



## CONCLUSION

### **Accreditation of Institutional Capacities of "Vazgen Sargsyan Military University of RA Ministry Of Defence" State Institution**

#### General information about the Institution

The full name of the Institution                   **"Vazgen Sargsyan Military University of RA Ministry  
Of Defence" State Institution**  
Official address:                                   RA, Yerevan, Nor Nork 6<sup>th</sup> district, 77 Shoproon street  
Previous accreditation decree and date:   Not available

#### LEGAL BASIS

Guided by the regulation on "State Accreditation of RA Institutions and Their Educational Programs" approved by the RA Government decree N 978-N as of 30 June 2011; by RA Government decree N 959-N as of 30 June 2011 on "Approval of RA Accreditation Standards for Professional Education" as well as by the Procedure on the Formation of expert panel of "National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance" (ANQA) foundation, ANQA discussed the ANQA's draft conclusion on the institutional capacities of **"Vazgen Sargsyan Military University Of RA Ministry Of Defence" State Institution** (hereinafter: MU or the University) on the basis of self-evaluation presented by MU, expert panel report, MU Action Plan on the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the expert panel report as well as expert panel opinion on the MU's Action Plan with the participation of the ANQA representatives, expert panel, and ANQA coordinator of the accreditation procedure.

As a result of the discussion the following was registered:

The main phases of accreditation procedure were carried out within the following time periods:

Submission of application	14 July, 2017
Submission of self-evaluation report	06 March, 2018
Expert panel site-visit	11-14 June, 2018
Submission of expert panel report	31 August, 2018
Submission of action plan on elimination of shortcomings	5 October 2018

## RESULTS OF PEER- REVIEW

The expertise was carried out by an independent expert panel formed in compliance with the requirements set by the ANQA regulation on "Formation of expert panel"<sup>1</sup>. The evaluation was carried out according to the 10 criteria of institutional accreditation approved by the RA Government decree N 959-N as of 30 June 2011.

### BRIEF SUMMARY

While carrying out the peer-review the Expert panel took into consideration that V. Sargsyan Military University of MoD is a higher military education institution the main mission of which is to prepare BA and MA military specialists with necessary skills and competences in line with modern international standards and scientific-educational tendencies through the implementation of academic programs. The expert panel also took into consideration that MU has a military importance for RA military sphere. At the same time MU is under the immediate supervision of MoD and in many cases does not have freedom for making decisions. One of the most important factors taken into consideration by the expert panel during the expertise was that MU combines the statuses of a professional education institution and a military unit with all the related environmental, procedural and other peculiarities.

Internal and external stakeholders of MU have merely the same impression about the mission of the University which proves that the role of MU in the society is clearly formulated. However unified clear formulation of mission and vision is still missing at the University. 2015-2020 long-term development plan of MU is developed not in the format of a strategic plan but rather a plan-schedule. Expected outcomes and indicators for assessment are not mentioned in the plan which puts the processes of revealing achievements and shortcomings of MU activities as well as further effective planning at a risk.

Elements of military unit and university systems are combined in the management system of MU. There is a clear hierarchy among the management circles but there are also collegial bodies typical to an education institution like Scientific Council and Methodical Councils. Responsibilities of each structural unit and each staff member of MU are strictly defined in the respective documents. Sometimes changes are made in the management structure but they do not always depend on the analysis of effectiveness of the management system.

In spite of the existence of collegial bodies there is a danger of one-man decision in MU by the officers having higher military rank. Formal participation of cadets in the management procedures stands for that.

The planning process and following the plans are given much importance to in MU. This is ensured through the application of clearly defined mechanisms of bottom-up accountability. The latter however is not made complete with external accountability. The current approach of publication of very limited information on MU activities does not foster improvement of social opinion about MU, moreover, it hinders the opportunities of MU to carry out fundraising activities.

Academic programs being implemented at MU are fully in line with the mission of MU to prepare commander staff for RA Armed Forces (AF). The academic programs have mostly an applied nature. While developing academic programs MU defined their goals and objectives, intended learning outcomes which are in line with NQF descriptors. Admission requirements are

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 - Expert Panel Composition and ANQA Support Staff

also involved in the academic programs and teaching, learning and assessment methods are outlined. And what for the career of the alumni, serving in the RA AF is considered as such. MU has developed "Regulation of the organization of education processes with a credit system and assessment of the knowledge of learners" however the number of international mobility of cadets and teaching staff is limited conditioned by objective reasons: differences of military equipment and armament in the Armed Forces, danger of experience exchange in military sphere, differences in the raised problems, and subjective reasons: lack of implementation of academic program benchmarking, exchange programs and foreign language proficiency.

There is a tendency in MU to implement assessment of cadets on clear basis. It refers to the organization of examinations, final attestations and current assessment. There are quantitative tangible norms of assessment and methodical instructions on the level of some courses in MU. The basis for the appeal of marks are RA AF regulations however cases of appeal did not occur in MU and the University hasn't yet analyzed the reasons for that.

There is a tendency in the chairs to continuously improve the academic programs. MU regularly reviews the academic programs taking into account the feedback and changes of RA AF as well as the results of surveys conducted among the cadets and attendees.

There are clear mechanisms of cadets' collection and selection in MU. However MU has not conducted studies of their effectiveness. Regular studies of cadets' needs is carried out in MU through conduction of surveys, there are also mechanisms for the provision of additional educational consultancy to cadets, regulation for turning to the administrative staff, etc.

Steps towards the creation of scientific-research atmosphere for cadets at MU are not targeted, the desire of cadets to deal with research activities is still in a low level. MU strives to ensure effective educational environment for cadets trying to apply mechanisms of evaluating the quality of provided services. However the absence of systematic analysis hinders the complete disclosure of problems existing in learning environment and provided services as well as finding their effective solutions to them.

The requirements set for the professional qualities of the teaching staff are formulated in a general way: not less than 50% of the teaching staff should have scientific degree or title and/or long-term military service work experience in the relevant sphere. Having lack of specialists with scientific degree and title is conditioned by objective reasons however it causes the danger of having only specialists with military service experience thus omitting research and pedagogical skills.

The workload of teaching staff is not analyzed in MU which causes a serious danger of being overloaded because besides the teaching activity according to individual plans activities of self-development as well as additional lessons and consultancy for cadets are also envisaged. There are mechanisms of regular assessment of teaching staff and improvement of teaching such as class observations, surveys and activities of methodical consultancy.

The circle of ambitions and interests of MU in the research sphere is not yet clearly formulated. MU doesn't have mechanisms encouraging learners' and teachers' involvement in research initiatives which decreases the motivation of teaching staff and cadets to make research activities as well as puts the formation of research skills and competences of learners at a risk.

Internationalization of the results of research activities on the institutional level is not given much importance to by MU. There is no clear policy on the development of scientific research at MU. Analysis of research results are not carried out at the University in terms of effectiveness and impact, thus their absence can hinder further development of research

activities as well as the implementation of activities towards the improvement. Progressiveness of scientific-research activities are not ensured in MU.

Education environment in MU is like a military unit which on the one hand causes limits (usage of external information recourses, academic honesty) and on the other hand is in favour of a cadet as the environment corresponds to the environment of further military service of the cadets as much as possible.

Currently there is no diversification of financial resources at MU however it does not cause any danger of reduction of funding. Stable source of MU funding is RA state budget. RA MoD provides means to MU according to the provided estimates which express MU's financial and material needs.

Material resources of RA AF and MoD are also available for MU. The territory of MU is rich in all the necessary technical means for the implementation of academic programs. Classrooms are equipped according to courses taught, i.e. classrooms are not attached to the groups of cadets for the implementation of different courses but instead classrooms are equipped for a particular course and this helps to raise the effectiveness of the application of resources. Satisfaction with material resources in MU is assessed through surveys conducted among the stakeholders and through other feedback mechanisms. However MU material-resource base needs further improvement.

MU has strict mechanisms and procedures of accountability within the University and to MoD. Accountability to public by MU is mainly done through MoD. Limits concerning the transparency of procedures and processes as well as availability to the public are often objectively conditioned by the confidentiality of information. However processes and procedures which do not contain military secret or provisions for the safety of the state are not transparent either and they are not published.

Non sufficient efforts by MU in terms of the application of diverse and effective tools for public relations can hinder the formation and strengthening of comprehensive and positive image of MU among the public. MU has stable feedback mechanisms with departments of RA MoD, RA AF and with alumni by creating objective perspectives of MU future development. At the same time it should be mentioned that mechanisms of public relations are not consistent which can result in the detachment of MU activities from public developments. MU does not have its own page.

The formulations in the long-term development plan of MU do not reflect MU's circle and ambitions of internationalization. The absence of policy and procedures regulating the sphere put at a risk the implementation of coordinated activities. MU cooperates with limited circle of local and international organizations and the planned events and activities are not always implemented and for the non-implemented activities respective decisions are made<sup>2</sup>. Cases of cadet mobility are limited and on an ad hoc basis, mobility of teaching staff is not carried out at MU. MU does not yet ensure sufficient level of foreign language proficiency among its internal stakeholders and this is a serious obstacle for internationalization. Though some steps towards internationalization are being taken, MU does not yet have environment promoting the development of exchange of experience and internationalization.

MU has QA traditions derived from the peculiarities of military sphere. QA policy and procedures are stipulated in the basic documents, especially in the QA manual. All the staff

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<sup>2</sup>□ The sentence was reformulated after the feedback got from the University.

members of MU are aware of the provisions of QA manual understanding the importance of QA processes and the University values. MU provides sufficient human resources for the management QA internal processes. Internal and external stakeholders are involved in QA processes. The absence of analysis of the effectiveness of QA tools does not give an opportunity to objectively assess the impact of QA processes on the improvement of academic programs and University activities. The absence of systematized process of evaluating and reviewing the QA system is conditioned by the fact that QA system at MU is still in the stage of stabilization.

#### **STRONG POINTS OF THE UNIVERSITY ARE:**

- 1) Clear definition of rights, obligations and responsibilities for all the cycles of MU.
- 2) Comprehensive system of internal accountability.
- 3) Stable flow of information from RA AF and RA MoD for the improvement of academic processes.
- 4) Mechanisms of cadets' needs assessment.
- 5) Stable guarantee of MU alumni employment at RA AF.
- 6) Availability of teaching staff for additional consultancy.
- 7) Attractiveness of MU free of charge education.
- 8) Precise assessment criteria.
- 9) Experienced officer-teacher among the teaching staff.
- 10) Necessary educational material base and infrastructure for the implementation of academic programs, availability of RA AF and RA MoD resources.
- 11) Compliance of educational and future military service environment.
- 12) Stable financial resources.
- 13) Existence of procedures for the organization of nearly all processes.

#### **WEAK POINTS OF THE UNIVERSITY**

- 1) Absence of clear separation of military and university elements in management processes.
- 2) Lack of qualitative analysis of the gathered information about MU activities.
- 3) Limits in the development of alternative career opportunities for alumni.
- 4) Lack of autonomy of cadet structures.
- 5) Comparatively small number of teaching staff with scientific degree and title.
- 6) Absence of differentiated funding according to scientific degree and titles.
- 7) Non formulation of MU's interests and ambitions in research sphere, absence of mechanisms promoting research activities.
- 8) Limitations in the management of resources and dependence on MoD allocations.
- 9) A great number of documents regulating MU activities and lack of their coordination.
- 10) Lack of information for public and absence of MU's own platform for information sharing.
- 11) Lack of independence in terms of establishing external relations, absence of international exchange and research projects.
- 12) Low level of foreign language proficiency among the internal stakeholders.

From the perspective of being integrated into European Higher Education Area, the international expert has presented his remarks concerning 10 criteria. For the integration into European Higher Education Area the international expert has presented the following recommendations:

1. It is necessary to define key performance indicators that are suitable to assess whether the strategic goals are reached or not and to explain why the specific indicators were chosen,
2. All the University's community (academic and administrative) should be regularly trained to achieve mutual understanding of its' mission statement,
3. MU representatives should participate in formulation of RA Armed Forces Development Plan, from which mission of the MU stems,
4. Democratization of governance should be emphasized in the area of non-military, academic activities of the University,
5. More attention should be paid to student's and alumni's opinions,
6. More independence should be brought to the MU in the area of academic programmes preparation; relation with the MoD should be turned from subordination to cooperation,
7. International academic exchange programmes to ensure incoming and outgoing mobility of both teachers and students should be introduced on regular basis,
8. The policy of external relations, strengthening international cooperation in education processes and academic programs, should be developed in cooperation with MoD, broadening independence of the MU in academic cooperation with foreign universities,
9. English language proficiency should be further developed,
10. MU should invest and strengthen QA processes at the strategic planning level,
11. From the perspective of the enhancement of effectiveness of QA Department, it should be separated from the departments dealing with the issues of science and international relations,
12. The cooperation with the MoD, not only in the QA area, is subordinated, whereas it should be turned more into relation of collaboration,
13. Transparency procedures should be clarified, as number of information on activities in the University is described as service secret.

#### **MU'S COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS ON DRAFT REPORT OF EXPERT PANEL**

MU sent its remarks and comments on the report to ANQA on 31.07.2018. In 30 August 2018 ANQA organized a meeting for the representatives of the University and the expert panel during which the expert panel gave its feedback concerning the remarks of the University. Taking into consideration the University's comments, the expert panel compiled the final version of the report which was approved by the panel on 31.08.2018.

#### **MU ACTION PLAN ON THE ELIMINATION OF SHORTCOMINGS MENTIONED IN THE EXPERT PANEL REPORT**

**MAU accepts that the recommendations provided by the expert panel are within the scope of the University's strategy, and it has submitted the action plan and time-schedule on the elimination of shortcomings.**

Having examined the University's action plan of improvement of institutional capacities based on the recommendations provided in the final expert panel report, the expert panel comes to the following conclusion: taking into consideration the expert panel's recommendations and with the aim to eliminate the identified shortcomings, the University has undertaken the commitment to improve all the aspects of its activity, in particular:

- Nearly all the recommendations given by the expert panel (except for one recommendation concerning teaching staff) were taken into account in the action plan of MU however some aspects of recommendations are not defined in the expected outcomes;
- The link between interim outcomes and expected outcomes is mainly clear, and in case of acquisition of interim outcomes the expected outcomes are mostly realistic;
- For each interim outcome the circles that are responsible for the control over it are defined;
- The necessary resources for the acquisition of expected outcomes are defined, though it is mainly limited to the MU current human resources and in case of financial recourses only the sources are mentioned without initial qualitative evaluation of the resource need;
- For the acquisition of the expected outcomes mainly realistic deadlines are set however the number of “regularly implemented activities” is significant and not having mentioned clear deadlines can put the timely implementation of those activities in danger;
- Indicators for the evaluation of progress are mainly qualitative, only in cases of some outcomes they are quantitative, however targeted indicators are not defined for the latter. The mechanisms evaluating the impact are mainly based on existing accountability as well as on regular monitoring and analyses.

***The study of the MU action plan on the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in expert panel report has shown that the implementation of major part of the University's action plan does not contain risks. The acquisition of the outcomes defined in the action plan on the elimination of shortcomings will foster the solution of the problems of MU existing in different spheres and will ensure stable progress of MU.***

As a result of expertise the expert panel evaluated the institutional capacities of the University per accreditation criterion by using the “**unsatisfactory**” and “**satisfactory**” evaluation scale<sup>3</sup>. The evaluation is presented in the following table:

<b>CRITERION</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>
<i>I. Mission and Goals</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>II. Management and Administration</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>III. Academic Programs</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>IV. Students</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>V. Teaching and Support Staffs</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>

<sup>3</sup> The expert panel was guided by the following principles while carrying out the evaluation:

-**unsatisfactory** - if the University does not meet the requirements of the criterion and it is not allowed to continue the activities that way and urgent improvements are needed;

-**satisfactory** - if the University meets the requirements of the criterion yet there might be a need for improvement.

<i>VI. Research and Development</i>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
<i>VII. Infrastructure and Resources</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>VIII. Social Responsibility</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>IX. External Relations and Internationalization</i>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
<i>X. Internal Quality Assurance System</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>

Based on the aforementioned, ANQA suggests the Accreditation Committee to draw MU's attention to the implementation of the following activities while making a decision:

- 1) To give urgent solution to the problems existing in the spheres of **Research and Development** and **External Relations and Internationalization**.
- 2) According to the requirements of the Clause 12 of the Regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Education Institutions and their Educational Programs” or within the deadlines set by the Accreditation Committee, to regularly present a written report to ANQA on the results of the carried out activities.
- 3) To revise the action plan on the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the expert panel report taking into account the expert panel's remarks on the action plan.

ANQA finds that the suggested reforms will foster the fulfillment of the MU's ambitions mentioned in the self-evaluation report and will serve as a basis for the next evaluation.

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Head of ANQA Accreditation Department

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Head of the Expert Panel

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ANQA coordinator

## Appendix 1

### Composition of the Expert Panel

External evaluation of MU self-evaluation and QA processes was carried out by the expert panel with the following composition:

1. Tigran Mnatsakanyan- Candidate of Economical Sciences (PhD), Lecturer at the Chair of Management in Armenian State University of Economics, RA, Head of the Expert Panel
2. Bartlomey Poucheck- PhD in Security, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Command and Maritime Operations in Polish Naval Academy, Poland, member
3. Aram Baghiyan-Candidate of Technical Sciences (PhD), Scientific Consultant at “Improvise”LLC , RA, member
4. Margarita Poghosyan- Candidate of Economical Sciences (PhD), Lecturer at the Chair of Economics and Management at Yerevan Northern University, RA, member
5. Mikayel Khachatryan- 3rd year bachelor student of Applied Mathematics and Informatics at the Institute of Mathematics and Higher Technologies of Russian-Armenian University, RA, student member

ANQA support staff

Lilit Pipoyan – Specialist at ANQA Department of Institutional and Program Accreditation.

Ani Mazmanyanyan- Specialist of the Centre of QA and Reforms at Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences, translator.



