



DECISION

DECREE N 23

20 October 2017

On Awarding Institutional Accreditation to Crises Management State Academy of MES RA

General Information about the Institution

Full name of the Institution:	" Crises Management State Academy of MES RA" State Institution
Short name:	MES RA CMSA
Official address:	Acharyan St., 1 Building, Yerevan, Armenia
Previous accreditation decree and date:	Not available

Guided by the regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs” approved by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N 978-Ն decree; by RA Government decree N 959-Ն (30 June, 2011) on “Approval of RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation”; by the Procedure on the Formation and Functioning of Accreditation Committee of “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation (ANQA) as well as by ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel, in the open session held on 20 October 2017, the Accreditation Committee of “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) discussed the issue of state institutional accreditation of Crises Management State Academy of MES RA" (hereinafter: CMSA or Academy) with the presence of the representatives of the RA Ministry of Education and Science, Chair of the Expert Panel, ANQA coordinator of the accreditation procedure as well as Academy representatives.

Having examined the self-analysis presented by Academy, the Expert Panel report, follow-up plan as well as ANQA conclusion, the Committee stated the following:

The main phases of the accreditation process were carried out following the below-given timeframe:

Submission of application	12 December 2016
Submission of self-evaluation report	27 February 2017
expert panel site-visit	15-18 May 2017
Submission of expert panel report	26 August 2017
Submission of action plan on elimination of shortcomings	15 September 2017

The expertise was carried out by an Expert Panel formed in compliance with the requirements set forth by the ANQA regulation on the composition of expert panel. The assessment was carried out based in line with 10 criteria of institutional accreditation established by N959-Ն (30 June, 2011) decree on approving RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation.

While carrying out the expertise the expert panel took into consideration that "CMSA has an important role and responsibility for personnel training, retraining and qualification upgrading for existing units of MES RA, as well as in the development of civil protection and emergency education policy in the RA education system ". The mission of the Academy is "the preparation of specialists (6th and 7th levels of National Qualifications Framework: bachelor and master qualifications) meeting the requirements of spheres of the departments under RA Ministry of Emergency Situations; the implementation of educational, scientific, methodical and practical activities in the sphere of protection of population in emergency situations; as well as the implementation of postgraduate academic programs, additional and continuing education, scientific and applied research"

The Academy has not undergone accreditation according to the previous standards and regulation of accreditation that were operating until 2011. In this current process of accreditation the Academy is participating based on its own application.

The Academy provides 7 full-time and part-time BA (Crisis Management, Management, Fire Protection, Defense in Emergency Situations (Pedagogy), Civil Defense, Rescue Services, Exploitation and Service of Transport and Fire Rescue Special Equipment) and 2 MA (part-time) programs (Crisis Management, Rescue Services). Full-time Bachelor education in the professions of Fire Protection and Rescue Services is free of charge. The programs are formed on a credit base. There are no set standards for those programs. The outcomes based description of academic programs and courses was carried out in 2016. Teaching/learning and assessment methodology is not described in the program descriptions. A positive fact is that together with traditional teaching methods of new methods of student-centered learning are also applied and the students are satisfied with those methods. In the

operational level the academic programs are not yet implemented based on the learning outcomes.

Student-lecturer (full time) ratio in 2012-2013 was 13.0 now it has reduced to 11.6. Until 2016-2017 academic year the average age of the teaching staff was about 50. During the recent years the number of teaching staff members has increased and the average age is 49. The Academy was able to recruit its teaching staff with specialists of different spheres (academic, practical, servant and civic specialists) however mechanisms evaluating professional qualities of the teaching staff does not yet have the necessary effect: in some cases because of the unsatisfactory results of evaluation a reduction of hours for lecturers was applied, in rare cases also fire from work. Students and alumni of the Academy highly evaluate professional and personal qualities of the teaching staff members. It's worth mentioning about the involvement of quality rescue workers from the Ministry of Emergency Situations in the activities of the teaching staff. Steps are taken towards stabilization and rejuvenation of the staff of the Academy by involving graduates as teaching and support staff members and by sending them to other universities as PhD applicants. The expert panel highly evaluated the active participation of the teaching staff members in training within international projects.

The current infrastructure and resources of the Academy form an effective learning environment and are sufficient for the implementation of professional education. However in terms of continuous improvement of education quality there is still need to enrich laboratory base and the training ground of the Academy in Lusakert as well as to enlarge the use of ICT in the education process. Financial incomes are formed from state budget, students' fees and other sources. Main part of the budget allocation goes to the salaries. The small number of students and student-lecturer low ratio make the Academy pursue such a policy to save recourses. The current mechanisms of student recruitment and admission gave an opportunity to the Academy to ensure stable number of students for the recent years. The abrupt increase of the rate of dismissal and recovery is bothersome and the Academy has not yet created mechanisms towards their control. Surveys revealing students' educational needs have recently been introduced and are not sufficiently operation yet. The expert panel positively assesses current mechanisms of providing additional consultancy and support to students as well as the availability of the staff for students. Generally the students are satisfied with the environment of Academy and they appreciate the Academy's desire for the students' centered learning however student bodies need more attention and necessary resources. The fact that for the last 5 years 40-46% of graduates are unemployed and 5-10% graduates continue their education after graduation is troublesome.

The research interests of the Academy have clear field directions. However the defined research goals are rather ambitious: there are no clear plans for the institution that desires to be involved in European research area. Research activities are generally not regulated. Outcomes of internationalization in the research sphere are not tangible. Financial resources

are allocated only for the publications in the scientific journals of the Academy and the carried out research do not ensure any kind of financial inflows.

Students' participation in the research activities is rather low conditioned also by the small number of research activities carried out at the Academy. Bachelor students are not involved in scientific-research activities. Research activities of Master students should be expressed through master theses however there are repetitions of thesis topics for the last three years and in some cases the works are fully repeated. In 2012-2016 only 1 scientific article with a student as co-author was published and in the leading scientific-research activities of the Academy 3 master students were involved. The overwhelming majority of students present at the meeting with expert panel was not aware of the activities of Students' Scientific Union. The Academy gives importance to the expansion and diversification of international relations in educational and scientific spheres. International partnership agreements fostered implementation of trainings for the teaching and administrative staffs and the creation of educational cabinets. The impact of international cooperation on the academic programs and educational process is not yet significant, exchange programs for students and teaching staff are still in perspective however there are agreements fostering it. One of the main reasons hindering internationalization of activities is the low level of English language proficiency.

The current management system is the one typical to universities, it is acceptable and is in line with the Academy's strategic goals and objectives. The absence of some necessary structural units in the structure of the Academy for the implementation of certain strategic objectives affects the efficiency of those activities. Transparency and accountability of the management system is ensured through the availability of documents, through the internal information system and web-site. The management system gives an opportunity to both teaching staff and students to express their benefits in management activities. The lack of financial planning in accordance with strategic directions breaks the ties between financial policy of the Academy and strategic development as well as affects on the effectiveness of the development of the Academy. In terms of investment of the principle of full quality management in the activities of administration currently only planning and partially implementation phases are in place. QA system of the Academy is still in the phase of investment and does not fully fulfill its functions. QA Center does not yet collect sufficient data for the evaluation of the effectiveness of academic programs and other services. Factually, implemented QA activities do not ensure the implementation of the policy set by the Academy. Some stakeholders participate in different surveys however they are not aware of the further results and impact of the survey results. In order to establish a functional team QA staff of the Academy strongly needs further professional development. The center is provided with necessary material-technical resource base, which was purchased within the World Bank grant project.

QA Center has little commitment in forming trust towards the Academy among the stakeholders.

The Academy recommends, within the framework of its strategy, to carry out the following consultations aimed at overcoming the issues raised by the expert panel in the accreditation process and further improving the university's performance:

Mission and Goals

1. To define the strategic goals based on the analysis of external factors and opportunities influencing the activities of the Academy and also include external stakeholders.
2. To review time-schedule of the strategic plan aligning it with the strategic plan and do clear resource allocation.
3. To reasonably define key performance indicators of the strategic plan. To make analysis on the effectiveness of the implementation of strategic goals applying those indicators.
4. Develop mechanisms and procedures for the evaluation and improvement of mission and goals and the evaluation of the results of the latter.

Governance and Administration

5. To clarify organizational structure of the Academy and to replenish with structural units necessary for the fulfillment of strategic goals.
6. To carry out financial planning according to strategic directions and to link the budget with strategic goals and objectives to prevent failure of the implementation of strategic plan.
7. To develop mid-term and short-term clear plans derived from the strategic plan and corresponding reports for the structural units.
8. To review the administration of the Academy by introducing PDCA principle of quality management in all the activities.
9. To create necessary information data of the Academy for the evaluation of effectiveness and analysis of academic programs and other processes, make these data available for the stakeholders.
10. To develop mechanisms evaluating awareness of the stakeholders and provide information not only about the content of the academic programs but also about their quality.

Academic Programs

11. To clarify the mapping of academic programs and course learning outcomes, as well as to clarify the academic program and course descriptions in accordance with the Methodical Guideline for the development of Academic programs at the Academy.

12. To describe teaching, learning and assessment methodology in the course descriptions and to substantiate their alignment to the learning outcomes.
13. To review the methodology of practical lessons in order to ensure the creating of necessary skills among the students to achieve the learning outcomes.
14. To introduce mechanism preventing plagiarism, to clarify the policy of peer-review of master theses in order to enhance the objectiveness of assessment.
15. To develop policy and procedure of benchmarking, to carry out benchmarking with partner universities in order to ensure contextual alignment of academic programs and to foster mobility.
16. To carry out monitoring of academic programs according to the set regulation and to clarify the corresponding mechanisms.

Students

17. To make qualitative studies of admission and recruitment mechanisms in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the applied policy. To develop mechanisms regulating students' dismissal and readmission indicators as well as clear criteria for the MA admission.
18. To develop policy and procedures for the further development of the Academy based on the results of students' needs assessment. To make analysis of the effectiveness of students' needs assessment mechanisms.
19. To establish a unit fostering career development of graduates and to allocate additional resources in order to enhance the quality of educational services and to promote students' career development. To align the activities aimed at ensuring employability and competitiveness of graduates in the labor market with strategic plan.
20. To develop clear mechanism of involving students in scientific research activities. To develop promotion mechanisms for students involved in the scientific research activities.
21. To make the activities of Students' Council and Students' Scientific Union more active and clear by appointing coordinators of the activities.
22. To make analysis on the evaluation of the services provided to students in order to record about their reliability and impact of the results.

Teaching and Support Staffs

23. To clarify the requirements of recruiting support staff by defining professional qualities relevant for the teaching staff of the current academic program.
24. To interconnect the current mechanisms of evaluating the teaching staff, to carry out general quality analysis and to develop improvement policy based on the results of the analysis.

25. To make the results of internal and external evaluation the basis for the trainings of the teaching staff and to carry out evaluation of the effectiveness of the trainings.
26. To develop criteria for the professional attestation of the teaching and administrative staffs as well as to develop improvement mechanisms.

Research and Development

27. To develop separate strategy for the organization of scientific research activities of the Academy by defining more clear goals.
28. To carry out joint research with chairs and to interconnect research projects.
29. To develop joint research projects with international partner institutions, to make the implementation of applied research more active to foster inflow of financial income.
30. To develop clear mechanisms of interconnecting research and educational processes by involving students in research activities.

Infrastructure and Resources

31. To describe resources necessary for the implementation of each academic program.
32. To develop mechanisms of decision making concerning financial resource allocation.
33. To enrich laboratory and library base in line with the requirements of the academic program.
34. To carry out evaluation of the resources and services provided to students in the Academy in accordance to the requirements of academic programs and the strategic plan.

Social Responsibility

35. To review the format of Rector's reports by linking it with strategic objectives and by viewing it as mechanism of evaluating the performance of the strategic goals.
36. To update the web-site of the Academy with necessary information.
37. To develop policy and procedures of public relations and needs assessment.
38. To develop mechanisms means for the evaluation of the effectiveness of mechanisms applied by the Academy towards the formation of public relations.
39. To develop separate policy promoting internationalization which will be basis for the work plans of the structural units dealing with internationalization.
40. To establish separate infrastructure or to appoint a staff member responsible for the enhancement of the effectiveness of the activities towards internationalization.
41. To develop mechanisms ensuring and evaluating the link between external relations and education process.
42. To develop exchange programs for students and teaching staff within the framework of international cooperation, to ensure sufficient level of foreign

language proficiency among the students and teaching staff, to update information in a foreign language on the official web-site of the Academy about the academic programs and the activities of the Academy.

Internal Quality Assurance System

43. To carry out evaluation of the effectiveness of QA policy and procedures.
44. To involve internal and external stakeholders in QA activities.
45. To carry out qualitative analysis of the results of stakeholders' needs assessment.
46. To carry out analysis of the effectiveness of QA system of the Academy, to review the system and to align it with the needs of the Academy.
47. To introduce mechanisms ensuring the transparency of QA procedures for the internal and external stakeholders.

Observing the presented package of documents and considering the opinions of head of the Expert Panel and other representatives, the Accreditation Committee finds that Crises Management State Academy of MES RA fulfills its main objective “the preparation of specialists meeting the requirements of spheres of the departments under RA Ministry of Emergency Situations; the implementation of educational, scientific, methodical and practical activities in the sphere of protection of population in emergency situations; as well as the implementation of postgraduate academic programs, additional and continuing education, scientific and applied research”. The Academy has an important role and responsibility in terms of preparation and development of professionals for the departments within the system of RA Ministry of Emergency Situations as well as for the development of the policy of the RA education system dealing with the issues of civil defense and emergency situations. In its field of activities the academy has significant achievements in providing the MES units with qualified professional staff.

At the same time, the Academy as a higher education institution implementing educational programs is still in the process of development and has a great deal to do to meet the requirements of the classical university. Some work should be done on adapting to educational and research issues, in the areas of infrastructure development and internal quality assurance, integration of education and research activities and increasing management effectiveness. For formulation its strategic goals and for achieving those goals and for obtaining the necessary financial resources the Academy should involve external stakeholders, especially the Ministry of Emergency Situations.

The diversification of financial access and their growth will make it realistic for the creation of own educational laboratories for educational programs and acquisition of sufficient technical equipment, which will contribute to the improvement of the learning environment needed to shape the educational outcomes of the programs.

By clarifying its ambitions and setting more realistic goals, the Academy should rethink its research strategy by providing appropriate financial and technical resources for identifying and researching development issues in the field. Clarification of the research directions of the chairs, encouragement of individual research work of lecturers, developing intermediate and

inter-university research programs and increasing student engagement to that programs will contribute to the implementation and development of the university's strategic objectives.

The educational programs provided by the research lecturers will allow students to develop critical thinking, and their graduation theses will correspond to the characteristics of the ANQ master's degree, with certain research and innovative components. At present, the basis for the implementation of master's degree programs is of concern.

Being a unique educational institution not only in the Republic of Armenia but also for the region and presenting the Ministry of Emergency Situations internationally, the Academy can use these links as internationalization of its activities. In parallel with the improvement of material and technical resources, trainings of teaching and administrative staff, should increase the impact of international cooperation on the modernization of the content VET's and enhancing the efficiency of educational processes should be increased, also it should be increased student and teacher exchange programs and their foreign language proficiency. It is important to initiate research projects within the framework of cooperation, which would include lecturers and students. The Academy has some achievements in introducing a quality assurance system, but it is not yet integrated into the Academy's processes. Mechanisms and tools need to be put in place to ensure the implementation of a well-developed quality management concept and policy, involvement of internal and external stakeholders in quality assurance processes, improvement of the operations of the VETs and the Academy.

The Academy should also ensure that the quality of professionalism of the staff of the Quality Assurance Center will be sufficiently increased, and also the staff should be aware of their responsibilities and fulfill them. The Accreditation Committee considers it alarming that in the two professions of BA in the context of the state order when the labor market is comprised of mainly government agencies, the employment rate of graduates is low; 40-46% of graduates do not find jobs.

The elimination of the shortcomings mentioned in the expert report and the implementation of the offered consultations will ensure the student-centered and research-based nature of the educational services provided, will promote effective management of the institution and integration into the international education space, which is in line with the ambitions of the Academy.

Taking into consideration that the Academy can eliminate the shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report by methodically operating its internal QA mechanisms and fully accomplish vital state goals in a reasonable time period, as a result of voting the Committee:

DECIDED

1. ***To award conditional institutional accreditation*** to Crises Management State Academy of MES RA for 2/two/ years
2. After the publication of the decision on accreditation award, to submit the action plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report and respective time schedule within two months taking into account:

- a) The necessity of finding solutions primarily to the problems existing in the fields of “Research and Development”, “External relation and Internationalization” and “Internal Quality Assurance System”;
 - b) Results and consultations of an international expert's partner assessment of the Center's aspirations to integrate into the European Higher Education Area.
3. Following today's requirements, pay special attention to the strengthening of the link between learning and research, improvement of the management system, modernization of the necessary material-technical base, training of professors, mobility of professors and students, internal quality assurance, for improving the performance of the institution.
4. According to the requirements of clause 12.3 of the Regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Education Institutions providing professional academic programs and their Professions” every 6 /six/ months to submit a written report to ANQA on the results of the carried out activities.

Chair of Accreditation Committee
20 October 2017
Yerevan

S. Avetisyan