

PROCEDURE

ON THE FORMATION AND OPERATION OF THE ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE OF THE “NATIONAL CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE” FOUNDATION /new edition/

1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1.This Procedure is established based on subpoint 3 of point 8 and subpoint 3 of point 15 of the Statute on State Accreditation of Institutions and their Academic Programmes in the Republic of Armenia, approved by the RA Government Decree N 978-N of June 30, 2011.

2.The Accreditation Committee (hereinafter referred to as “Committee”) of the “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation (hereinafter referred to as “ANQA”) shall be formed with the aim to make decisions on institutional and academic programme accreditation.

3.The Committee shall be an independent, collegial, permanent body which carries out its authority set by the the Statute on State Accreditation of Institutions and their Academic Programmes in the Republic of Armenia (hereinafter referred to as “Statute on State Accreditation”) and this Procedure.

4.The expenses related to the organization of the Committee’s work and the members’ remuneration shall be covered by ANQA.

2. STRUCTURE AND FORMATION PROCEDURE OF THE ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

5.The Committee shall be made up of representatives from various professional fields.

6. The Committee shall comprise a total of 13 members, with 10 representing stakeholders from the higher education system and 3 from the secondary vocational education system.

7. The composition of the formed Committee sector shall have the following capacities within the education sector:

- 1) expertise and evaluation in governance and administration;

2) expertise and evaluation of the academic programmes, educational (vocational academic programmes, human and material resources) and research processes aligning them with national requirements and the international context;

3) development, implementation and review of the effectiveness of the quality assurance policy;

4) expertise and evaluation of the external relations and social responsibility.

8. The Committee member shall meet the following requirements:

1) have at least one of the capacities defined in point 7 of this Procedure;

2) have experience in education management and administration, but not currently serving as an acting education manager;

3) have at least five years of teaching experience;

4) be a citizen of the Republic of Armenia.

9. The same person cannot be a member of the Committee more than twice in a row.

10. The acting managers (rector, vice-rector, director, deputy director) of higher, preliminary and secondary vocational education institutions cannot be included in the Committee.

11. The Committee's authority period shall be five years.

12. Candidates for the Committee shall be nominated by tertiary education institutions, employers, professional associations and ANQA.

13. The data of the candidates for the Committee shall be submitted to ANQA's Secretariat by email at secretariat@anqa.am.

14. ANQA shall submit the list of candidates to its Board of Trustees (hereinafter referred to as the "Board") for holding an election.

15. Nominal list of the Committee members and changes to it shall be approved by the Board's decision.

16. The Committee shall have a chair and a secretary.

17. The functions of the Committee's secretary shall be performed by ANQA's Secretariat.

18. The inaugural session shall be appointed and moderated by the Board president until the election of the Committee chair.

19. During the inaugural session, the Committee president shall be elected from the members of the Committee.

20. A contract shall be signed between the Committee members and the president of the Board.

21. The authority of the Committee member shall be terminated in the following cases:

1) loss of Armenian citizenship or acquisition of citizenship from another state;

2) pursuant to their application;

3) declaration of incapacitation, semi-incapacitation, missing or dead by a court decision entered into force, legally binding sentence;

4) appointment to a position specified in point 10 after becoming a Committee member;

5) death of the member.

22. The authority of the Committee member can be terminated in the following cases:

- 1) based on substantiated inactivity of the Committee member;
- 2) violation of the conditions of the Commitment of confidentiality and impartiality,
- 3) unexcused absence from the meetings of the Committee more than twice, including non-participation in online sessions or sessions by request;
- 4) violation of the terms and conditions of the contract.

23. The vacant position of a Committee member shall be filled within a month in accordance with this Procedure.

24. The Committee member who has submitted a resignation application to the Board president, shall continue to perform his/her responsibilities until the appointment of a new member by the Board.

3. AUTHORITY OF THE ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

25. The Committee shall:

- 1) define the approaches and principles of decision-making on accreditation;
- 2) study the package of documents of the education institution subject to accreditation: the institution's self-evaluation, consent or observations and recommendations on the preliminary version of the expert panel report, the final expert panel report, as well as the preliminary version of the follow-up plan;
- 3) make a decision on the accreditation of an education institution or an academic programme;
- 4) provide a conclusion on the follow-up plan presented by the accredited education institution or an academic programme after the decision;
- 5) under the conditions of force majeure, make appropriate decisions based on the circumstances at hand.

26. The Committee shall submit recommendations to ANQA for the enhancement of the Statute on State Accreditation and accreditation criteria.

4. AUTHORITY OF THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

27. The Committee president:

- 1) shall represent the Committee in relation with third parties in the periods between sessions;

- 2) shall cooperate with ANQA;
- 3) shall organise the Committee's work and ensure the proper conduct of its activity within the constraints of the authorities arising from this Procedure;
- 4) shall give instructions to the Committee's members, decide their responsibilities within the frames of the Committee's functions;
- 5) shall draw up and sign the decisions of the Committee;
- 6) shall submit the Committee's annual report to the Board;
- 7) can temporarily transfer his/her authority, either entirely or partially, to another Committee member;
- 8) can submit recommendations to the Board, with a purpose of increasing the effectiveness of the Committee's work or improving the composition of its members;
- 9) shall perform other authorities arising from this Procedure.

28. The Committee member shall have the right to:

- 1) if necessary, require additional information and documents from the expert panel and the education institution;
- 2) express viewpoints on any issue under discussion;
- 3) ask questions,
- 4) make suggestions and recommendations.

29. The Committee member shall be obliged to:

- 1) be aware of the legal acts regulating the accreditation process;
- 2) participate in the Committee sessions, in some cases also connect online;
- 3) get acquainted with the package of documents on the discussed issues, take part in their discussions;
- 4) fulfill the assignments given by the the Committee chair within the scope of the issues under discussions;
- 5) take part in the voting process;
- 6) sign the Commitment of confidentiality and impartiality;
- 7) comply with ANQA's Code of Ethics and Conduct;
- 8) declare self-withdrawal and non-participation in the voting upon awareness of some facts or circumstances about the education institution that may raise reasonable doubt on his/her impartiality. The member's self-withdrawal shall be mentioned in the meeting minutes.

30. The following cases can be considered as a basis for self-withdrawal:

- 1) the Committee member has a biased approach to the education institution undergoing accreditation process.
- 2) the Committee member, his/her spouse or a relative up to the third degree of consanguinity, holds an official position at the education institution undergoing accreditation process.

3) the Committee member is aware that he/she or his/her spouse or a relative up to the third degree of consanguinity has economic interests from the education institution undergoing accreditation.

31. Each Committee member shall have the right of one vote. The transfer of voting rights to another member shall be prohibited.

5. AUTHORITY OF THE ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE'S SECRETARY

32. The minutes of the Committee sessions shall be managed by ANQA Secretariat's staff member selected by mutual agreement of the Committee and ANQA's Director.

33. Head of ANQA' Secretariat shall:

1) prepare and provide the Accreditation Committee's members with the package of documents related to agenda items for discussion at least two weeks prior to the session;

2) notify the Committee members about the date, time, place and agenda of the session in writing or by email at least two weeks prior to the session;

3) register the session participants, manage the minutes of the Committee's sessions in written and digital forms;

4) prepare and sign the minutes of the Committee sessions, send the minutes to the Committee members,

5) submit the Committee decision, the accreditation certificate, (in the case of programme accreditation, also the supplement) to the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia (hereinafter referred to as the "authorized body") for the approval of the Minister.

6) ensure the maintenance of the State Accreditation Register;

7) perform other authorities within the frames of this Procedure.

6. WORK REGULATION OF THE COMMITTEE, PREPARATION AND CONDUCT OF SESSIONS

34. The Committee shall fulfill its activities through sessions.

35. The Committee sessions shall be held upon necessity at least four times a year, the dates shall be appointed by the chair based on ANQA's suggestions.

36. The Committee sessions shall be considered valid if a minimum of two-thirds of the members are in attendance. The session shall be postponed in case of the absence of a quorum. The session cannot be postponed more than two times. If the Committee session is not convened

more than twice, the Committee shall be dissolved. The new Committee shall be formed as stipulated by this Procedure.

37. The Committee sessions shall be prepared by the chair and secretary, with the involvement of other Committee members if necessary. The coordinator of the expert panel shall support these activities.

38. The Committee shall convene a session to make an accreditation decision.

39. The Committee sessions shall be led by the Committee chair.

40. The Committee members can make a suggestion on the involvement of pressing issues into the agenda, which shall be put up for a vote.

41. Two weeks prior to the Committee meeting, the three members (hereinafter referred to as the “Scrutiny Group”) selected by the Committee chair, shall study the package of documents of the education institution subject to accreditation and the evaluation provided by the expert panel for each criterion. The Scrutiny Group shall also meet with the coordinator of the accreditation process, who facilitates meetings with the expert panel and the institutions’ representatives to clarify the factual circumstances of the external review. The ANQA Secretariat’s staff member shall also participate in the meetings. The meetings shall be attended and documented by the head of ANQA’s Secretariat. After the meeting, the Scrutiny Group shall prepare and submit the conclusion on the review outcomes to the Secretariat in the prescribed format. The Scrutiny Group, in conjunction with the Committee chair, shall prepare the draft version of the accreditation decision.

42. During the Committee session, the Scrutiny Group shall present the outcomes from the study of the document package and the meetings with participants. Based on the outcomes, the Group shall introduce the conclusion for each criterion, according to the format set by ANQA.

43. After hearing each agenda item, the Committee members shall proceed to a final discussion to make a decision, followed by an open voting.

44. The decision shall be made based on the voting results.

45. The Committee shall study and discuss the follow-up plan submitted by the accredited education institution within two months after the decision-making and provide a conclusion.

46. The Committee sessions shall be recorded and documented.

7. DECISION-MAKING OF THE ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

47. The Committee decisions shall be reached through open voting (for or against), with a simple majority of participants’ votes. In the case of equality of votes, the president’s vote shall be decisive.

48. ANQA Director with the right to a consultative vote and the secretary without right to vote shall take part in the Accreditation Committee's session.

49. Based on the approaches and principles of the accreditation decision-making, the education institution's package of documents, the justifications provided by the Committee members, the Committee shall make one of the following decisions:

- 1) to grant an institutional or programme accreditation;
- 2) to grant conditional institutional or programme accreditation;
- 3) to reject institutional or programme accreditation.

50. A separate decision shall be made for each accreditation process.

51. The Committee's decisions on accreditation shall be published on ANQA's official website after the approval of the the head of the authorized body.

8. MINUTES OF THE ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

52. The Committee sessions shall be documented in paper and digital forms.

53. The Committee minutes shall include:

- 1) the session's date, starting and ending times, and place;
- 2) the data of the Committee members and other people participating in the session;
- 3) the outline of the speeches on the issues under discussion, questions, their answers;
- 4) the outcomes of the voting and the decision made.

54. The minutes shall be agreed upon with the Committee members.

55. The minutes shall be signed by the Committee's chair and the secretary.

56. The session shall be recorded and documented.

9. APPEALING THE DECISION OF THE ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

57. The Committee's decisions can be appealed to the Board by an expert panel or an education institution after the publication of the decision within a month, according to ANQA's appeal template.

58. The appeal shall be submitted to ANQA's Secretariat by email or in writing.

59. Upon receipt of the appeal, within two working days, ANQA's Secretariat shall submit it to the ANQA's Board of Trustees or return it in case:

- 1) the appeal is not signed by the appellant or his/her authorized representative;
- 2) the name of the body to which the appeal is submitted is not indicated;
- 3) the appeal lacks the date;
- 4) the appeal is signed by an unauthorized person, or if authorized, the letter of authorization is not attached to the appeal;
- 5) the timeframes for the appeal submission are violated.

60. The ANQA's Board of Trustees with the suggestion of ANQA's Director, shall form an Appeal Commission (hereafter referred to as the "Commission") consisting of three members to examine the appeal and provide a conclusion.

61. The Commission members can be appointed from ANQA's expert pool, given they meet the requirements set forth in points 7-8 of this Procedure.

62. The Commission's member having a conflict of interests with the appellant can be replaced with another expert selected from ANQA's expert pool by the decision of the chair of the Board of Trustees.

63. The Secretariat shall submit the appeal accepted by the Board of Trustees to the Commission.

64. The Commission shall examine and conclude the appeal against the decision of the Accreditation Committee within a month.

65. While drawing up a conclusion, the Appeal Commission shall be guided by the principles of legality, impartiality and objectivity.

66. The Commission shall give one of the following conclusions on the appeal:

- 1) to leave the Committee's decision unchanged, rejecting the applicant's appeal;
- 2) to send it back, with a proposal for a new decision by the Committee.

67. The Appeal Commission's conclusion shall be based on the submitted package of documents:

- 1) the appeal;
- 2) the institution's self-evaluation;
- 3) the preliminary version of the expert panel report;
- 4) the institution's consent or remarks and objections (if any) to the preliminary version of the report
- 5) the expert panel final report;
- 6) the Accreditation Committee's decision.
- 7) additional arguments, statements, including new circumstances, submitted by the parties during the examination of the appeal.

68. The Commission shall give conclusions on the principle of consensus.

69. The remuneration costs of the Commission's members shall be covered by the appealing party.

70. The functions of the Appeal Commission's secretary shall be performed by ANQA's Secretariat. The examination process shall be recorded and documented. The minutes shall be signed by the Commission members and the secretary.

71. The Appeal Commission's conclusion shall be signed by the all members of the Commission.

72. The Commission's conclusion shall be submitted to the Board.

73. If the appeal is upheld, the Commission's conclusion shall be sent to the Accreditation Committee with a proposal to make a new decision.

74. The Commission's decision cannot be appealed to ANQA again.

10. FINAL PROVISIONS

75. Changes in this Procedure shall be made by the ANQA's Board of Trustees, presented by ANQA Director, as well as with proposal of the members of the Board of Trustees.

76. This Procedure shall enter into force upon publication.

COMMITMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY AND IMPARTIALITY

I, (name, surname), a member of the Accreditation Committee of the “National Center for Quality Assurance of Vocational Education” Foundation (hereinafter to as “ANQA”), hereby certify that I am fully acquainted with the Procedure on the Formation and Operation of the Accreditation Committee of the “National Center for Quality Assurance of Vocational Education” foundation (hereinafter to as the Procedure), and the Code of Ethics and Conduct of the “National Center for Quality Assurance of Vocational Education” foundation.

I undertake not to perform any actions that might lead to a conflict of interest while fulfilling the responsibilities assigned to me by this Procedure. Under the concept of "disclaimer of conflict of interest" I understand a situation where I have no economic interest, political or national, family or emotional or any other connections or shared interests (hereinafter referred to as “private interest”) related to myself, a person associated with me or a third party, which influences, appears to influence or could reasonably influence my capacity to make objective and impartial decisions as a member of the Accreditation Committee.

I hereby undertake not to be guided by private interest, not to perform an action, manifest inaction, or take a decision that leads to, contributes or could reasonably lead to or contribute to the normal functioning of the Accreditation Committee.

I hereby undertake to immediately notify ANQA of any conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest situations and to submit a self-withdrawal at least two working days prior to the Accreditation Committee’s session.

Meanwhile, I undertake not to publish the information obtained during the exercise of the authority assigned to me by the Procedure and thereafter, which is considered confidential until its official publication.

This Commitment includes the following:

- 1) not to disclose confidential information about the Accreditation Committee and tertiary education institutions to third parties;
- 2) not to copy or otherwise reproduce or disseminate the confidential information.

I realize that in case of violation of the obligations set forth in this commitment, my authority as a member of the Accreditation Committee will be terminated and I will be held liable according to the acting legislation of the Republic of Armenia.

Committee member _____