

NATIONAL CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE  
FOUNDATION



EXPERT PANEL REPORT

ON INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION CARRIED OUT AT PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
ACADEMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

Yerevan– 2019

## INTRODUCTION

Institutional Accreditation of Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia (hereinafter referred to as the Academy or PAARA) is carried out based on the application presented by the Academy.

The process of institutional accreditation is organized and coordinated by the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA). ANQA is guided by the regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs” set by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N978 decree as well as by N959-N (30 June, 2011) decree on approving RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation. The expertise was carried out by the expert panel formed according to the requirements of ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel. The expert panel consisted of 4 local experts and 1 international expert.

Institutional accreditation aims not only at the external evaluation of quality assurance but also to the continuous improvement of the institution’s management and quality of educational programs. Hence, there were two important issues for the expert panel members:

1. To carry out an expertise of institutional capacities in line with the RA standards for state accreditation
2. To carry out an evaluation for the improvement of university’s quality and for its integration to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

This report includes the results of the evaluation of the Academy’s institutional capacities according to the state criteria and standards for accreditation as well as the results of peer review by the international expert from the perspective of being integrated into EHEA.

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## SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION

### PEER-REVIEW OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO STATE ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

The expertise was carried out by the expert panel<sup>1</sup> formed according to the requirements of ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel. The evaluation was carried out according to the 10 criteria set by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N 959-Ն decree.

The evaluation was carried out according to 10 accreditation criteria set by the RA Government decree N959 as of 30 June, 2011.

While carrying out the expertise the expert panel took into consideration that according to the Strategic plan 2013-2018 of the Public Administration Academy of the RA the mission of the Academy was “implementation of higher professional and post graduate academic programs, provision of additional and continuous education, implementation of scientific and applied research activities, provision of consultancy, assurance of the public administration sphere with informative-analytical materials in line with the requirements of management system of public and private sectors as well as international scientific-educational cooperation in the sphere of public administration”.

PAARA underwent accreditation in 2015 according to the 10 accreditation criteria set by the RA Government decree N959 as of 30 June, 2011. As a result PAARA was awarded institutional accreditation for 4 years period. Taking into account the recommendations from the precious accreditation, the Academy has made improvements in a number of fields.

In its 2019-2024 strategic plan the Academy defined its mission: “continuous improvement of higher education and provision of additional academic programs meeting the requirements of preparation of high quality specialists for public and private sectors, conduction of scientific and applied research activities, provision of consultancy, assurance of the public administration sphere with informative-analytical materials as well as international scientific-educational cooperation in the sphere of public administration”.

PAARA has clearly formulated mission which expresses the main activities of the Academy. However the Academy has not yet carried out evaluation of the implementation of the previous strategic plan which could serve as a basis for the development of the new 2019-2024 strategic plan. PAARA didn't have 2013-2018 action plan and the action plan developed for 2015-2017 based on the recommendations of the previous expert panel was viewed as such while the usage of the two action plans simultaneously could foster complete implementation of the goals mentioned in the strategic plan. It is praiseworthy that the internal stakeholders of the Academy were involved in the working group for the development of the strategic plan however especially students didn't have an active participation. External stakeholders of the Academy are employers. However most of the employers, who are viewed as external stakeholders are involved as teaching staff members of the Academy on the basis of external double-jobbing. This hinders the clear differentiation of external stakeholders and needs assessment putting under the risk the preparation of specialists that are competitive and meet the requirements of the current labor market. Though for the evaluation of the strategic goals in 2013-2018 there were indicators defined however monitoring of the implementation results, evaluation and disclosure of current

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<sup>1</sup>Appendix 1: CVs of expert panel members

problems have not taken place. The results of the analysis of the previous strategic plan didn't serve as a base for the definition of strategic priorities in the new strategic plan.

Though some structural changes took place based on the recommendations from accreditation the acting management system stills needs improvement in terms of clarification of functions of different structural units as the conditions hindering the effective governance have not been analyzed. It is risky that during the structural changes job responsibilities have not been developed for a number of positions and structural units. PAARA carries out situational management rather than strategic management which is risky for the fulfillment of mission and goals. The limited study of external factors influencing the activities of the Academy puts the risk prediction and implementation of effective planning under a danger.

As during the previous accreditation today also there are no mid-term and short-term planning in PAARA. Though reports of different structural units are defined as mechanisms for monitoring of planning however the implementation, evaluation and improvement phases of the processes are missing. The unified approach for collecting and analyzing the information on the effectiveness of education services and other processes provided by the Academy is missing, the mechanisms for the further usage of information gathered for making improvements are not precise which reduces the objectiveness of the evaluation results and the opportunities for further improvement. As a result of the previous accreditation; after the adoption of the new strategic plan and change of the mission an attempt was made to align the academic programs with the Academy's mission. In particular, the Academy has made improvements in terms of definition of academic program LOs, selection of teaching and learning methods however involvement of external stakeholders in the processes has not been carried out and the evaluation of the results of carried out changes is missing. This means that the process is in the phase of planning and implementation according to PDCA cycle. The policy on the monitoring of the academic programs is not carried out completely at PAARA; as a tool only surveys are used which are also limited. No changes have been made in the academic programs as a result of the surveys. External stakeholders of the Academy do not participate in the academic program monitoring process. All these can put the stability and competitiveness of the academic programs at a risk and can deepen the gap between academic programs and labor market. There are no mechanisms preventing plagiarism. Benchmarking was carried out within one academic program and mobility of 4 students was recorded however the unified policy on benchmarking is still missing which hinders comparison of other academic programs with similar ones and assurance of a great number of student mobility.

There are mechanisms for the recruitment and admission of students at PAARA. Though Academy carries out evaluation of effectiveness of the above mentioned mechanisms, no improvements have been made as a result of them. There is no policy on the recruitment and selection of foreign students at PAARA which would foster internationalization as well as increase of financial inflows. Though PAARA has a policy developed for revealing students' educational needs, as mechanisms for needs assessment surveys are used, however there are no qualitative analysis of the survey results due to which students' target needs could be revealed.

There are no precise procedures for the organization of additional classes for students, however it is praiseworthy that teaching staff is willing, ready and available for providing consultancy. Different meetings and classes are also organized to promote students' progress however evaluation and analysis of the effectiveness thereof is not carried out. Thus activities towards guidance and direction of students still need regulation and improvement. There is a Union of Alumni, Department of Career and Internship however there are no analyses about the effectiveness of the link with employers, satisfaction of alumni and employers, effectiveness of the organization of internship as well as employability of alumni that would verify the effectiveness

of the activity of the above mentioned units. Besides, during the site visit it turned out that most of the students are not aware about the activities of career center and union of alumni. Thus it is not known what percentage of students uses the above mentioned services and what percentage is satisfied. Mechanisms of feedback from alumni need improvement. The transparent activity of the mentioned units would foster enhancement of effectiveness carried out among the students. Though students' scientific union was established based on the recommendations of the previous accreditation, there is no planning and coordination of activities of the union. Low level of involvement of students in scientific-research activities, limited number of articles authored or co-authored by the students show the weakness of research component also in master theses which hinders the development of analytical skills among the students.

Different structural units if PAARA including Students' Council are doing active work in terms of protection of the rights of students of PAARA, reveal of educational and other needs. However monitoring of the activities of Students' Council is not carried out that would foster effective activity of this unit.

PAARA has a policy on the selection of sufficient teaching and support staffs for the implementation of academic programs. Nevertheless the appointment of teaching staff is not based on a competition, this can hinder objective selection of the teaching staff and recruitment of competitive specialists. There are no criteria for the professional qualities of the teaching staff in the academic programs of PAARA. There are processes for the evaluation of teaching staff by students at PAARA but the results are not used for the improvement of teaching and promotion of the teaching staff. It is a positive fact that among the teaching staff of PAARA there are specialists that are well aware and have many years of experience in RA Governance sphere. This fact fosters organization of outcome-based education and after the graduation from PAARA the graduates are already specialists with concrete skills and competences. Currently clear mechanisms and procedures promoting the progress of the teaching staff are applied not in all chairs of PAARA which can weaken the stability of the teaching staff. The main factor hindering the stability of the teaching staff is that the number of hourly paid teaching staff members exceeds the number of main (permanent) teaching staff. Though research directions of the Academy are mainly reflected in the charter and the current strategic plan there are no mid-term and short-term plans as during the previous accreditation. After structural changes in PAARA the Vice-rector on educational-scientific affairs is responsible for research activities however the functions of the Vice-Rector are nor clarified in this respect. For the implementation of research topics of Academy the sequence of steps, time-schedule and distribution of responsibilities are not defined in any document which puts the implementation of activities and evaluation of results at a risk. Research topics in the Academy are carried out by the initiative of the chairs. The limited number of scientific research is conditioned by the small number of main (permanent) teaching staff members. Clear policy on the implementation of research and development is not formed and there are no respective procedures which puts the continuous development of research activities and the merchandize of the results under risk.

Though some research activities are carried out at PAARA in particular by the scientific-research laboratory of "Management Psychology", "Center of Regional Research" and "Research Center of Management of Science", however the topics of research by these units are not in line with research directions defined in the strategic plan of the Academy. The absence of respective clear policy and procedures for the implementation of research continues being actual from the previous accreditation up to now. Besides, there is no policy on the internationalization of research activities and their results. As during the previous accreditation today also there are no precise mechanisms for interconnection of research activities with education process.

The resources of the Academy currently ensure the fulfillment of goals of academic programs. Still the absence of canteen, medical unit and publishing services at PAARA puts at a risk full satisfaction of the needs of internal stakeholders. The Academy needs to improve its professional library and digitalized electronic literature.

There is a mechanism for the allocation of financial means however it is not carried out according to the strategic priorities of the Academy which was also highlighted by the expert panel of the previous accreditation. All the information about PAARA activities, regulations, procedures, news and announcements are published on PAARA official web-site and in a number of social platforms. Procedures and activities of the Academy are transparent and available to public. Besides, the Academy tries to make its activities public through different mass media, newspapers, fairs which also fosters transparency of main activities.

There are mechanisms promoting public relations in Academy: different mechanisms of transfer of knowledge and multiple processes of provision of additional education (individual, corporative mid-term and long-term thematic trainings on paid basis)

From the institutional perspective the Academy lacks in concept for internationalization. Though internationalization is highlighted in the level of strategic plan, it is not clear how and in what period of time the Academy envisages to ensure increase in the indicators of internationalization. In English version of PAARA web-site educational services and opportunities of exchange programs are not properly presented and it hinders tendency of development of internationalization.

With the aim of investment of academic programs in foreign languages, activation of internationalization and mobility it is necessary to strongly enhance the level of proficiency in foreign language among teaching and support staffs as well as students. The indicators of mobility of students and teachers are troublesome though students are aware of exchange programs, opportunities of their participation and selection criteria. Analysis of effectiveness of cooperation with partner-structures is not carried out which hinders internationalization of scientific-research activities. Though increase in the number of partner-structures was recorded, tangible increase in the number of participants in international exchange programs is not ensured and the interconnection of activities of internationalization and education process is missing. As a result of recommendations from pervious accreditation PAARA clarified the authorities and functions of the Department of Professional Education Quality Assurance however the grounds proving their full and effective implementation are missing.

Absence of effective policy of quality assurance makes the fulfillment of PAARA's mission and strategic goal by different structural units risky. Results of annual monitoring of academic programs, self-evaluation reports and analysis on the revision of course descriptions, recordings of discussions and reports of QA department are also missing in the Academy. The absence of the above mentioned processes hinders continuous improvement of the academic programs. It is not a positive fact that PAARA's Department of Professional Education Quality Assurance is not operating under the direct supervision of the Rector according to the organizational structure which hinders independence of the Department. Passive involvement of internal stakeholders of in QA activities is worrisome. Besides, external stakeholders, in particular employers and alumni are not involved in the development of QA tools, in surveys. Internal QA system of the Academy and the quality culture are not fully developed yet. PDCA cycle is not fully closed: for most of the procedures evaluation and improvement have not been carried out which puts the stable development of the Academy in danger. The absence of reports of the Department of Professional Education Quality Assurance hinders assurance of transparency of information about the quality of procedures at PAARA for internal and external stakeholders.

### Strengths of the Academy

- 1) Creation of preconditions for the development of distance learning
- 2) Existence of highly qualified, experienced and motivated teaching staff
- 3) Availability of administrative and support staffs for students and their willingness to help
- 4) Active implementation of trainings for state government bodies, local self-governance bodies and other state workers.
- 5) Existence of favorable environment for education process.
- 6) High level of employability of alumni.

### Weaknesses of the Academy

- 1) Absence of evaluation of effectiveness of management system, analysis of influence of external factors as well as low level of needs assessment among external stakeholders.
- 2) Situational management not based on strategic plan and without assurance of PDCA cycle.
- 3) Absence of action plan of the strategic plan, time-schedule, concrete indicators and indices, mid-term and long-term plans.
- 4) Lack of involvement of external stakeholders in the development and implementation of academic programs.
- 5) Small number of main teaching staff members, risk of stability of staff.
- 6) Absence of conceptual base in the scientific-educational sphere, absence of link between scientific-research activity and education process.
- 7) Absence of commercialization of research outcomes of PAARA's scientific centers.
- 8) Low indicators of participation of teaching staff and students in international exchange and grant projects.
- 9) Absence of academic programs or courses in foreign language, absence of students studying in PAARA from partner European universities within the framework of exchange programs.
- 10) Absence of alignment of financial planning with strategic goals, limited opportunities for the diversification of financial incomes.
- 11) Absence of a decentralized QA network, low level of cooperation among the QA department and structural units.
- 12) Limited number of human resources in the QA department, absence of tools for the evaluation of effectiveness of activities.
- 13) Not following PDCA cycle in the processes carried out at PAARA.

### Recommendations of the expert panel

#### Mission and Goals

- 1) To develop and introduce qualitative and quantitative justified indicators and mechanisms ensuring their effectiveness for the evaluation of strategic and analysis of strategic goals as well as their future improvement.
- 2) To ensure active participation of internal and external stakeholders in the development of mission, goals and academic programs and needs assessment.

#### Governance and Administration

- 3) To carry out evaluation of the organizational structure of Academy to enhance the effectiveness of activities of structural units.



- 4) To ensure effective needs assessment of internal and external stakeholders clarifying the scope of external stakeholders.
- 5) To introduce mechanisms in order to ensure involvement of different stakeholders in organizational and decision making processes.
- 6) To carry out studies of external environment and guarantee the active participation of external stakeholders in different activities carried out at Academy.
- 7) To develop concrete indicators and indices to evaluate the effectiveness of activities of structural units, develop annual plans of structural units in order to enhance the effectiveness of monitoring and control over the activities of the structural units.

#### Academic programs

- 8) To develop policy on benchmarking of academic programs and procedures ensuring its implementation.
- 9) To organize external expertise of academic programs taking external stakeholders as participants in the development of academic programs and LOs.
- 10) To ensure compatibility and contextual alignment of academic programs with that of partner-universities.
- 11) To review the policy on struggle against plagiarism, enhance the effectiveness of revealing cases of academic dishonesty and struggle against different cases of plagiarism in master theses.
- 12) To carry out regular improvements of the system of assessment of students' knowledge.
- 13) To add the research components in academic programs directed to the development of research skills among master students.

#### Students

- 14) To regulate the organization of additional lessons and provision of consultancy to students fostering their effective learning.
- 15) To develop and introduce effective mechanisms for the recruitment and admission of foreign students.
- 16) To develop indicators for the evaluation of the activities of Career center directing it to the study of the needs of labor market, satisfaction of alumni and employers, employability of alumni, feedback mechanisms and to make the activity of alumni union more active.
- 17) To enhance the involvement of students in research activities through precise mechanisms of promotion.
- 18) Introduce mechanisms for the evaluation of effectiveness of education environment.

#### Teaching and support staffs

- 19) To carry out recruitment of the teaching staff at PAARA through competition.
- 20) To develop policy and introduce mechanisms to ensure the stability of main teaching staff members.
- 21) To develop precise procedures for the professional development of the teaching staff.
- 22) To organize trainings for the teaching staff based on their professional needs and to carry out evaluation of the effectiveness of those trainings.

#### Research and Development

- 23) To develop short-term and mid-term plans for the development of scientific-research activities based on the strategic priorities and interests mentioned in the strategic plan of the Academy.

- 24) To introduce mechanisms for the promotion of the scientific-research activity of the teaching staff, to differentiate the payment of the teaching staff based on the results of their scientific-research activity and publications in peer-reviewed journals.
- 25) To introduce tools for the improvement of students' research competences, to ensure active participation of students through scientific-research centers and laboratories.
- 26) To develop mechanisms ensuring involvement of the teaching staff in international scientific-research grant projects.
- 27) To develop and implement policy on the commercialization of research outcomes.

#### Infrastructure and Resources

- 28) To carry out distribution of financial resources according to strategic priorities.
- 29) To carry out evaluation of availability, usage and effectiveness of resources provided to students and teaching staff.
- 30) To ensure the mobility of the students with special needs in all the buildings, to establish a medical unit and canteen.

#### Societal Responsibility

- 31) To define the requirement for making qualitative analysis in all the reports developed at PAARA.
- 32) To expand and improve information on PAARA website in foreign languages.
- 33) To make the information about academic programs and opportunities of cooperation available for the stakeholders on PAARA website.

#### External relations and Internationalization

- 34) To introduce mechanisms for the implementation of PAARA policy on internationalization with respective qualitative and quantitative indicators and time-schedule.
- 35) To increase the hours of foreign language courses, to improve teaching technologies and to introduce more up-to-date approaches directed to the development of professional competences in foreign language.
- 36) To develop the packages of acting academic programs in foreign languages to ensure the inflow of foreign students.
- 37) To expand the scope of cooperation of partner-universities by adapting their best practice.
- 38) To develop mechanisms promoting the participation of stakeholders in the activities of internationalization (international grant projects, exchange programs).
- 39) To develop mechanisms for the improvement of foreign language proficiency among the teaching staff.
- 40) To enhance the effectiveness of activities of the division of international cooperation and external relations.

#### Internal Quality Assurance

- 41) To ensure effective cooperation of QA Department with other structural units of the Academy.
- 42) To ensure the independence of the QA Department in the organizational structure of the Academy and to enlarge the authorities of the Department.
- 43) To organize the activities of the QA department through PDCA cycle by making transition from planning to the implementation of developed policy and mechanisms as well as to make evaluation and further improvements.

- 44) To clarify the scope of responsibilities of the staff of QA Department.
- 45) To ensure the creation of effective grounds for the external QA processes.
- 46) To introduce mechanisms ensuring the transparency of the activities of QA Department.
- 47) To develop and improve mechanisms of needs assessment of internal and external stakeholders.
- 48) To introduce mechanisms and procedures ensuring active participation of internal and external stakeholders in QA processes.

## PEER-REVIEW FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF BEING INTEGRATED INTO EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

### Considerations

PAARA is a relatively small education institution the mission of which is to prepare high quality manager specialists for public and private spheres. In the strategic plan and mission of the Academy for 2013-2018 and 2019-2024 “international educational-scientific cooperation in the sphere of public administration” is also highlighted.

In order to carry out the process of internationalization there is a Division of international relations and external relations at PAARA the activities of which are coordinated by the Vice-Rector on external relations. PAARA cooperated with a number of national and international organizations on a documents basis, it signs agreements and memoranda.

The information on international and exchange projects is available to internal stakeholders of PAARA. However there are no systematic analyses on the effectiveness of cooperation. The impact of international cooperation on education process is missing. Their link with education process is not clear.

1 teacher and 4 students have participated in exchange programs within Erasmus+ (Salzburg University). Such a low level of mobility of internal stakeholders speaks for the imperfection of the processes of internationalization. Moreover, in its strategic plan the Academy does not give importance to the inflow of foreign students.

As for the mobility of teaching staff, the teaching staff of PAARA goes abroad to participate in seminars and conferences and not for teaching. The cases when foreign teachers came to the Academy to teach within the framework of international memoranda or agreements are also rare.

The level of foreign language proficiency among the stakeholders of the Academy is low. Hence there is a need to increase the hours of foreign language courses and to organize additional trainings. Academic programs in English are missing in PAARA. The existence of courses in English is an important precondition to enhance the level of proficiency of local students and to enroll foreign students.

Academic program LOs are defined by the chairs. In program and course descriptions teaching, learning and assessment methods are also mentioned. However the involvement of internal stakeholders in the development, revision, assessment and improvement of academic programs is low and that of the external stakeholders is missing. Development of academic programs together with external stakeholders (including international partners) will give an opportunity to reveal needs of current labor market and to prepare quality and competitive specialists with effective academic programs.

There is no complete information about the academic programs in the website either in Armenian or English. It would be desirable to present information about needs assessment of academic programs, competences, LOs and credits. Curricula are also not available online.

It should be noted that the expression of the workload of students in the academic programs was expressed in credits which was in line with Bologna system. However there was a lack of awareness and understanding of ECTS among the students, teaching staff and employers. Even in the English version of the SER “ECTS” was translated as European Teacher Transfer System.

The Academy has also a Career Center and Union of alumni. Surveys are conducted among the alumni and students however there is no analysis of the results. Besides, the results of the surveys are not transparent as they are not presented to the stakeholders. It would be helpful to use the results of surveys and monitoring in the evaluation and improvement of academic programs. The practice of distance learning at PAARA is highlighted as well as conduction of trainings for the specialists of the management sphere.

The members of the Council of the Academy are at the same time employers and teaching staff members. The fact that the number of hourly paid teaching staff members exceeds the number of main (permanent) teaching staff puts the stability of the teaching staff of PAARA at danger. Besides, the selection of the teaching staff is carried out not based on a competition and this hinders objective selection of the teaching staff and recruitment of competitive specialists.

Though QA is presented as a separate goal in the strategic plan of the Academy, the processes are not carried out with PDCA cycle, the network (decentralized) approach of QA is missing, the differentiation of the functions of QA Department staff is not clear, the influence of the QA Department in the activities of the Academy is not reflected. The main tools for the evaluation of the activities of PAARA by the QA Department are surveys carried out among the internal stakeholders which not always are fully conducted, analyzed and do not always foster decision making based on the survey results. Participation of external stakeholders in the needs assessment is missing. The activities of the QA Department are not transparently presented to the stakeholders. Effective implementation of systematic approaches in the QA sphere at PAARA will foster improvement of management system.

## Recommendations

- To introduce academic programs in foreign languages ensuring the inflow of foreign students
- To introduce QA mechanisms of international cooperation,
- To involve courses/modules in the academic programs that will foster international competitiveness of students,
- To involve employers/representative of state and public sectors in the revision of academic programs,
- To activate national and international cooperation,
- To improve the level of foreign language proficiency among the students and teaching staff to foster internationalization,
- To develop strategy for internationalization and to show a systematic approach towards that direction.

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Aghavni Hakobyan  
Head of the Expert panel

## DESCRIPTION OF EXPERTIZE

### COMPOSITION OF THE EXPERT PANEL

The external evaluation of the Academy's self-evaluation was carried out by the expert panel with the following members:

1. Aghavni Hakobyan – Armenian State University of Economics, Head of the Department of Continuous Education and Trainings, Candidate of Economical Sciences, Associate Professor
2. Margret Schermutzki – Director of Quality Management at Aachen University of Germany, Higher Education Expert at “Tuning Academy” International Center of higher education and research
3. Gegham Karoyan – Deputy director on educational affairs of the Institute of ICT and Electronics at Armenian National Polytechnic University, Candidate of Technical Sciences, Associate Professor
4. Vahagn Aglyan – Head of the Chair of Public Administration at Yerevan State University Candidate of Historical Sciences, Associate Professor
5. Tatev Movsisyan – 2<sup>nd</sup> year MA student of “Management” at Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences

The composition of the expert panel was agreed upon with the Academy.

The works of the expert panel were coordinated by Gayane Ananyan –Specialist of ANQA Department of Institutional and Program Accreditation.

The translation was provided by Ani Mazmanyanyan- Lecturer at Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Science.

All the members of the expert panel, including the Coordinator and the translator have signed independence and confidentiality agreements.

### THE PROCESS OF EXPERTISE

#### Application for state accreditation

The Academy applied for institutional accreditation by submitting the application form, the copies of the license and respective appendices to ANQA.

The ANQA Secretariat checked the data presented in the application form and attached documents as well as in the electronic survey of ANQA. After making the decision on accepting the application an agreement was signed between ANQA and the Academy. The timetable of activities was prepared and approved. Within the time-period set in the time-schedule the Academy presented its self-evaluation report in Armenian and English and the supporting documentation according to ANQA format.

The self-evaluation of PAARA was carried out by a working group formed especially for that purpose.

#### Preparatory phase

ANQA coordinator observed the report to check its alignment with ANQA technical requirements. Then ANQA secretariat sent the self-evaluation to the expert panel the

composition of which was agreed upon with the Academy and was approved by the order of ANQA Director.

In order to prepare the expert panel for the works and to ensure the effectiveness of expertise ANQA conducted 5 trainings for the expert panel on the following topics:

1. RA regulation of accreditation, criteria and standards
2. Main functions of expert panel
3. Preliminary evaluation as preparatory phase of developing expert panel report, the main requirements of writing the report
4. Methodology of observation of documents and resources
5. Techniques and ethics of meetings and questions

Having observed the self-evaluation and documents of the University the expert panel conducted the initial evaluation according to the format preparing the list of questions for different target groups and also list of additional documents needed for observation. During the initial evaluation, the expert panel also had class observations and was present at the defense of MA theses. Within the scheduled time the expert panel summarized the results of the initial evaluation and formed a time schedule of the site-visit. According to the ANQA manual on the conduction of expertise the intended meetings with all the target groups, close and open meetings, document and resource review were included in the time schedule.

#### Self-evaluation of PAARA

The Institutions presented Armenian and English version of its self-evaluation report (SER) according to the ANQA format on 12.04.2018 together with attached documentation package. The SER contained mainly generic and descriptive information and didn't show real dynamics after the previous accreditation.

#### Preliminary visit

The preliminary visit of the Head of expert panel, ANQA head of staff and coordinator of expert evaluation took place two weeks before the site visit. During the preliminary visit the schedule of site visit was agreed upon with the Academy, the list of additional documents for observation was presented, organizational and technical issues as well as norms of ethics during the site visit were discussed and mutually agreed decisions were made. The rooms prepared for focus groups and expert panel discussions were observed, the issues related to the equipment and facilities were clarified.

#### Site-visit

Site visit of the expert panel took place from 29 to 31 May, 2019. According to the schedule the works of the expert panel launched with a close meeting of the panel the aim of which was to discuss and agree about the assessment cycle, issues to be clarified during the site-visit, strong and weak points of the University per criteria and procedure of focus groups with the international expert as well as to clarify further steps.

All the members of the panel, ANQA coordinator as well as the translator were present at the site visit.

The site visit started and was closed with the meeting with the Rector. The teaching staff, students, deans, heads of chairs, employers and alumni for focus groups to clarify some problems were selected randomly from the list provided beforehand. All the meetings were organized according to the schedule, including also open meeting during which PhD students /researchers/ were present. During the site visit the expert panel conducted observation of documents, resource observation and focus groups in different structural units of the Academy.

During the close meetings of the panel at the end of each working day the interim results of peer review were discussed and at the end of the site visit the main outcomes of the site visit were summarized during the close discussion.

Peer review was carried out within the framework of state accreditation criteria and standards and ANQA procedures where two- level scale is applied: satisfactory and unsatisfactory. Besides, the self-evaluation of the Academy was evaluated according to that scale per standard and the expert panel report –per criteria.

#### Expert panel report

The expert panel has conducted preliminary evaluation according to the self-evaluation report of the Academy, the documents attached to it and the observations during the site-visit as a result of regularly organized discussions. Based on the observations after the discussions the Head of the panel and ANQA coordinator prepared the draft expert panel report which was agreed upon with the panel members.

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Gayane Ananyan

Signature of the Coordinator

## EVALUATION PER ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

### BRIEF INFORMATION ON THE ACADEMY

History: “Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia” was established according to the Decision No. 240 of the Republic of Armenia Government dated as of May 24, 1994 and is the successor of the Management School of the Republic of Armenia. The goal of establishment of the school was preparation of state officials for employment on the executive and middle management level within the RA President’s Staff, the RA Government, the Republican and local bodies of the executive authority. In 1994 short-term training courses were organized and after a year the first admission of the School for full-time study was organized. In 1997 according to the decision of the RA Government the School was given the right to organize part-time studies with the duration of 2.5 years’ study. In order to align the processes of training and qualification enhancement of state servants according to Decision of the Government of the

Republic of Armenia, dated as of 2002, “Management School of the Republic of Armenia” was reorganized into “Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia” State Non-Commercial Organization continuing its previously adopted mission.

As per Decree No. 370-A of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, dated as of April 10, 2003, the Academy established studies in Master’s programs. According to the Decree N1703-N of the RA Government as of December 27, 2017 the general governance of the Academy is carried out by “the Staff of Government of the Republic of Armenia” State Administration (Authorized Body) in compliance with RA Legislation and the Charter of the Academy combining the principles of sole and collegial management and implementation of functions by Governing Board, Scientific Council and Rectorate.

Education: About 640 students study in the Academy. The Academy provides MA education in the professions of Jurisprudence, Public Administration, Political Science, Psychology, Finances as well as PhD education in Public Rights, Economy and Management, Political Institutes and Processes, General Psychology, Theory and History of Psychology, Personality Psychology. In its strategic plan the Academy highlights continuous improvement of education quality, reinforcement of quality culture, development of additional and continuous education for which it is envisaged to review implemented academic programs aligning them to the needs of the labor market, to develop outcome-based academic programs, to introduce comprehensive and objective assessment system, to integrate master education and internship.

Currently there are 5 chairs in the Academy that carry out education with 12 MA academic programs. Education in the Academy is organized both free of charge and on paid basis with full-time and part-time mode of study. Since 2017-2018 together with the International Educational-Scientific Center of the RA National Academy of Sciences PAARA has been implementing “Business administration (management)” MA program in distance learning mode.

Research: To enlarge the investment of research outcomes and the participation of stakeholders in research activities PAARA planned in its strategic plan to develop mechanisms for the interconnection of research and education processes, integration of research outputs in academic programs, enhancement of public awareness of research opportunities at PAARA and enlargement of research capacities of the Academy.

Internationalization: In the strategic plan of PAARA in terms of development of external relations and internationalization it is envisaged to enlarge the scope of international cooperation fostering the mobility of students, teaching and administrative staffs, to carry out international accreditation of at least one academic program, to enlarge the scope of cooperation of PAARA with international organizations, to introduce academic programs awarding double and/or joint diploma.

Quality Assurance: For the development of internal QA system it was envisaged in the strategic plan of the Academy to develop and introduce education quality assessment and assurance system, to improve the credit system at Academy, to ensure favorable conditions and



mechanisms for the continuous development and effectiveness of the quality of teaching and learning, to initiate processes of revision of current academic programs and investment of new programs in line with the labor market demands, to prepare for external quality evaluation of academic programs and accreditation processes.

While carrying out the peer-review the expert panel was guided by the principle of “compliance to the goals” and the above mentioned information was viewed as main ambitions and goals of the Academy.

#### CRITERION I. MISSION AND GOALS

CRITERION: The policies and procedures of the institution are in accordance with the institution’s mission which is in line with ANQF.

#### FACTS

1.1 The institution has a clear, well-articulated mission that represents the institution’s purposes and goals and is in accordance with National Qualifications Framework (hereafter NQF).

According to the strategic plan of PAARA the mission of the institution is “implementation of higher professional and post graduate academic programs, provision of additional and continuous education, implementation of scientific and applied research activities, provision of consultancy, assurance of the public administration sphere with informative-analytical materials in line with the requirements of management system of public and private sectors as well as international scientific-educational cooperation in the sphere of public administration”.

The Academy viewed the improvement plan which was developed based on the recommendations of the previous accreditation as an action plan for the strategic plan.

In 2019 the Academy developed and approved its new 2019-2024 strategic plan. However it should be noted that the effectiveness of fulfillment of the previous strategic goals has not been evaluated. The new 2019-2024 strategic plan of the Academy has not been developed based on the analysis of the results of the previous strategic plan. Besides, the Academy has not developed action plan for 2019-2024 strategic plan.

The Academy’s mission is in line with NQF in terms that after the completion of the academic programs qualifications of master and researcher are awarded. At the same time the Academy has not carried out analysis on the alignment of academic program learning outcomes with NQF.

1.2. The mission statement reflects the needs of the internal and external stakeholders.

According to the RA Government decree N338 as of April 8, 2002, as well as according to the RA Law on State Non-Commercial Organizations sub-points “e” and “j” of provision 2 of article 13, the authorities of the governance of PAARA are reserved to the “Staff of the Government of the Republic of Armenia” state administrative institution.

As internal stakeholders PAARA mentions in the SER its students and teaching staff, and external stakeholders are experts, alumni and employers.

According to the PAARA Rector’s order on “Approving the Composition of the Working Group for the Development of PAARA Strategic Plan and the Time-schedule for the

Implementation of Activities” internal stakeholders of PAARA were involved in the development of PAARA 2019-2024 strategic plan.

As a weak point in the SWOT analysis of PAARA the following was mentioned: “Insufficient participation of internal stakeholders (especially students) in the formulation of objectives derived from PAARA mission”. On the other hand, external stakeholders are not involved in the working group.

According to PAARA improvement plan from previous accreditation the Academy envisaged to organize round-table discussions based on PAARA mission, strategic goals and provided services.

The Academy has envisaged ensuring the participation of alumni, state and local self-governing bodies, private sector, civil society representatives and respective structural units. The expert panel was not provided grounds about the implementation of those activities.

1.3. The institution has set mechanisms and procedures to evaluate the achievement of its mission and goals and further improve them.

The main mechanism of evaluating the results of implementation of PAARA mission and goals is accountability. Accountability operates according to hierarchy: bottom-up (chair-educational-methodical department-Vice-Rector) up to the Rector of the Academy. There is no unified format for making reports. Reports in the Academy are not developed according to the annual work plans.

The reports of PAARA structural units are summed up in the Rector’s annual report which is discussed in Scientific Council and then is presented to the approval of the Governing board and is published in the website of the Academy. However the reports of the Rector are not presented according to the outcomes of strategic goals and objectives of PAARA and changes for improvement based on the outcomes are not carried out.

In the recommendations of the previous accreditation expert panel the following was mentioned: “to improve mechanisms to evaluate and improve the outcomes of the fulfillment of PAARA mission and goals and to develop clear procedures for their implementation, to clarify the intended outcomes of the strategic plan and indicators of evaluation”.

Nevertheless, the expert analysis show that indicators of evaluation of outcomes of strategic plan were not clarified and indicators in 2019-2024 strategic plan are completely missing.

Regularly carried out inspections by the RA Civil Service Council and RA Government’s Staff are viewed by the Academy as mechanisms evaluating the effectiveness of fulfillment of strategic goals and allocation of financial means.

#### JUDGEMENTS:

The expert panel finds it positive that PAARA has a clearly defined mission which expresses the main activity of the Academy. However the Academy has not carried out evaluation of the effectiveness of fulfillment of strategic goals which should have served as a basis for the development of the new 2019-2024 strategic plan. The Academy didn’t have an action plan for

2013-2018 strategic plan and as such it views the improvement plan developed based on the recommendations of the expert panel. Whereas the joint application of those two plans could foster complete fulfillment of strategic goals.

The analysis of the expert panel show that goals and objectives mentioned in the strategic plan of the Academy reflect the main processes carried out at the Academy.

Employers are viewed as external stakeholders of the Academy however during the expertise it turned out that most of the employers are also involved as teaching staff members that hinders clear differentiation of external stakeholders, real needs assessment and does not ensure their participation in the development of the strategic plan. It is positive that PAARA has involved its internal stakeholders in the working group for the development of the strategic plan, however especially students didn't have enough participation. Such participation of external stakeholders in the development of the strategic plan can put the preparation of competitive specialists in line with the current requirements of the labor market at danger.

Though PAARA defined indicators for the evaluation of the fulfillment of goals of 2013-2018 strategic plan, those indicators didn't have qualitative and quantitative justifications which puts the monitoring and evaluation of fulfillment of strategic goals at danger. Evaluation and analysis of the evaluation of results of implementing 2013-2018 strategic plan would give an opportunity to reveal non-fulfilled goals and to target them in 2019-2024 strategic plan.

The absence of the indicators of fulfillment of strategic goals again puts the evaluation of progress and mission of PAARA at danger.

The expert panel finds that accountability shouldn't be the main mechanism of evaluating the results of the strategic plan. The reports need to be improved not only in terms of analytical context, reveal of problems and suggestion of improvements but also from the perspective of ensuring their participatory and transparent nature.

#### CONCLUSION:

Taking into consideration that the main activity of the Academy is in line with its mission, the goals and objectives involve needs of internal and external stakeholders, the expert panel finds that the Academy meets the requirements of Criterion 1.

The compliance of the institution's institutional capacities with the requirements of criterion 1 is satisfactory.

## CRITERION II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

CRITERION: The institution's system of governance, administrative structures and their activities are efficient and are aimed at the accomplishment of mission and goals of the institution preserving ethical norms of governance.

## FACTS

2.1 The Institution's system of governance ensures structured decision-making process, in accordance with defined ethical rules and has efficient provision of human, material and financial resources to accomplish its educational and other purposes.

According to the Charter "General governance of the Academy is carried out by "Staff of the Government of the Republic of Armenia" state administrative institution based on the RA Legislation and the Charter, with the combination of sole management and collegial principles and with the implementation of functions of the Council, Scientific Council and Rectorate".

Legal acts adopted by the Academy ensure institutional grounds for decision making. In particular, the strategic plan of the Academy, Charter, Charters of the structural units, job descriptions of the Academy staff list positions, work regulation of the Rectorate, Charter of the Students' Council, Charter of the Students' Scientific Union, Regulation on the election, concluding an employment contract and ordering a position of the heads of chairs, rules of behavior, etc.

There is a mapping of bodies involved in the organizational structure, there are documents regulating the activities of structural units where mechanisms of accountability and subordination are reflected. There are job descriptions of people who make managerial decisions. The decision making process is documented taking into account the existence of a number of regulatory documents.

During the site-visit it turned out that the governance of the Academy is not carried out derived from the priorities of the strategic plan. The absence of the action plan and concrete indicators in the strategic plan does not give an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of management processes. In the Academy mainly situational management is carried out. Regulation of many processes is carried out upon the immediate order of the Rector. To ensure dynamic development of the Academy as a result of the previous accreditation recommendations the organizational structure of the Academy was reviewed.

In January 2019 the Academy approved its new organizational structure which however was not formed based on the analysis of the previous one. Based on the recommendation of the previous accreditation expert panel the Academy envisaged to carry out annual self-evaluation of different structural units, which however was not carried out. Evaluation of effectiveness of the allocation of human, material and financial resources according to the direction of activities and structural units of the Academy was not carried out either.

According to the new organizational structure of the Academy, there are 4 positions of Vice-Rectors at PAARA: Vice-Rector on Scientific-educational Affairs, Vice-Rector on External Relations, Vice-Rector on Additional and Continuous Education, Vice-Rector on Administrative-economic Affairs. Spheres of activities of the Vice-rectors are described in job descriptions (developed in 2016). Job responsibilities have not been reviewed according to the last changes of the organizational structure. Hence the responsibilities of 4 Vice-Rectors and head of structural units under their supervision are not defined in any document. Observation of the structure and management system of the structural units showed that the responsibilities and authorities of some positions are not clearly differentiated.

Moreover, under the supervision of the Vice-Rector on External Relations there is only one department which is the Department of International Cooperation and External Relation. The Department of Trainings and Enhancement of Qualifications and Educational-methodical Department are under the supervision of Vice-Rector on Additional and Continuous Education. The Center of Distance Learning is simultaneously under the supervision of both Vice-Rector on Scientific-educational Affairs and Vice-Rector on Additional and Continuous Education. The Educational-methodical Department, Division of PhD studies, Department of Professional Education Quality Assurance are under the supervision of Vice-Rector on Scientific-educational Affairs. The coordination of scientific-research activities are factually carried out by the Vice-Rector on Scientific-educational Affairs.

The Academy has ethical rules for the management system approved in 2015. The regulation and authorities of the Ethics Committee regulation of applying to the Committee and organization of activities are defined in PAARA Code of conduct. Evaluation of effectiveness and influence of the activities of Ethics Committee has not been carried out by the Academy.

Evaluation of effectiveness of the management system has not been carried out, assessment systems are missing. The Academy is equipped with recourses which are necessary for the fulfillment of educational and other goals, there is a policy and clear procedures of financial management. However strategic goals and objectives of the Academy are not put as basis for the policy of financial management. Main priorities and development targets of PAARA for the future 5 years are not put as the basis for the allocation of financial resources.

So, there are 9 main goals in the 2013-2018 strategic plan of the Academy, however it is not possible to evaluate what resources were annually allocated for the fulfillment of those goals, whether the resources were used efficiently, what the proportions of reallocation were, as such analysis has not been made. External financial audit was not conducted in PAARA.

2.2 The institution's system of governance gives an opportunity to student and the teaching staff to take part in decision making procedures.

Current regulations and documents of the Academy are aimed at assurance of involvement of internal and external stakeholders in the management bodies and in decision making processes. Involvement of internal stakeholders of the Academy (teaching staff and students) in the PAARA Council is 45% and the involvement of students in the Scientific Council is 24%. Students and teaching staff participate in the decision making concerning them and in the sessions of Scientific Council.

Surveys conducted among students are widely used for needs assessment of stakeholders, individual meetings of administrative staff with students are regularly organized. The meetings are not always formal which gives an opportunity to quickly and operatively respond to the problems.

The previous expert panel mentioned in the recommendations the development of students' autonomy as a necessity by enlarging and deepening students' participation in the management of the Academy and decision making processes. For the implementation of this recommendation the Academy envisaged the following in the improvement plan: to enlarge the participation of students in the management of the Academy and decision making processes, to

enhance the effectiveness of involvement of students in different collegial bodies. As an indicator for this recommendation the Academy defined the following: “participation of students in the sessions of governing bodies, number of initiatives proposed by them”. Nevertheless it should be stated that the effectiveness of involvement of students in the governing bodies was not evaluated. As a weak point the Academy presented in the SER the following: “lack of initiative by the students in the decision making procedures in governing bodies”. After the site-visit it was found out that the Academy has not implemented clear steps in terms of enhancing the level of participation and activeness of students in the decision making in governing bodies.

2.3 The institution formulates and carries out short-term, mid-term and long term planning consistent with its mission and goals as well as has appropriate mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of those plans.

The improvement plan developed based on the results of the previous accreditation expert panel report was approved in the Academy as an action plan for 2013-2018 strategic plan.

According to the recommendations of the previous accreditation the Academy has defined the following in the improvement plan as a goal: to improve the management system of PAARA and to enhance its effectiveness and quality, to introduce mid-term and short-term planning system.

However the grounds for the implementation of mid-term and short-term plans is missing, besides there are no clear mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of short-term, mid-term and long-term plans. PAARA views its strategic plan as a long-term planning tool. However there is no action plan for the implementation of 2019-2024 strategic plan. As a tool for mid-term planning the improvement plan which was developed based on the recommendations of the previous accreditation is viewed. It should be stated that the previous action plan is not developed on PAARA strategic goals but rather on the recommendation of the previous accreditation and improvement plan. The Academy has not carried out monitoring of the effectiveness of the plans. The development plan of the Chair on Languages and Information Technologies for the upcoming three years can be mentioned as an example of the planning. However suchlike programs, short-term planning, self-evaluation works, reports are missing in other structural units.

2.4 The institution conducts the study of factors influencing its activities and draws on reliable findings during the decision-making process.

Surveys in PAARA are presented as main tools for the analysis of internal and external factors. Statistical analysis and benchmarking are rarely conducted at PAARA. There are no other mechanisms, tools and schedules for the study of factors influencing PAARA’s activities. There are no regulated mechanisms for the prediction and evaluation of external factors. Particularly, there are no needs analysis of labor market/employers and public. Surveys conducted among the alumni are not regularly and systematically organized, and grounds assuring analysis of survey results and their impact on the further activities of the Academy are missing. As a mechanism for revealing the development tendencies of external environment is viewed involvement of

practitioners as teaching staff members at the Academy. As a result of the analysis of external environment the investment of the new academic program in Tourism Management is mentioned. The investment of the new academic program is conditioned by the consideration of priorities in state policy and by the increase of the number of tourists in the RA recently.

2.5 The management of the policies and the processes draws on the quality management principle (plan-do-check-act /PDCA/).

The main document of quality management system in the Academy is “QA Guideline”. The grounds assuring analysis of implementation of policy and administration with PDCA cycle are missing. The processes of the management system of the Academy are in different phases of PDCA. 2013-2018 strategic plan of the Academy was planned, implemented but the grounds of their evaluation are missing. To what extent it fostered effective administration is not evaluated. The academic programs which are improved based on the quality management principle are in the phase of implementation. The development of the new academic program descriptions was carried out based on the recommendations of the previous accreditation.

A unified format for the course descriptions was developed according to which course descriptions were reviewed and changed.

The evaluation of the academic programs is carried out through the results of surveys conducted among the students.

Each year there is an opportunity for making changes in the academic programs and curriculum up to 10%, and in this term the cycle is closed.

In terms of the scientific-research component activation of the scientific-research activity was planned after the previous accreditation process, scientific-research centers were established.

2.6 The institution has evaluation mechanisms in place ensuring data collection, analyses and application of the data on the effectiveness of the academic programs and other processes.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of academic programs and education process in the Academy is not systematically organized. Revision of the academic programs is partly regulated. Revision of the academic programs is carried out jointly by the chairs and Department of Professional Education Quality Assurance. Chairs are responsible for the involvement of new courses, revision of academic programs, and the QA Department is responsible for the design of academic programs, definition of LOs, methodical support and assurance of the compliance of the academic programs with the given requirements. The importance of the revision of the academic programs is stipulated in the document “Methodical Instructions for the Development of LO-based Academic Programs” adopted in 2013 in the Academy.

Mechanisms for gathering information about effectiveness of the academic programs and other processes are missing in the Academy as a result of which analysis and evaluation of the gathered data is not carried out. High level of the employability of alumni is viewed as an indicator of the effectiveness of the academic programs.

The level of employability of PAARA alumni within 2-5 years after the graduation in 2013 was 77%, in 2014 was 86%, in 2015 was 83% and in 2016 was 75%.

2.7 There are objective mechanisms in place evaluating the quality of quantitative and qualitative information on the academic programs and qualification awarded.

Information about the academic programs and awarded qualifications of the Academy is available to the public through PAARA web-site, booklets, as well as through the informative journal “Armenian Universities”.

The information about the academic programs and awarded qualifications is also published in the annual reports of the Rector. The Academy widely uses the platform of social networks for the dissemination of information.

In the recommendations of the previous accreditation it was mentioned: “to develop objective mechanisms for the evaluation of qualitative and quantitative information about the academic programs and awarded qualifications”.

As a result of the expert panel studies it became clear that mechanisms evaluating the publications have not been developed in the Academy yet, the qualitative and quantitative information about the quality of qualifications is not analyzed and evaluated yet.

## JUDGEMENTS.

Though structural changes have been made based on the recommendations of the previous accreditation the management system needs further improvement and the functions of the structural units need clarification as the changes were not comprehensive and were not carried out based on the evaluation of effectiveness of the management system.

The Academy implements situational and not strategic management which is risky in terms of the fulfillment of goals and objectives of the Academy. The expert panel also finds risky that as a result of structural changes job responsibilities have not been defined for some positions and structural units. SERs of structural units of the Academy could foster effective management.

Though management system of the Academy gives an opportunity to involve internal and external stakeholders in decision making small number of internal and external stakeholders are involved in management of the Academy and fulfillment of strategic goals which puts the decision making in danger and does not ensure transparency and objectiveness of management decision making.

The expert panel is concerned about the lack of studies of the impact of external factors on the activities of the Academy, this hinders the disclosure of current problems and development of plans based on them.

As during the previous accreditation today also PAARA does not implement short-term and mid-term planning. Though as mechanisms for the monitoring of planning reports and different procedures of monitoring are defines, there are no phases for the implementation of monitoring, evaluation and improvement.

A unified approach on gathering and analyzing the information about the effectiveness of education and other services provided by the Academy is missing, the mechanisms for the further use of gathered information for improvements are not clear which decreases the effectiveness of improvements and objectiveness of evaluation.

Preparation of quality specialists of public administration is in danger in the Academy because of the lack of information and analysis on the effectiveness of the academic programs.



## CONCLUSION:

Taking into consideration that situational management is implemented at PAARA, analysis on the effectiveness of the management system is missing, the current organizational structure, the activities of structural units and the planning system of the Academy are not fully directed to the fulfillment of strategic goals, mid-term systematized planning is missing, there are no analysis of external environment, most part of administrative processes are in the phases of planning or implementation and the evaluation and improvement phases based on it are rare, as well as the recommendations of the previous accreditation have not been implemented, the expert panel finds that PAARA does not meet the requirements of Criterion 2.

The compliance of the institution's institutional capacities with the requirements of criterion 2 is unsatisfactory.

## CRITERION III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

CRITERION: The academic programs are in concord with the Institution's mission, form part of institutional planning and promote mobility and internationalization.

### FACTS

3.1 The academic programs are in line with Institution's mission, they correspond to the state academic standards and are thoroughly described according to the intended learning outcomes of the qualification awarded.

The Academy implements exclusively MA programs in line with the 7<sup>th</sup> level of NQF. There are 12 academic programs in the Academy with full-time and part-time modes of study. Since 2018 together with the International Educational-Scientific Center of the RA National Academy of Sciences PAARA has been implementing "Business administration (management)" MA program in distance learning mode. The program was introduced within the framework of grant project of Competitive Fund of Innovations in the Higher Education of the RA with the financial support from the World Bank.

Continuous improvement of education and preparation of higher quality manager specialists for public and private sectors is stipulated as the mission of the Academy in 2019-2024 strategic plan. The academic programs of the Academy are in line with the mission in terms that PAARA indeed prepares specialists for public and private sectors. As main principles in the strategic plan assurance of availability and accessibility of education services and revision of the academic programs based on the needs of labor market are mentioned.

In the recommendations of the previous accreditation it was highlighted: "to clarify the LOs per profession, to align them with the requirements of the labor market". For the implementation of the latter Academy has defined the following indicator: "academic program LOs defined in line with labor market requirements, revised curricula and course descriptions according to LOs". However during the site-visit it turned out that the employers didn't take part in the development of LOs

Academic program LOs are defined with knowledge-skills-competences. During the expert analysis it became clear that in some courses there are repetitions of topics within the same profession of BA studies. The Academy explains it with the fact that it enrolls BA graduates from

other universities with other professions. In the academic programs the Academy has involved courses and topics that allow ensuring further studies of students with different BA background in master studies.

In 2013 the Academy developed “Methodical Guidelines for the Development of LO-based Academic Programs” where the sequence of steps for the development of academic programs and phases of the development of courses are described. The Academy does not have a tool for the alignment of academic program LOs with NQF. LO based academic programs are presented according to the awarding qualifications. LO based academic programs are also presented on the level of each course description.

Generic, professional and narrow professional skills are presented. It should be stated that the Academy has not yet carries out benchmarking of academic program LOs, the academic programs haven’t undergone external evaluation.

The proportion of theoretical and practical hours in the academic programs of the Academy is 50/50. In particular, all the courses of Public Administration profession (except for Professional foreign language and ICT and Electronic Management courses) have 16 hours of lecturing and 16 hours of practical lessons according to the curriculum. Such a distribution of theoretical and practical hours exists also in other academic programs.

From the expert analysis it became clear that there are repetitions of LOs and content in some academic programs. Due to the different names of the academic programs there is an increase of applicants in the Academy.

3.2 The Institution has a policy that promotes alignment between teaching and learning approaches and the intended learning outcomes of academic programs, which ensures student-centered learning.

After the previous accreditation process on the level of each academic program teaching, learning and assessment methods were developed according to the generic, professional and narrow professional LOs. In the academic programs general description of teaching methods and ways of their usage are presented.

Different teaching methods are presented in the academic programs of the Academy: lecturing, practical plays (role plays), debates (interactive discussions), practical lessons. As learning methods team work (including business plan development), shows, solution of practical tasks, simple and complicated situational task solutions, educational film watching and internship are mentioned. Particularly, e.g. in the cases of Public Administration, Tourism Management, Insurance and other academic programs it is stipulated that about 50 % of curricular hours should be seminars, case studies, etc. In the “Management of State Funds” academic program it is mentioned that “the Academy structures its education by the development of skills through using different theoretical concepts about management (including Management of State Funds) in concrete situations (case studies in management and finances)”.

During the site-visit it turned out that student-centered learning is used by the teaching staff: interactive methods /during the teaching process many lecturers apply the method of case study or analysis of situational problems/.

At the same time expert analysis showed that evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching methods at the Academy is not carried out.

In 2018 in order to enhance the effectiveness of learning the Academy obtained the official right to use Google Education electronic platform due to which during the beginning of the course the lecturer presents the plan of the course to the students and provides materials related to the course.

3.3 The Institution has policy on students' assessment according to the learning outcomes and promotes academic honesty.

Assessment system at the Academy is regulated by the "Regulation on the Control and Assessment of Students' Knowledge at PAARA" as well as by the "Regulation on Organization of Education with Credit System at PAARA". MA students become aware the current assessment system through the "Guideline for MA students" the electronic version of which is available on PAARA website. Besides, assessment system is presented also in the academic program descriptions according to the teaching and learning methods.

The following assessment methods are presented in the academic programs: oral or written examination together with situational tasks. During the assessment letters and ranking system are applied (100 points). According to the above mentioned guideline, in order to get MA degree the learner should successfully obtain at least 20 credits (including scientific seminars, MA thesis and final exam). The Academy has not carried out evaluation of the effectiveness of evaluation system to see whether current assessment methods allow to effectively evaluate the acquisition of the LOs defined in the academic programs.

The assessment of internship is defined in the "Regulation on the Control and Assessment of Students' Knowledge at PAARA". As assessment components in the regulation the following are mentioned: attendance 20 points, report of internship 30 points, defense of the internship report 50 points. Assessment criteria for MA thesis are not presented.

In 2015 the Academy has adopted "Rules of Behavior" according to which lie, plagiarism, fake, theft, dishonesty, scientific fraud or usage of other peoples materials unfairly are violations of the "Rules of Behavior" hence they are intolerable.

In the Academy the antiplagiarism system is partially introduced. Effective mechanisms revealing cases of violating academic honesty are missing. Checking of MA students' theses with antiplagiarism system is selective. During the site-visit it turned out that the system is not applied because of lack of time (for fully checking one work 6-8 hours is needed). Possible sanctions for violation of academic honesty are not stipulated. In the MA theses which were observed during the site-visit there were cases of plagiarism which was possible to reveal due to a common search in the Internet, there were also examples of non-properly made references. Some part of MA theses were mostly descriptive not analytical, the outcomes of individual research made by the student are not presented. Though there is a clear requirement for MA theses to be externally peer-reviewed during the site-visit there were theses the peer-review of which was conducted by the teaching staff of the Academy.

There is a regulation of complaint of the results of examinations and checking at PAARA approved in 2014. The regulation is supposed to settle the complaints concerning the results of examinations and checking.

3.4 The academic programs of the Institution are contextually coherent with other relevant programs and promote mobility of students and staff as well as internationalization.

Unified policy or format for the implementation of benchmarking of the academic programs is missing at PAARA. In the recommendations of the previous accreditation enhancement of international mobility of students and teaching staff was mentioned. In its improvement plan the Academy envisaged to foster cooperation with foreign universities and diversify ways mobility in order to implement the above mentioned recommendation.

In order to implement the above mentioned recommendations the Academy also envisaged to have a three-year improvement plan for international mobility, existence of academic mobility programs with foreign institutions, increase in the number of signed cooperation agreements, agreements for students' exchange and mobility, etc.

Some comparative analysis of the academic programs have been carried out, particularly there is a part in the academic programs where data about the benchmarking conducted during the development of the academic program is mentioned. Those data involve names of countries and universities the experience of which was benchmarked and also the reference of the used materials. In particular, during the development of "State Governance and Local Self-governance" academic program the benchmarking was conducted with the following institutions: USA Harvard University, Kennedy School of Government, Australia -Australian and New Zealand School of Government. In the structure of the academic program the part on "Suggestions on academic program as a result of analysis of benchmarking". The latter has the same content in all the academic programs and does not contain suggestions and changes.

For the development of new academic programs there is no obligatory requirement of being compatible with similar academic programs and assurance of mobility opportunities.

The exception is cooperation with Salzburg University concerning Political Science profession (within the framework of Erasmus+) dues to which based on the agreement signed with Salzburg University in 2018 4 MA students from PAARA went to Salzburg University. Mobility within Armenia is missing. There is no comparative analysis between academic programs of PAARA and that of other RA Universities. The only exception is the distance learning academic program which is implemented together with the RA National Academy of Sciences.

3.5 The Institution has policies in place ensuring academic program monitoring, evaluation of effectiveness and improvement.

In the QA manual of the Academy adopted in 2013 the Academy highlighted the importance of monitoring and regular revision of the academic programs. According to the charter of the Department of Professional Education Quality Assurance approved in 2017, the Department develops "QA procedures for monitoring and regular revision of the academic

programs, their approval, follows and supports the implementation of the academic programs, develops procedures for the evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning on the levels of academic programs and separate courses, evaluates the organization of education, including the effectiveness of educational-methodical, material-technical and human resources, presents respective suggestions”. However, toolkit and time-schedule for the implementation of the above-mentioned processes are missing. As an assessment mechanism in the SER of PAARA surveys conducted from 2012 to 2018 for upgrading and improving the academic programs are presented. The analyses of the latter are not available. There is no information on what extent the results of the surveys were taken into account during the development of the course descriptions.

In its QA concept paper the Academy highlights full participation of learners, alumni and employers in the QA processes of the academic programs. It is viewed as one of the main guarantees as well as requirement of European standards.

According to the concepts the Academy envisages to “conduct surveys among the employers to find out the level of their satisfaction with PAARA alumni, to develop respective mechanisms which will be directed to the disclosure of requirements of alumni and employers concerning education content and organization”. Nevertheless it should be stated that during the site-visit it turned out that surveys are not conducted among employers and alumni.

A questionnaire was developed for conducting surveys among alumni, however there is no questionnaire for employers.

There are no cases of external evaluation of academic programs. The necessity of the latter is mentioned in the QA manual and concrete procedures are presented for it.

## JUDGMENTS

The expert panel finds it positive that as a result of the previous accreditation the Academy tried to align the academic programs to the mission of the Academy after approving new strategic plan and changing the mission.

In spite of the fact that according to its strategic plan the Academy gives importance to the revision of academic programs in line with the needs of the labor market, effective mechanisms and tools for its implementation are not developed yet.

The expert panel finds it positive that the Academy has carried out improvements in the academic programs, formulation of LOs, selection of teaching and learning methods, however there is no evaluation of the impact of changes. This means that the process is in the planning and implementation phase of the PDCA cycle.

Analysis of the system of assessment of students is not carried out in the Academy. Criteria for the evaluation of MA theses generally do not exist in PAARA. The lack of criteria makes the objectiveness and transparency of the assessment and the reliability of the awarded qualifications risky.

The policy on the revision of the academic programs is not fully implemented at PAARA. As mechanism only surveys conducted among students are used which are limited. As a result of surveys no changes have been made in the academic programs. External stakeholders of PAARA do not participate in monitoring of the academic programs in general. All these can put the

stability of the academic programs and competitiveness of students at danger and can cause a gap with the labor market.

Cases of plagiarism revealed by the experts in the theses papers of graduates of PAARA state that the develop “Rules of behavior” and the introduced antiplagiarism system are not applied.

The issues revealed in the theses papers hinder the acquisition of analytical and research skills by MA students and the preparation of students in line with the academic program LOs.

In spite of the fact that benchmarking was conducted within 1 academic program and within it 4 students participated in mobility program unified policy in benchmarking is missing which hinders compatibility of the academic programs with similar programs in other institutions. It would give an opportunity for more mobility of students.

#### CONCLUSION:

Taking into account that academic programs are mostly in line with the mission the institution, LOs of academic programs are properly mapped, teaching and learning methods are defined in details in the academic programs, there is a benchmarking of an academic program and a good experience of student mobility, the expert panel finds that PAARA meets the requirements of Criterion 3.

The compliance of the institution’s institutional capacities with the requirements of criterion 3 is satisfactory.

### CRITERION IV. STUDENTS

CRITERION: The Institution provides support services to students ensuring productive learning environment.

#### FACTS

4.1 The Institution has set mechanisms for promoting students’ recruitment, selection and admission procedures.

In order to enhance students’ enrollment Academy envisaged in its 2013-2018 strategic plan to enlarge and differentiate the advertisement for admission, regularly to organize “open door days” and study visits of future applicants, to prepare materials advertizing PAARA professions and history of the Academy.

During the site-visit it became clear that the above mentioned planned activities were factually implemented. For the enrollment and recruitment of students in the Academy announcements, booklets, website of the Academy, students’ guide, Facebook page, etc. are used.

The QA Department has carried out evaluation of their effectiveness. According to the results most of the students were admitted to the Academy with the recommendation of PAARA graduates. Qualitative analysis on the result of the carried out evaluation or improvement of current mechanisms have not been carried out. In 2018 there was an increase in the number of students admitted to the Academy (633, while in 2016 it was 390 and in 2017 it was 518).

Nevertheless it should be stated that there is no policy on recruitment of foreign students in the Academy. Admission and selection of students is regulated through RA legislation and internal legal acts. Admission to MA studies is carried out with 2 phases: written tests and interview for paid and free of charge education. Admission is organized for both students with basic professional education and for those admitted to PAAR from other professions. Questionnaires for the admission exams were revised according to point 3 of objective 1.1 of the strategic goal 1 stipulated in 2013-2018 strategic plan.

#### 4.2 The Institution has policies and procedures for assessing student educational needs.

The following mechanisms of students' needs assessment are in place in the Academy: surveys conducted among the students and students' involvement in different management levels of PAARA (25% in the Governing Board and in Scientific Council).

The QA Department regularly conducts anonymous surveys directed to the evaluation of the quality of teaching, effectiveness of academic programs, organization of education process, satisfaction with resources and disclosure of other problems in PAARA. However during the site-visit it turned out that internal and external stakeholders are not aware of the results of surveys.

The students are active mainly in raising the issues related to them: applying to the heads of chairs, Students' Council, teaching staff and Educational methodical department. During the site-visit it turned out that issues and suggestions raised by the students were discussed different levels of management and most of them have already been given a solution to, and others are still in process (e.g. creation of an application).

In order to satisfy social-economic needs the Academy organizes free of charge education of students, provides scholarships as well as applies regulation on discounts in tuition fees and students become aware of these processes through individual emails. However analyses on the effectiveness of those processes are missing.

#### 4.3 The Institution provides opportunities for extra-curricular activities and advising services aimed at supporting students' effective learning.

In order to foster effective education of students in 2013-2018 strategic plan the Academy planned "to implement preparatory courses for the applicants, to provide consultancy services, to organize and carry out activities fostering cooperation of learners and teaching staff in education process and improvement of moral-psychological atmosphere". AT the same time the following recommendation was given by the expert panel: "To develop and introduce clear procedures of additional consultancy hours. Particularly, it is advisable to develop controlling mechanisms of consultancy hours per academic program". During the site-visit it turned out that till now there are no clear procedures of organization of additional lessons and consultancy and the fact of their absence is also mentioned in the SER of the Academy. Clear time-schedule for the organization of consultancy at the chairs is also missing. During the site-visit it turned out that students having other professions have overcome professional difficulties through admission exams the questionnaire for which is available on the website of PAARA beforehand. Besides, the students easily turn to the teaching and support staffs at the chairs to get necessary consultancy. Teaching staff members of the chair also initiate study visits for students to different state governing

structures, they organize additional meetings, lessons, seminars, lecturing, e.g. In 2015-2015 and 2018-2019 a three-month courses of Turkish and French were organized for students. During the site-visit it was found out that guidance, consultancy and extracurricular meetings are also organized upon the necessity and wish of students. According to students teaching staff is willing and available to provide any kind of consultancy.

4.4 There are precise regulation and schedule set for students to turn to the administrative staff for additional support and guidance.

Clear procedures on turning to the administrative staff for the provision of support and guidance to students are missing which was also mentioned by the previous expert panel. During the site-visit it turned out that in spite of the absence of the above mentioned procedures and time-schedule, upon necessity the students can turn to different structural units of the Academy and to get solution to their problems (e.g. change in the schedule of exams, provision of discounts, presentation of complaints and suggestions about teaching staff and lectures) or guidance in a short period of time. There is a defined schedule for turning to the Rector of the Academy (once a week, 2 hours) and the students can also use this time. During the site-visit it turned out that students' satisfaction with the administrative staff in terms of getting guidance and support is high.

4.5 The Institution has student career support services.

The Academy gives importance to the career progress of its students and alumni for which it envisaged in its 2013-2018 strategic plan:

- to establish long-term cooperation links with the main employers and public structures of the Academy,
- to reinforce the link of alumni with the Academy,
- to create database and information and communication system of alumni,
- to enlarge opportunities of online and immediate cooperation of alumni with the Academy and with one another,
- to foster the development of Alumni Union of the Academy directing their activities to the establishment of external cooperation and getting external investment and donations.

During the observation of SER and during the site-visit it turned out that the above mentioned planned activities were partially implemented. For the provision of career services to students/graduates Alumni Union of the Academy and Career Center were established. After the previous accreditation of the Academy the Center has carried out a number of works to create a database of alumni of last years and employers. The Center regularly organizes courses on the topics of writing CV, introducing themselves properly to the employer, which also got positive feedback from employers.

In order to enhance the competitiveness of students in the labor market Career Center together with the Department of Internship cooperates with RA State governing bodies (Staff of the RA Prime-Minister, Staff of the RA President, State Revenue Committee of the RA, Ministries, etc.) and a number of private organizations (Vivacell, IngoArmenia, Fast Credit, etc.)



where the internship of students is organized. Most of the above mentioned structures are considered as potential employers of the alumni of PAARA.

According to the SER 100% of students is aware of the services fostering career development, however during the site-visit it turned out that most of the students are not aware of the activities of Career Center and Alumni Union.

#### 4.6 The Institution promotes student involvement in its research activities.

In its 2013-2018 and 2019-2024 strategic plan the Academy gives importance to the enhancement of stakeholders' involvement in scientific-research activities. At the same time in the improvement plan of the Academy it was envisaged to form Students' Scientific Union (SSU) by enlarging students' involvement in research activities. During the site-visit it turned out that the above mentioned activities were partially implemented. After the previous accreditation SSU was established the goals and functions of which are stipulated in the Charter approved by the order of PAARA Rector as of 01.12.2017.

However involvement of learner in the activities of SSU is low. It should be noted that mechanisms promoting students' scientific activities are missing in the Academy and research activities are envisaged as an obligatory component of the academic program. There are no cases of joint supervision (lecturer and employer or teaching staff member of other institution) of MA theses. The Regional Research Center is operating attached to the Academy however students of the Academy do not take part in the activities of the Center. However the expert panel recorded that in 2018 15 MA students had speeches in the scientific conference organized for 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First Republic of Armenia and 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Kharabakh Movement. MA students have the opportunity to be published in "Public Administration" scientific journal however there are sharp changes in the number of articles published by or co-authored by the students (in 2013- 1, in 2014-13, in 2015-4, in 2016-2, in 2017-15, in 2018 data is not provided). During the site-visit it turned out that activities have not been planned towards the sharp changes-decreases in the number of articles.

#### 4.7 The Institution has a special body, which is responsible for the protection of students' rights.

In its 2013-2018 strategic plan the Academy envisaged "to foster enhancement of the level of awareness of students of their rights and obligations, to enhance the role of student unit in the anti-corruption activities of the Academy".

Expert analyses show that the above mentioned activities were factually implemented by the Academy. Rights and obligations of students, the main guarantees for the protection of their rights are regulated by the internal legal acts: agreement signed between the Academy and student, internal regulatory rules, Regulations on the complaint of the results of exams and checking and provision of scholarships to students. The Academy also has a Student's Guide where along with the information about the teaching staff and courses taught, students' rights and obligations defined by the internal rules are presented. The body responsible for the protection of students' rights, discussion of their problems and presentation of their interests in the Academy is Students' Council the activities of which are stipulated in the charter of the Council. During the

site-visit it turned out that Students' Council carries out activities towards protection of students' rights and making them aware of their rights and obligations. During the site-visit the expert panel recorded that students become aware of the events organized by the Students' Council and made decisions through the monitors of the groups and the cases of violation of students' rights mainly get their proper solutions.

4.8 The Institution has set mechanisms for evaluating and ensuring the quality of educational, consultancy and other services provided to students.

For evaluation and quality assurance of educational, consultancy and other services provided to students, the Academy planned in its improvement plan "to improve educational, consultancy and other services provided to full-time and part-time students, to create online courses particularly for part-time students". During expert analysis it became clear that for the implementation of the above mentioned activities regularly only surveys were conducted in the Academy and the issues revealed due to them (satisfaction with resources, complaints from teaching and learning methods) were discussed during the session of the Scientific Council and respective solutions were given to them upon necessity. During the surveys organized by the QA Department the students evaluate the quality of teaching and learning of courses, expectations from the Academy, resource equipment, activities of infrastructure, etc. During the site-visit it became clear that many of the students are not aware of the results of surveys. Evaluation of the effectiveness of surveys conducted for the assessment of educational, consultancy and other services provided to students is not conducted at the Academy either.

#### JUDGMENT:

The expert panel finds it positive that there are clear mechanisms for recruitment and admission of students at the Academy. Though the Academy carried out evaluation of effectiveness of the above mentioned mechanisms, improvements of the current mechanisms have not been carried out. The Academy should give importance to the role of the policy on students' recruitment which would foster internationalization of the Academy and enhancement of financial inflows.

Though the Academy has developed policy on the needs assessment of students, as mechanisms of revealing needs surveys are applied. However there are no qualitative analyses of the survey results due to which it could be possible to reveal target needs of students.

There are no clear procedures on the organization of additional lessons for students in the Academy, however it is praiseworthy that teaching staff is willing and available to provide consultancy to students. Different meetings and courses are organized to foster the progress of students however evaluation and analysis of their effectiveness is not carried out. Thus the expert panel finds that processes of providing support and guidance to students still need to be regulated and improved.

Though the Academy has Alumni Union, Career Center and Department of Internship, there are no analyses on the effectiveness of cooperation with employers, satisfaction of alumni and employers, effectiveness of the organization of internship, as well as employability of alumni that would foster the effective activity of the above mentioned units. Besides, during the site-visit

it turned out that most of the students are not aware of the activities of Career Center and Alumni Union. Thus, it is not known what percentage of students use the services of the mentioned units and to what extent they are pleased. Feedback mechanisms with alumni need improvement. Transparent activities of the above mentioned structures would foster the enhancement of effectiveness of procedures carried out among the students.

Though SSU was established based on the recommendations of the previous accreditation, there is no planning and coordination of the activities of those union. Low involvement of students in the scientific-research activities of the Academy, limited number of articles published by the students or with the co-authors show the weakness of research component in MA academic programs which in its turn hinders the development of analytical skills and competences of students.

Different structural units of the Academy including the Students' Council do active work in the protection of students' rights, disclosure of their educational and other needs. However, monitoring of the activities of the Students' Council is not carried out that would foster effective operation of the unit.

#### CONCLUSION:

Taking into consideration that there are mechanisms for the recruitment and admission of students, the Academy carried out policy on the disclosure and improvement of students' educational and social-economical needs, PAARA provides students with necessary guidance and consultancy to ensure effective learning environment, there is a respective unit which is responsible for the protection of students' rights, the expert panel finds that the Academy meets the requirements of Criterion 4.

The compliance of the institution's institutional capacities with the requirements of criterion 4 is satisfactory.

### CRITERION V. TEACHING AND SUPPORT STAFFS

CRITERION: The Institution provides for a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff to achieve the set goals for academic programmes and institution's mission.

#### Facts

5.1 The Institution has policies and procedures promoting recruitment of a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff capable of ensuring programme provisions.

In strategic goal 4 of 2013-2018 strategic plan of the Academy much importance is given to "stable and quality recruitment of teaching and support staffs, issues of clear planning and professional development of staff". Besides, the Academy stipulated the following in objective 4.1. in the strategic plan: "to improve and recruit the teaching staff in line with the requirements of academic program improvements and QA". In goal 4 of its 2019-2024 strategic plan, PAARA gives importance also to the "creation of its own personnel".

Regulation on the recruitment of teaching and support staffs is stipulated in the "Internal Disciplinary Rules of PAARA" approved by the orderN21-A of PAARA Rector as of 01.02.2012.

The regulation on the election of the head of chair is approved by the order of the Rector N198/1-A as of 29.09.2017 (edited version).

According to the Internal Disciplinary Rules of the Academy the selection of the teaching staff is carried out based on a competition. However during the expert analysis it turned out that competition for the selection of the teaching staff has not been announced so far. In the recommendation of the previous expert panel policy on the selection of teaching staff and development of mechanisms for its evaluation was highlighted. However policy is not developed and the selection of the teaching staff is not carried out with a regulated procedure. E.g. as a result of different discussions heads of chairs target potential candidates to be later involved in the teaching staff. Derived from the necessity of recruiting lecturers, the head of the chair discussed the list of potential lecturers with the Vice-Rector on Scientific-Educational Affairs and writes a reference to the Rector. In each case before signing the contract, there is an interview of the candidates with the Rector or the authorized person. Interview is conducted according to the requirements of the particular job description approved by the Rector of the Academy.

During the site-visit the management of the Academy mentioned that the applied approach gives an opportunity to form necessary teaching staff and the students also mentioned about the professionalism of lecturers.

5.2 The requirement for teaching staff qualifications for each program are comprehensively stated.

In its 2013-2018 strategic plan the Academy gives importance to the formation of mechanisms for the promotion and dissemination of leading pedagogical practice in order to improve effectiveness and teaching quality of the teaching staff. Besides, in its 2019-2024 strategic plan the Academy gives importance to the “needs assessment of the teaching and support staffs, their training and attestation”.

There is an order on approving the job descriptions of teaching and support staffs which was discussed in the session of Scientific Council on 01.02.2016. In job descriptions the role, working functions, responsibilities, knowledge, skills and basic professional field are presented. Besides, in each course description information about education, work experience and scope of scientific interests of the given lecturer is presented. On the other hand there are no clear requirements presented to the professional qualities of the lecturer within the framework of academic programs and courses. It was also mentioned in the recommendations of the previous accreditation. It should be mentioned that both alumni of PAARA and specialists having many years of experience in management sphere, in particular Members of Parliament, ministers, deputy ministers, Doctors of Sciences, Candidates of Sciences, leading specialists of education and economic spheres teach at the Academy

5.3 The Institution has well established policies and procedures for the periodic evaluation of the teaching staff.

In objective 2.4. of goal 2 of its 2013-2018 strategic plan the Academy gives importance to “the development and investment of annual obligatory system of evaluation of pedagogical

activity of the lecturer”. In the same objective provision of “Best Lecturer” annual awards is also defined however it has not been yet carried out.

For the evaluation of the teaching staff every academic term students are given questionnaires where they evaluate lecturer’s professional skills, preparedness, special qualities, methodical assurance of the course, level of availability, etc. Based on the results of the questionnaires sometimes change of lecturers is taking place.

As means of evaluation of the teaching staff scientific-research activities are also taken into account, particularly, published scientific articles, monographs, textbooks, academic manuals, as well as participation in conferences. However to what extent the scientific activity of the particular lecturer is in line with the mission and goals of the Academy is not evaluated. In order to improve the activities of the teaching staff there are formats for conducting class observations at PAARA based on which every academic term class observations are conducted however systematized analysis of class observations have not been carried out.

5.4 The Institution promotes teacher professional development in accordance to the needs outlined during regular evaluations (both internal and external).

In sub goal 9 of goal 4 of its 2019-2024 strategic plan the Academy gives importance to “needs assessment of teaching and support staffs, their training and attestation”.

Based on the order N 86-A of the Rector as of 21.03.2018 checkings were organized about the knowledge and skills of the staff of the Academy of English, Russian and computer as well as trainings were organized”. However professional trainings based on the results of the class observations mainly have not been carried out.

On the other hand, in 2016-2018 about 90 staff members of the Academy participated in different trainings, 38 of them in 2018. However evaluation of the effectiveness and comprehensive analysis of conducted trainings have not been carried out. The observation of the topics of trainings for 2016-2018 show that they are not always directed to the professional field.

5.5 The Institution ensures that there is a permanent staff to provide for the coverage of qualifications adequately.

The Academy does not apply clear policy on assurance of stability of the teaching staff. During the site-visit and based on the observation of the documents provided by the Academy it was found out that main staff of the academy is 1/6 of the whole staff. Thus assurance of stability of teaching staff is quite problematic and is a unique challenge from the perspective of implementation of academic programs.

According to the SER of PAARA the data on the teaching staff is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Hired	15	17	14	15
Fired	11	6	8	18

As it is seen from the table in 2018 there is a negative move of the teaching staff, while in recent years new academic programs were launched (“Business Administration”, “Tourism Management”, “Insurance”).

On the other hand, PAARA still succeeds to maintain relative stability of its teaching staff. Particularly, for many years the Academy invites specialists of the particular field with applied skills to teach at PAARA thus forming an organizational culture. It should be mentioned that during the site-visit both main and hourly paid teaching staff members of PAARA proved themselves to be the followers of values of the Academy and dedicated workers who carry out the education process with responsibility. However there is a workload of heads of chairs. As the hourly paid teaching staff members are invited specialists and sometimes they miss lessons because of their work or business trips, head of chairs replace them during the lectures.

#### 5.6 There are set policies and procedures for the teaching staff promotion.

In objective 4.1. of goal 4 of its 2013-2018 strategic plan the Academy defines: “to improve and recruit teaching staff in line with the improvements of the academic programs and QA requirements”. Besides, in the same objective it is also mentioned about the support provided to the teaching staff of the Academy for defense of doctoral or PhD papers, award of scientific title of a professor or associate professor.

The previous accreditation expert panel mentioned the development of policy on assuring professional development and improvement of the teaching staff as a recommendation. However, it should be stated that clear policy promoting professional development of the teaching staff is still missing.

According to the SER presented by the Academy the norms of payment of teaching and support staffs as well as invited lecturers on hourly paid basis were reviewed during the Rectorate session on 28.12.2018. During the sit-visit it turned out that before that the payment per hour of the invited lecturers was higher than that of the main staff member.

It should be mentioned that depending on the number of students in the professional chair the head of the chair gets an additional indexed payment (e.g. Chair of Management).

#### 5.7 There is necessary technical and administrative staff to achieve the strategic goals.

In 2018-2019 PAARA Governing bodies and their structures were renewed. Education process at PAARA Is organized and immediately coordinated by the Educational-methodical

Department, Center for distance education, Department of Training and Enhancement of Qualification, Department of PhD studies and chairs. Divisions of MA studies and internship are operating within Educational-methodical Department. Activities controlling education quality are carried out by the Department of Professional education quality assurance. All the structural units of the Academy are recruited with necessary staff members however during the expert analysis and the meeting with internal stakeholders it was found out that support staff needs to be replenished from the perspective of complete fulfillment of strategic goals and implementation of education process.

There are charters of the above mentioned structural units and also job descriptions of the staff.

It should be mentioned that there are no faculties in the Academy and the function of the faculties are implemented by Educational-methodical Department. Because of such a distribution and not clear differentiation of authorities and responsibilities, there is an overload of some structural units (particularly Educational-methodical Department, Department of Professional Education Quality Assurance).

## **JUDGEMENTS**

The expert panel finds that there are certain approaches towards formation of teaching and support staffs for the implementation of academic programs which are different from the defined requirements. The expert panel finds it positive that there are highly qualified teaching and support staffs for the implementation of academic program goals. However selection of the teaching staff at PAARA is not based on the competition that can hinder objective selection and recruitment of competitive staff.

There are no criteria for the professional qualities of the teaching staff however there are job descriptions for teaching staff. Overload of heads of chairs and their replacement of invited teaching staff can hinder effective implementation of courses and acquisition of LOs.

The expert panel finds that some processes of the evaluation of teaching staff take place at PAARA, however there are no analysis and justifications that could foster improvement of teaching quality and assurance of the policy on the progress of teaching staff.

It is also positive that practitioners of the management fields and specialists having many years of experience are recruited as teaching staff members at PAARA. The mentioned circumstance fosters organization of LO-based learning and preparation of specialists with concrete skills.

Currently there are no clear mechanisms and procedures fostering the progress of the teaching staff at PAARA and it can weaken the stability of the teaching staff. The fact that number of hourly paid teaching staff exceeds the number of main teaching staff also hinders the stability of the latter.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Taking into account that there are some policy and procedures for the formation of teaching and support staffs, evaluation of teaching staff is conducted, there are different trainings,

business trips and cooperation events which are directed to the improvement of the teaching staff as well as the fact that specialists of the professional field are recruited as teaching staff members, the expert panel finds that the Academy is recruited with teaching and support staffs having necessary professional qualities in order to fulfill PAARA mission and academic program goals.

The compliance of the institution's institutional capacities with the requirements of criterion 5 is satisfactory.

## CRITERION VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

CRITERION: The Institutions ensures the implementation of research activity and the link of the research with teaching and learning.

### FACTS

6.1. The Institution has a clear strategy promoting its research interests and ambitions

In its 2019-2024 strategic plan the Academy mentioned as a priority: "implementation of scientific and applied research activities, development of scientific potential and enlargement of stakeholders' involvement in scientific-research activities". The following is also highlighted by the Academy: "investment of scientific research results and enlargement of stakeholders' participation in research". In 2013-2018 strategic plan of the Academy as a goal was mentioned stable development of scientific potential and enhancement of effectiveness of research. This was especially highlighted from the perspective of being a key base for RA public administration sphere.

In the recommendation of the previous accreditation expert panel and in the improvement plan of PAARA a number of provisions concerning the development of the field of science of PAARA were highlighted. Particularly, "to develop clear policy and respective procedures ensuring the implementation of research that would give opportunity to evaluate the quality of scientific-research activities".

For the implementation of those recommendations the Academy envisaged "to direct research, consultancy and education processes of PAARA towards urgent needs of RA public administration, to address the needs of governance at the RA, to support issues on upgrading public service, to promote innovative processes in public administration sphere".

In order to fulfill this goal it was planned to develop also mid-term work plan for the implementation of scientific-research activities. The recommendations of the previous accreditation expert panel in fact are not implemented. Strategic goals for research sphere (2019-2024 strategic plan) are generic and do not reflect concrete interests and ambitions of the Academy. Concrete actions to reach strategic goals related to research sphere are not developed.

Statutory goal of PAARA is "information-analytical assurance of state governance sphere". The implementation of the latter is not clear and tangible on conceptual level. It is not clear how it is implemented in practice.

There is no separate unit for the implementation of scientific-research activities. Funding of scientific-research activities at PAARA is carried out through grants and state



funding. Since 2013 the first topic funded by State Scientific Committee of the RA Ministry of Education and Science was carried out “Study of Psychological Factors Assuring Effectiveness of Master Education” where teaching staff members, PhD and MA students of the Academy were involved.

In 2014 scientific-research laboratory of “Management Psychology” and “Center of Regional Research” were established by the contractual funding of RA State Scientific Committee. The Center studies scientific, educational, economical, political and civil procedures that take place in neighboring region of the RA and that have an immediate influence on the development of the RA.

6.2. The Institution has a long-term strategy and mid-term and short-term programs that address its research interests and ambitions.

In 2013-2018 strategic plan of the Academy as a goal is mentioned to assure enhancement of stable development of scientific potential and enhance the effectiveness of research. However the fulfillment of the mentioned goal has not been evaluated and circumstances hindering its assurance were not revealed. Analysis of the results of previously implemented research works has not been carried out at PAARA. In the recommendations of the previous accreditation it was mentioned: “to pay special attention to the development of mid-term and short-term plans expressing Academy’s interests and ambitions in research sphere”. However the Academy does not have a separate strategy for research sphere or mid-term plan and takes respective strategic goals as a basis. The Academy cooperates with State Scientific Committee. Within the framework of cooperation 35 works were published, 13 out of which are topics in the sphere of psychology and other are in topics of international relations /regional/. Besides, 20 more reports were published which were related to psychology. There are scientific-research centers and laboratories at PAARA that involve grant projects. However involvement of PAARA students in the activities of those centers and laboratories is limited. Analysis of the effectiveness of PAARA scientific-research sphere is not carried out, only the number of published articles is presented. Most part of funded research is not immediately related to the mission of the Academy (to the sphere of public administration), one of the funded scientific topics is “Perspectives and Challenges of Armenia-Iran Relationship within the Context of Regulation of Iran-West Relationship”.

During the previous accreditation the expert panel gave importance to the development of clear policy and respective procedures ensuring the conduction of research that would also give an opportunity to evaluate the quality of scientific-research activities. However the mentioned recommendation was not implemented.

6.3 The Institution ensures the implementation of research and its development through sound policies and procedures.

Conduction of research on the institutional level in the Academy takes place with the initiative of heads of chairs. Procedures directed to the development of research are missing in PAARA. Though scientific-research units were established, the link of their activity with the

Academy's mission and strategic plan is missing, policy development and priorities are not defined. Involvement of teaching staff and MA students in the mentioned units is not regulated. IN the recommendations of the previous expert panel it was mentioned about the importance of investing mechanisms ensuring high quality and effectiveness of published works and scientific-publishing activities of the Academy.

Expert analysis show that policy on the promotion of research and mechanisms promoting the development of research skills of the teaching staff are missing at PAARA. There are no conceptual approaches at PAARA ensuring the implementation and development of research, there is no action plan according to the chronological development and defined indicators of effectiveness either.

Students' Scientific Union (SSU) has been operating since January 2019. Indicators of evaluation of SSU's activities are not developed. The Academy does not carry out evaluation of effectiveness of involving MA students in SSU activities. The level of involvement of PhD and MA students and alumni in research activities is low. "Public Administration" scientific journal is one of the research platforms which is published twice a year.

In 2019 SWOT analysis was carried out within the frames of which strong and weak points were studied, opportunities and threats were revealed, the reference index was analyzed. Statistics of the number of articles for 2004-2019 and the number of journals were examined. Mechanisms of merchandizing research are missing.

#### 6.4 The Institution emphasizes internationalization of its research.

In 2013-2018 strategic plan of the Academy as an objective it was mentioned: "Aim to have international scientific cooperation and to be integrated into EHEA".

Expert analysis showed that the above mentioned issues haven't been solved yet. Particularly, the Academy does not have a concept or policy on internationalization of scientific activities as well as there is no policy on increasing the number of articles of PAARA teaching staff in such journals. Internationalization of research activities is ensured through involvement of foreign specialists in the editorial board of "Public Administration" scientific journal however this journal is not rather known abroad because most part of the articles are in Armenian, besides it is based on the own initiative of teaching staff and chairs.

The number of publications by the teaching staff of PAARA in peer-reviewed professional journals in CIS countries has decreased. The number of publications in internationally peer-reviewed professional journals is limited: in 2016 it was 1, in 2017- 2, in 2018-1 publication. As compared to 2016 and 2017 in 2018 the number of publications in RA peer-reviewed journals by PAARA teaching staff has been decreased. In the list of internationally peer-reviewed journals for example the journal 21<sup>st</sup> Century is mentioned which is the journal of Noravank foundation (RA). There is low level of involvement of students in international research programs.

6.5 The Institution has well established mechanisms for linking research with educational process.

Systematic approach and mechanisms of interrelating research activity with education process are missing however some segmented steps have been implemented: an attempt was made to cooperate with different organizations while deciding on the topics of MA theses. So, together with Ararat Regional Governance there is already an arrangement concerning the topics of theses.

The circumstances that about 1/5 of the teaching staff of the Academy are invited specialists can foster interconnection of research and education process as those invited specialists work at PAARA on an hourly paid basis and as main staff they are involved in different government bodies. The Academy can use this circumstance in favor and can create effective mechanisms connecting research and education processes. From the other hand research activity for the mentioned specialists is not always a target. Implementation of MA academic programs gives an opportunity to largely focus on research activities however the mechanisms promoting research activity among the MA students are not effective. Without applying research component in education and involving students in research can hinder the development of critical thinking and analytical skills as an LO of the academic program.

## JUDGMENTS

In PAARA Charter and in the current strategic plan research directions of the Academy are mainly reflected however as during the previous accreditation currently also there are no mid-term and short-term plans. After the structural changes in the Academy the Vice-rector for Educational-Scientific Affairs is responsible for research processes however the functions of the latter are not clearly defined. Statutory goals of the Academy are conduction of fundamental and applied research in the sphere of state governance and assurance of informative analysis of state governance sphere however there is no institutional planning for the implementation of those goals. Besides, sequence of actions for implementation of research topics in the Academy is not defined in any document, there is no time-schedule, distribution of responsibilities which hinders the evaluation of the activities. Research topics are initiatives of the chairs of PAARA. The expert panel finds that lack of main teaching staff members hinders the activation of scientific research. Teaching staff members representing the practical field mainly are not engaged in research and taking into account the small number of main teaching staff members, opportunities and tendencies of activating research become limited. Clear policy on the conduction of research and development of the Academy in this term is not defined and there are no respective procedures thus making risky the continuous development and commercialization of research outcomes.

It is praiseworthy that there is some research activity at PAARA, particularly by the scientific-research laboratory of “Management Psychology”, “Center of Regional Research” and “Research Center of Management of Science”. This fact allows concluding that research activity in these directions is perspective and in future can foster financial inflow.

However recommendations mentioned by the previous accreditation expert panel are actual for the Academy till now. Absence of the clear policy and respective procedures for the conduction of research hinders evaluation of the quality of scientific-research activities.

The Academy has much to do in terms of internationalization of research activities as till now no internationally significant research has been carried out.

As during the previous accreditation, today also there are no mechanisms interconnecting research activities and education process.

#### CONCLUSION:

Taking into account that there are no mechanisms promoting innovative research activities among the teaching staff and students, publications of the teaching staff are limited, teaching staff do not participate in external scientific-research projects, internationalization of research activities is nearly missing, the interconnection of research and education process is missing, the expert panel finds that PAARA does not ensure conduction of research activities and link with education.

The compliance of the institution's institutional capacities with the requirements of criterion 6 is unsatisfactory.

### CRITERION VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

CRITERION: The Institution has necessary resources to create learning environment and to effectively support the implementation of its stated mission and goals.

#### FACTS

7.1. The Institution has an appropriate learning environment for the implementation of academic programs offered.

In objective 2.4. of strategic goal 2 the Academy envisaged: "to continue further improvement and refreshment of educational infrastructure, development of methodical, technological resources including classrooms with technologies". In objective 4.2.it was defined: "to ensure technologically equipped, modern educational and working environment to promote effective activities of all learners and staff members". About 640 MA students, 61 PhD students and PhD applicants study at PAARA. Classroom area per one MA students is 2.4 sq.m.

The Academy implements its education process in two buildings one of which is mainly for the trainings and qualification enhancement. The Academy has a sports hall, halls equipped with necessary technical means for the organization of different conferences and other events. There is an educational media-center, hall-classroom after French-Armenian benefactor Raymond Ezeglyan for the organization of seminars, conferences, lectures, etc., scientific-research laboratory of "Management Psychology", "Center of Regional Research" and "Research Center of Management of Science", library, Creative Zone for communication and creativity of students, etc. The classrooms are mainly equipped with computer technologies. projectors and smart boards. There is a Wi-Fi in all the area of the Academy.

The library of PAARA has a stock and classroom-reading hall. It operates based on its charter where main issues, rights and obligations of readers and librarians, regulation of the

management of library are mentioned. The library fund in terms of professional direction is in line with the requirements of the academic programs of PAARA. AS of 2018 there are about 17000 units of books, out of which 13000 are in Armenian. However digitalized fund is limited and is about 500 units. There are two laptops in the library, 13 PC, 2 projectors, 1 smart board, 1 scanner of books, devices printing and reading barcodes.

During the site-visit it turned out that the Academy does not have a canteen and medical unit.

7.2. The Institution provides appropriate financial resources with necessary equipment and facilities as needed to achieve its mission and goals.

In objective 6.1. of strategic goal 6 mentioned in 2013-2018 strategic plan “to improve and align financial planning with Academy’s strategic goals and objectives”.

PAARA’s mid-term and short-terms budget is approved according to the format of the RA Ministry of Finance. Besides the RA state budget the Academy gets funding from other sources as well and their allocation is also directed to the fulfillment of PAARA mission and goals and assurance of regular activities. Extra budgetary funds are formed particularly from the tuition fees of full-time and part-time MA students, PhD students and PhD applicants, fees of trainings, grants, etc.

Allocation of financial resources is carried out according to the justification presented by the structural units. Tuition fees are directed to the payment of salaries of PAARA staff, publication of educational materials, acquisition of literature, furniture, stationary, utility payments, etc.

According to the report of PAARA in 2018 the overall budget was envisaged 475 million 480.3 thousand AMD however the factual budget entry was 450 million 314.9 thousand AMD. 34.4% of the budget entry was from the RA state fund and 65.6% were extra budgetary sources.

Approximate allocation of financial resources of PAARA in 2018 is presented in table 2.

Table 2

	Name of expense	%
1.	Salaries of staff, additional payments	65
2.	Energy, utility services	6
3.	Communication Services	1
4.	Business trips	2.5
5.	Information Services / Advertising	1.5
6.	Improvement of buildings	1
7.	Stationary and office supplies	1.5

8.	Scholarships	10
9.	Discounts	3
10.	Taxes RA state budget	4
11.	Acquisition of equipment (including administrative)	3

7.3. The Institution has sound policy on the allocation of financial resources and capacity to sustain and ensure the integrity and continuity of the programs offered at the institution.

In goal 6 of its 2013-2018 strategic plan PAARA gives importance to outcome-based budgeting as a key point in PAARA financial management and allocation of financial resources effectively. Based on the data of the previous year annual orientation proportions are defined among the resources directed to PAARA development, payment of salaries and maintenance of infrastructure.

During the site-visit it turned out that needs of chairs are satisfied according to the justifications presented to the Academy management annually or upon necessity.

7.4. The Institution's resource base supports the implementation of institution's academic programs and its strategic plans, which promotes sustainability and continuous quality enhancement.

Current resource base of the Academy gives an opportunity to implement academic programs. During the site-visit the expert panel visited Educational Media center, classrooms, distance learning center, laboratory of "Management Psychology", "Center of Regional Research" and "Research Center of Management of Science", library, Creative Zone for communication and creativity of students, etc. The classrooms were mainly equipped with modern computer techniques, particularly with PCs, projectors, smart boards. In the distance learning center there was necessary toolkit for the implementation of distance learning, Moodle system where electronic materials for education were presented.

However acquisition of resources for the needs of the Academy is not regularly done. Particularly, according to PAARA 2018 report the resources for the acquisition of equipment formed 3% of the budget. The Academy does not allocate financial resources according to the fulfillment of strategic goals for the continuous quality development.

7.5. The Institution has a sound policy and procedure to manage information and documentation.

In goal 7 of its 2013-2018 strategic plan PAARA gives importance to "renovation of information system of the Academy and introduction of new systems". Organization and management of documentation- circulation of internal and external documents is carried out according to the regulation approved by PAARA Scientific Council on 28.12.2012. In 2019 Mulberry electronic system of documentation was introduced in PAARA. Before the usage of Mulberry system there were some resources for general use and for the satisfaction of internal

needs. In particular, there was a network connection among the Educational-Methodical department and chairs.

Letters addressed to PAARA through PAARA email: [info@paara.am](mailto:info@paara.am) as well as through Facebook, Google+, Youtube, Twitter are appropriately proceeded. Google Education/G Suite system was introduced at PAARA to ensure university-lecturer-student-graduate link.

For the conduction of distance learning Moodle was introduced as well as BigBlueButton server system for the organization of Webinars.

All the teaching and support staff members of the Academy have emails. Through the Google classroom platform the communication of teaching staff and students was moved to distance learning platform.

Dissemination of information about PAARA is carried out also through announcements, printed and electronic mass media, official website, informative manuals, booklets.

7.6. The Institution creates safe and secure environment through health and safety mechanisms that also consider special needs of students.

Services for assurance of security are regulated in PAARA through:

- a. Order of PAARA Rector N140/1-A as of June 11, 2012 about the establishment of "Civil Defense Organizations:"
- b. Order of PAARA Rector N142-A as of June 14, 2012 about approving he plan on Civil Defense.

Civil Defense Staff involves the following units: fire protection, preservation of public order, rescue and emergency technical.

Derived from the security issues there is a checkpoint (security), fire alarm system and video surveillance of academy building.

There is no medical unit at PAARA. However some lecturers had trainings of the first aid and the Academy provides necessary materials for first aid. It should also be mentioned that during the site-visit it turned out that rules for the maintenance of security techniques were not hang on the walls of classrooms.

There are ramps in the main and library entrance of the Academy for students with special needs.

7.7. The Institution has special mechanisms in place for the evaluation of the effectiveness, applicability and availability of resources given to the teaching staff and learners.

There are no special mechanisms developed at PAARA for the evaluation of resource application, availability and effectiveness. There are no mechanisms for the evaluation of application and availability of resources by the students through which students' satisfaction with resources and classroom conditions could be revealed.

According to the observed documents evaluation of the quality of education environment was conducted among the MA students. However the survey is not conducted regularly. The suggestions of students were distributed the following way:

	Suggestions	%
1	Suggestions about library resources	25
	a. It is desirable to add professional literature in the library b. Digitalize all the books in library and put them on the website	
2	Suggestions about computer resources and awareness	32
	a. It is desirable to enlarge computer courses b. It is desirable to regularly update website especially in terms of questionnaires and days of exams. c. To put information on the website about vacancies in different employers. d. To put information about the tuition fee discounts on the website.	
3	Suggestions about buildings	42
	a. The issues on the cleanness of the buildings should be improved. b. Classroom conditions should be improved. c. It should be desirable to have a canteen.	

During the expert analysis it was found out that the Academy carried out works towards digitalizing the library, publication of information about tuition fee discounts on the website, cleanness of buildings and improvement of classroom conditions.

Creative group consisting of 15 people was created in the Academy. The aim of the group is to suggest new, interesting ideas that could foster improvement of the activities of the Academy. There is also a platform on the website of the Academy through which students and teaching staff can send their suggestions to the Creative Group. Particularly, the group suggested establishing a canteen, receiving applications for admission through the application of electronic platform, introducing electronic documentation, etc.

## JUDGMENTS

The expert panel finds that generally the resources of the Academy currently ensure fulfillment of the academic programs. However these issues should always be kept in the center of attention and the resource base should be upgraded regularly. Surveys conducted at PAARA show that the students are not satisfied with the absence of canteen, medical unit and publishing services. Students are also not satisfied with the limited number of digitalized and electronic professional literature.

The expert panel finds that there is a mechanism for the allocation of financial resources however the proportion for the acquisition of resources is small. About as much funding is



allocated for resource acquisition as to the business trips. In the annual budget some expenses are envisaged which are directed to the fulfillment of PAARA goals however expenses are not detailed according to the strategic goals and academic programs which would make financial investments more addressed. However in a number of key spheres (e.g. research, library, internationalization) limited investments could put the fulfillment of strategic goals at danger.

The current mechanisms for the evaluation of learning environment are surveys which are conducted among the students however they are not regularly conducted and do not ensure the participation of all teaching staff members and MA students. From the perspective of needs assessment the activity of creative group is important that could foster disclosure of needs and improvement of learning environment. However the activities of the group are not regulated and evaluation of the effectiveness of their activities has not been carried out. It is dangerous that there is no medical unit at PAARA especially at evening hours when the staff who is trained for the first aid is not at PAARA.

#### CONCLUSION:

Taking into consideration that the Academy has sufficient learning environment for the implementation of academic programs, it puts efforts for the improvement and enrichment of resources, ensures sufficient conditions for the implementation of academic programs, there is a policy on the allocation of financial resources, there is a policy on management of information and documentation, the expert panel finds that PAARA has necessary resources for the creation of learning environment and assurance of the fulfillment of PAARA mission and goals.

The compliance of the institution's institutional capacities with the requirements of criterion 7 is satisfactory.

### CRITERION VIII. SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY

CRITERION: The Institution is accountable to the government and society for the education it offers and the resources it uses as well as for the research it conducts.

#### Facts

##### 8.1 The Institution has a clear policy on institutional accountability

The accountability of the Academy is regulated through the charter of PAARA. Rector's annual report is formed based on the annual reports of the structural units which reflect the results of current activities.

Governing Board and Scientific Council hear the annual report of the Rector about the additional and continuous education, educational-methodical activities, education quality assurance, scientific activity, publications, library, international cooperation, service and development of information systems, public relations, activities of Career Center and Union of Alumni, HR management, documentation system as well as financial activities. Containing huge amount of information about the activities of PAARA in different spheres, the observed annual reports do not reflect the analysis of results of strategic goal implementation, revealed problems and suggestions to their solutions.

The reliability of financial reports of the Academy is rechecked by the independent audit company or by the financial supervision department of RA Ministry of Finance and Economics.

8.2. The Institution ensures transparency of its procedures and processes and makes them publicly available

The Academy considers enhancement of transparency and accountability of PAARA activities as well as assurance of accessible and understandable information to the public about the PAARA services as its priorities. There are trilingual information materials (booklets) about the activities of PAARA.

All the information about PAARA activities, regulations, procedures, guidelines, news and organized events are published on PAARA official website [www.paara.am](http://www.paara.am).

Events, news, information, activities concerning are presented also in Facebook, Google+, Youtube, Twitter.

The Academy also participates in the fairs “Education and Career EXPO” organized by the RA Ministry of Education and Science.

8.3. The Institution has sustainable feedback mechanisms for establishing contacts with society.

The Department of Information and Public Relations deals with the establishment of public relations at PAARA. The charter of this department was approved by PAARA Rector’s order N38-A as of 20.02.2017. Goals and objectives, functions, management and organization of the activities of the Department, number of staff are stipulated in the charter. Under the supervision of the Department of Information and Public Relations operate also Career Center and Union of Alumni. However evaluation of effectiveness of the activities of those units has not been carried out.

As feedback mechanisms the Academy applies surveys among students, alumni and employers. Both on the website of the Academy and in social platform besides email there is also an opportunity to leave comments.

8.4 The Institution has mechanisms that ensure knowledge /value/ transfer to the society.

In goal 3 of its 2013-2018 strategic plan and in goal 2 of its 2019-2024 strategic plan the Academy gives importance to the mechanisms of continuous, regular trainings of employees of public service system and other fields, development of professional knowledge and skills and transfer of knowledge and values to the public. The Academy is a key structure for education and training of specialists of RA which conducts qualification enhancement and training courses for public servants, heads of communities, members of Council of Elders, community servants, as well as specialists of private sector. Only in 2018 the number of civil servants, heads of communities of local self-government bodies, members of the Council of Elders and community servants was 2112, in 2017 it was 590, in 2016-574 and in 2015-1440.

The mentioned functions are carried out by the Department of trainings and qualification enhancement the charter of which was approved by the PAARA Rector’s order N38-A as of

20.02.2017. There are also job descriptions of the Head of the Department, chief specialist and leading specialist.

Continuous trainings were organized for the state and civil servants of RA Civil Service Council, Ministry of Defense, representatives of RA National Assembly staff, heads of communities, members of the Council of Elders as well as respective structures of the Republic of Nagorno Kharabakh based on the existing contracts. Trainings are conducted based on the methodology of disclosure and assessment of needs (there is a “Methodology on Disclosure and Evaluation of Training Need” authors A. Lokyan, G. Hovhannisyan, M. Margaryan).

Individual, corporative short and long term thematic trainings on paid basis were developed and organized on the topics of “Human Resource Management”, “Competences of Effective Management”, “Management of IT projects”, “Organization of Procurement Procedures”, “Public Relations”, “Top Manager” and “Innovation Management”.

**JUDGEMENT:** The expert panel finds it positive that the Academy has accountability mechanisms in place: bottom- up till the Rector of the Academy, Scientific Council and then to the Governing Board of the Academy. The activities of all the structural units are summed up in different reports. At the same time the expert panel finds that the absence of qualitative analysis in the reports cannot sufficiently foster further development of the Academy’s activities. Taking into account that all the information about activities, regulations, procedures, news and announcements are published not only on the official website of PAARA but also in a number of social platforms the expert panel finds that procedures and processes of the Academy are transparent and available to the public. Besides, PAARA tries to make its activities public through different publications, mass media, fairs, newspaper, etc. which also promotes transparency of the main activities of the Academy.

The expert panel finds it positive that there are mechanisms fostering the public relations, the structure is active in different mechanisms for transferring knowledge to society (individual, corporative short and long –term paid thematic trainings) that foster dissemination of best practice.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Taking into account that there is a system of accountability at PAARA, which partly reveals current problems of the Academy, information given to the public is available, there are mechanisms of feedback and transfer of knowledge the expert panel finds that the Academy meets the requirements of Criterion 8.

*The compliance of the institution’s institutional capacities with the requirements of criterion 8 is satisfactory.*

## CRITERION IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

CRITERION: The Institution promotes experience exchange and enhancement through its sound external relations practices, thus promoting internationalization of the institution.

### Facts

9.1 The Institution promotes its external relations through sound policies and procedures aimed at creating an environment conducive to experience exchange and enhancement and internationalization.

As a goal internationalization is targeted in 2013-2018 and 2019-2027 strategic plans of the Academy. In 2019-2024 strategic plan it is stipulated as enlargement of internationalization process and international cooperation and enhancement of effectiveness. A number of steps were envisaged towards internationalization at PAARA, including increase in the number of participation in international educational/research projects, enlargement of mobility of teaching staff, students and employees, international accreditation of at least one academic program, investment of academic programs awarding double and/or joint diploma. However there is no clear planning of fulfillment of goals mentioning necessary resources, responsible, toolkit and time-schedule of implementation.

Recommendation about developing ways of cooperation between PAARA and state governing bodies and organizations as well as developing new approaches towards enlarging the scope of external stakeholders were mentioned also by the previous accreditation expert panel. Though the importance of internationalization was mentioned in the strategic plan and in the improvement plan, any conceptual document that would present necessary actions and their sequence for the assurance of vision is missing. There are no long-term, mid-term and short-term action plans towards internationalization of the Academy. Approaches towards evaluation of the effectiveness of internationalization activities are missing, the interconnection of internationalization activities with education and other processes of PAARA is not sufficient.

9.2 The institution's external relations infrastructure ensure regulated process.

There is an institutional infrastructure to ensure internationalization of the Academy- the Department of international cooperation and external relations that has been operating based on its charter approved in 2017. The Head of this Department is accountable to the Rector and to the Vice-Rector for External Relations. The goals and objectives defined for the above mentioned Department are too ambitious (e.g. to foster Academy's integration into world's scientific and educational processes and programs, to maintain and enlarge cooperation with prestigious organizations, foreign universities, etc. ) as compared to the limited human and financial resources allocated for them. During the site-visit the Department had one employee. In fact the Department mainly deals with organizational issues concerning internationalization of the

Academy, i.e. organizes meetings to make students and teaching staff aware of possible mobility programs, gathering of candidates and their guidance.

There are no analyses on the outcomes and achievements of the Department of International cooperation and external relations. Indicators of effectiveness of the Department are missing, it is not clear how chairs and other structural units take part in the processes of internationalization and to what extent it is considered a priority for development. Annual reports of the Department are descriptive, there are no quantitative indicators about the carried out work, results of the evaluation of activities carried out with foreign applicants is missing, etc. No clear toolkit is used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Department activity.

9.3 The Institution effectively collaborates with local and international institutions and organizations.

The Academy is a member of the Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe (NISPACEE), European Network Training Organizations for Local and Regional Authorities (ENTO) and the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA):

Recently the number of partner organizations has strongly increased, particularly the Academy has 66 cooperation agreements with educational and state institutions of different countries. Among the partner countries of the Academy are Russian Federation, Belarus, Ukraine, Lithuania, Beirut, Romania, Poland, France, Georgia, Germany, Shanhai, in total about 37 universities and institutions. However as a result of expert panel examination it turned out that most of the international cooperation agreements are broad-framed and they do not have clear and purposeful action plans and schedules. The Academy has not carried out evaluation of the effectiveness of agreements and their impact on PAARA activities.

Currently within the framework of Erasmus+ the Academy is cooperating with Salzburg University and Mikolas Romeris University of Vilnius. However low indicators of mobility of students within Erasmus+ is explained by financial and language problems by the Academy. From local institutions as partners the Academy presents 5 universities: V. Sargsyan Institute of the RA Ministry of Defense, International Scientific-educational Center of the RA National Academy of Sciences, Artsakh State University, Shirak State University after M. Nalbandyan and Goris State University. The Academy does not make analysis on the effectiveness of cooperation with local institutions either. It is not clear how the cooperation promotes improvement of educational and scientific activities of the Academy. A good example of local cooperation is “Business administration (management)” MA program in distance learning mode which has been implemented since 2017-2018 together with the International Educational-Scientific Center of the RA National Academy of Sciences by awarding joint diploma. The program was introduced within the framework of grant project of Competitive Fund of Innovations in the Higher Education of the RA with the financial support from the World Bank.

The list of partner institutions is available in English on PAARA website however the scope of cooperation, schedules of events and activities, opportunities of the participation of stakeholders or other information is not available.

9.4 The Institution ensures internal stakeholders' appropriate level of a foreign language to enhance productivity of internationalization.

In goal 5 of its 2013-2018 strategic plan among other activities the Academy envisaged to “Establish professionalized classrooms for teaching language in order to align the quality of foreign language teaching to modern requirements and to organize lectures in foreign languages”. In order to implement recommendations of the previous accreditation expert panel, in its improvement plan the Academy envisaged to have as a outcome “mechanisms promoting proficiency of teaching staff in foreign languages, increased number of teaching staff members who are attested and their level of satisfaction with the program”.

Expert analysis showed that during the last years trainings of foreign languages in the Academy have been carried out only within the framework of Erasmus+ “Library Network Support Services in Armenia, Moldova and Belarus; Modernizing libraries in Armenia, Moldova and Belarus through library staff development and reforming libraries” (LNSS) project. Within the framework of this project in 2016 10 employees of PAARA took part in the course English for Specific Purposes (ESP). And in 2018 within the framework of the same project 11 employees of PAARA took part in the course English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). Within the framework of the same project 8 employees (2 heads of chairs, 5 heads of departments and 1 leading specialist of a department) took part on trainings for 2.5 months having the opportunity to improve and deepen their communications skills in English and competences of teaching in that language.

The Academy has applied to get a permission of teaching in foreign language however currently any course in foreign language is not implemented in PAARA.

Proficiency in foreign language is given importance to by internal and external stakeholders of PAARA.

## JUDGEMENT

The expert panel finds that from the institutional perspective there is no conceptual approach to internationalization at PAARA. Though on the level of strategic plan internationalization is prioritized however it is not clear how and in what time the Academy envisages to ensure increase in the indicators of internationalization. The existence of the Department of international cooperation and external relations is necessary but not sufficient condition for the implementation of ambitious goals directed to internationalization. The differentiation of functions and authorities of the Head of the above mentioned Department and the Vice-Rector on External Relations is not clear. Moreover, during the site-visit the position of the head of the Department was vacant and the activities concerning internationalization were carried out by the Vice-Rector and one employee of the Department.

On PAARA website provided services, opportunities of exchange programs are not properly presented in a foreign language which limits opportunities of internationalization.

For the investment of academic programs in foreign languages, activation of internationalization and mobility there is a need to strongly improve foreign language proficiency among the teaching and support staffs and students.

Low indicators of mobility of teaching staff and students are concerning though students are aware of exchange programs, opportunities of participation and selection criteria. Analysis of

effectiveness of cooperation with partner-institutions is not carried out which hinders implementation of academic programs at PAARA and internationalization of scientific-research activities.

Though the number of partner-institutions has been increased however it does not ensure planning and implementation of actions within the scope of the cooperation, it does not promote increase in the number of mobility and the interconnection of internationalization and education process is missing.

#### CONCLUSION:

Taking into account that conceptual approaches to internationalization are missing, sufficient human and financial resources are not allocated for the implementation of ambitious goals of internationalization, analyses of qualitative and quantitative indicators of internationalization are not made, participation of teaching staff and students in international exchange programs is insufficient, the interconnection of international cooperation with education process is missing, the expert panel finds that PAARA does not meet the requirements of Criterion 9.

The compliance of the institution's institutional capacities with the requirements of criterion 9 is unsatisfactory.

## CRITERION X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

CRITERION: The Institution has an internal quality assurance system, which promotes establishment of a quality culture and continual improvement of all the processes of the Institution.

#### FACTS

10.1 The Institution has internal quality assurance policy and procedures.

The importance of QA system is stipulated in 2013-2018 and 2019-2024 strategic plans of the Academy. Reinforcement of education quality culture is one of the key goals of the new strategic plan of the Academy. In order to fulfill the mentioned goal the Academy has envisaged: "to carry out study of labor market needs, to review the academic programs in line with the requirements of the labor market, to integrate educational and scientific processes, to develop academic programs aimed at clarification of LOs, integration of MA education and internship, assurance of interconnection between acquisition of LOs and assessment through the investment of comprehensive and objective assessment system as well as to introduce innovation technologies in education process". The Academy approves "Concept of Quality Assurance" document, developed QA manual, published "Methodology and Tools of Self-evaluation Process of Higher Education Institutions" methodical guidelines, the Regulation on conduction of sociological surveys at PAARA within the framework of education quality management was approved.

In the QA concept of PAARA QA policy, goals and objectives are presented. Though there is a policy related to internal QA at PAARA, its implementation mechanisms are strongly

limited, mainly conduction of surveys is presented as a procedure, analysis of effectiveness of implementation of the policy is missing. Monitoring is viewed as an important and key mechanism in the concept document, however the ways of implementation of the latter are not clearly defined.

Surveys are applied as means of needs assessment of internal and external stakeholders and evaluation of their satisfaction. One of the recommendations of the previous accreditation was “to elaborate necessary procedures for the implementation of QA policy, their assessment mechanisms, to develop clear and tangible indicators for the enhancement of education quality and introduce mechanisms measuring effectiveness” taking into account that the Regulation on conduction of sociological surveys at PAARA was put into action since 2015. The aim of sociological survey is to take into account opinions of students, attendees, employees during education process and to reveal organizational or program issues of education quality management. Directions of surveys, procedure of their organization, development of annual schedule for the conduction of surveys and their approval are presented in the Regulation. The preparation (elaboration) of survey tools are described, the processes of selection and control of necessary staff for the conduction of sociological surveys, presentation of suggestions and publication of survey results, frequency and responsible staff for the conduction of surveys, organization and preservation of the necessary documents are described in the Regulation.

The expert recommendation was partially carried out as mechanisms for the evaluation of procedure on the conduction of surveys, clear indicators for the enhancement of education quality as well as mechanisms measuring the effectiveness have not been developed so far.

10.2 The Institution allocates sufficient material, human and financial resources to manage internal quality assurance processes.

Department of Professional Education Quality Assurance has been operating at PAARA since 2010. The aims and functions of this unit are stipulated in the Charter approved by PAARA Rector’s order as of 20.02.2017. There are three positions in the Department: Head of the Department, chief and leading specialists. Their job responsibilities and functions are stipulated in job descriptions approved by the Scientific Council of PAARA in 2016 however evaluation of performance and needs assessment of these employees is not carried out. Legal adviser of PAARA supports the implementation of activities of QA Department and in other structural units there are no QA responsible people.

According to the charter of the Department of Professional Education Quality Assurance approved in 2017, the Department develops “QA procedures for monitoring and regular revision of the academic programs, their approval, follows and supports the implementation of the academic programs, develops procedures for the evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning on the levels of academic programs and separate courses, evaluates the organization of education, including the effectiveness of educational-methodical, material-technical and human resources, presents respective suggestions”. QA Department has a separate room, is equipped with necessary technical resources however there is no separate budget line for financial resource allocation for the Department needs. Financial and material resources are provided upon necessity. Distribution of responsibilities within the Department is not carried out according to the functions mentioned



in job description. During the site-visit the activities of the Department were carried out by the Head of the Department and the specialist. During the meetings it became clear that most part of the work is done by the Head and the specialist is just dealing with the organization of surveys. Annual reports about the results of activities carried out by the Department are missing, evaluation of the effectiveness of the Department is not carried out.

The Department is not under the supervision of the Rector but the Vice-Rector of Educational-scientific Affairs. The latter deals with “organization and coordination of activities for the development of internal mechanisms and criteria for assurance and evaluation of education quality”.

Within the framework of its functions the QA Department cooperated with chairs and other structural units of the Academy however effectiveness of this cooperation is not evaluated, and the role of the Department is not clear in terms of formation and development of decentralized network of quality assurance at PAARA.

### 10.3 The internal and external stakeholders are involved in quality assurance processes.

Internal stakeholders of PAARA are teaching staff and students. Though in the concept document of QA it is mentioned that “the Academy promotes enlarged and conscious participation of teaching and administrative staffs in the processes of assurance and improvement of quality, fosters initiatives of educational (chair, educational-methodical unit) and administrative units in QA processes”, from the SER it was not clear and during the meeting with the teaching staff their involvement of QA processes was not presented. Besides, in the above mentioned concept the Academy views full participation of students, alumni and employers in QA processes as “one of the main guarantees of effective system, considering surveys about the effectiveness of teaching process, surveys about the satisfaction of alumni with the services provided by PAARA, surveys about the satisfaction of alumni and employers and self-evaluations of educational and program processes as ways of participation”. While during the meetings with alumni and graduates it turned out that they haven’t participated in survey and were not aware of the results. Data on the needs assessment of employers as well as satisfaction of employers with knowledge and skills of PAARA students and alumni were not provided to the expert panel.

Students participate in QA activities as member of students’ self-governing bodies, besides they are involve in Scientific Council of the Academy. Internal stakeholders were involved in self-evaluation process of PAARA and in the preparation of respective report as member of self-evaluation working group.

Within the framework of sociological surveys of education quality management mainly evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching process of PAARA teaching staff is carried out. However participation of students in QA processes is not participatory and initiative: students are not involved in the formation of questionnaires, analysis of results and disclosure of issues existing in QA sphere they are rather acting as respondents.

The cooperation of QA Department with chairs is limited in the provision of formats for the development of academic programs. However according to the organizational structure of internal QA system, committees of QA should be operating within Scientific Council and chairs.

During the site-visit neither chairs nor QA Department mentioned about the activities of the mentioned committees of QA system, their role and outcomes of activity.

10.4 The internal quality assurance system is periodically reviewed.

According to the QA concept of PAARA continuous improvement of quality is one of the most important components of the policy on QA which is directed to the assurance of continuous and stable improvement the quality of teaching, learning and assessment processes in line with the requirements of students and labor market.

According to the above mentioned concept, QA system of PAARA should be aimed at continuous improvement of quality assurance at PAARA being guided by PDCA cycle.

During the site-visit it became clear that in different sphere of the activity of PAARA PDCA cycle is not closed, internal QA processes are in different phases of PDCA. E.g.

- Evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching process by PAARA teaching staff which was stipulated in the regulation of conduction of sociological surveys was planned and implemented.
- “Justification of necessity and evaluation of effectiveness of newly introduced academic programs” which was envisaged by the above mentioned regulation was planned and partially implemented. During the investment of academic program “Tourism management” studies of the field were carried out however envisaged questionnaires were not developed. Formats of course descriptions were developed where LOs of courses and teaching and learning methods were reflected.

- Planned. Taking into account recommendations of the previous accreditation in its improvement plan the Academy has envisaged: “study of international practice of coordination of the policy on education quality assurance, its implementation and control”. In order to fulfill it the institutions should have carried out comparative analysis to reveal the best practice of the RA and foreign university quality assurance policies. As indicators of implementation study of international practice, existence of indicators for quality evaluation and strengthening of QA culture at PAARA were defined. However facts for the implementation of the planned activities are missing.

In case of a number of activities the Academy is still in the “plan” phase of PDCA cycle and the processes were not transferred to the DO, CHECK and ACT phases while from chronological perspective after the previous accreditation the Academy should have summarized PDCA cycle in many activities. In case of a number of activities the logic of the cycle is not even kept.

Many regulatory documents and mechanisms were adopted by the Academy however they haven't yet completed internal QA system: indicators for the evaluation of the effectiveness of structural units are missing, self-evaluation and analysis of units with the application of qualitative and quantitative methods is not carried out, self-evaluation of QA department is missing, obstacles of revision of QA system at the Academy has not been analyzed, etc.

10.5 The internal quality assurance system provides valid and sufficient grounds for the external quality assurance processes.

In its QA concept document, along with other principles, as a main principle of QA PAARA mentioned interconnection of internal and external stakeholders viewing institutional and program evaluations as main points that connect internal and external QA processes.

While developing its SER the Academy used the format developed by ANQA with relevant criteria and standards. The operation of PAARA QA system should foster external evaluation of quality assurance through relevant documentation base, developed mechanisms, evaluation of effectiveness of procedures and monitoring of the effectiveness of toolkit. In the Concept document of PAARA the importance of unified database creation is mentioned for registration and maintenance of data concerning quality, besides analysis of information about quality, disclosure of factors influencing quality, tools for revealing quality improvement resources are envisaged.

QA Department of the Academy has collected huge information without analyzing it, without disclosure of main factors influencing the quality and current issues, as a result of which the information presented in the SER is descriptive rather than analytical and it makes the process of external quality evaluation difficult because, in fact, it does not contain sufficient grounds for the external evaluation.

10.6 The internal quality assurance system ensures the transparency of the processes in the Institution providing valid and up to date information on their quality to the internal and external stakeholders.

According to the QA concept document one of the aims of QA system is “to assure accountability of QA system of PAARA towards students, employers, founder (Government of the Republic of Armenia), authorized body (RA President’s Staff) and funding organizations”.

However in the SER of PAARA and during the site-visit the expert panel was not provided with sufficient information how QA Department ensures transparency of QA activities, what kind of analysis it makes and whether it provides them to internal and external stakeholders.

In the section of QA Department of PAARA website only the goals and objectives of the Department are mentioned, while reports about carried out activities, analytical reports are missing, that would give an opportunity to evaluate current state of internal QA system and have necessary information about respective processes.

#### JUDGEMENT:

Absence of procedures for the implementation of QA policy shows that principles and approaches mentioned in the QA concept document and QA manual have not been analyzed, the QA system is in the phase of formation and is not enough related to the activities of other structural units.

The expert panel finds it concerning that PDCA cycle is invested not in all the processes and in case of its existence it is not completely closed: phases CHECK and ACT are partially implemented which puts the stability of the development of PAARA at danger. The structural units do not regularly gather information about their activities, do not analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of their activities, which makes the fulfillment of PAARA mission and goals risky.

QA Department at PAARA does not operate under immediate supervision of the Rector who is responsible for quality but together with Educational-methodical Department is under the supervision of the Vice-Rector for Scientific-Educational affairs which hinders independent activities of the QA Department and makes risky objective disclosure of problems concerning academic programs and teaching and evaluation of their effectiveness.

Though as an outcomes of the previous accreditation recommendation the Academy has clarified the authorities and functions of the QA Department, their complete implementation and grounds for the evaluation of effectiveness are missing. The Department does not carry out self-evaluation of its activities, does not analyze the gathered huge information and does not ensure active participation of external stakeholders, especially employers and alumni in the development of QA tools. While active participation of stakeholders would foster formation of stable QA mechanisms and investment of QA culture.

The expert panel finds that absence of analysis about different activities by the QA Department, evaluation of their effectiveness, different reports does not ensure transparency of information about QA processes for internal and external stakeholders.

#### CONCLUSION:

Taking into consideration that principles and approaches of QA stated by PAARA have not been turned into concrete actions, the internal QA system is not sufficiently related to the activities of structural units, participation of internal and external stakeholders in QA activities is not tangible, PDCA cycle is not used for the processes carried out at PAARA (including QA processes), independence of QA Department is not guaranteed and the Department does not provide enough information about the quality of PAARA activities, the expert panel finds that PAARA does not meet the requirements of Criterion 10.

The compliance of the institution's institutional capacities with the requirements of criterion 10 is unsatisfactory.

#### EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERION	CONCLUSION
1. Mission and Goals	Satisfactory
2. Governance and Administration	Unsatisfactory
3. Academic Programs	Satisfactory
4. Students	Satisfactory
5. Teaching and Support Staffs	Satisfactory
6. Research and development	Unsatisfactory
7. Infrastructure and Resources	Satisfactory

8. Societal Responsibility	Satisfactory
9. External Relations and Internationalization	Unsatisfactory
10. Internal Quality Assurance System	Unsatisfactory

26 July, 2019

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Aghavni Hakobyan  
Head of the expert panel

#### APPENDIX 1. CVS OF THE EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

Aghavni Hakobyan– in 2001 graduated from Yerevan Gladzor University, the faculty of Economics (qualification is “economist-financier”). In 2002-2005 studied PhD in the Economics Institute after M. Kotanyan of the RA National Academy of Sciences, at the same time she was working in the Chair of General Economics of Yerevan Gladzor University as a chair assistant. She became PhD in 2005 and continued to work in the Chair of General Economics of Yerevan Gladzor University as a lecturer. In 2007-2013 she was the Head of Education Department at the Chair of General Economics of Yerevan Gladzor University as well as head of the working group for institutional accreditation. In 2009 according to the decision of the Scientific Council of Gladzor University and by the approval of RA State Attestation Committee she was awarded with the scientific title of associate professor. In 2009-2016 she was a lecturer in the Yerevan Branch of Russian Economic University after G. Plekhanov. In 2009 she participated in the project by Educational and Cultural Bureau of USA state Department “University Administration in the USA” project of international visitors. In 2012 finished Yerevan School of Political courses of European Council. In 2013-2016 she was the Chief Specialist of External Relations at Armenian State University of Economics (ASUE). Since 2017 she has been teaching in the Chair of Macroeconomics at ASUE. From May, 2019 till now she is the Head of the Department of Continuous Education and Trainings. She has participated in a number of trainings, conferences and seminars in the USA, France, Germany, Belgium, Hungary, Slovakia, Malaysia, Moldova, Georgia. She is an author of more than 30 scientific and educational-methodical articles.

Margret Schermutzki –Graduated from Aachen University of Germany in 1969 and in 1977 the faculty of Business Management of the same university. In 1981-2007 was a lecturer in the faculty of Business at the University. In 1981-2013 was a researcher (scientific worker) at the same university. IN 2005-2007 was an expert, consultant of applied sciences at Aachen University, In 2007-2013 worked as a Director of Quality Management at Aachen University of Germany. Since 2010 is a Higher Education Expert at “Tuning Academy” International Center of higher education and research.

Gegham Karoyan – Graduated from the faculty of Cybernetics with the specialization of Industrial Electronics of Armenian State Engineering University (ASEU) and in 2004 graduated from MA studies of the same university the specialization of Electronics and Microelectronics. In 2003-2008 worked in the chair of Electronic Techniques of ASEU as a senior coordinator (laborant). In 2005-2006 was an assistant at the Chair of Informatics and Computing Techniques of the Faculty of Natural Sciences of Gavar State University. In 2006 graduated from the Faculty Cybernetics with the specialization of Electronics of ASEU. In 2008 he became candidate of technical sciences. In 2009-2013 worked as an assistant in the Chair of Electronic Techniques of the Faculty of Cybernetics of Armenian National Polytechnic University. In 2009-2010 participated in the qualification enhancement courses of the teaching staff at ASEU. In 2011-2013 was a Deputy Dean of Scientific Affairs in the Faculty of Cybernetics. Since 2012 has been a member of ASEU Alumni Association. In 2013 got the scientific title of an associate professor and has been teaching in the Chair of Electronic Techniques. In 2013 participated in training courses of Multisim software package conducted by National Instruments organization at the laboratory ANEL of Armenian State Engineering University. Starting from 2017 till now has been working as a Deputy Director of Educational Affairs at the Institute of Information and Communication Technologies and Electronics

Vahagn Aglyan – Graduated from MA of the Faculty of International Relations of Yerevan State University in 1998. In 2001 became candidate of historical sciences at the same university. Since 2002 till now has been scientific worker of the Institute of History of RA National Academy of Sciences. Since 2005 is a lecturer of Public Administration in the Faculty of International Relations. In 2005-2006 he was an employee at Arizona State University Public Administration School. Since 2008 he has been working in Yerevan State University as a head of the Chair of Public Administration.

Tatev Movsisyan – Graduated from Yerevan Brusov State university OF Languages and Social Sciences in 2017 the faculty of Foreign Languages (professionalization: Linguistics-English). Currently is studying at the same University, is a 2<sup>nd</sup> year MA student of Management at the Faculty of Education and Professional Pedagogy. In 2018 participated in the training courses for student experts organized by “Students’ Voice” project of ANQA.

## APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE

### SITE-VISIT OF EXPERT PANEL CONDUCTING INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION AT PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ACADEMY OF THE RA

29.05.2019- 31.05.2019

	29.05.2019	Launch	End	Duration
1.	Meeting with the Rector	9:00	09:30	30 minutes
2.	Meeting with the representatives of the Governing	09:40	10:30	50 minutes

	Board			
3.	Meeting with the Vice-Rectors of the Academy	10:40	11:40	50 minutes
4.	Meeting with the self-evaluation working group	11:50	12:35	45 minutes
5.	Meeting with the Heads of Chairs (including the Heads of the Chairs implementing the 3 academic programs presented in the self-evaluation report)	12:45	13:45	60 minutes
6.	Break, discussions of the expert panel	14:00	15:00	60 minutes
7.	Meeting with the teaching staff (including the 3 academic programs) (10-12 representatives)	15:10	16:10	60 minutes
8.	Meeting with alumni (8-10 representatives)	16:20	17:20	60 minutes
9.	Meeting with employers (8-10 representatives)	17:30	18:30	60 minutes
10.	Observation of documents, close meeting of the panel	18:30	19:30	60 minutes

	30.05.2019	Launch	End	Duration
1.	Meeting with the representatives of Student Council and Student Scientific Union	9:00	10:00	60 minutes
2.	Meeting with MA students (10-12 representatives, full-time)	10:10	11:10	60 minutes
3.	Meeting with MA students (10-12 representatives, part-time)	11:20	12:20	60 minutes
4.	Observation of resources (structural units, classrooms, cabinets, library)	12:30	13:30	60 minutes
5.	Break, discussions of the expert panel	13:40	14:40	60 minutes
6.	Meeting with the representatives of the structural units (HR and General Department, PR department, Department of International Cooperation and External Relations, Department of Finance and Accounting, Department of Information Systems and Development, Department of Internship, Education Department, Center for Distance Education)	14:50	15:50	60 minutes
7.	Open meeting with the expert panel	16:00	16:40	40 minutes
8.	Observation of documents, close meeting of the panel	16:50	18:50	120 minutes

	31.05.2019	Launch	End	Duration
1.	Meeting with QA responsible staff	9:00	10:00	60 minutes
2.	Visit to chairs	10:10	11:10	60 minutes
3.	Meeting with students (distance)	11:20	12:20	60 minutes
4.	Meeting with the staff selected by the expert panel	12:30	13:30	60 minutes
5.	Break, discussions of the expert panel	13:40	14:40	60 minutes
6.	Observation of documents, close meeting of the panel	14:50	17:50	120 minutes
7.	Meeting with the University Management	17:50	18:20	30 minutes
8.	Close meeting of the panel	18:30	19:30	60 minutes

APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS FOR OBSERVATION

N	Name of the document	Criterion/standard
1.	Analysis of the outcomes of 2013-2018 Strategic Plan of the Academy	1.1
2.	Action plan for 2019-2024 Strategic plan /draft	1
3.	Analysis of internal and external factors influencing the management of the Academy	2.4
4.	Results of the evaluation of the effectiveness of implementation of mid-term activities	2
5.	Job descriptions /teaching staff, heads of chairs, support staff/	2
6.	Report/analysis on quality assurance of management /with PDCA cycle/	2.5
7.	Descriptions, annual plans of the three presented academic programs	5
8.	Schedules and plans of the trainings of the teaching staff	5.4
9.	Policy on the implementation of benchmarking	3
10.	List of the topics of final papers /theses/ for the last 4 years	3
11.	Minutes of the analysis/ discussions about the revision of course descriptions	3.2
12.	Master theses	3.5
13.	Diaries of internships	3
14.	Questionnaire for the evaluation of the effectiveness of training courses	3
15.	Minutes of the Committee for the Defense of Theses Papers /part-time, full-time/	3
16.	Statistics/analysis about the employability of students of the three presented academic programs	4.5
17.	Charter of the Student Council	4
19.	Data of the main staff for each academic program	5.2
20.	Number of young lecturers	5.5
21.	Average age of the teaching staff	5.5
22.	Teaching staff-student ratio /for the last 4 years/	5
23.	Samples of annual workloads of the teaching staff	5
24.	Course description of the courses in foreign language	9.4
25.	Documents proving mobility of students /internal, external, local, international/	9
26.	Documents proving mobility of the teaching staff /internal, external, local, international/	9
27.	Quarterly reports of the Center for QA (for the last 4 years)	10
28.	Analysis of survey results carried out among the students, teaching staff and employers	10



#### APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED

1. Classrooms
2. Chairs /Chair of Law, Chair of Political Management and Public Policy, Chair of Management/
3. Center of Distance Learning
4. Computer classroom
5. Library
6. Halls
7. Educational Media Center
8. Center of Regional Research
9. “Managerial Psychology” Scientific-research Center
10. Research Center of Science Management
11. Creative Zone for communication of students

#### APPENDIX 5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE ACADEMY

##### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. EHEA- European Higher Education Area
2. ECTS-European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
3. PAARA –Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia
4. AP- Academic program
5. QA-quality Assurance
6. ANQA-National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation
7. ESG- European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance
8. NQF-National Qualifications Framework
9. PDCA- Plan-do-check-act
10. SP-strategic plan