



ESTONIAN QUALITY AGENCY  
FOR HIGHER AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

# IA report for Yerevan Haybusak University

2019

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## Introduction

‘Institutional accreditation’ is the process of external evaluation which assesses the conformity of a University or higher education institution’s management, work procedures, study and research activities and environment to both legislation and the goals and development plan of the higher education institution itself. This is feedback-based evaluation in which an international assessment panel analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the institution of higher education based on the self-assessment report of the institution and on information obtained during the assessment visit, providing recommendations for improvement and ways of implementing them.

The goal of institutional accreditation is to support the development of strategic management and quality culture that values learning-centeredness, creativity and innovation in the higher education institutions, as well as to increase the societal impact of education, research and development delivered by the HEIs.

Higher Education institutions are assessed according to twelve standards. Assessment focuses on the core processes of the HEI – learning and teaching, research, development and creative activities, and service to society – as well as on strategic management of the organisation and resource management. The learning and teaching process is examined in more detail under five standards (study programme, teaching staff, learning and teaching, student assessment, and learning support processes). Throughout the assessment process, there is a focus on academic ethics, quality culture and internationalisation.

The institutional accreditation of Yerevan Haybusak University (YHU hereinafter) took place in September 2019. Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA hereinafter) compiled an international assessment panel for the accreditation as follows:

<b>Helen Thomas (chair)</b>	Freelance Education Consultant, United Kingdom
<b>Tanel Kerikmäe</b>	Director of the Tallinn Law School, Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia
<b>Mark Frederiks</b>	NVAO, International Policy coordinator, The Netherlands
<b>Jacques Lanares</b>	University of Lausanne, Vice Rector, Switzerland
<b>Andrea Olschewski</b>	Professor of Anaesthesiology at the Medical University of Graz; Former Dean for Doctoral Studies, Medical University of Graz, Austria
<b>Arus Harutyunyan</b>	Armenian State University of Economics, MA student
<b>Davit Ghazaryan</b>	Yerevan State Medical University, Assistant Professor; Head of Practice Department

The assessment process was coordinated by EKKA staff – Mr Hillar Bauman and Ms Jekaterina Masenko.

After an initial preparation phase, the work of the assessment panel in Armenia started on Monday, 9 September 2019, with an introduction to the Higher Education System of Armenia as well as the assessment procedures by EKKA. The members of the team agreed the overall questions and areas to discuss with each group during the site visit to YHU. The distribution of tasks between the members of the assessment panel was organised and a detailed schedule of the site visit agreed.

During the following four days, meetings were held with the representatives of YHU (from, Tuesday 10th to Friday, 13th September 2019).

On Saturday, 14th September, the panel held an all-day meeting, during which both the structure of the final report was agreed, and findings of team meetings were compiled in a first draft of the assessment report.

The following report has two parts: a report on institutional accreditation and report on quality assessment of three study programmes: 1) General Medicine, M.D; 2) Law, BA; and 3) Management, MA.

The findings of the study programme assessments are used to inform the full institutional accreditation report, through a form of 'sampling'.

### ***Information about the Yerevan Haybusak University***

Yerevan Haybusak University (YHU) is a private university in the Republic of Armenia (RA) which was founded in 1990 as Haybusak Co-operative Institute. In 2003, it became Haybusak University. Since 2003 a number of private higher education institutions have joined YHU including the Institute of Oriental Studies after H. Lazarian, Armenian Open University after Loris Kalashyan, Yerevan "Roslin" Arts Institute, "Imastaser Anania Shirakatsi" University of Gyumri, Armenian Institute of Ecology, Economics and Rights of Yerevan. YHU is licenced by RA to deliver higher education and operates in accordance within RA legislation. It is the largest private higher education institution in Armenia with about 2,700 students.

The University is owned by four Founders, one of whom is the current Rector. The Rector reports to the General Assembly of Participants. The Rector is supported by the Rectorate in management matters. The most senior committee of YHU is the Scientific Council. There is also a student parliament.

YHU has 5 faculties: Medicine, Law and International Relations, Economics, Humanities, and Design and Fashion Modelling. IT offers programmes in 18 areas, the majority of which are at undergraduate level. YHU offers masters programmes in 7 different specialisations. The Faculty of Medicine is the largest faculty with over half of all students. All international students, of which, at the time of the visit, there were nearly 1,000, are in the Faculty of Medicine.

YHU has two principal sites in Yerevan, both of which it owns. The administration is based in Abeljan 6, where a new building has been built adjacent to the original one.

The University last underwent an accreditation assessment in 2014 from the National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA).

### ***The main changes on the basis of the recommendations of the previous institutional accreditation***

The ANQA review had ten main recommendations, not all of which YHU accepted on the basis that some were lacking objectivity and were not specific enough.

The principal areas that YHU cites that it has developed since the ANQA accreditation are: clarifying the mission, strategic goals and objectives; developing short-, mid- and long-term plans with performance indicators; greater use of stakeholder views in developing the University's plans; the development of Ethical Rules; the Education Quality Unit has been expanded and further developed; study programmes have been revised; benchmarking has been conducted; learning outcomes have been reviewed and differentiation between learning outcomes for bachelor's and master's levels have been developed; YHU

has published the Student Guide; a rating system has been developed for teaching staff, the Strategic Plan includes YHU's ambitions and priorities in the field of research and student involvement in research has been enhanced, and there is a policy on internationalisation with targeted activity to achieve the aims. YHU has also invested in the development of its premises and equipment. This includes a new building with equipment for the Faculty of Medicine.

***Briefly main impressions of the institution as well as of the self-evaluation report and of the visit.***

YHU has undertaken many developments since the ANQA accreditation visit. A significant number of these changes were introduced in the twelve months leading up to the panel's visit. This meant that there had not been sufficient time for all the developments to be fully disseminated to relevant stakeholders, to engender a shared understanding of the changes, and many were not yet embedded into the University.

YHU has been working to address weaknesses identified earlier and to grow its student numbers, particularly international ones, which it has done considerably with a parallel increase in financial turnover.

There is a strong sense of commitment to YHU from staff coupled with a willingness to adopt to changes and new initiatives, though the understanding of these is patchy. YHU is committed to involving stakeholders in developments, as demonstrated by the way that it approached the development of the self-evaluation report (SER).

The SER was a lengthy document with much information, some of which was difficult to follow. Data on student recruitment, progression and achievement were not easy to follow. Within the wealth of information, it was sometimes difficult for the panel to find the key points. Though there was some evaluation in the summaries to each section under the headings of *strong points, improvement ways and planned actions*, the planned actions were often vague and the specific outcomes not clear. The SER, as many documents, had been translated. The translations were not always clear; not all annexes mentioned in the SER were available, either in Armenian or English.

## **Summary of the institutional accreditation findings**

### **General Findings:**

The panel found that YHU has invested a great deal of time and energy into its further development and is keen to realize its ambitions to be a university which provides high quality education of an international standard, which is internationally recognised for its scientific research, which promotes and enshrines values of social justice and social responsibility which is underpinned by up-to-date technologies and highly qualified staff, and which produces graduates who are well educated both as citizens and as proficient specialists in their chosen field. The panel recognised that this is an ambitious goal. The strategic plan 2016-2020 (SP), which reflects the overall aim, includes some aspirational elements which are not achievable within a four-year time scale. The extensive scope of the strategic plan has resulted in the University working on a wide range of areas at the same time. In the panel's view this has led to a lack of focus, of specificity and of close monitoring. The panel also noted that there had been recent changes in the senior staffing structure which were not reflected in the documentation and only came to light through discussion. The impression this creates is one of decisions being made in an ad hoc rather than in a systematic way.

Main strengths and problems to support the summary of the assessment indicated in the table below.

	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
Strategic management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic ethics	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internationalisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Study programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning and teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning support systems	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research, development and/or other creative activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service to society	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Commendations:

- The new buildings and facilities, including the simulation centre, that support student learning.
- The success in growing the international student numbers.
- The good relationship between teaching and administrative staff and students which provides a strong sense of community.
- The pro-activeness of staff in supporting students' needs, including those of international students.

#### Recommendations:

- YHU must develop the strategic plan so that it has clear and measurable goals attached to it which are supported by specified resources of time and money.

- YHU should develop strategic plans for its core areas of research, teaching and learning, internationalisation, service to society and quality that align with and feed into the main goals of the University.
- Implementation plans should be transparently linked to the budget and reflect the priority areas.
- YHU should develop, articulate and disseminate its use of key concepts which underpin the provision including student-centred learning, the research-teaching link, internationalisation, and service to society.
- YHU must review the link between learning outcomes and assessment and ensure that assessment criteria are explicitly and transparently aligned to the learning outcomes.
- YHU must target investment to develop a solid research culture which is underpinned by a clearly focussed strategy.
- YHU should develop an academic career pathway to ensure the future of its educational activities and enable it to attract both national and international staff.
- YHU should ensure that it updates and publishes key documents, such as the organisational structure, the quality assurance manual, the student guide, so that they are available to all relevant stakeholders.
- YHU must develop its approach to ethics to ensure that there are policies to address all essential areas and that the infrastructure to oversee the policies and their implementation are free from any potential conflicts of interest.
- YHU should monitor the implementation of initiatives, whether policy or procedure, to ensure that they are effective in achieving the intended aims.

## 1.1. Strategic management

### Standard:

Development planning at the higher education institution is purposeful and systematic, involving various stakeholders. The higher education institution regularly evaluates the achievement of its stated objectives and the impact of its activities.

### Guidelines:

*The HEI has formulated the objectives and key results for its core activities – learning and teaching; research, development and creative activities, and service to society – taking into account national priorities and the needs of society, focusing on its strengths and reducing unnecessary duplication both within the HEI and throughout higher education in Armenia. The HEI is managed in accordance with its mission, vision and core values, as well as objectives set out on the basis of those principles. Achievement of the objectives and effects of the activities are evaluated regularly. Creativity and innovation are supported and given value in both core and support activities. Membership of the HEI (including students), as well as external stakeholders, is involved in developing and implementing the HEI’s development plan and action plans. The HEI members share the core values that serve as a basis for the institution’s development plan.*

### Indicator:

*The rate of achieving the objectives set in the development/action plan (key results)*

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>x</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Evidence and Analysis

Reflecting the recommendations in the last evaluation, YHU developed a strategic plan 2016-2020 (SP) which includes vision, mission, core values, objectives mid and short term plans and indicators. The stated vision of YHU is “to strive to provide high-quality study programs, a student-centred approach and to foster the creative initiative of students and staff with the aim of directing them to the fulfilment of the science-education-innovation process. The University strives to become a university which:

- provides high-quality education which is in line with international standards and which adequately and dynamically responds to the constantly changing demands of the society, economy and labour market;
- is an internationally recognized leading scientific-education institution, adheres to social justice and provides available education of the socially vulnerable layers of the society;
- takes social responsibility and takes into consideration the opinions of its internal and external stakeholders;
- is technically equipped with modern technologies, has highly qualified teaching staff and ensures a partnership and collaborative relationship among students and teachers which is the guarantee for the comprehensive development of citizens and the preparation of competent specialists;
- enroots and shares national and universal values and, as a cultural and scientific-educational institution, collaborates with world-known universities.”



The SP includes the YHU's core values which are student achievement, available education, democracy, highly competent teaching staff, academic honesty, competitiveness and social responsibility. Staff and students are aware of, understand and share the values.

YHU has articulated its specific mission which is *"to prepare specialists who will foster the development and reinforcement of the state and separate communities, taking into consideration the RA regional peculiarities and international relations."*

The SP was developed through a participative process, and based on the strategic plans of the faculties. The faculty plans, developed by working groups, were discussed in the Rectorate and, subsequently, discussed and approved by the Scientific Council of the University.

The SP has 11 objectives; four of these link to resources, three to internal and external communication, two to teaching and one to research. Each objective has a number of indicators; however, the panel could find no evidence of targets for these either in documentation or from discussions with senior staff and management.

The mid- and short-term action plans outline activities, those involved and deadlines. It was not clear to the panel who held the lead responsibility for overseeing the meeting of each specific activity. The panel could not find any evidence of more detailed action plans such as the identification of resources of time, money and staff needed to meet the objectives.

The SP identifies three main challenges that YHU faces: *"the alternation of financial inflows, investment and improvement of research activities as well as the formation of modern study programmes ensuring high quality education."* The panel could find no detailed analysis either within the self-assessment report or from explanations provided in any of the discussions of the context for these challenges or a transparent link with a swot analysis.

The SP's focus is at the institutional level; the panel did not see any strategic plans elaborated for key areas of activity, including research, internationalisation, learning and teaching, resources and service to society.

YHU has recently established a Monitoring Committee (MC) which has a membership of five and is chaired by the Rector. The MC meets three times a year; the agenda is prepared by the Rector's adviser for quality assurance, and the MC discusses a wide range of issues. At the time of the visit the panel learned that the focus of discussion was research. It was not clear, however, whether the discussions reflected strategic issues and progress on the SP.

Annual reports are submitted by the deans to the Rector, who, in turn, reports to the Scientific Council. The dean's reports are activity reports rather than a report on the implementation of the SP; the reports do not align with the indicators included in the SP and its related plans. The panel reviewed the job descriptions for the vice-rectors and could find no mention of specific responsibilities relating to the elaboration, implementation or reporting on those aspects of the SP within their sphere of operation. It was difficult for the panel to see how the management and reporting structures and the focus of the reports prepared enables senior management to be fully aware of progress on the SP's implementation; to know whether and to what extent objectives are met; to be able to modify or adapt the SP to changes of context, or to allocate additional resources to meet priority objectives.

The panel concluded from the evidence provided through documentation and through meetings that a strategic approach to the management of YHU is not yet fully embedded. Whilst some of the basic elements have been implemented, these tend to be of a planning nature rather than strategic. The SP is a

starting point and lacks indicators related to targets which can be tracked and monitored for impact and progress. Mid- and short-term plans are not strategic plans with annual objectives but rather a simplistic list of activities for the current year. This means that the strategic plan focusses on processes and activities rather than on the outcomes.

The absence of focussed strategic plans for the core areas of research; teaching and learning, internationalisation, and service to society is a significant weakness in the strategic management of YHU. The panel found that the absence of these impacted on the related standards where there was insufficient development of a strategic approach which resulted in weaknesses across each of these areas. The panel agreed not to penalize each standard but to limit this weakness to its judgment on strategic management.

The panel concluded from their analysis of interviews and from their scrutiny of the roles of the vice-rectors and of other members of the leadership within YHU that the strategic planning and development process would benefit from consistency of understanding across the University and from more academic leadership at central and faculty level. This would be supported by a review of the decision-making structure. It would also be supported by reviewing and revising the roles of the vice-rectors, which, according to the job descriptions, particularly that of the Vice Rector Educational Affairs, have more of a co-ordinating and administrative function than a strategic and leadership role.

### Recommendations

- YHU should elaborate fully developed strategic plans, which are based on an in-depth and evidence based analysis, which include specific targets to ensure that priorities are clearly identified and that goals are measurable. This will enable their achievement to be clearly demonstrated.
- YHU should develop strategic plans for each of its core areas that align with and feed into the main goals of the University.
- YHU should provide staff development for strategic planning to ensure that those engaged in the process have the appropriate competencies and skills.
- YHU is recommended to prepare an organogram that clearly outlines the structure of the university, decision making bodies and reporting lines so that it is clear to all stakeholders.
- YHU should develop more detailed action plans to ensure that resources (human, financial, time, infrastructure) are available to reach the targets set within the given deadline and to ensure that an individual is identified who holds responsibility for each objective.

## 1.2. Resources

### Standard:

The higher education institution develops its staff and manages its physical and financial resources in a purposeful, systematic and sustainable manner. Internal and external communications of the higher education institution (including marketing and image-building) are targeted and managed.

### Guidelines:

*The HEI has an efficient staff development system. The principles and procedures for employee recruitment and development are based on the objectives of the HEI's development plan, and are fair and transparent. The career model of academic staff motivates talented young people to start their academic careers, creates opportunities for progress, and ensures sustainability of the academic staff. The principles for employees' remuneration and motivation are defined, available to all employees, and observed.*

*Allocation of the HEI's financial resources is based on the objectives of its development plan. The management and development of its infrastructure (buildings, laboratories, classrooms, IT systems, etc.) are economically feasible. Sufficient resources are available for updating the infrastructure for education and research, and/or a strategy exists enabling the HEI to acquire them.*

*A sufficient number of textbooks and other learning aids are available, they are of uniformly high quality and accessible. Publicly offered information about HEI's activities (including study programmes) and the findings of external evaluations is correct, up to date, easily accessible and understandable. The HEI has a system to popularise its core activities and academic career opportunities. The HEI has a functioning system for internal and external communications, relevant to the target audiences. The HEI members are informed of the decisions relevant to them in a timely manner.*

*Employee satisfaction with management, working conditions, information flow, etc., at the HEI is surveyed regularly and the survey results are used in quality improvement activities.*

### Indicators:

- *Distribution of revenues and costs (incl. RDC activities)*
- *The results of the staff satisfaction survey*

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>x</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Evidence and Analysis

The management and development of the human, physical and financial resources of YHU are based on the SP. Staff development activities are planned to focus on both the development of procedures, for example the development of the internal education quality assurance system; or on the recruitment of highly proficient teaching staff, and on the development of staff competencies, such as the definition of performance indicators, on teaching staff's qualification enhancement and on the development of their scientific research activity. These interventions are aimed at developing both specific as well as transferable abilities and skills in the students.

The previous accreditation process from ANQA and the preparation for the EKKA accreditation led to some major changes at YHU. These include: the development of regulations for the competitive selection of staff; the development of regulations for the rating and evaluation of the professional activities of the academic staff; the development and delivery of staff training in quality assurance; YHU's infrastructure has been substantially developed by, for example, including new facilities and establishing new cooperation with the specialists in 14 clinics, medical centres, hospitals and scientific-research institutions for medicine, by developing and administering staff and student surveys and making improvements in the light of the survey outcomes, and visiting lecturers have been contracted to bring in up-to-date theoretical and practical knowledge.

The Rector maintains direct oversight of the achievement of human performance indicators. Regular review and analysis of these are effected through the relevant structural units of the University. Job descriptions and personal specifications have been developed. The professional requirements for the staff of the Education Quality Centre have been elaborated and staff have participated in development activities to enhance their skills and knowledge in relevant areas. In some study areas, YHU is able to attract international visiting lecturers who have up-to-date theoretical and practical knowledge.

YHU provides a range of professional development activities for academic staff. However, it was not clear to the panel what systems were in place to ensure systematic identification of the needs and aspirations of academic staff and how these were met. A scheme for rating staff has been introduced. However, evidence as to how far this had developed was not consistent; some staff understood the scheme was still being developed. The panel did not have sufficient evidence to demonstrate that rating is linked to remuneration. The University needs to establish systematic processes in relation to the development of staff to ensure that staff consolidate knowledge, skills and behaviour as well as developing new knowledge, skills and behaviour.

Decisions about resources and investment are made by the Rector. Smaller requests for resources go via the deans to the Rector; the panel learned that such requests were invariably met. Larger resource investments are discussed in the Rectorate and, where appropriate, with the Founders. Considerable investment had been made in a new building on the Abelyan Street campus which houses improved facilities for practical courses, particularly for students of the Faculty of Medicine.

YHU has an established library. The library is limited in size and holds a number of multiple copies of core texts. The library offers access to free internet and some texts are held in electronic format. At the time of the panel's visit, YHU had started to invest in electronic library resources. Availability was still in the very early stages and did not provide sufficient access to state-of-the-art e-textbooks or dedicated software programmes, particularly in English.

There are specialist facilities for art, design and fashion which are limited but meet the needs of the small cohort sizes. The panel saw evidence of the updating of some equipment in these study areas. YHU had recently invested in a simulation centre for the Faculty of Medicine which, when further developed, will provide a solid learning environment for students of medicine. The Faculty of Law has a legal clinic.

Overall, it was clear to the panel that the allocation of YHU's financial resources is based on the objectives in the development plan. The annual budget shows a stable upward trend for the last few years which should support the further development of resources.

### Commendations

- The new building on the Abelyan Campus which provides up-to-date facilities for practical work in the field of medicine.
- The effective collaborations which YHU has established with several clinics for teaching practical skills to medical students and the provision of the legal clinic.

### Recommendations

- YHU should further improve the transparency and understanding of the principles of employees' remuneration.
- YHU should further systematise staff development processes to ensure that activities support the development of new knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- YHU should focus investment in the library to extend the digital resources to enable staff to exploit e-learning opportunities for the benefit of students' learning.
- Increase the budget dedicated for research at YHU and establish formal collaborations with research institution in Armenia in order increase research outcome and thus, visibility.

### 1.3. Quality Culture

**Standard:**

The higher education institution has defined the quality of its core and support processes, and the principles of quality assurance. In the higher education institution, internal evaluation supports strategic management and is conducted regularly at different levels (institution, unit, study programme), the findings of internal and external evaluations are analysed and quality improvement activities implemented.

**Guidelines:**

*Members of the HEI have agreed upon definitions for the quality of their core and support processes and are guided by them in their daily work. The HEI develops and publicises its policies and procedures for internal quality assurance (internal evaluation) and conducts regular internal evaluations, which take into account, inter alia, the standards set out in this Guide, and incorporates feedback from its members and/or from external experts. In the course of internal evaluations, peer learning, comparisons with other HEIs regarding their results and means for achievement, as well as a sharing of best practices take place, among other things.*

*Internal evaluation is based on the following key questions in quality management: What do you want to achieve, and why? How do you want to do it? How do you know that the activities are effective and will have the desired impact? How do you manage the quality improvement activities?*

*Regular reviews and enhancements of study programmes ensure their relevance, including their compliance with international trends.*

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>x</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Evidence and Analysis

The first objective of YHU's SP is to produce 'high quality of education based on improvement of current study programs', and the second 'the improvement and development of internal education quality assurance system.' YHU has a centralised Education Quality Assurance Unit (EQA) which has been expanded since the ANQA assessment. It has five staff members, four of whom also have a small teaching load. In addition, each of the five faculties and each of the non-academic departments has a designated quality assurance individual. This structure ensures the engagement of all faculties and non-academic units in the quality assurance and improvement processes of the University. In addition, there is a quality assurance consultant who provides advice on an occasional and *ad hoc* basis to the EQA and also directly to the Rector.

The functions, responsibilities, goals and objectives of the EQA are specified in the *Regulation on the Education Quality Assurance Centre*. It is not clear how the objectives of the EQA relate to the objectives of the SP, nor is it clear how these are monitored. The panel learned that although there are short- and mid-term plans for EQA, at the time of the visit no reports had been submitted on progress. In addition,

objectives are not formulated in a way that enables progress on them to be clearly tracked nor the meeting of them to be objectively demonstrated. As the guardians of quality in the University, the EQA should set an example for the setting, reviewing and reporting on objectives for the institution as a whole.

In 2017, YHU produced its first Education Quality Assurance Manual (EQAM). This is an extensive document which includes the historical context of the University, overall description of the quality assurance system and details essential components of this including the development and approval of study programmes, assessment guidance and regulations and guidance on plagiarism. There have been a number of changes in the University since the document was produced so that at the time of the panel's visit the document was not fully accurate. The panel heard that the process of preparing for the EKKA accreditation had helped the University identify parts of the EQAM which need to be updated and that there were plans to do this. Whilst those staff who were engaged in the development of the manual and consultation on its content were aware of the EQAM, the panel did not see or hear any evidence that there was wide-spread awareness and use of the manual across the University.

The process of producing the document and the responsibility for up-dating it lies with the EQA. The panel learned that this is done by consulting with colleagues across the University, including students. The EQA reported that they had undertaken some basic benchmarking with three other universities, both in and beyond RA. The panel heard that there are plans to develop the process of benchmarking so that it more effectively informs the quality infrastructure. The engagement of colleagues across the University in the development of the EQAM provides an appropriate foundation for the development of a quality culture.

EQA is the focus in YHU for the development, conducting and analysis of surveys. There is a designated staff member who is responsible for coordinating this work. At the time of the visit a number of surveys and questionnaires had been developed and distributed to a range of stakeholders. The panel saw documents relating to those that had been distributed, including the analysis. From discussions with a range of stakeholders, including external stakeholders, it was clear that distribution was limited and not consistent and that the number of returns was low. The reports on the analysis of the surveys are somewhat simplistic and it was not possible for the panel to ascertain how these had impacted on the provision. The panel did not see any evidence that feedback is given to the stakeholder groups on the outcomes of the survey and actions taken in the light of the survey; in other words, there is no closing of the feedback loop. There is still some way to go to reach the stage where the distribution, analysis and follow through on surveys is effective as a tool for the maintenance and enhancement of quality.

EQA responsibilities include the process of programme development and review. The EQAM outlines the process of programme review in some detail. However, the panel did not see formalised evidence of how these reviews had been carried out and reported; nor was it clear which study programmes have been subject to the described review process. YHU must ensure that the processes are applied and that these are fully documented to ensure that the reviews serve the aims of programme enhancement. The process includes the involvement of external experts in the given field of the programme. There are written criteria for the selection of external experts, a process of approval of them through the Scientific Council and an outline of the responsibilities of the expert. The inclusion of external experts and the clarity of the selection and approval of them is good practice.

YHU has adopted the plan, do, check, act (PDCA) as the institution-wide approach to quality management. The EQAM states that this approach should be adopted for reviewing the effectiveness of structural units. Whilst the approach is appropriate, the extent to which the approach has been used to review structural units was not clear to the panel.

Staff at all levels were clear that quality was a key value and of significant importance and were fully aware of the commitment YHU has to provide a high quality educational experience. Staff and students were also aware of how they were engaged in some of the quality processes. It was difficult for the panel to establish the extent of ownership of quality that different groups felt and it is clear that more needs to be done to promote quality and a consistent sense of ownership across the University.

### Commendations

- The further development of the quality infrastructure, including the growth of the EQA and the establishment of a quality role in each faculty and administrative unit.
- The production of the Education Quality Assurance Manual.
- The involvement of external experts in the review and approval of study programmes and the documentation supporting their appointment and the remit of their roles.

### Recommendations

- YHU needs to ensure that the EQA leads the way within the University in the review of its structure, its effectiveness and progress made towards the achievement of objectives.
- YHU should ensure that the distribution and analysis of questionnaires to stakeholder groups is consistent and rigorous.
- YHU should develop a process for closing the feedback loop to ensure that stakeholders are aware of actions taken in response to their feedback.
- YHU should update the Education Quality Assurance Manual to ensure that it reflects accurately the structure and processes that are current in the University so that all stakeholders are clear about these.



## 1.4 Academic ethics

### Standard:

The higher education institution has defined its principles for academic ethics, has a system for disseminating them among its members, and has a code of conduct including guidelines for any cases of non-compliance with these principles. The higher education institution has a functioning system for handling complaints.

### Guidelines:

*The HEI values its members and ensures that all its employees and students are treated according to the principle of equal treatment.*

*Employees and students of the HEI are guided by the agreed principles of academic ethics in all their activities.*

*The HEI respects fundamental values and policies of research.*

*The HEI supports its students and teaching staff in their understanding and responding to ethical issues. Teaching staff and students do not tolerate academic fraud, including cheating and plagiarism, and they will act immediately upon any such occurrence.*

*Management of complaints from HEI members (including discrimination cases) is transparent and objective, ensuring fair treatment of all parties.*

### Indicator:

- Number of academic fraud cases

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>x</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Evidence and Analysis

In June 2019, the Scientific Council of YHU adopted “Rules of Ethics”. These rules apply to academic and support staff and to students. YHU based the document on the development of model codes of ethics carried out in Armenia by the Council of Europe and the European Union. The fourteen principles of ethics in education, formulated by the Council of Europe, are quoted in the YHU document. The rights and obligations of academic staff, students, and education-support staff are described. The general provisions include the statement that academic staff ensure university-wide awareness of the rules and the consequences of violation of those rules. However, the consequences of violation of the rules is not elaborated in the YHU document; there is a merely a statement that violators “are subject to disciplinary and administrative responsibility according to the defined RA legislation.”

The Council of Europe recommends that ethical rules should be accompanied by policies, procedures, and regulations that are necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the ethical rules. The panel could find no evidence to demonstrate that appropriate policies and procedures are in place at YHU to ensure the implementation of the ethical rules. The panel concluded that some crucial ethical policies relating to whistle-blowing; anti-corruption and bribery; non-discrimination and anti-harassment; plagiarism and

research integrity, have been neither developed nor implemented.

In 2019 YHU established an Ethics Committee (EC). The tasks of this committee are to pursue the maintenance of ethical rules, to examine cases of violation of the rules and to contribute to their solution. This EC meets ad-hoc, whenever there is a complaint, and has dealt with only one case involving two senior members of staff. In this case, the EC made a recommendation and the Rector made the final decision. The Scientific Council approves the membership of the EC. The panel noted that deans are committee members, although this may hinder full participation of teaching staff and student members in the EC's deliberations and decision-making. As the EC advises senior management, potential conflicts of interest would be better avoided if senior management members were not members of the EC. Currently, complaints concerning ethical issues have to be submitted to the Rector before it can be discussed by the EC. This poses an unnecessary barrier to the filing of complaints.

In 2017, the Scientific Council of YHU adopted a Student Guide (A1.17); this Guide states students' rights and obligations but refers neither to the Rules of Ethics nor to the Ethics Committee as initiated in 2019.

YHU's approach to handling complaints is entirely informal. The Student Guide contains no section on filing or handling complaints. From discussions, it was clear that students tend to approach their dean when experiencing problems. Whilst there is a Students' Parliament that students can also turn to, the Students' Parliament has no procedure for handling complaints. Other options mentioned for registering complaints included putting a note in the YHU ideas box or asking the Rector a question through a special option on the website. The Rector brings the questions and complaints received to the Rectorate meeting and takes steps to address the issues through the appropriate structural units

The panel learned from discussions with academic staff that plagiarism is a major problem in Armenian higher education. Despite the recognition of the size of the problem, YHU has no system in place, such as detection software, for detecting academic fraud or plagiarism. Academic staff acknowledged that plagiarism could occur but could offer no solutions to dealing with the problem. The absence of a system to tackle academic misconduct and the lack of awareness of staff of how to address the problem is particularly striking given that YHU strives for *"the complete elimination/absence of plagiarism... and other such like manifestations of academic fraud"* (SAR p.24).

Cases of academic dishonesty have been registered since 2016. According to the SAR (p.24) ten such cases have been detected since 2016. The relevant SAR appendix (4.5) which was noted as including the details of these cases, was not made available to the panel, either in English or in Armenian. In discussions neither students nor staff had any awareness of these cases. The panel was informed that reflection on issues of academic dishonesty will be a topic for chairs and be discussed in faculty council meetings.

YHU intends to raise awareness of the ethical rules by publishing them on the website, referencing the ethical code in classes, and by including an ethical breaches question in surveys, to alumni, for example. Some of these intentions had been realised at the time of the visit. Students and staff met by the panel were aware of the ethical rules although none of the students met by the panel had experienced any breaches of ethical rules. Some students knew that there had been problems, such as discrimination against international students, but did not know the details. Students emphasised that ethical or other problems could be discussed with their dean or with other members of staff and they valued the approachability and access to a range of staff. Students showed little awareness of the role of the Ethics Committee which may reflect the fact that it had only recently been established.

The panel observed an open class on academic (dis)honesty which was taught by a lecturer from the Faculty of Law. The open class focused mostly on plagiarism and students, although both students and teaching staff participated. The panel valued the open atmosphere of discussions between teacher and class. The panel suggest that it would be useful for YHU if such classes were extended to cover all aspects of the Rules of Ethics. In addition, the depth of discussion would be enhanced if specific, practical cases were used and if students and teachers participated in separate classes.

### Recommendations

- YHU should develop appropriate and relevant polices to ensure the implementation of the ethical rules relating to whistle-blowing, anti-corruption and bribery, non-discrimination and anti-harassment, plagiarism and research integrity.
- It is recommended that YHU reconsiders the membership of the Ethics Committee to ensure that it has representation from teaching staff and students.
- YHU should adopt a conflict of interests procedure for the Ethics Committee to ensure fair treatment of the issues raised.
- YHU is recommended to review the operating of the Ethics Committee so that it meets more regularly, is transparent about the outcomes of meetings and enables complaints to be filed directly to the Committee.
- YHU must develop a procedure to protect whistle-blowers.
- YHU is encouraged to hold classes on academic (dis)honesty for all faculties of the University; to broaden the perspective of the class to cover all aspects of the Rules of Ethics.
- YHU is encouraged to consider whether a course on ethics could become a mandatory part of the curriculum for students and, introduce a class for teaching staff to discuss ethical issues, to work towards the aim of eliminating academic plagiarism.

## 1.5 Internationalisation

### Standard: \_

*The higher education institution has set objectives for internationalisation and assesses the attainment of these objectives regularly. The higher education institution has created an environment that encourages international mobility of students and teaching staff, supporting the development of learning, teaching and RDC activities, as well as the cultural openness of its members and Armenian society in general.*

### Guidelines:

*The HEI creates opportunities for international student exchanges by offering study programmes and/or modules taught in English. The learning environment at the HEI supports internationalisation and cultural openness.*

*Recognition of qualifications and recognition of prior learning and work experiences for student admission and programme completion are in accordance with the quality requirements set by the HEI, are systemic and consistent with the expected learning outcomes and support international student mobility.*

*The organisation of studies at the HEI facilitates student participation in international mobility. The HEI has agreements with foreign higher education institutions and, through international exchange, sends its students abroad to study and undertake practical trainings, providing comprehensive support for this. Members of the teaching staff encourage students to participate in international mobility.*

*International lecturers participate in the process of teaching, including supervision of doctoral theses.*

*The HEI supports and recognises the participation of its teaching staff in international teaching, research or creative projects, as well as their teaching, research or creative work and personal development which are performed at HEIs abroad.*

### Indicators:

- *Teaching staff mobility (in-out)*
- *Student mobility (in-out)*
- *Number of English-taught study programmes by main units and levels of study*

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>x</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Evidence and Analysis

YHU adopted an “Internationalization Policy and Strategy” for 2016-2020. The Policy and Strategy was revised in June 2019. The panel learned that a new international strategy document will be prepared for 2020 onwards. The strategy document comprises a vision, principles, goals and ways to achieve the goals. However, all these elements are formulated in a general way. For example, the first goal is “assurance of study programs at international level”; the first way to achieve the goal is stated as “to ensure compliance

of YHU study programs with European educational standards by means of benchmarking". These general formulations do not enable attainment of the goals to be measured. The relationship between the goals and the ways to achieve the goals is not explained, and the ways to achieve goals are often formulated as additional goals, as illustrated in the example quoted above. It is not clear how the goals relate, for example, to the desired numbers and composition of the international student group.

The financial projections of YHU show a threefold increase in income from tuition fees and the University hopes to further increase the number of international student to realise this projection. However, there is no action plan as to how this ambition should be achieved.

There is an *Action Plan 2016-2020 of Internationalization Policy of YHU* which was adopted in 2015. The action plan identifies the responsible unit for each action, deadlines, which are mostly 2016-2020, and expectations. This action plan sums up 39 actions but no connection is made between the actions and the goals in the internationalisation policy. In addition, the planned actions are not evaluated and there is no measurement of the attainment of the goals with regard to internationalisation.

About 1000 of the total number of students enrolled at YHU are international students, representing, in 2018-2019, twenty different countries. This number has grown significantly from less than 400 in 2015-16. All international students are enrolled in the Faculty of Medicine. The vast majority of them come from India, Iraq, Iran, Israel and Egypt. YHU is a licenced institution in Armenia which promotes acceptance of its diplomas in these countries. In some cases, there is explicit recognition of YHU's diploma as, for example, in India where YHU has been added to the official website of the Medical Council of India (MCI).

A number of international students had transferred from another institution in Armenia where enrolment in that institution provided evidence of meeting the relevant admission requirements. In other cases, agreements with the countries of origin facilitated student admission.

The panel heard from international students that the relatively low student fees, the reputation of YHU compared to other private medical schools in Armenia, and the reasonable fair price-quality ratio, were important factors in choosing YHU. Some students mentioned the small scale, informal atmosphere, and attentive staff who offer support to students with problems affecting their study as important benefits of YHU. Overall international students were satisfied with the education and support provided by YHU. Where students have problems, they approach teaching staff or the dean. Problems that were cited by the students included challenges with student accommodation, which is not provided by YHU. However, it is anticipated that the newly built student dormitories would go some way to address this problem. Students also suggested that there had been some incidents of discrimination but no examples to support this were given. YHU does not provide catering which meets the dietary needs of students from different cultural and religious backgrounds. However, YHU does allow students to bring their own food to campus. There is no separate room provided for religious prayers.

There have been some initiatives aimed at integrating international and Armenian students, such as encouraging participation in different religious feasts. Overall there is little interaction between the international students in the medical faculty and the Armenian students in the other faculties of YHU. The panel saw no evidence of any policies or strategies aimed at developing the intercultural competences of students and staff at YHU; nor did the panel see evidence of any courses for students and staff to increase intercultural awareness and competences. The high proportion of international students at YHU provides the potential for international classes. However, the panel saw no evidence of an understanding of what international teaching and learning might be not how it might enhance the educational experience.

There are fourteen international teaching staff all based in the Faculty of Medicine; half of whom are from India, with three from Iran, and the others from Iraq, Lebanon, USA and Australia. There are opportunities for medical students to participate in international summer schools and clerkships in the home country. The panel also heard of similar opportunities in some other faculties but lack of funding results in very low

take up. Apart from the Faculty of Medicine, the international mobility of both teaching staff and students is limited or non-existent.

YHU estimates that one third of teaching staff know a foreign language. Free courses have been organised to enhance teachers' foreign language proficiency. The panel heard in at least one faculty that a significant proportion of teachers attend these courses. However, it was also clear that, despite the courses, hardly any staff felt confident about their ability to teach in English. This limits significantly the ability for staff to undertake international mobility.

YHU states that *“on annual average, about three dozen teachers participate in diverse conferences, carry out research and creative activities in different foreign universities and scientific centre.”* Participation in international research projects is very limited. The panel heard from both staff and students that more opportunities for international mobility would be greatly appreciated.

YHU has a small department of International Relations (DIR) which is primarily focused on international partnerships and policy, rather than supporting international students. A small number of memoranda have been signed with foreign institutions. YHU won a grant (2015) with Tallinn Health Care College within the Erasmus+ project. The University has also signed a memorandum (2017) with the International Business School Americas. International collaborations with other institutions are very limited and in some faculties non-existent. International benchmarking is barely undertaken; where it is, the benchmarked institution tends to be selected opportunistically, through, for example, contacts with a graduate working there, rather than by similarity or benchmark fit.

### Commendations

- The success in growing the international student numbers.
- The pro-active way in which staff meet the needs of international students.

### Recommendations

- YHU should develop a coherent internationalisation policy with clear and measurable objectives and an associated and realistic action plan.
- YHU should ensure that the policy includes objectives relating to the international mobility of students and staff and the impact of these on the quality of education. The policy should also include objectives for international partnerships, language proficiency and intercultural awareness and competences.
- Policy objectives and related objectives should be monitored and evaluated and resulting improvements should formally be recorded.
- The panel recommends YHU consider making language courses obligatory so that all those who teach or aspire to teach in English, have an appropriate level of competence in English.
- YHU should also consider developing a course on intercultural awareness for those staff to support effective teaching in an international, multicultural setting.
- The panel recommends that YHU take steps to facilitate the integration of the international medical students into the wider YHU community. YHU might also like to consider the possibilities for an international classroom where Armenian and international students sit together and learn from each other.
- The panel recommends YHU to extend the functions of the Department of International Relations into an international office that gives continuous support to international students and staff, and everyone participating (or wanting to participate) in international mobility.

## 1.6 Teaching staff

### Standard:

Teaching is conducted by a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff who support the development of learners and value their own continuous self-development.

### Guidelines:

*Members of the teaching staff engage systemically in development of their professional and teaching skills, improve their supervision competence, and share best practices with one another.*

*Teaching staff's participation in research, development and/or creative activities supports the teaching process and ensures competence for the supervision of students' theses (including doctoral theses).*

*Members of the teaching staff collaborate in fields of teaching, research and/or creative work within the HEI and with partners outside the HEI, e.g. with field practitioners, public sector organisations, companies, other research and development institutions, and lecturers from other Armenian or foreign higher education institutions. Qualified visiting lecturers and practitioners participate in the teaching process.*

*When assessing the work of teaching staff (including their periodical evaluations), the effectiveness of their teaching as well as their research, development and creative work is taken into account, including student feedback, the effectiveness of their student supervision, development of their teaching and supervisory skills, their international mobility, and their entrepreneurial experience or other work experience in their fields of speciality outside the HEI.*

### **Indicators:**

- *Competition for elected academic positions*
- *Results of students' feedback about the teaching staff*
- *Teaching staff participating in continuing training or other forms of teaching skills development*

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>x</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Evidence and Analysis

Overall, there is a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff at YHU. From observations and discussions with the panel it is clear that teaching staff are motivated and share, informally, within the faculty, their effective teaching practices, and research activities and findings with one another. YHU aspires to achieve an appropriate balance of teachers with theoretical and practical skills. Many staff are either involved in or have significant experience in their area of expertise. A significant



number of practitioners are directly involved in teaching which enhances the delivery of the curriculum and students' learning experience.

The process for recruiting new teaching staff was outlined to the panel and is included in the *Regulation on the Competitive Selection and Positioning of Teaching Staff*. The need for new staff is identified by the deans; this may be prompted by new areas in the curriculum where there is no current expertise, by the size of the student body or in some cases because the most appropriate member of staff is not available. Whilst this approach ensured that there is a sufficient number of staff with relevant expertise and experience to undertake the immediate teaching needs, the panel found little evidence of a more strategic approach for succession planning for academic leadership roles. The exception to this was a strategic decision to admit four students for doctoral studies at YHU with the intention that, in due course, they become full staff members and contribute both to the teaching and research agenda of YHU.

There is a list of requirements or specifications for the role being recruited for and the requirements include the expectation of at least a masters' degree. This expectation is not consistently applied; suitability may also be demonstrated by "*at least five years of professional work experience.*" The panel found the approach to requirements inconsistent. Applications and selection is undertaken by the Competitions Committee and this includes departmental and faculty heads. The panel did not see any evidence specifying the qualifications or credentials expected for international or visiting teaching staff.

The panel explored the appraisal and development of staff. There is a rating system which is elaborated in the *Regulation on Rating Evaluation of Professional Activities of YU's Teaching Staff* (December, 2018). This regulation embraces both the teaching and research activities of staff as well as "*internal and public services*". The regulation also outlines where evidence for the ranking is found. This includes student satisfaction surveys, the results of class observation by the chairs and by EQA, and the efficiency of research/creative activity. The outcomes of the process can be used for promotion and remuneration purposes and for the identification of development needs for both teaching and research. In discussions with staff the panel found inconsistent views on the implementation of the rating regulation: some staff reported that they understood a system was being developed but had not participated in the process; others indicated that the process was inconsistently implemented. The inconsistency of views found, may reflect the fact that the rating system has not yet gone through a full cycle. YHU must implement the system and review its effectiveness to ensure that it supports the development of staff in a transparent and consistent way; it should also address the views heard from some teaching staff that there is a lack of clarity and consistency about the expectation of staff to conduct research, the requirements for the development of pedagogic skills and what support they can expect from the University.

YHU provides training and development opportunities for teaching staff and the panel was provided with a record of those offered. Staff reported that they had attended training events and cited training days on learning outcomes, the student-centred approach as well as language classes. Teaching staff expressed their commitment to developing their skills, both pedagogic and subject specific, and demonstrated their awareness of YHU's commitment to the student-centred approach to teaching and learning. However, their grasp was basic and the training and development opportunities afforded to staff so far are insufficient to effect the major shift required from the traditional approach to teaching to a student-centred one.

The panel reviewed the use of modern ICT technologies by the staff. There is very limited availability of appropriate and relevant hard-and soft-ware. It was clear that in addition to investing in the necessary ICT resources, significant staff development would be needed to enable staff to apply these technologies for the benefit of students' learning.



The panel noted the range of faculties at YHU and noted the potential for the development of interdisciplinary and multicultural cooperation. There was little evidence of real interdisciplinary work or multicultural cooperation which, as a growing trend in international higher education, YHU needs to develop to achieve its aspirations on the global stage.

#### Commendations

- The high level of student satisfaction with the skills and experience of the teaching staff.
- The strategic move to recruit and support doctoral students to develop the research base of the University.
- The commitment and enthusiasm of staff.

#### Recommendations

- YHU is encouraged to continue the practice of recruiting doctoral students to serve the long-term teaching and research goals of the University.
- YHU must implement the rating system and review its effectiveness to ensure that it supports the development of staff in a transparent and consistent way.
- YHU is encouraged to make the criteria for the appointment of international and visiting staff explicit and consistent with the relevant regulation on the appointment of teaching staff.
- YHU should invest in staff development related, in particular, to the development of an understanding and implementation of student-centred learning; to the use of digital technologies, and to the development of interdisciplinary and multicultural co-operation.

## 1.7 Study programme

### Standard:

Study programmes are designed and developed while taking into account the expectations of stakeholders, higher education and professional standards, and trends in the relevant fields. The objectives of study programmes, modules and courses and their planned learning outcomes are specific and coherent. The study programmes support creativity, entrepreneurship and development of other general competencies.

### Guidelines:

*In planning study programmes and student places, the HEI pursues its objectives and the needs of the labour market, and takes into account national strategies and the expectations of society.*

*Expected student workloads defined in the study programmes are realistic and consistent with the calculation that 1 ECTS credit is 25-30 student learning hours.*

*Theoretical learning and practical learning are interconnected. The content and organisation of practical trainings support the achievement of learning outcomes of the study programme and meet the needs of all parties.*

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>x</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Evidence and Analysis

YHU's processes for the development of study programmes is described in detail in the EQAM. This includes a set of principles and requirements that should be followed in the development of a new programme study area. With the exception of some terminological confusions, particularly the use of *courses* and *modules*, the detail is clear and substantial.

The first requirement of study programmes is that they should reflect the mission of YHU and should align with the appropriate levels of the National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Armenia (NQF). Evidence from committee meeting minutes, including those of the Scientific Council, and discussions with staff, confirmed that there was shared understanding of the need to meet both of these requirements as well as consideration and reflection on these requirements by different groups of staff.

YHU demonstrates its awareness of the need to benchmark study programmes both internally in Armenia and internationally to support its aim of being recognised globally for its higher education. The EQAM includes an extensive section on what benchmarking is and the necessity for YHU to take this forward. The University has made progress in this area, and the panel heard some evidence from staff in different study areas of benchmarking both nationally and internationally. The panel also heard evidence of the survey work that YHU has done so far to identify appropriate benchmarking institutions.

YHU guidance identifies the need to take the views of stakeholders, including external stakeholders, into account in the development of study programmes. The panel found some evidence of stakeholder needs being asked for and used in the development process. However, it was not always clear how this feedback from stakeholders had been elicited and how systematic the process had been. External stakeholders met by the panel could provide instances of feedback given, the need, for example, to develop the IT skills of students so that they were readier for employment on graduation. How and whether this feedback had been responded to was not clear. None of the stakeholders met by the panel had received a survey where feedback on the content of study programmes had been requested.

New study programmes go through a process of discussion and approval from department to the Scientific Council to the Methodical Council (MC) with final approval resting with the Scientific Council. The process includes a requirement for external experts in the MC. There are clear criteria for external experts and for the role that they play, as well as a process for their appointment. This is good practice. The panel did not see evidence to demonstrate how consistently the requirement is implemented. The process, as described, is, however, clear and sound.

The formal processes for study programme development do not require contributions from students. Discussions with study programme teams from three areas and with students provided evidence that students do, however, contribute at the faculty level.

There is a well described process for outlining changes and developments in programmes. These should be identified in an annual monitoring report prepared by the heads of departments. The reports are required to bring together views of all stakeholder feedback surveys, views of students, outcomes of staff observations, and the course outcomes or results. Although the process is clear, the panel did not see sufficient evidence to provide confidence that the process is carried out consistently as intended and how that the outcomes of the reviews systematically feed into developments in programmes at macro and/or micro i.e. course level.

Programme documentation includes the ECTS and appropriately reflects nominal student workload. Evidence from discussions with students in different study areas confirmed that the workload expectations were reasonable.

Curricula for the programmes include both compulsory and elective courses. The range of elective courses varies between subject areas. In some areas, the masters in management, for example, students felt that they were able to tailor their programme to reflect their own interests. In other areas, law for example, elective programmes are limited and the curriculum would benefit from more options to meet the needs of the labour market and to help YHU stand out among its regional competitors.

A key feature of higher education programmes is that curricula should be research informed. Guidance on programme development does not include this important criterion. Whilst external experts who are part of the scrutiny process and other external stakeholders, including employers, have the opportunity to contribute considerations of research in study programmes, there is no evidence of a systematic approach to ensure that programmes do reflect relevant aspects of current research in the curriculum.

Learning outcomes are included in the programme documentation. The panel found some variation in the articulation and focus of learning outcomes between subject areas. For example, learning outcomes in medicine are clearly defined and appropriate. In other areas, including the law degree and the masters in management, the panel found that learning outcomes were not sufficiently focussed, that they were described in terms of process rather than outcome and that the skills element of the programme were not adequately addressed.

YHU aims for its graduates to be competitive specialists in their chosen field. To achieve this, programmes include a mix of theoretical and practical knowledge. Practical skills and knowledge are developed, in particular through internships, clerkships (medicine) and placements which are integral elements of all study programmes. In some faculties, there was full satisfaction with the opportunities afforded by the internships and the balance of practice and theory in the curriculum overall. In other areas, law, for example, external stakeholders expressed some dissatisfaction with the balance between theory and practice. Overall evidence demonstrated that graduates from YHU are successful in a wide range of employment contexts where their practical skills and theoretical knowledge were valued.

### Commendations

- There are clearly documented processes for the development and review of study programmes which include clear guidance on the inclusion of external experts.
- Student workloads are realistic and enable the achievement of the programme aims.

### Recommendations

- YHU should ensure that feedback from stakeholders, both internal and external, is systematically collected, analysed and reviewed so that changes made are transparent and visible to all stakeholders.
- YHU should ensure that study programmes offer an appropriate and relevant range of electives to meet the external labour market needs.
- YHU should ensure that learning outcomes in all courses are focussed, specific and include outcomes related to skills.
- YHU should ensure that programme review is carried out regularly and systematically and fully documented with the outcomes communicated to stakeholders.
- YHU should ensure that current research systematically informs the development of study programmes.

## 1.8 Learning and teaching

### Standard:

Admissions requirements and procedures ensure fair access to higher education and the formation of a motivated student body. The higher education institution systemically implements a student-centred approach that guides students to take responsibility for their studies and career planning, and supports creativity and innovation. Graduates of the higher education institution, with their professional knowledge and social skills, are competitive both nationally and internationally.

### Guidelines:

*The teaching process takes into account students' individual abilities and needs, and supports their development. Organisation of independent work and classroom teaching motivates students to take responsibility for their studies.*

*Teaching methods and learning aids used in the teaching process are modern, appropriate and effective, and support development of a digital culture.*

*Students are motivated to learn and contribute to improving the quality of their studies by providing meaningful feedback on both the learning process and the organisation of studies.*

*Doctoral students plan their studies, as well as their research and development activities, in collaboration with their supervisor(s), setting specific objectives for each year and assuming responsibility for achieving those objectives.*

### Indicators:

- *Student satisfaction with the content and organisation of studies*
- *Alumni satisfaction with the quality of studies*
- *Employer satisfaction with the preparation of the graduates*

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>x</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Evidence and Analysis

The Republic of Armenia regulates the numbers and administers the admission process for each study area for both public and private universities. YHU reviews applications once they have been passed to the University following the centralised process. Where students apply for part-time study, they are interviewed. The panel were informed that admissions are carried out according to RA legislation and that the University's regulations reflect the relevant legislation. However, the panel found some variation in admission procedures across the different faculties. In some cases, the process and criteria were clearly outlined by staff met. In the Faculty of Medicine, however, evidence for the minimum standards for admission, the process and the role of different administrative units involved was inconsistent. Students reported that they were confident that they received appropriate information and support during the application process in YHU. Applications from international students come directly to the institution. The overwhelming majority of international students apply to the Faculty of Medicine where the programmes

are offered in English as well as Armenian. Overall there is a sound basis for the formation of the study body.

YHU aims to offer student-centred learning which develops students' independent thinking, research and creative skills and the 2016-2020 SP includes the objective to "totally enroot student-centred learning" in the University. The panel learned that YHU's approaches to teaching and learning were, historically, teacher-centred and that awareness of Bologna and teaching and learning beyond the RA motivated the University to change its educational approach.

The Educational Methodical Division (EMD) outlined to the panel a rather simplistic definition of a student-centred approach which cited the need for maximum involvement of students, to put the students at the centre and to use interactive methods. Teaching staff were also able to articulate this same rather simplistic definition. Working together with the EQA, the EMD has run staff training events to promote an understanding of what student-centred learning is and how to realize this approach in teaching and learning. The panel heard examples from some teaching staff of how their practice had changed in the light of the training offered and some cited evidence of a positive change in students' participation.

The panel did not hear any evidence of how learning outcomes or assessment practices had been changed in the light of adopting a student-centred approach. Nor did the panel see any evidence of the realisation that learning outcomes and assessment need to be consistent with the student-centred approach.

Overall the panel considered that the understanding of a student-centred approach to learning and teaching is still rather limited within YHU and that there is still some way to go towards the achievement of the aspirational objective "to totally enroot" student centred learning. To do so requires significant investment in staff development, resources and the development of students' independent learning skills.

Programme and course documents outline a number of different teaching and learning sessions including lectures, seminars, workshops, practical sessions and clinical placements. This is an appropriate range of approaches to support student-centred teaching and learning. The panel learned that the dominant mode is the lecture; from observations and discussions, the panel established that lectures are often to small groups which enable the teacher to engage the students in questions and answers. Students were positive about the teaching they received and it was clear to the panel that the culture in YHU is one where students respect their teaching staff, are keen to learn, positive about their learning and committed to achievement.

Students on all programmes benefit from the inclusion of an internship or placement during their studies. Students are able to tailor the internship to meet their own needs and interests. Students who are working alongside studying may use their work place for their internship or choose to go elsewhere. Internships are a valuable aspect of the study programmes enabling students to gain and further develop skills for the workplace, and to tailor their programme to their own needs.

The panel explored the use of modern technologies to support learning and teaching. Evidence from discussion and viewing resources showed a very limited understanding of how digital technologies can be used enhance learning and teaching and, in particular, to support student-centred learning. The panel concluded that the use of digital approaches to learning and teaching and the resources to support them are still very rudimentary at YHU.

The panel learned that feedback is elicited from students through surveys, from student participation in faculty councils and through the student council. The use of surveys to elicit student feedback is still fairly recent and the panel did not see evidence of a systematic approach to the elicitation and analysis of feedback from students on their teaching and learning. Students did, however, feel that their views were

heard and taken into consideration. Students and staff could cite changes made in the light of their feedback and the example of the dismissal of a staff member as a result of student feedback was given. Overall students were very satisfied with their learning and teaching experience at YHU.

### Commendations

- The care taken in the interviewing of student to provide a sound basis for the formation of the student body.
- The inclusion of a placement in all study programmes which supports students' individual needs and develops their employment related skills.

### Recommendations

- YHU must ensure that there is a deep and shared understanding of student-centred learning across the faculties.
- YHU should invest in staff development to support the implementation of the student-centred approach and provide structured opportunities for the sharing of practice across the University.
- YHU should develop an institutional understanding of the use of digital technologies to support learning and teaching and resource the development of them.
- YHU is encouraged to ensure that admissions criteria and the processes of applying them are consistent, clear and transparent across all faculties and for all stakeholders.

## 1.9 Student assessment

### Standard:

Standard: Assessments of students, including recognition of their prior learning and work experiences, support the process of learning and are consistent with expected learning outcomes. The objectivity and reliability of student assessments are ensured.

### Guidelines:

*The assessment criteria are understandable to students and students are informed about them in a timely manner. Members of the teaching staff cooperate in defining assessment criteria and apply similar approaches.*

*Assessment methods are versatile and relevant, and assess the degree of achievement of learning outcomes (including general competencies).*

*If possible, more than one staff member is involved in the development of assessment tasks and student assessments. Along with assessments, students receive feedback that supports their individual development.*

*The HEI supports development of the teaching staff's assessment competencies.*

*Evaluation of doctoral students is transparent and impartial. Its purpose is to support the development of doctoral students, to assess the effectiveness of their current work and to evaluate their ability to complete the doctoral studies on time and successfully defend their doctoral theses.*

*When recognising prior learning and work experience towards the completion of the study programme, results obtained through the studies and work experiences (the achieved learning outcomes) are assessed.*

*Students are aware of their rights and obligations, including the procedures for challenges regarding assessments.*

### Indicator:

- *The number of credit points applied for and awarded under the accreditation of prior and experiential learning scheme (APEL); this does not include credit points transferred from a different study programme at the same HEI.*

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>x</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Evidence and Analysis

YHU has published regulations and guidelines on assessment in the *Regulation on Checking and Assessment of Learning Outcomes of Students* (2016) and in the *Regulation of Final Attestation of Graduates at YHU* (2018). These documents include an explanatory section on whether learning outcomes are being assessed cognitively or diagnostically; formatively, for evaluation or are a summative assessment.



The 2016 regulation includes YHU's assessment principles which are transparency, compliance and assurance of feedback. It is notable that the principles do not include that of objectivity.

The 2016 Regulation states that *"the selection of assessment criteria derives from the outcomes of the given study program or course."* It also states that *"by means of the assessment criteria the level of compliance of students' appropriation with the set outcomes of the program is defined."* The assessment criteria of general and professional knowledge and understanding are expanded on and linked to levels of achievement.

The 2016 Regulation does not clarify how assessment criteria should be linked to the specific learning outcomes of a course or programme. Scrutiny of the study programme documents did not provide evidence for the alignment of course specific learning outcomes with assessment criteria. Discussions with staff and students provided no evidence of awareness of a direct link between assessment criteria and specific learning outcomes nor the necessity for such. Moreover, discussions with students showed that they were not always aware of learning outcomes as the basis for assessment; they were, however, confident that they knew what material content they were going to be assessed on.

The 2016 Regulation provides information on the accumulation of grades. This information is also available on the website, and on Facebook where it is accessible to students. Teaching and administrative staff provide students with information on the procedural and administrative aspects of grade accumulation and how the final grade is calculated. Students were confident that they knew about grade accumulation.

The *basic provisions* of the 2016 Regulation state that the University operates a multifactor system of regular checking and assessment of students' learning outcomes one goal of which is "to improve class attendances". The Assessment Methodology section of the Regulation outlines a number of components, the first of which is "assessment of students' participation during classes with the help of calculation of class attendances". This component of assessment is allocated 10 grade points, i.e. 10% of the marks, and these grade points are awarded depending on the % level of participation. This represents a significant weakness in the YHU's approach to assessment. Staff agreed that neither participation nor attendance are learning outcomes. There appeared to be no consistency in how participation was assessed, since it could also be done at a distance rather than in class. The panel learned that there have been some discussions in the Scientific Council and the University is reconsidering the allocation of grade points for attendance and participation.

The *Regulation of Final Attestation of Graduates at YHU (2018)* outlines the procedures for final attestation at both undergraduate and masters' level. The Regulation clearly describes the process which is conducted by a Final Attestation Committee which includes external members. This is sound practice.

The panel explored the process for appeals against grades for assessments, apart from the final attestation, with staff and students. There was a lack of a consistent understanding of how appeals against grades could be made; some students seemed to think this was done by undertaking additional exam questions; other students indicated appeals were made to the teacher and others to the dean. It was not clear to the panel whether appeals were valid for non-procedural matters. At the attestation stage, however, it is clear that appeals can only be made against procedural violations of the Attestation Committee and the process for making an appeal is clearly explained in the Regulation.

Programme documents demonstrated that a variety of assessment tasks are used. These include spot checks, in class tests, presentations, case studies, practical assessments, multiple choice and examinations. All courses conclude with a summative examination. This represents a good range of assessment type. However, it was not clear to the panel how a programme team decided what kind of assessment was

appropriate and whether there were mechanisms to evaluate the appropriateness of an assessment type for the particular learning outcomes in question.

Students reported that they received helpful feedback from staff on their assessments. Feedback could be written or oral. Students were very appreciative of the availability and readiness of teaching staff to provide feedback on their assessments.

Over the period 2016-2019, YHU has offered a number of development sessions to teaching staff aimed at enhancing their skills in assessment. The topics of the sessions varies and is only offered once in any time period, which limits the opportunities for staff to attend. The panel could find no evidence of an analysis of the impact of the training on staff's assessment practices.

### Commendations

- Flexibility of teaching staff in providing feedback to students on their assignments.
- The readiness of administrative staff to help students on procedural and logistical aspects of assessment.

### Recommendations

- YHU should consider adding objectivity as a principle for assessment.
- YHU should ensure that there is clear alignment of assessment criteria to the specific learning outcomes so that students know what learning outcomes they are being assessed on.
- YHU should review the award of grade points for attendance and participation.
- YHU should clarify the grounds and processes for appeal so that they align with the processes for attestation and thus that there is consistency across the University.

## 1.10 Learning support systems

### **Standard:** \_

The higher education institution ensures that all students have access to academic, career and psychological counselling. Students' individual development and academic progress are monitored and supported.

### **Guidelines:**

*The HEI assists the student in developing an individual study programme based on the student's special needs as well as educational abilities and preferences.*

*The HEI advises its students (including students with special needs and international students) on finding practical training places as well as jobs. Students are aware of where to get support in the case of psychological problems.*

*The HEI has a functioning system to support and advise international students (including psychological and career counselling) which, inter alia, helps them integrate smoothly into the membership of the HEI and Armenian society. The HEI analyses the reasons students withdraw from studies or drop out, and takes steps to increase the effectiveness of the studies.*

*The HEI supports student participation in extra-curricular activities and civil society initiatives.*

*The HEI monitors student satisfaction with the counselling services provided and makes changes as needed.*

### **Indicators:**

- *The average duration of the study by levels of study*
- *Dropout/withdrawal rate*

Conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>x</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### **Evidence and Analysis**

Since the ANQA accreditation assessment, YHU has undertaken developments in the area of learning support systems, reflecting ANQA's recommendations. YHU has recently contracted an external provider to offer support to students for psychological issues. The service has had fairly low usage so far, something which is attributed to cultural resistance. YHU is now considering offering group therapy to overcome the resistance problem. In parallel, YHU is initiating training for both staff and students to improve team work and to address conflict management, which is due to start in 2020. The dean's office responds to students who need counselling on study related issues on an ad hoc basis.

International students are supported by buddying or mentoring, which is intended to support their integration into the University. YHU plans to make this more structured and to locate it in a unit dedicated

to the support of international students. There is specific language provision for international students of two to three hours a week over two years.

International students expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the responsiveness of YHU's support during the admissions process.

Career support is offered through a centre which focusses on alumni but also offers some services for current students. The centre has three substantive staff members, who have specialist skills in careers advice, as well as some temporary staff. The staff use their networks of employers to support students in finding internships and also to identify and disseminate information about employment opportunities. Whilst staff are clearly very willing to support students, and students value the support staff give, the support would benefit from being more systematic and integrated so that students are clear where, when and from whom which support is available.

The Alumni Centre is responsible for tracking employment statistics for graduates. The statistics are available and provide a measure to monitor the effectiveness of the centre. The performance of the career's unit is included in general surveys. At the time of the panel's visit, the outcomes of the surveys from the career's unit had not been analysed.

During their induction phase, students are informed about the support services offered by the career centre. There is a Facebook page but support services are not on the English version of the website. Students are also provided with a list of individuals who they can consult about specific needs at the start of the academic year.

YHU tracks progression and retention rates through information from students' individual cards. The retention rate fluctuates. Some reasons were suggested to account for the fluctuations, including new study requirements, but there was no evidence of a full and meaningful analysis which would include an analysis of variables including grade analysis and attendance rates at programme level.

YHU supports students in extra-curricular activities which are mainly coordinated through the Student Parliament. These include sport and cultural events. Students are also encouraged to participate in activities which support the community such as visiting orphanages and schools. Where appropriate, students may use their subject skills in community oriented activity such as offering legal advice, or undertaking blood pressure checks in public spaces.

It is clear that YHU has undertaken a number of developments and also that there are plans for other services to support students. However, these services are not yet embedded in the structure of the University so that it is clear to students what is offered and by whom. Some services are new and, at the time of the panel's visit, some were still in the planning phase, so it was not possible for the panel to assess the extent to which the services meet students' needs.

Students are informed about available services at the beginning of their studies at a time when they are absorbing information about all aspects of their studies at YHU. All information is not available on the website where students can access what they need when they need it. Planned and developed communication about the availability of learner support services would ensure that students know about them and are able to access information about them as and when they needed it.

Although progression and achievement rates are monitored, this monitoring is still at a basic stage and does not address what steps could be taken to improve the retention rate, nor how such steps might be monitored for impact.

Overall, YHU has made some progress in the development of services for students but there is still some way to go to ensure that all students have access to a comprehensive and relevant learning support system.

### Recommendations

- YHU should develop a clear and integrated structure for the support services for students.
- YHU should communicate the offer to students through different channels to ensure that all students have consistent and readily accessible information which they can access as and when they need it.
- YHU is recommended to undertake an in-depth analysis of the retention and withdrawal rates and develop measures to improve the rates.

## 1.11 Research, development and/or other creative activity

### Standard:

The higher education institution has defined its objectives and focus in the fields of RDC based on its mission, as well as on the expectations and future needs of society, and assesses their implementation and the societal impact of its RDC activities. RDC supports the process of teaching and learning at the higher education institution. Support services for RDC are purposeful and support implementation of the objectives of the core process.

### Guidelines:

*The HEI places a high value on the role and responsibilities of the field of RDC in society and evaluates the results of its RDC activities, their international visibility and societal impact.*

*The HEI responds flexibly to the current needs of society and the labour market in terms of its research and plans its research in collaboration with enterprises, public sector institutions and organisations of the third sector.*

*Members of teaching staff introduce students to their research results as well as the latest scientific achievements in their areas of specialisation, and involve students in their R&D projects where possible.*

*The organisation and management of RDC take into account thematic differences and the mission (profile) of the HEI.*

***Indicators depend on the specificities of the HEI:***

- *Numerical data: (1) scientific publications by classifiers; (2) public presentations of creative work; recognition from international competitions; reviews in professional publications, etc.; (3) patent applications, patents; (4) textbooks, study aids of various formats, etc.; (5) system development solutions; product development solutions; environmental applications solutions; (6) contracts concluded with enterprises; (7) spin-off companies, etc., in line with the profile and priorities of the HEI; etc.*
- *Number of scientific publications / creative works per member of academic staff and per employee with the requirement to do research (FTE, by areas)*
- *Number and volume of externally funded projects of RDC activities*

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Evidence and Analysis**

The self-evaluation report (SER) acknowledges both the need for scientific research and its link with learning. The 2016-2020 SP formulates objectives for research activities as follows:

- *to foster the expansion of scope of research and involvement of teachers and students in research projects;*
- *to promote collaboration between YHU chairs with national and international scientific research centres, universities and enterprises. To prepare ground for the University's involvement in national and international research programs.*
- *to organize admission to postgraduate education in specialties of Medicine and Economics.*

In the panel’s view these objectives fail to address adequately the significance and importance of research and development in society and in YHU’s strategic plan.

Senior leadership places emphasis on building capacity in research. The Vice Rector for Scientific Affairs and the Postgraduate Department, who had been in post for seven months at the time of the visit, has lead responsibility for research and development. The Vice-Rector has a significant research record in his own field, though this is not one related to YHU’s current portfolio of study programmes.

The senior leadership of the University is aware of the need to build research capacity. A recent initiative in this area is taking on four doctoral students to undertake their research within YHU and who, it is hoped, will continue into employment at the University. Whilst the panel commends this initiative, it is limited in scope and restricted, currently, to the Faculty of Medicine. There are still significant limitations in the management of research and development at the organisational level.

The panel explored what support is provided to staff for undertaking research. The panel learned that there are no requirements for relevant full-time academic staff at the YHU to undertake research.

The SER includes a statement about expenditure on research and development. The panel cross referenced the statements in the SER with the financial indicators provided and could not align the two or

gain an unequivocal picture of what investment is being made in research and development and into what activities.

It was clear to the panel from discussions with staff and tours of YHU premises that, currently, there are no research laboratories to support research in YHU. Research that is carried out by staff who contribute to teaching at YHU is undertaken in other universities or organisations, including state research institutions, with which staff have some affiliation. From the evidence seen and heard, the panel formed the view that not all academic staff with full-time responsibility at YHU are engaged in research. This limits considerably any significant staff and student collaborations in research and, most importantly, is inadequate to ensure the critical need for research-based teaching.

In the appendices of the SER, a total of 489 publications by YHU lecturers is stated for the period from 2014 until early 2019. However, the number of these publications, which are in international journals published in English, is low. The participation of YHU staff and students in conferences and projects since 2016 is mostly limited to Armenian or Russian speaking international conferences. The panel considered that those research projects that are carried out at the YHU are limited in scope and insignificant in terms of the overall research required at this educational level. Staff reported that YHU does not make proper provision for dedicated research time for full-time staff. These facts restrict the visibility of YHU in research and development.

The SER states that the master's study programmes, except in the study programme of general medicine, have a research direction. However, scrutiny of curriculum documents and feedback from staff and students did not provide convincing evidence that this was the case. Discussions with students indicated that they had a very limited understanding of research and its link with their education at YHU. The fact that the large majority of students are in the study programmes of general medicine or dentistry where there is no evidence of the inclusion of research issues weakens the YHU's position as a university in the higher education arena.

## Recommendations

- YHU must establish research environment and culture in all study programmes including general medicine.
- YHU should ensure that the funding to support research is transparently recorded and presented.
- YHU is encouraged to develop a more strategic approach to the development of its research capacity and should include specified support for staff to engage in research.
- YHU should take steps to embed the teaching of research skills and research activities into the curricula.
- YHU is advised to define and focus on two or three research fields of interest to YHU as a whole, preferably interconnecting faculties. These should also take the needs of society into consideration.
- YHU should establish active collaborations with national research institutions.
- YHU should develop an institution-wide understanding of the link between research and teaching and foster the link at all curriculum levels and in all faculties.

## 1.12 Service to society

### Standard:

The higher education institution initiates and implements development activities, which enhance prosperity in the community and disseminate recent know-how in the areas of the institution's competence. The higher education institution, as a learning-oriented organisation, promotes lifelong learning in society and creates high-quality opportunities for that.

### Guidelines:

*The HEI contributes to the development of the community's well-being by sharing its resources (library, museums, sports facilities, etc.), by providing consulting and advisory services, and by organising concerts, exhibitions, shows, conferences, fairs and other events.*

*The HEI involves alumni in activities aimed at the development of the HEI and the knowledge society.*

*Employees of the HEI participate in the work of professional associations and in other community councils and decision-making bodies as experts, directing society's development processes as opinion leaders. The impact academic employees have on society is taken into account when evaluating their work.*

*The HEI has defined the objectives for in-service training and measures their implementation. In-service training is planned in accordance with the needs of target groups.*

### Indicators:

- *Number of people in continuing training (and other privately financed open forms of study), number of lessons or ECTS per participant*

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>x</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Evidence and Analysis

In the section on developments since the last assessment the SER states that: *"The University regularly provides proper information about its activity to the society and has taken the social responsibility"*. In the main self-evaluation section on Service to Society YHU identifies relevant documents that focus and direct this aspect of its activities. It includes the following as some of its relevant activities: organisation of professional development/training courses; provision of support to secondary and vocational education institutions, provision of consultancy, assurance of feedback with alumni, cooperation with state and local self-government bodies and charity. There is also much emphasis in the SER on public relations as an aspect of service to society. In discussion with students and all categories of staff, the panel found a diverse range of views as to what constituted service to society which ranged from the payment of taxes as an economic benefit to society, to visiting orphanages and opening the gym to members of the public. The panel could find no consistent, shared understanding or interpretation of YHU's approach to service to society.



Despite the lack of clarity, the panel found many good examples of service to society. The Faculty of Law has set up a legal clinic where both teaching staff and students provide advice and assistance to members of the public. YHU has a number of partnerships with local and international non-governmental organisations such as UNDP and UNHCR. Students reported that they undertook visits to orphanages and other centres for vulnerable groups in society. Steps are also taken to identify the needs and problems of vulnerable groups and to offer options for discounts or waiver of fees for courses in some of the YHU faculties. Medical students described how they organize the distribution of medical information leaflets, offer to take blood pressure and undertake quick blood tests in parks and other public spaces in Yerevan. Staff and students also cited the availability of the gym to the wider community; however, there was little evidence of it being used. The panel learned of plans for laboratories and a rehabilitation clinic which would offer services to the community.

The panel learned from the SER and discussions that staff undertake their specialist activities in contexts outside the University. In particular physicians from the Faculty of Medicine work in a range of clinics in RA and may head up departments in hospitals. Professors from the Faculty of Law work in private law services and may own a private centre. Whilst the value these individuals offer is not insubstantial, it was difficult for the panel to understand how these activities related to a coherent strategy and understanding of service to society.

The graduates of a university can be a powerful means of identifying needs in different parts of society and developing ways of serving the community. Whilst the panel learned that YHU has an up-to-date database of alumni, they found no evidence of it being used either to identify or provide for the needs of society. From discussion with alumni, it was clear that links with alumni are patchy and mostly manifested in alumni being engaged to teach on some courses at YHU. The panel found no evidence of opportunities for lifelong learning that would keep alumni actively involved in the life and development of the University.

Although YHU has developed a number of surveys, the panel saw no evidence of surveys designed to elicit regular and systematic feedback from the wider community. Feedback on events undertaken is very limited. The lack of feedback from the community with measurable results which would enable YHU to analyse the impact of its activities and to identify future opportunities, is a weakness.

YHU uses a range of media including TV programmes, the YHU YouTube channel, radio and social sites. These channels can be an effective means of communicating with the public, educating it and supporting more general development in society. However, the panel found that the main focus of the use of these media at YHU is to disseminate information and provide publicity for YHU with the aim of attracting new students.

### Recommendations

- YHU should provide clear leadership on the meaning and strategy for service to society so that the activities are coordinated and purposeful for the community.
- YHU should develop and implement accountability measures to evaluate, analyse and monitor community service activities.
- YHU should review its use of media so that it focuses on issues for the public and providing information related to its specialisations and thus educating and developing the wider public.
- YHU might like to consider offering medical services from its medical personnel for the public.
- YHU might like to consider increasing the involvement of staff in inter-university activities in RA.

## 2. Assessment findings of the sample of the study programmes

### 2.1. Study Programme of General Medicine (M.D.)

The study programme in General Medicine at YHU is a full-time, 6 year-long program of 360 ECTS which is taught in Armenian, Russian or English.

According to the self-evaluation report and supporting documents, the goal of the programme is to *“prepare high quality and competitive specialists in medicine with professional knowledge, skills and competences in compliance with the current national and international requirements set in the sphere of healthcare, who will be able to receive postgraduate education, serve for social welfare and will strive for professionalism in the chosen field of medicine due to their constant and continuous work. After graduation, the medical doctor can carry out administrative and organizational activities and has the right to teach in middle-level vocational institutions. As a specialist, the graduate of the YHU is eligible to carry out independent medical (diagnostic, medical, preventive, etc.) activities only after receiving postgraduate education (internship or residency in a specific field).”*

YHU has established collaborative links with specialists from abroad and regularly invites them to lecture in English to students of the Faculty of Medicine. At the time of the visit there were 14 foreign teachers. (Appendix 5.4).

Statistics on student numbers on staff are provided in the report and summarised below, based on the self-evaluation report.

*Dynamic of students at the YHU in the study programme General Medicine since 2013:*

Name of Study Program Level /BA, MA, PhD/	Number of Students/Graduates										Admitted Students					Early leavers/dropouts
	13/14		14/15		15/16		16/17		17/18		13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	
	Graduate	Student	Graduate	Student	Graduate	Student	Graduate	Student	Graduate	Student	4	15	16	7		
General Medicine*	114	682	123	476	101	668	129	608	126	620	245	226	222	286	380	29
Dentistry*	290	767	262	752	130	750	269	729	182	750	320	283	251	380	482	25

*Development of teaching and educational support staff in the study programme General Medicine since 2013:*

	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18
Faculty of Medicine	41	35	29	29	47
Female	33	19	27	27	24
Male					

There is a new build laboratory building for the Faculty of Medicine at Abelyan 6 which was in operation from 2019. In 2018, the University obtained two new buildings at Adonts 18/1. At the time of the visit these buildings were still being renovated and adapted to provide clinics attached to the Faculty of Medicine. The students of Faculty of Medicine use the facilities of 14 clinics, medical centres, hospitals and scientific-research institutions as well as operating rooms and cabinets in Armenia which are equipped with modern medical equipment.

### 2.1.1 Planning and management of studies

- The design and development of study programme(s) take into account the expectations of students and other stakeholders, national strategies, legislation and trends in the particular area as well as labour market needs. The level and volume of RDC activities is sufficient and supports the launching of the study programme(s).
- The objectives of study programme(s), modules (including courses) and their learning outcomes are concrete and coherent. The teaching content and methods and assessment criteria and methods support students in achieving their learning outcomes and developing their key competencies. The study programmes support the development of creativity and entrepreneurship and other general competencies.
- The administration of material and financial resources that ensure the design and implementation of the study programme(s) is purposeful, systematic and sustainable. The learning environment, including materials, tools and technology support the students in achieving their learning outcomes.

### Evidence and Analysis

The goals and objectives of the General Medicine programme are clearly described in the study programme document. It is clear from the programme documentation that the programme aligns with the NQF and that the relevant regulations of current RA legislation are considered.

YHU is acutely aware of the challenges they face with respect to labour market needs. Armenia is subject to an ageing population. As there is a significant demand in RA for physicians, the labour market is open for the graduates. There is also a demand for physicians in the region. Thus, the increasing number of foreign students at YHU, principally from India, Iran and Iraq, could, on graduation, support the healthcare in the future.

The programme is clearly structured, and is composed of compulsory courses, elective courses, as well as clerkships. The learning outcomes are clearly defined. The workload of the students is adequate. Creativity and entrepreneurship competencies do not feature prominently in the programme.

The panel noted that significant emphasis is placed on monitoring and enhancing the quality of the study programme. However, the level of research and development activities remains low and the understanding of how to embed the teaching of research skills and research activities into the curricula needs to be improved.

### Recommendations

- YHU is recommended to establish a research environment and culture.
- YHU should take further steps to embed the teaching of research skills and research activities into the curricula and should develop the link between research and teaching.
- YHU is advised to establish active collaborations with national research institutions.

### 2.1.2 Learning, teaching and assessment

- Conditions and organisation of admission ensure fair access to education and motivated student body. Students' choice of specialisation is supported.
- A student-centred approach is used in the studies, aiming at the students to assume responsibility for planning their studies and career and supporting the development of key competencies and achieving the learning outcomes of the study programme.
- Student assessment, including taking accreditation of prior and experiential learning into account, supports the students and corresponds to the learning outcomes. Objective and reliable assessment is ensured.
- The organisation of studies including practical work and training is based on the specificities of students and forms of study and supports the student in achieving the learning outcomes. Opportunities have been established for mobility within Armenia and internationally.
- Support services for students are in place and available for students. Individual development and progress of students are monitored and supported.
- Graduates of the study programme are competitive in terms of their knowledge and social skills both nationally and internationally.

### Evidence and Analysis

The panel scrutinised documents, held discussions with staff and students, both Armenian and international, and observed some classes. It was clear from observations and discussions that the relationships between staff and students are based on mutual respect. Students appreciate the accessibility and motivation of staff and the support provided to them. This generates a strong community spirit.

The programme is fully recognised in Armenia as meeting the relevant requirements and Armenian students reported that they knew about the programme. International students reported that they heard about YHU from advertisements and social media. Given the increase in international student recruitment, the approach used to promote the programme is effective.

The admission of the students is based on personal interviews. However, the minimum standards for admission, the process, and the role of various administrative units and bodies that are directly involved were not clear to the panel.

The Faculty of Medicine has adopted a student-centred approach to teaching and learning, as promoted by YHU. However, the panel found a range of different understandings of the meaning of a student-centred approach between students and staff and what strategies, teaching methods and resources underpinned it.

The development of the key competences in the study programme is supported by a wide range of teaching and learning resources including cooperation with the specialists in 14 clinics, medical centres, hospitals and scientific-research institutions; the physical resources of operating theatres and cabinets, and the clerkships embedded in the overall study programme. The newly created skills - simulation centre is additional support.

The assessment of student learning throughout the study programme is clearly defined and transparent to the students. There are measures in place to ensure the reliability of assessment.

Appropriate support services are in place for the students. These are largely based on informal relationships with administrative staff: students really appreciate the close contact and accessibility of the administration. Students reported that they appreciate the way their problems and needs, including some difficult issues with teaching staff, are taken note of. Students were clear that YHU always tries to resolve the issues. Financial support is available for students to help with their fees.

Students provided numerous examples of engagement with international mobility. The panel established that most of this mobility was restricted to clerkships in the student's country of origin, India, for example, or to the country students returned to on graduation.

Graduates of the medicine study programme are competitive nationally. Information about their competitiveness and their career paths internationally, however, is very limited. The lack of information and data on graduates who leave Armenia means that YHU misses an opportunity to gain feedback for the benefit of current students and the development of the study programme.

## Commendations

There is an Impressive community spirit among teachers and students.

## Recommendations

- The admission criteria should be clear, transparent and available to the public.
- The concept of a student-centred approach should be revisited so that a shared understanding of it can be developed, disseminated and implemented in a coherent way.
- YHU should monitor the progress and career paths of alumni and use the outcomes of the monitoring to develop the study programme.

- It is recommended that the Faculty of Medicine foster the further development of the skills-simulation centre for the benefit of the medical curriculum.

### 2.1.3 Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

- Teaching is conducted by a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff who support the development of the students.
- Teaching staff follows the principles of academic ethics and the codes of conduct in case of non-compliance.
- Members of the teaching staff participate in international mobility programs which encourage the development of their teaching and RDC activities and the cultural openness of the HEI and the Armenian society.
- The effectiveness of both studies and RDC activities, students' feedback, the effectiveness of supervision, development of teaching and supervision skills, international mobility and entrepreneurial or work experience in the specific field outside the HEI is taken into consideration in evaluating the work of the member of the staff.

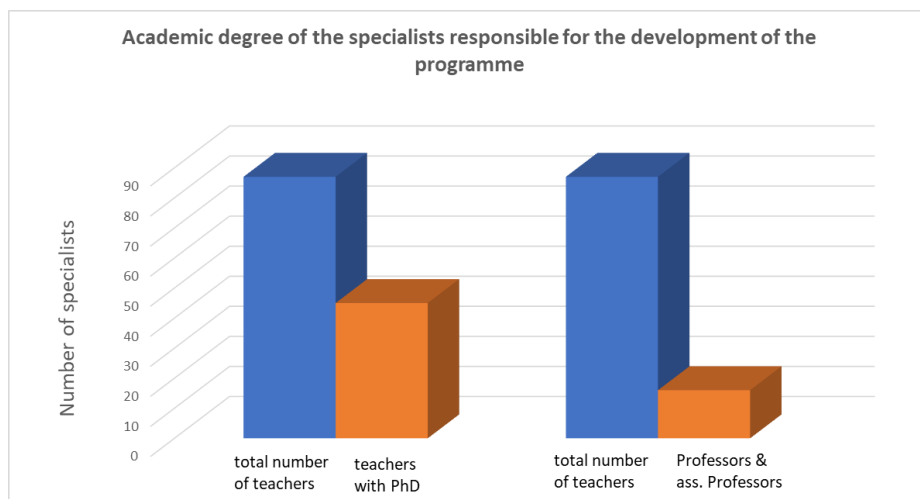
#### Evidence and Analysis

The total number of staff teaching on the General Medicine programme is 87. This includes 8 doctors of sciences, 6 professors, 36 candidates, 9 associate professors and 41 assistants. The range of expertise meets the programme needs. The student-teacher ratio on the programme is 11:1. Overall this is acceptable.

YHU aims to carry out targeted activity to ensure that the professional qualities of teaching staff are in line with the University's mission and the goals of the study programme. To achieve this, management monitors how the allocation of staff to the subject being taught to ensure that teaching staff have the appropriate knowledge, professional education and skills.

To ensure that the programme has a staff complement that fully meets the needs of higher education and a research agenda, YHU needs to increase the number of staff with higher academic degrees. Four doctoral places were assigned to the Faculty of Medicine in 2019. This is a welcome development. A career development programme for the existing teaching staff should be established to enhance their skills and ensure currency.

*Academic degree of the specialists responsible for the development of the Study Programme General Medicine (based on App 4 for Study Programme):*



From discussions with staff the panel found that the majority of staff failed to see the benefit of research activities, valuing instead the level of professional experience they possessed.

The staff is aware of the importance of academic ethics; YHU published the Rules of Ethics in 2019. The panel found a discrepancy between the processes for implementing the rules as articulated by the senior leadership and as articulated by staff and students. The panel also found examples of staff and students who had not yet been sufficiently trained in academic ethics.

The previous accreditation process by ANQA and the preparation for the current accreditation by EKKA led to an increase in visiting lecturers from abroad to bring in up-to-date theoretical and practical knowledge. At the time of the visit there were 14 foreign or visiting teaching staff; YHU plans to increase this number.

### Commendations

- Visiting lecturers from abroad have been attracted to bring in up-to-date theoretical and practical knowledge.

### Recommendations

- YHU should take steps to ensure that staff and students are fully aware of YHU's policy for adhering to academic ethics and that this is consistently implemented, in particular in relation to an understanding plagiarism.
- YHU should ensure that staff recognise the value of and engage in scientific activities.
- YHU should develop a robust approach to assessing and monitoring the target activities including ensuring that teaching staff skills and professional qualities meet the mission and goals of the study programme and are appropriate to the subjects they teach.

## 2.2 Study programme of Law (BA)

### General information:

The BA Law Programme nominally lasts for four years. The delivery of the programme is supported by 22 members of teaching staff. Eight of these who are not lawyers cover expertise in philosophy, sports,

economy etc. The documents ‘*Mapping of Module Outcomes of Study Program on Specialisation of Law*’ and ‘*Modules/Course, their Goals and Learning Outcomes of the BA Study Programme in Law*’ show that the curriculum includes a significant number of non-law related courses alongside the courses focused on law or legal related disciplines.

The panel reviewed the self-evaluation of the law study programme, the programme documentation, the background of the teaching staff and held meetings with students, teachers, programme developers and with the Dean of the Faculty of Law and observed a lecture.

## 2.2.1 Planning and management of studies

- The design and development of study programme(s) take into account the expectations of students and other stakeholders, national strategies, legislation and trends in the particular area as well as labour market needs. The level and volume of RDC activities is sufficient and supports the launching of the study programme(s).
- The objectives of study programme(s), modules (including courses) and their learning outcomes are concrete and coherent. The teaching content and methods and assessment criteria and methods support students in achieving their learning outcomes and developing their key competencies. The study programmes support the development of creativity and entrepreneurship and other general competencies.
- The administration of material and financial resources that ensure the design and implementation of the study programme(s) is purposeful, systematic and sustainable. The learning environment, including materials, tools and technology support the students in achieving their learning outcomes.

### Evidence and Analysis

The design and development of the BA programme in law take the expectations of students, alumni and other stakeholders into account. The programme developers emphasised the strong link between the curriculum and the market needs. However, the panel found insufficient evidence of the degree to which national strategies and labour market needs are taken into account in the development of the curriculum. This extends to the specialist and electives options within the programme where currently there are only specialisations for criminal law and for civil law. The limited range of stakeholders combined with the limited specialisation options included in the programme restricts the employment choices open to graduates. The panel concluded that the graduate profile is inadequately reflected on to ensure graduates have the best employment prospects.

Following preparatory work by the programme development team, the objectives, structure and content of the study programme, together with the individual courses and modules with their learning outcomes, are reviewed and approved by the Scientific Council. The panel could not discern a clear meaning to the term *module* which was sometimes used interchangeably with *course*. The panel considered that, overall,



the learning outcomes would benefit from being more concrete with greater coherence across the programme.

Teaching content, methods and the assessment criteria reflect the requirements and approaches of YHU. The programme supports the development of creativity and entrepreneurship skills. However, the panel found that the range of internship opportunities would benefit from being extended and more diverse. The panel also found that the content of some courses does not reflect the title of the course. For example, the course EU Law does not focus on the law and its practice today, but rather on its history.

The Faculty of Law has taken some initiatives to identify synergies with different faculties in YHU and to develop interdisciplinarity as demonstrated by organising joint conferences with other faculties and external stakeholders.

Student workload is appropriate.

The administration of material and financial resources to support the development and sustainability of the programme are, in the panel's view, insufficient. This is particularly the case in support for research, the provision of contemporary and up-to-date literature in the field of law, and digital technologies to support teaching.

### Commendations

- Programme development takes the views of the principal stakeholders into account. Links between the Faculty of Law and its alumni are maintained; and alumni support its educational activities.
- The Faculty of Law is keen to promote synergies and interdisciplinarity.

### Recommendations

- YHU is recommended to broaden the scope of the curriculum, by including comparative legal studies and the challenges facing lawyers, related to globalisation and digitalisation for example, to ensure that the programme is competitive and outward looking.
- The programme would benefit from articulating a clear meaning of the terms *module* and *course* and using them consistently.
- The programme would benefit from a review of courses to ensure that content is appropriate and that the title of the courses reflect the content.
- YHU is encouraged to identify a more diverse range of internship opportunities and cooperation with new stakeholders.
- It is recommended that YHU review the resources for the law programme to ensure that the resources and that the learning environment meet the needs of contemporary legal education.

## 2.2.2 Learning, teaching and assessment

- Conditions and organisation of admission ensure fair access to education and motivated student body. Students' choice of specialisation is supported.
- A student-centred approach is used in the studies, aiming at the students to assume responsibility for planning their studies and career and supporting the development of key competencies and achieving the learning outcomes of the study programme.
- Student assessment, including taking accreditation of prior and experiential learning into account, supports the students and corresponds to the learning outcomes. Objective and reliable assessment is ensured.
- The organisation of studies including practical work and training is based on the specificities of students and forms of study and supports the student in achieving the learning outcomes. Opportunities have been established for mobility within Armenia and internationally.
- Support services for students are in place and available for students. Individual development and progress of students are monitored and supported.
- Graduates of the study programme are competitive in terms of their knowledge and social skills both nationally and internationally.

### Evidence and Analysis

Although it was clear that the admission of students ensures fair access; the accounts of the process as given by administrators and by students were inconsistent and the panel did not gain an unequivocal explanation of the minimum standards for admission.

In line with the expectations of YHU, the law programme adopts a student-centred approach to teaching and learning. Students and staff met by the panel provided a different account of what the approach entailed.

Practitioners support the development of key, subject-related competencies. Students are provided with a list of companies that offer internships during which students develop their skills and competencies. Students also have the opportunity to develop skills in the legal clinic which offers assistance to refugees. Professional relationships between staff and students are strong, and students really appreciate the team ethos of the Faculty of Law. This ethos is also supported by the role of a student assistant assigned for each course who acts as a point of liaison between teaching staff and students.

Assessment takes into account individual work in the form of assignments, tests and examinations, as well as participation in the study process.

Although YHU is committed to mobility, international mobility in particular, there was no evidence to demonstrate opportunities provided by the Faculty of Law for staff or students to participate in mobility either within Armenia or internationally.

Support services for students related to their studies are mainly based on informal contacts with the administration. Students access the institution-wide support services including the library and the gym.

The size of the Faculty of Law enables frequent and effective communications between teaching staff and students and ensures that students receive adequate attention to their individual needs. Statistics about employment and discussions with alumni demonstrated that the graduates of the law programme are competitive nationally. The panel found no evidence of information about relevant career opportunities outside Armenia.

The Faculty of Law has a local, Armenian, legal database. The panel did not see evidence to demonstrate that the Faculty of Law is accessing modern, international data bases such as Lexis Nexis or Hein Online.

### Commendations

- There is an impressive community spirit between staff and students.

### Recommendations

- YHU is encouraged to ensure that the admission criteria and the outcomes of applying them are clear and transparent for all relevant stakeholders.
- The concept of student-centred approach should be more clearly articulated and disseminated and its implementation should be consistent and coherent.
- YHU is recommended to identify opportunities for mobility, especially international mobility for students.

## 2.2.3 Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

- Teaching is conducted by a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff who support the development of the students.
- Teaching staff follows the principles of academic ethics and the codes of conduct in case of non-compliance.
- Members of the teaching staff participate in international mobility programs which encourage the development of their teaching and RDC activities and the cultural openness of the HEI and the Armenian society.
- The effectiveness of both studies and RDC activities, students' feedback, the effectiveness of supervision, development of teaching and supervision skills, international mobility and entrepreneurial or work experience in the specific field outside the HEI is taken into consideration in evaluating the work of the member of the staff.

### Evidence and Analysis

The current size and composition of the teaching staff is sufficient for the small size of the student cohorts. The panel did not see evidence of succession planning to ensure the longer-term future of the staff profile. For example, there are no doctoral students undertaking their studies in the Faculty of Law. The teaching staff are motivated and coherent as a body. There was, however, little evidence to demonstrate that sufficient attention is paid to the articulation and application of performance criteria for teaching staff;

that staff are adequately involved in the decision making or that there is research funding to support their further development. The panel endorse the attempts to apply for international research funding as demonstrated by the Jean Monnet grant applications. However, the panel considered much needed to be done to support teaching staff with the knowledge and practical skills required to make grant applications, and develop international cooperation.

Teaching staff demonstrated an awareness of the principles of academic ethics. Staff support students where there are problems, complaints or suggestions relating to academic ethics and how they are implemented.

The SER provided data on the numbers of research publications from the Faculty of Law over the last three years, although without any detailed analysis. The research activities of staff are almost entirely based in Armenia and the panel found no evidence of international research activity. Similarly, the panel saw no evidence of international staff mobility.

The Faculty of Law could not provide a full picture of evaluation criteria used for teaching staff. The panel gained the view that these were not comprehensive and did not take direct account of research or international mobility.

### Commendations

- The teaching staff is sufficient in number and has both the required theoretical and practical knowledge and skills.
- The motivation of teaching staff is high.

### Recommendations

- It is recommended that the Faculty of Law develops a sustainability plan for the development of the body of teaching staff which should include places of doctoral students.
- The Faculty of Law should develop a strategy for international cooperation and for research which includes the development of skills for staff in making grant applications.
- Performance criteria for staff should include both international and research activity and these criteria should be taken into account when filling a vacant position.
- The Faculty of Law is encouraged to develop a policy to improve the digital skills of staff.

## 2.3. Study programme of Management (MA)

YHU offers a Master's degree in the specialisation Management which is based in the Faculty of Economics. The programme is delivered over four semesters, typically over two years. Successful completion of the programme requires the student to gain 120 ECTS at NQF level 7. The programme is delivered full-time and in Armenian.

The main goal of the programme is *“to prepare specialists who will meet the labor market requirements, will have developed personal qualities and both professional and generic competences.”* The main objectives are: *“formation of generic competences ensuring Master's comprehensive development, and formation of general professional and ad-hoc competences, taking into consideration the specificities of the given specialisation and the labor market requirements.”*

Student statistics for numbers those admitted and those who graduate are stated in the SER as follows:

Name of Study Programme  Level /BA, MA, PhD/	Number of Students/Graduates										Admitted Students					Early leavers / dropouts
	13/14		14/15		15/16		16/17		17/18		13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	
	Graduate	Student	Graduate	Student	Graduate	Student	Graduate	Student	Graduate	Student						
Management  MA	15	22	11	22	7	18	6	22	5	25	11	9	5	11	23	9

The SER also provides the data on retention of students on the programme as follows:

Academic year	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Students dropped out	18%	28%	15%	35%	12%

The programme team have collaborations with the RA Chamber of Commerce.

### 2.3.1 Planning and management of studies

- The design and development of study programme(s) take into account the expectations of students and other stakeholders, national strategies, legislation and trends in the particular area as well as labour market needs. The level and volume of RDC activities is sufficient and supports the launching of the study programme(s).
- The objectives of study programme(s), modules (including courses) and their learning outcomes are concrete and coherent. The teaching content and methods and assessment criteria and methods support students in achieving their learning outcomes and developing their key competencies. The study programmes support the development of creativity and entrepreneurship and other general competencies.
- The administration of material and financial resources that ensure the design and implementation of the study programme(s) is purposeful, systematic and sustainable. The learning environment, including materials, tools and technology support the students in achieving their learning outcomes.

## Evidence and Analysis

The programme document provides the programme learning outcomes and specifies the professional and transferable competences that graduates should achieve. The programme document also elaborates a range of employment opportunities that should be open to the graduate.

The curriculum has three blocks: compulsory courses which may be required by the Republic of Armenia or by YHU; internships, scientific-research work and preparation for the master's thesis; and final attestation i.e. defence of the thesis. The student workload and credit weighting of each block is clearly described in the programme document. Notional student learning hours and attendance hours are given for each course within a block. However, the curriculum description in the document *Study Programme Management* does not include the number of credits assigned to the courses.

The programme has been developed through discussions within the faculty; discussions with stakeholders, including students and employers, and by referencing benchmarked institutions. The panel learned that the programme team used two institutions in RA for benchmarking purposes and one in Russia.

The learning outcomes are included in the course descriptions. However, evidence from discussions with students and staff did not demonstrate that learning outcomes are actively used within the programme delivery. For example, staff could not provide an account of how learning outcomes expressed increasing challenge; the learning outcomes are not explicitly linked to assessment, and students were not aware of learning outcomes, only course content. Overall the programme would benefit from learning outcomes which were more specific on the level of competencies taught, had clearer expression and greater specificity at the course level and were better articulated and communicated to students.

The sequencing of the courses is largely appropriate. The elective courses and the thesis in particular enable students to focus on areas of particular interest to them. The programme is open to students with a non-management related undergraduate degree. All students follow the same courses. This means that those students with a related undergraduate degree may be covering basic aspects of management that are not at level 7. This may also limit the overall achievement of students. YHU might consider a foundation or bridging course for entrants with non-related degrees so that the master's programme is better focussed on level 7 learning.

Admission to the programme is prescribed by the "*Regulation on Admission to Master's Degree of YHU*". All applicants must hold a bachelors' degree. All students are interviewed.

There is a clear process to enable students to transfer in to the programme which reflect YHU's regulation and the regulations of RA. Staff could not remember any cases of transfer of students into the master's management programme.

The panel explored the student numbers which have fluctuated considerably over the last five years. The panel learned that there is no target to which the faculty should aim. Staff were vague about a minimum number that would be required to deliver the course; the figure suggested was four or five students.

## Recommendations

- YHU should revisit the learning outcomes and develop them so that they are specific at course level and show progressive level of challenge appropriate to level 7.

- YHU should consider how learning outcomes can actively inform the delivery of the curriculum and ensure that students are both informed of and understand the learning outcomes and how they inform the design and delivery of the programme.
- YHU is encouraged to include the numbers of credits allocated to each course in programme documentation.
- YHU is encouraged to consider providing a bridging course for students with a non-management background.

### 2.3.2 Learning, teaching and assessment

- Conditions and organisation of admission ensure fair access to education and motivated student body. Students' choice of specialisation is supported.
- A student-centred approach is used in the studies, aiming at the students to assume responsibility for planning their studies and career and supporting the development of key competencies and achieving the learning outcomes of the study programme.
- Student assessment, including taking accreditation of prior and experiential learning into account, supports the students and corresponds to the learning outcomes. Objective and reliable assessment is ensured.
- The organisation of studies including practical work and training is based on the specificities of students and forms of study and supports the student in achieving the learning outcomes. Opportunities have been established for mobility within Armenia and internationally.
- Support services for students are in place and available for students. Individual development and progress of students are monitored and supported.
- Graduates of the study programme are competitive in terms of their knowledge and social skills both nationally and internationally.

#### Evidence and Analysis

Students met by the panel were confident that they had full information about the programme to inform their application and that the overall application and admissions process was clear and fair.

In line with YHU expectations, the management programme aims to embed a student-centred approach to teaching and learning. Staff were aware of the approach and had attended some training courses in the approach. However, their understanding of the approach was limited. Nevertheless, members of teaching staff could offer some examples of some strategies they used to encourage student participation and reflection including discussions, interaction in lectures and providing cases and asking students to bring solutions to the case. The panel also learned that teaching emphasises to the students their roles as future managers.

The panel explored with the staff whether there was a distinction between teaching at undergraduate and teaching at master's level. Staff found it difficult to identify any differences in approaches to teaching, including the challenge of tasks set. Students greatly appreciated and valued the teaching they experienced.

Assessment is undertaken according to the relevant YHU regulations (*Regulation on checking and assessment of learning outcomes of students and Regulation on final attestation of YHU students*). Marks are accumulated from summative grades of assessment tasks and activity. These include participation during classes, examinations, students individual and creative works. The criteria for assessment emphasise the level of comprehension of the material rather than linking explicitly to the learning outcomes. Neither staff nor students that the panel met could provide a clear and consistent understanding of the link between assessment and learning outcomes. Students were clearly informed about what they were to be assessed on, what the assessment task would be and what material they needed to cover. They were also clear about how marks were accumulated. Students were clear that attendance and participation counted towards their grade. An example was given of how a student's level of participation could be judged by e-communication with the teaching staff. There was no consistency as to how attendance and participation was judged and staff agreed that attendance and participation do not constitute a learning outcome.

A scrutiny of a small sample of theses did not consistently demonstrate an appropriate level of achievement for a master's programme.

Whilst students and staff were aware of plagiarism and academic misconduct, they did not provide the panel with an unequivocal understanding, nor were they aware of penalties and what would happen if a case of academic misconduct were identified.

Students on the master's programme may work alongside their study. The flexibility of YHU to accommodate their availability was greatly appreciated by the students. A prospective student provided an example of how YHU would accommodate her maternity leave.

The master's programme includes an internship. This may be undertaken in the student's work place, if they have one, or they may identify other placements. The placements are well organised and supported by the staff and there are clear criteria for them.

The principal learning resources supporting the delivery of the programme were quoted as being the materials and literature that teaching staff provide via e-mail communications. The YHU library had only very limited literature in the management area and insufficient to support some of the specialisations. Staff informed the panel that there is the opportunity for students to use the MacMillan Bookstore, to familiarise themselves with a greater range of literature and support their access to it. The MacMillan Bookstore permits the use of books in the store without a requirement to purchase them. Staff also reported that where relevant literature was only available in a foreign language they would translate it into Armenian for the students.

### Commendations

- The flexible approach to the organisation of the programme to take account of students' personal circumstances including work commitments.
- The relevance of the programme to students' needs and the opportunity to tailor the programme through elective choices and the topic of their master's thesis.



- The availability, accessibility and support offered by staff, including feedback on assignments.
- The organisation and support for internships.

### Recommendations

- The programme assessment criteria should be clearly and explicitly aligned with the learning outcomes and assessment tasks should identify which learning outcomes are being addressed.
- Assessment criteria should be carefully reviewed alongside the learning outcomes to ensure that they reflect level 7 learning.
- The awarding of grades for attendance and participation should be discontinued.

### 2.3.3 Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

- Teaching is conducted by a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff who support the development of the students.
- Teaching staff follows the principles of academic ethics and the codes of conduct in case of non-compliance.
- Members of the teaching staff participate in international mobility programs which encourage the development of their teaching and RDC activities and the cultural openness of the HEI and the Armenian society.
- The effectiveness of both studies and RDC activities, students' feedback, the effectiveness of supervision, development of teaching and supervision skills, international mobility and entrepreneurial or work experience in the specific field outside the HEI is taken into consideration in evaluating the work of the member of the staff.

### Evidence and Analysis

According to the SER there are 8 staff engaged in delivering the master's in management programme. Of these seven have the title professor, six are economists and one a philosopher; the eighth is a language (French and English) teacher. The numbers of staff assigned to the programme across different documents was not, however, consistent.

Any one given member of staff may contribute to up to three different subjects or courses. The courses they are assigned to teach reflect their particular specialisms and areas of expertise. The panel learned that an increase in student cohort size or the absence of a member of staff would trigger the appointment of additional staff.

Staff appointments are made against a set of criteria which are clearly articulated.

The number, range and expertise of the teaching staff is adequate for the delivery of the programme.

According to the SER teaching staff on the master's programme have published 3 educational manuals, one textbook, a collection of exercises, 4 monographs, 38 scientific articles 18 of which were published in international journals and were presented in conferences. There was no evidence of a strategy at faculty level to provide direction for staff research.

Students are guided to undertake research within their internship. Some support is given in teaching them relevant skills for this research. Staff could not outline how research and teaching were linked nor could they provide concrete examples of how their own research enhanced the curriculum. The SER gave an example of student engagement through joint presentation with a member of staff. This was, however, an isolated example.

International mobility is stated as an aim for the programme. There was, at the time of the visit, no involvement of international teaching staff on the programme and little evidence that YHU staff had participated in international mobility apart from some conference presentations. There are no international students on the programme and no evidence that Armenian students have participated in any international mobility programmes. Language level and personal circumstances were cited as limiting factors.

### Commendations

- There is a sufficient range and level of expertise within the teaching staff to deliver the programme.
- Staff are clearly committed to supporting students in their learning.

### Recommendations

- YHU should develop a strategy for research at departmental level which should encompass research informed teaching and learning.
- YHU should explore ways of developing an international dimension to the programme to enhance its relevance and to provide a more competitive edge.