Appendix

Decision N 3_L of the Board of Trustees of the "National Center
for Professional Education Quality Assurance" foundation, May 5, 2025

REGULATION ON
THE FORMATION OF THE EXPERT PANEL OF THE "NATIONAL CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE" FOUNDATION

1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. This Regulation is established on the basis of the Statute on State Accreditation of Tertiary Level Institutions and their Academic Programmes in the Republic of Armenia (hereinafter referred to as the "Accreditation Statute") approved by the RA Government Decree N 978-N of June 30, 2011.
2. The expert panel shall be formed to conduct an external review of higher education institutions and vocational education institutions (hereinafter referred to as "TLIs", "education institutions") that applied to ANQA for institutional and programme accreditation purposes. The external review process shall be carried out in accordance with the State Accreditation Criteria and Standards.
3. The expert panel's activities shall be regulated by the Accreditation Statute, the Manual for the External Review of Tertiary Level Institutions of RA (hereinafter referred to as the "Manual"), the Code of Ethics and Conduct of "National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance" foundation, and within the scope of powers defined in this Regulation.
4. The Expert Panel shall carry out its activities based on the principles of legality, objectivity, independence and impartiality.
5. This Regulation shall define the procedure for the formation of the expert panel, the requirements for experts, the rights and responsibilities of the expert panel and the coordinator, the powers of the expert panel, the termination of its powers and the monitoring and assessment of the expert panel's activities during the accreditation process.

2. THE FORMATION OF THE EXPERT PANEL

2.1 Recruitment, Preparation and Selection of Experts

6. To join ANQA's expert pool, the candidates shall:
   1) register in the pool (http://forms.anqa.am);
   2) complete the expert data questionnaire;
   3) participate in courses and training designed for experts;
7. Expert candidates shall be recruited from the following groups:

1) staff members involved in the education institutions' groups responsible for the preparation of self-evaluation;

2) sector specialists upon recommendation of experts participated in the accreditation processes;

3) invited participants upon the recommendation of the heads of quality assurance divisions/centres of education institutions;

4) participants selected as a result of round table discussions (thematic, sectoral) organised by ANQA,

5) teachers researching their teaching practice and publishing related articles;

6) well-known sector specialists in science, economy, industry, or representatives with education management experience;

7) employers in active cooperation with education institutions.

8. ANQA regularly organise capacity building courses for specialists included in the expert pool.

9. The courses end with the assessment of the participants' skills based on the specified rubric.

10. The rubric assess:

1) the introduction of innovative solutions aimed to enhance the education institutions' governance and academic programmes (hereinafter referred to as the "APs");

2) ability to pose outcome-based questions;

3) skills to prepare expert panel report;

4) communication and teamwork skills.

11. Participants with positive assessment shall be included in ANQA's list of expert candidates.

12. The expert panel consist of three to seven experts.

13. The expert panel shall be composed of:

1) academic staff representatives;

2) representatives from the field of education management;

3) representatives/employers from professional or specific field of industry (mandatory in case of programme accreditation);

4) students from VET institutions and HEIs;

5) international experts (mandatory in case of HEIs).

14. The international experts shall be selected from education quality assurance agencies or reputable international organizations.

15. ANQA shall select seven to ten expert candidates from a pool of local and international experts and submit them to the Accreditation Committee for consent. From the list agreed upon by the Committee, ANQA shall form the preliminary composition of the expert panel and forward it to the education institution for consent within two weeks.

16. The education institution shall submit its consent or objection in writing. If there is an objection regarding one or more candidates of the expert panel, the educational institution is obliged to submit a written and justified rejection, indicating the reasons for the objection, including any possible justifications related to conflict of interest.

17. ANQA shall study the education institution's rejection. In the absence of justifications, the composition of the expert panel shall remain unchanged, and the accreditation process shall proceed in accordance with the established procedure.

18. If ANQA accepts the rejection, it shall make respective changes to the preliminary composition of the expert panel, selecting another candidate from the list agreed upon with the Accreditation Committee, and the contract signed with the education institution shall be extended for one month. In the event of failure to reach consent on the new composition of the expert panel after a one-month period, the contract signed with the education institution shall be terminated.

19. Within one week of receiving the internal audit results of the education institution accredited with conditions, ANQA shall form an expert panel of three to six members from the expert pool, if possible, including an expert panel member from the education institution accredited with conditions. The composition shall be submitted to the Accreditation Committee for consent. After the consent, a three-member expert panel shall be formed.

20. The agreed-upon composition shall be sent to the education institution, which shall submit its consent or objection within two working days.

21. The number and composition of expert panel's members shall depend on the size and peculiarities of the education institution subject to external review, as well as the type of accreditation.

22. The final composition of the expert panel once agreed upon with the Accreditation Committee, then with the education institution, shall be approved by the order of ANQA's director.

23. ANQA shall appoint one of the members of the expert panel as the panel chair.

24. The status, rights and responsibilities of the expert panel's members shall be defined by this Regulation and paid service contracts.

2.2 Requirements for the Expert Panel

25. The formed expert panel shall have:

1) capacity to conduct external review of the education institutions' institutional capacities or academic programmes;

2) skills in management and administration, including development and implementation of policies and strategic plans;

3) teaching and research experience (at least three years, except for student experts);

4) skills to evaluate internal quality assurance processes and analyze data.

For higher education institutions, local experts shall have an academic degree, while in the case of vocational education institutions, at least a master's degree or certified specialist's qualification shall be required.

26. Expert panels shall include students who are at least in their second year of a bachelor's degree, admitted to a master's or postgraduate programme, or in the second year or higher at VET institutions, with experience in public activities.

27. The expert panel's local experts shall be fully proficient in both spoken and written Armenian language.

28. At least one of the expert panel's local experts shall be proficient in the English language.

3. POWERS, RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EXPERT PANEL

29. The functions of the expert panel shall be the following:

1) to study and evaluate the education institution's self-evaluation report and the package of documents attached;

2) to conduct class observations and observation of internships and resources;

3) to conduct a site visit, participate in all expert panel meetings, close meetings and decision-making processes;

4) to prepare a preliminary version of the expert panel report based on the electronic questionnaire completed by the education institution, the self-evaluation report, the desk review, the study of the documents attached and the results of the site visit;

5) to participate in the discussions about the education institution's remarks and suggestions on the preliminary version of the expert panel report;

6) to prepare the expert panel final report;

7) to give a conclusion on the education institution's preliminary version of the follow-up plan;

8) to meet with a three-member Scrutiny Group formed by the chair of the Accreditation Committee;

30. The member of the expert panel

have the right to:

1) request additional information from the education institution through the coordinator as needed during the external review process;

2) suggest changes to the site visit schedule;

3) provide feedback to ANQA on the entire external review process.

shall be obliged to:

1) prior to the involvement in the expert panel, inform ANQA in writing of any issues that may lead to a conflict of interest with the given education institution;

2) following inclusion in the expert panel, the individual is required to sign a commitment confidentiality and conflict of interest avoidance undertaking;

3) strictly follow ANQA's Code of Ethics and Conduct during the entire external review process.

31. The chair of the expert panel shall be responsible for the proper conduct of the entire external review process and the panel's activities.

32. The chair of the expert panel shall also be obliged to:

1) conduct a preliminary visit to the education institution with ANQA's head of the Institutional and Programme Accreditation Division and coordinator to agree upon the site visit schedule;

2) manage all the meetings of the site visit, close meetings, and guide decision-making processes;

3) follow the schedule, maintain the work protocols (keep the meeting schedule, follow the presentation and clarification of all the issues raised by the expert panel members);

4) prepare a response to the observations on the preliminary version of the expert panel report.

4. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COORDINATOR OF THE EXPERT PANEL

33. To organise the expert panel's activities and coordinate the education institution's external review process, one or two coordinators shall be appointed by the order of ANQA's director.

34. The coordinator facilitate communication between the expert panel and the education institution and ensure adherence to the procedures set forth in the Accreditation Statute and the Manual.

35. The coordinator shall be responsible for the compliance with the external review procedure and evaluation principles.

36. The coordinator shall not have the right to give evaluations or considerations regarding the education institution's activities or academic programmes.

37. The coordinator shall be obliged to:

1) follow the smooth flow and effective implementation of processes (organizing discussions, resolving misunderstandings);

2) coordinate the whole process and protect the rights of the expert panel's members;

3) carry out a situation analysis (in ad hoc cases, come up with decisions and solutions);

4) collaborate with the expert panel's chair to draw up the site visit schedule and come to an agreement with the education institution about it;

5) conduct preliminary visit to the education institution, check the institution's readiness for the site visit (provided working room, equipment etc.);

6) assist the expert panel in preparing the preliminary version of the expert panel report;

7) arrange discussions with the expert panel members and the education institution's representatives to address the institution's remarks and objections on the preliminary version of the expert panel report;

8) assist the expert panel in preparing the expert panel final report;

9) provide the education institutions with recommendations on the preparation of the follow-up plan and organise the expert panel's evaluation process of the plan;

10) organise and participate in the meetings with a three-member Scrutiny Group and the representatives from the expert panel and the education institution;

11) ensure the expert panel's activities and implemented processes comply with the requirements of this Regulation and the Manual.

5. MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF EXPERT ACTIVITIES

38. During the entire external review process, the experts' activities shall be monitored and assessed by ANQA's director and head of the Institutional and Programme Accreditation Division.

39. ANQA shall monitor the experts' ongoing activities through the observation of meetings, site visits and expert panel reports.

40. A detailed description of the monitoring methods and the assessment of the experts' activities is set forth in the Manual.

6. EARLY TERMINATION OF THE POWERS OF THE EXPERT PANEL MEMBER

41. The powers of the expert panel member shall terminate:

1) in the case of declaration of incapacitation, semi-incapacitation by a court decision entered into force, legally binding sentence;

2) in case he/she has taken on a managerial or administrative position that poses a conflict of interest at an education institution undergoing accreditation;

3) in the event of death.

42. The powers of the expert panel member may be early terminated:

1) upon his/her application;
2) in the case of incomplete fulfillment or failure to fulfill the responsibilities set forth in this Regulation;
3) in the case of violation of the requirements of the contract signed with ANQA, as well as Commitment of Confidentiality and conflict of interest avoidance;
4) in the case of violation of ANQA's Rules of Ethics and Conduct;
5) in the case of violation of the contract provisions.

The decision on the early termination of the expert's powers shall be made upon the agreement of the parties.

43. In the case specified in point 43 of this Regulation, a change of the expert panel member shall be possible during the desk review phase. In the subsequent phases, the external review shall continue without the expert panel member concerned if feasible; otherwise, it shall be terminated. The procedure for the termination of the external review process is set forth in the Manual.

8. FINAL PROVISIONS

44. Amendments and supplements to this Regulation shall be made by ANQA's Board of Trustees upon the presentation of ANQA's director.

45. To invalidate the procedure for the formation of the expert panel of the "National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance" Foundation, approved by Decision No. 14.1/[97088]-11 of the Board of Trustees of the "National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance" Foundation dated November 23, 2011.

46. This Regulation shall enter into force upon its publication.