“NATIONAL CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE” FOUNDATION

EXPERT PANEL REPORT ON INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF GRIGOR NAREKATSI UNIVERSITY OF STEPANAKERT

Yerevan – 2022

INTRODUCTION

Institutional accreditation of "Grigor Narekatsi" University of Stepanakert (hereinafter referred to as GNU or the University) was carried out according to the application submitted by the institution.

The process of institutional accreditation was organized and coordinated by the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA) guided by the regulation on "State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs" set by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 in N978 decree as well as by N959-Ն (30 June, 2011) decree on approving RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation.

The external review 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 academic programmes (APs). Hence, there were two important issues for the expert panel members:

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

The current report includes the results of the evaluation of GNU's institutional capacities according to the RA 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 EVALUATION

EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

The external review of GNU was carried out by the expert panel formed according to the requirements of ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel[1]. The evaluation was carried out according to the 10 criteria set by the RA Government on 30 June 2011 N 959–Ն decree.

While carrying out the evaluation the expert panel took into consideration that according to the mission stipulated in 2019-2024 Strategic Plan (SP) adopted in April 2019, GNU strives to prepare technologically competent personnel capable of facing and solving national, social and professional challenges, taking into account the challenges, priorities and characteristics of the Republic of Artsakh, and valuing the national value system. According to the main 6 goals mentioned in the SP and the accountability program implemented in the University, the structural units develop annual reports, where the link between the work done and the strategic goals is clearly indicated.

According to the specialties approved by the Government of the Republic of Artsakh, GNU is authorized to provide secondary and higher professional education at the specified levels of the NQF in the following directions: pedagogy, natural science, humanities, economics. Currently, 29 academic programs are implemented in the University, 13 of which are secondary professional education academic programmes, 9 are BA, 7 are MA degree academic programmes (AP).

The expert panel notes that in a crisis situation, the management of the University together with the teaching staff as one team managed to ensure the continuity of education. The University has established a regulatory framework for operating a modern quality assurance system with a supportive organizational structure that includes staff and students. Strengthening the critical approach and involvement of University staff is the most important challenge in the process of building quality and organizational culture. Improving mechanisms for informing stakeholders about the impact and future progress of quality assurance processes in continuity should become a priority for the University.

The expert panel notes that the development and implementation of a long-term risk management plan is very important for the future development of the University.

Thus, it can be concluded that management and quality assurance systems, with the presence of relevant regulations and documents, create sufficient foundations for the stability of the University.

The University regularly conducts a review of the APs for improvement. According to the first goal of the SP, the APs have been restructured, after specifying the learning outcomes (LOs) of each academic program based on the opinions gathered in advance from employers and graduates, there is a student-centered approach in teaching, learning and assessment methods and a regulation of academic honesty.

Highly qualified teaching and support staffs are employed at the University. Conditioned by the post-war situation, there was an outflow of personnel in the University. To address the challenge, the University is currently recruiting professionals from the labor market who will help students develop practical skills. The expert panel notes the need for clear planning and implementation of professional trainings for lecturers.

[1] Appendix 1: CVs of the expert panel members

The University is taking steps to replenish resources and ensure financial stability. It is positive that the University has an inviolable fund, which provides the skills for effective management in a crisis situation. The expert panel notes that the inclusion of alternative financial streams will contribute to long-term financial stability.

The expert panel notes that the University generally provides credible awarding of qualifications.

The staff of GNU considers it a priority to provide support to students in educational and social issues and tries to provide appropriate solutions to all problems relating students, but the activity of the University's Student Council is not aimed at raising relevant issues and protecting students' rights. Students are mostly satisfied with the educational and other services they receive. The University has various mechanisms for raising students' needs (surveys, meetings-discussions), but their analytical part is weak.

In its strategic plan, GNU emphasized the development of modern research directions, the expansion of professors' and students' involvement in them, the internationalization of research works, but the University's ambitions in the research direction have a high milestone: the potential of the University, the human (the existence of the outflow of the main teaching staff) and financial resources are not taken into account. Despite the setting of scientific priorities in the chairs and the implementation of steps in the direction of Armenian studies, the University has not registered significant results in terms of research either quantitatively (number of published articles) or qualitatively (in internationally recognized scientific journals).

The goals of GNU in external relations and internationalization are ambitious, clear vision and plannings are missing in the direction of internationalization, steps for achieving strategic goals in the direction of external relations and internationalization have not been implemented yet, activities towards the development of language proficiency have not yet brought to the expected results.

Strengths of the Institution:

1) Understanding of University priorities connected with the mission of the University conditioned by the preservation of national and moral values of the region.
2) Existence of teamwork and a sound moral-psychological environment.
3) Existence of LO-based APs in line with NQF and similar academic programs.
4) Existence of mechanisms promoting the progress of young lecturers.
5) Existence of financial stability and an inviolable fund at the University.
6) Support in terms of teaching and social issues provided to students by University administrative and teaching staffs.
7) Existence of high motivation and awareness of GNU QA Center specialists in activities directed to the formation and development of quality culture.

Weaknesses of the Institution:

1) Lack of evaluation of the effectiveness of University structure.
2) Lack of reports based on qualitative and quantitative analysis.
3) Lack of fundamental scientific research.
4) Lack of scientific groups implementing scientific grants.
5) Lack of initiativeness among internal stakeholders and lack of their participation in the decision making processes.
6) Low level of English proficiency among the students and teaching staff.

Main recommendations:

Mission and Purposes

1) To develop and implement a risk management plan, considering the challenges in the Republic of Artsakh.
2) To revise the existing SP for 2020-2022 as a result of the analysis of the indicators presented in the short-term road map.
3) To develop clearly measurable qualitative and quantitative indicators in order to monitor the implementation of the SP goals.

Governance and Administration

4) To carry out evaluation of human resources and effective distribution of potential in the University.
5) To coordinate the study and analysis of the impact of external and internal processes that will support data-driven decision making.
6) To coordinate the fundraising process by planning clear deadlines and executors.
7) To develop the interaction between different structural units in the University, in order to increase the efficiency of management.

Academic programmes

8) To improve the structures of the APs, to review the credit allocation policy, to increase the proportion of practical hours, as a basis for the formation of the abilities and skills of a future specialist.
9) To introduce a policy of selection of teaching, learning and assessment methods, ensure correlation of teaching, assessment and teaching methods of APs with the LOs of academic programmes.
10) To improve a multi-component assessment system so that it is clearly understandable to internal and external stakeholders, ensuring consistent assessment of LOs in full-time and remote mmodes of studies.
11) To introduce mechanisms and tools for ensuring academic honesty, including paying attention to the localization of various IT software tools in GNU: anti-plagiarism program, development of program descriptions, database, etc.
12) To improve the procedure and policy for the implementation of benchmarking of APs, which will take into account the opportunities of internationalization of APs.
13) To improve the policy of monitoring, evaluation of the efficiency and improvement of the APs, increasing the role of employers in the monitoring and evaluation system of APs.

Students

14) To create Students Scientific Union (SSU) or to activate its activities in order to involve students in the implementation of scientific research works.
15) To include tasks that form research and analytical skills in professional subjects.

16) To improve student consultancy services by engaging a psychologist to provide psychological consultancy to students.
17) In order to increase the visibility of the University, to create and activate an alumni association

Faculty and staff

18) To redevelop and improve the policies and procedures for the selection of teaching and support staffs with the necessary qualifications to implement the APs, the involvement of young specialists and researchers in teaching activities, the requirements for the professional knowledge and abilities of the teaching staff, linking them with the LOs of the APs.
19) To redevelop and improve the procedures for ensuring the professional development and training of the teaching staff, to improve the mechanisms for revealing the needs of the teaching staff, supporting the improvement of their professional qualities, promoting the increase in the number of teaching staff members with scientific degrees and titles according to the fields.
20) To improve the remuneration system of the teaching staff, the procedure for the formation of workload and the norms of job classification, taking into account the proportional distribution of functions and responsibilities.
21) To ensure the academic freedom of the teaching staff, promoting involvement in research works, academic mobility programs, using appropriate financial resources and other clear mechanisms.
22) To redevelop and introduce the ranking procedure of the teaching staff with the most objective and reliable indicators, to improve the performance evaluation mechanisms, methods and tools of the teaching staff.
23) To redevelop and introduce the mechanisms of periodic assessment of the work of the administrative and support staffs and the measurement of professional competence, to encourage and support the improvement of the professional qualities of the teaching support staff.

Research and Development

24) To develop a vision for the development of research sphere by aligning the ambitions and interests of GNU with the opportunities, and by defining clear KPIs.
25) To develop short-term and mid-term plans for the development of scientific research activities and to carry out modern research in accordance with the needs of the Republic of Artsakh, which will be realistic, have applied significance and competitive advantage.
26) To introduce effective procedures for encouraging the scientific research activities of the teaching staff and mechanisms for evaluating efficiency in the research field.
27) To introduce mechanisms for improving the research skills of lecturers and students, contributing to the increase of academic literacy and ensuring their active participation in inter-chair, inter-university research activities.
28) To develop and introduce a policy for the internationalization of research activities, taking into account the potential of GNU in the field of internationalization.
29) To develop and introduce mechanisms for linking research activities and the educational process, applying the research outcomes in the educational process.

Infrastructure and Resources

30) To reequip the computer base of GNU and to ensure the availability of appropriate software programs, based on the requirements of the relevant APs and the existing challenges in the professional IT field.
31) To ensure distribution of financial resources, taking into account the goals of the RA, individual APs and assessing the riskiness of external factors.
32) To introduce a policy of distribution of financial resources ensuring and guaranteeing the continuity of the APs, to ensure the diversification of financial inflows, to improve the fundraising mechanisms.
33) To review the mechanisms and their content regarding resources and services provided to students and teachers, carry out periodic evaluation, ensuring continuous improvement of resources.

Societal Responsibility

34) To make the reports more analytical with the aim of outlining ways of improvement.
35) To improve the official web-site of the University by publishing APs, updating information in English and Russian.
36) To develop the mechanisms of transferring knowledge to society, evaluating the competitive advantage of GNU (Narekagitutyun) which will foster diversification of finances.

External Relations and Internationalization

37) To reassess the ambitions set by the GNU in the field of foreign relations and internationalization, define a vision, taking into account the status and needs of the Republic of Artsakh as well as the potential of GNU.
38) With the involvement of internal and external stakeholders to develop and implement a policy of internationalization and external relations, expanding the scope of cooperation and aligning it with the GNU's strategy and capabilities. To actively involve the Armenian Diaspora in the processes aimed at internationalization.
39) To introduce effective mechanisms to encourage the development of external relations and internationalization, considering internationalization as an institutional value, using also the possibility of internationalization at home.
40) To create opportunities for the mobility of students and lectueres through the provision of language skills, contributing to the exchange and development of experience, the study of international experience and the implementation of benchmarking policies.

Internal Quality Assurance System

41) To revise and improve IQA procedures and policies, supplementing the missing toolkit accordingly.
42) To increase the personnel capacity of the QA Center and to create a QA Committee of the University, consider the appointment of persons responsible for the main processes.
43) To systematically involve external stakeholders in the processes of improving education, research and internationalization.
44) To redesign and improve stakeholder survey methodology and tools, demonstrate analytical and critical approaches, including employers and University management, improve quantitative indicators of student and other stakeholder participation in surveys.

45) To strengthen the link between strategic management and quality assurance processes, including mechanisms for monitoring processes and their results, improve the system of reporting information about actions guiding the stakeholders.
46) To develop and introduce the implementation of periodic audits of the main processes of the GNU and the internal accreditation of APs.

25 July, 2022

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Hermine Grigoryan, Head of the Expert Panel

PEER-REVIEW FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EDUCATION INSTITUTION'S INTEGRATION INTO EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

Introductory remarks: GNU is a small, private university with declared ambitions to follow the European model of higher education. In answering the question to what extent, the evaluated implements solutions characteristic of the EHEA, several specific conditions in which the University operates should be considered. First of all, the University functions in the Republic of Artsakh, a state not recognised, by the international community. This naturally limits the contacts with foreign partners, the processes of internationalisation and thus also the possibilities of development. Although the University has been in existence for 25 years, most of the solutions known in the universities of the European area only started to be implemented after 2018 and this process was disrupted by the war in 2020 and a pandemic. Furthermore, the GNU has never undergone an external evaluation, so there are some flaws in the presentation of its processes and their results in the SER.

University Mission and Strategic Plan. The university is currently implementing a strategic plan developed for the period 2019-2024. The objectives, activities and expected outcomes articulated in it are vague and seemingly difficult to operationalize in annual plans and plans of individual university units. The strategic plan is not supported by a reliable SWOT analysis, it fails to identify KPIs, implementation deadlines, persons responsible for the implementation of the planned tasks and sources of financing. For an external observer, the lack of risk analysis is surprising, even though the university operates in conditions of political uncertainty and its existence as a private institution depends on the number of students and the tuition fees they pay. Discontinuation of study programmes due to insufficient number of students was considered in interviews with GNU representatives as one of the most important risks for the university.

Although many goals are not feasible e.g., in the sphere of internationalisation, the GNU strategy has not been revised and adapted to the current conditions and context. In interviews with the review team, political uncertainty was considered by representatives of the University as a significant barrier to designing its future. Therefore, in practice, the strategy does not fulfil its role as a link between the University's mission and the realities of the internal and external environment and does not indicate the path of its future development. In general, it can be concluded that strategic planning is not an essential tool for directing the operations of the school and GNU is not a forward-looking institution. Such myopia can have negative consequences. For example, prospective students may hesitate to study at a university whose plans are shorter than their study cycle. In assessing these weaknesses, the lack of a tradition of strategic planning in RA and Armenian higher education, even at the state-wide level, should be considered.

Human and material resources. The University is experiencing difficulties in staffing some classes due to the departure of the most experienced teaching staff after the war and in recruiting specialists in some disciplines, despite paying twice the rate for visiting professors. Only half the number of teachers is employed on a full-time basis. The enormous (unprecedented in Europe) teaching load on academic teachers (depending on the position between 700 and 950 hours per year), teaching many (even 16-17) classes by one teacher. Moreover, some of them perform administrative functions in the university and teach in a college run by the GNU. This situation negatively affects the quality of teaching and the teachers' involvement in research. Staffing difficulties were signaled as one of the main challenges for the development of the university, but no multi-year plan was prepared for the recruitment and development of academic staff in the various disciplines. Despite the scarcity of its own staff, no efforts have been made to launch academic programmes run jointly with other universities. It is likely legal regulations and the lack of such a tradition are obstacles to such cooperation.

Students and teachers do not have access to international databases and bibliographic databases as well as licensed computer software, including specialised software so important for the study of computer science and economics. As the review team was informed, at most Excel is used for quantitative analyses. There are no classes, apart from IT classes, involving computers.

The University's financial position is very good, in recent years each year there has been a surplus of income over expenditure, which in the last year was as high as 84 %. Teachers' salaries are being increased and expenditure per student is rising. The way in which the University applies a flexible tuition fee system for students and helps them to seek sponsorship is to be commended. However, the possibilities to finance the modernisation of the university's infrastructure, to finance own research or pro-quality activities are very limited, since as much as 98% of expenditure is spent on payrolls.

University governance. The organisation and the system of governance are similar to those in private European universities and combine elements of one-person management with academic self-governance. Students and staff as members of the collegiate bodies are guaranteed participation in decision-making. The very strong position of the Rector, who is at the same time one of the two shareholders, collects dividends (0.5 per cent of the profit just like the other shareholder), chairs the Scientific Council, the Governing Board, the Rectorate, should be emphasized. Since the Rector is elected by the shareholders, he is *de facto* elected by one person. Such an arrangement carries the danger that the business interests of the shareholders will dominate over the academic interests of the university community.

There are also some concerns about maintaining the faculty structure of the university organisation, in which the positions of deans and faculty councils have been abolished. One of the two existing faculties includes only 2 chairs of IT and Natural Sciences and Economics (the latter artificially classified under Natural Sciences), while the other has 8 chairs.

Main processes (including teaching, research, cooperation with the socio-economic environment, internationalisation) are not coordinated - as it is the case in many universities - by standing committees. This limits, especially in the absence of faculty councils, the flow of information, good practices between chairs. A characteristic feature of the management system is the creation of organisational units without employed specialists and the assignment of administrative tasks and functions to academic staff. For example, the Vice-Rector heads the Department of External Relations. This results in a blurring of managers' responsibilities, reduces the effectiveness of management, and limits and decreases teachers' time for teaching and research.

One of the biggest weaknesses in GNU is the lack of a formal framework for ensuring academic integrity. No Code of Ethics has been adopted, and no support structures such as an Ethics Committee or a committee that could ensure independent and confidential handling of complaints and appeals have been established. No institutional system to protect the interests of students and staff has been developed. According to the University Charter, the protection of students' interests is ensured by the Student Council. However, its chairman informed the review team that this academic body also deals with student discipline. Thus, an obvious conflict of interest is noted. The extent of unethical behaviour such as corruption, downloading, plagiarism, discrimination, bullying, sexual harassment is not analysed, because according to the university representatives they in principle do not take place, and possible individual cases are analysed within the current management structures. Student works are not yet checked by the anti-plagiarism system.

The basis for good decisions is reliable information. GNU collects this information mainly by surveying students, staff, graduates, and at regular meetings with various stakeholders. But it does not systematically validate of this information, so decisions can be subjective. For example, only one in two students completes surveys and the University does not report on the return rate of surveys addressed to staff and graduates.

Study programmes and teaching and learning. The structure of the academic programmes is similar to that found in other European universities, among other things the intended learning outcomes are defined, ECTS is used, a system for the assessment of student achievements was formalized. What differs GNU from European universities is the focus on individual disciplines and the lack of interdisciplinary studies. The quality of academic programmes could be enhanced if, like in many European universities, special committees were responsible for their monitoring and evaluation, bringing together teachers, students, and employers' representatives, rather than chairs as is the case now. This would make it possible to address the needs of stakeholders regularly and directly to the curricular content. Benchmarking is also underdeveloped and informal rather than integrated into quality policy.

In teaching, the student-centred learning approach is emphasised. However, in meetings with the review team, teachers too often equated this with individual student work. The university employs a large group of teachers from other universities and institutions (30% are part-time workers), who represent a variety of teaching techniques. This excessive diversity of approaches was signaled during the interviews in relation to the student assessment system. However, a university-wide framework to ensure a uniform approach to teaching and learning processes has not been developed.

The extent to which the educational process is based on the latest scientific findings is also questionable, as a large group of teachers do not conduct scientific research and, due to their lack of knowledge of foreign languages, especially English, have limited access to publications from international sources. In meetings with the review team, students, graduates, and employers expressed high satisfaction with the quality of the curricula and teaching methods as well as the support provided to students by teachers. Due to the lack of data on the professional life of graduates - there is only data for new graduates - it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the educational process measured by their success on the labour market.

Undoubtedly, one of the biggest structural weaknesses of the university is insufficiently advanced **scientific research**. Research is mentioned as one of the strategic priorities, but no long-term policy for its development in specific disciplines has been developed. From the perspective of European standards, it is not only the lack of research teams implementing scientific grants, the trace of publication output, but also its quality that raises concerns. Publications are mainly in the university's journal or national publications, in a few cases abroad. It seems that some teachers misunderstand the concept of scientific research. At one meeting, the development and publication of a textbook was cited as an example of scientific work. The university is trying to encourage teachers to intensify their research through a system of monetary allowances for publications, but with mediocre results. The reasons for this passivity have not been analysed, apart from the identification of considerable differences in research intensity between chairs. It seems that, given the low research potential of GNU, a re-profiling of this research and even of the University towards applied research strongly linked to the needs of the region and the Republic should be considered.

One of the consequences of languishing in this area is the trace participation of students in research. According to the SER, only 3 undergraduate students and 20 masters students are involved. The GNU

statute provides for the establishment of a Student Scientific Society, but so far no such association has been formed.

Internationalisation. The lack of success in internationalisation abroad, including participation in the university's mobility programmes, does not raise much concern if the context i.e., the non-recognition of RA is taken into account. Occasionally, contacts with foreign partners are established, but they are not significant for the teaching or research process. On the other hand, the university does not make use of the opportunities to develop internationalisation at home. No classes are offered in foreign languages, the think-tank was able to point out a few cases of hosting visiting professors, the curriculum lacks intercultural, global values, even though GNU graduates are expected to compete in international labour markets. The opening up of the university could be served by intensifying cooperation with other universities of the Republic, Armenian or, due to better language skills, Russian. In practice, the exchange of students and employees between GNU and the above-mentioned universities does not exist. The University does not use the possibility of cooperation with foreign partners in the form of online.

At the root of these weaknesses is the inadequate knowledge of foreign languages, primarily English among students and teaching staff. According to SER, only only 25% of undergraduate students, 38% of master's students and teachers declares knowledge of English, although it is not known at what level of proficiency. *Nota bene*, unlike the EQF, the NQF does not define any foreign language requirements for undergraduate or graduate studies.

The University management is aware of these shortcomings and has made internationalisation one of its priorities in its strategic programme. A Department of External Relations was created. Students and staff were offered free courses to improve their foreign language skills.

IQA and Quality Culture. Despite the lack of tradition in the development of a quality culture, GNU has a comprehensive range of arrangements that make up its internal quality assurance system. Quality of education has been identified as one of the strategic priorities, commitment to the European provisions in higher education is declared. The Quality Assurance Guide defines a quality assurance policy, the scope of which covers all key processes, for most of which appropriate procedures and tools have been defined. A support structure in the form of a Quality Assurance Centre, led by a competent director, has been established. Formal participation of internal stakeholders in quality assurance activities has been ensured and the internal system seems to have been accepted by staff and students. The experience of several Armenian universities was used in the construction of the IQA. Thus, this package can be considered consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance and quality assurance practices in the European Higher Education Area.

While appreciating these achievements, it should be noted that the system is not complete, and the quality loop is not closed in many areas. Not all evaluation procedures have been prepared, among others University governance, research, internationalisation, lifelong learning. Not all mechanisms mentioned by the QAG have been applied regularly and some are not functioning e.g., monitoring of study programmes. It is difficult to find a clear link between surveying stakeholders and improving the quality of teaching, which may suggest weaknesses in the feedback mechanism. Given the short life of IQA and the disruption caused by the war, its effectiveness cannot be assessed.

A key challenge for a quality culture development is the insufficient involvement of all key stakeholders in quality improvement processes through peer-to-peer dialogue. SER directly states, *"The lack of a culture of quality assurance among internal and external stakeholders...*". A certain passivity

of stakeholders in engaging in continuous quality enhancement and a deficit of critical reflection on the existing quality assurance system was evident in the meetings with the review team. Teachers and students, including managers, interviewed generally did not raise the issue of quality assurance, but rather felt that the existing solutions fully met their needs and suggested small improvements.

Recommendations:

1. It is necessary to revise the Five-Year Strategy and make the strategic goals more realistic in accordance with the human and material resources available. The basis for this revision should be a reliable SWOT (or better still PESTEL) analysis of the current GNU potential and external conditions
2. Complete the University development strategy with a risk management policy and performance indicators.
3. Use benchmarking against main competitors when assessing your future position in the education markets.
4. Strategic planning could be institutionally supported by the establishment of a standing committee on university development, or the transformation of the QAC into a Center for Strategic Studies and Quality Assurance.
5. Consider abolishing the Faculty structure and moving to a two-tier management, chairs and university-wide level.
6. GNU should, in cooperation with other universities and the Ministry of Science Artsakh Republic, seek to establish a consortium that would finance subscription access to international bibliographic and database databases, purchase of licensed specialized software. In order to better match the structure of supply of graduates with the structure of demand on the labour market, the RA government should finance a national database of professional careers of university graduates.
7. Adopt an academic integrity policy with a Code of Ethics and institutional support for this process in the form of a University Ethics Committee, Appeal and Complaints Committee etc.
8. It would be useful to entrust the protection of the interests of students and employees to the newly created post of academic ombudsman.
9. It is recommended to develop a framework for the implementation of the student-centred learning approach, considering the context in which the teaching and learning processes take place.
10. A critical issue for the university is to develop a long-term policy for the development of research in specific scientific disciplines together with reliable mechanisms for its implementation and align it with available funding and resources. In order to link the research agenda with the needs of the region and the country, it is worth considering focusing on applied research.
11. Consider establishing a Research Center in which the people employed would have formal researcher status as provided by the University Charter.
12. Consider setting up an advisory board on research and internationalisation with experts from domestic and foreign universities, the public sector and business.
13. Strengthen foreign language proficiency, especially English in personnel policies and assessment of student performance.
14. Explore the possibility of launching exchange programmes for students and staff with Armenian universities, courses in foreign languages and online lectures provided by foreign professors.

15. Review IQA and complete it with missing procedures, tools, and quality indicators. Evaluate the reliability of the information collected and the effectiveness of the feedback mechanisms
16. It is recommended to adopt a more pro-active institutional approach to enhance stakeholder involvement in quality assurance policy, including promoting the concept of a quality culture rooted in the GNU tradition, shared values, and its informal assurance system, as well as a better balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches, and communication between stakeholders.

Mischeslav Soha
International Expert

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW
COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

External evaluation of GNU institutional capacities was carried out by the following expert group:

1. **Hermine Grigoryan,** Candidate of Physical and Mathematical Sciences, Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences at Vanadzor State University after H. Tumanyan, Associate Professor at the Chair of Mathematics and Informatics in the Faculty of Natural Sciences, Head of the Expert Panel, Armenia.
2. **Mischeslav Soha** Candidate of Economical Sciences, professor at Warsaw University and State Management School, Doctor of Economics, Member of European Consortium of Higher Education Accreditation (ECA) financial Committee, Poland.
3. **Narine Sirakanyan** Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Expert at the Department of Risk Assessment, Control Planning, Analysis and Evaluation, Armenia.
4. **Asya Simonyan** Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Shirak State University after M. Nalbandyan, lecturer at the Chair of physical training theory and methodic, coach of artistic gymnastics, Armenia.
5. **Anahit Abrahamyan** 1st year MA student at Gavar State University, the Faculty of Economics the profession of Accounting /per branches/.

The composition of the expert panel was agreed upon with the University and was appointed by the decree of ANQA Director.

The work of the expert panel was coordinated by the Head of the Department of Institutional and Program Accreditation at ANQA Varduhi Gyulazyan.

Oral translation was provided by a lecturer at the Chair of Translation at Brusov State University Vardanush Baghdasaryan.

All the members of the expert panel, including the translator and the coordinator have signed agreements of freedom and confidentiality.

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

Application for state accreditation

GNU 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.

According to the decision on accepting the application an agreement was signed between ANQA and Grigor Narekatsi University of Stepanakert. The timetable of activities was prepared and approved.

Self-evaluation

According to the time-schedule, the University presented its self-evaluation report in Armenian and English and the supporting documentation according to ANQA format. ANQA coordinator checked the technical correspondence of the report to ANQA requirements. Within the defined time-period the self-evaluation report of GNU was accepted by ANQA. Afterwards self-

evaluation report and attached documentation package together with the electronic survey filled in by the University were provided to the expert panel the composition of which was beforehand agreed upon with the University and was approved by ANQA Director.

Preparatory phase

In order to prepare the expert panel for the work and to ensure the effectiveness of the processes ANQA conducted 4 trainings in the following topics:

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

Having examined the self-evaluation report of the University and the supporting documentation base, the expert panel conducted preliminary evaluation according to the format making also the list of additional required documents and the questions for clarification was formed mentioning the respective structural units and target groups. During the preliminary evaluation the members of the expert panel also participated in online lessons of the University.

Then the expert panel summarized the results of initial evaluation and formed the site-visit time-schedule[2]. Guided by the Accreditation Manual meetings of all the groups with the expert panel, close and open meetings, observation of documents, visits to different structural units of the University, etc. were involved in the time-schedule.

Preliminary visit

On April 26, 2022 a meeting with the management of GNU was carried out. During the meeting time-schedule of the site-visit was agreed upon with the University, the list of additional documents for observations was presented, organizational, technical, informative issues as well as ethical norms and behaviour of the participants of the meetings were discussed. The conditions for focus groups and for the expert panel work were discussed.

Site-visit

The site-visit tool place from May 2 to May 5, 2022. The works of the expert panel launched with close meeting the aim of which was to discuss and agree with the international expert Mischeslav Soha upon the evaluation framework, issues to be discussed during the site-visit, GNU's weak and strong points per criteria, procedure of focus groups and to clarify further steps. All the members of the expert panel, ANQA coordinator and the translator took part in the site-visit. The whole expert panel group was present at the visit, and also ANQA coordinator and translator.

The site-visit launched with the meeting with GNU management. Lecturers, students, deans, heads of chairs, employers and alumni were selected by the expert panel from the list provided by the University beforehand. All the meetings envisaged by the time-schedule took place. During the site visit the expert panel carried out class observations, observed documents[3] and resources[4].

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[2] Appendix 2: Time-schedule of the site-visit

[3] Appendix 3: List of documents observed

[4] Appendix 4: Resources observed

At the end of each day of the site-visit and during the close meetings preliminary evaluation by the expert panel was withdrawn and at the end of the site-visit during the close meeting the main results of the site-visit were summed up. The external review was carried out based on State Accreditation Criteria and Standards as well as based on ANQA procedures which assume a two-level scale for the evaluation: satisfactory and unsatisfactory

Expert panel report

The expert panel carried out the preliminary evaluation on the basis of the electronic questionnaire filled in by the University, the submitted self-analysis, the study of the attached documents, the observations of the site-visit, as a result of regular discussions. Based on the observations made after the discussions, the expert panel prepared a preliminary version of the expert report.

The international expert also prepared a separate opinion on the peer review. The documents were translated and provided to the expert panel. The peer review opinion is fully included in the text of the report. After the approval of the members of the expert panel, the preliminary report was submitted to Grigor Narekatsi University of Stepanakert. After examining the draft expert panel report the University has not provided comments, thus the expert panel has developed the final version of the report which was approved by the expert panel on 25 July, 2022.

25 July, 2022

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Varduhi Gyulazyan, Coordinator of the expert panel

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

History: Grigor Narekatsi University was established by the direct efforts of poet, public speaker, doctor of philology, professor Vardan Hakobyan in 1996 with a state license. From the beginning, the University bears the name of Saint Grigor Narekatsi. The University, many of whose graduates are already recognized heroes of the national struggle for survival and leading specialists in various fields, not only was able to withstand the high demands presented to the modern university, but thanks to organizing the educational process at a proper level in 2003 among the state and non-state universities of Artsakh, it was the first to receive a state certificate (N1), the University was given state status. Famous academicians, doctors of science and professors, candidates of science, associate professors, recognized figures of art and culture, distinguished pedagogues, doctors are included in the educational-scientific activities of the University.

Education: "Grigor Narekatsi" University of Stepanakert is an autonomous educational and scientific-cultural institution, whose activities are aimed at the organization of education, fundamental scientific research and study in various fields of Armenian science, natural science, socio-economic science, humanities, culture in general education, vocational education, higher education, postgraduate education levels according to the law and in the forms of academic programmes. In order to meet the challenges of the time and effectively implement its educational mission, the University constantly renews the range and content of its academic programmes, uses modern teaching and learning methods, and provides effective support services to its students. The educational process of GNU is carried out in accordance with the best traditions of higher education, the legislation of the Republic of Artsakh and the requirements of the Bologna process. During the course of study, students acquire solid knowledge and skills, develop analytical, communication and practical qualities.

Research: With its SP GNU considers as a priority the definition of modern research directions arising from the needs of the Republic of Artsakh, the involvement of teaching staff and students in research works to promote the expansion of academic cooperation and the internationalization of research works.

Internationalization: GNU 2019-2024 SP envisages to contribute to the continuous development of internationalization, to activate exchange programs and cooperative relations.

It is planned to.

- To develop policies promoting the internationalization of the University.
- Establish an institute of visiting professors.
- Develop cooperation with foreign universities.
- International grant programs.

Quality Assurance: The institution's ambitions towards the standard are formulated as objectives in the GNU QA Manual. It is planned for the coming years.

- To introduce and continuously improve the quality management system of GNU in accordance with the standards and guidelines of the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance (ANQA)

●To provide mechanisms for the maximum participation of the stakeholders in the quality assurance processes of GNU and for the dissemination of a transparent and accountable culture oriented towards quality.

● To monitor the effectiveness of University processes, ensuring continuous improvement of services.

● To ensure the quality of education based on learning outcomes.

● To pursue the implementation of the mission in line with the GNU vision, strategic goals and objectives.

● To increase the quality of educational services provided in GNU.

● To evaluate all the processes taking place at the University (strategic planning, development of subject/course and academic programmes, student certification and assessment, teaching methodology, formation of educational environment, etc.).

● To promote the formation, rooting and further development of the culture of quality assurance in GNU.

● To prepare the University and the academic programmes for external evaluation.

Source: *The source of facts in the above domains is the documents provided by the University (for example, self-analysis, strategic plan, schedule, plans of departments, concepts, etc.).*

I. MISSION AND PURPOSES

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

Findings:

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).

The mission of GNU is presented in 2019-2024 Strategic Plan (SP) adopted by the Scientific Council, according to which the mission of the University is: "taking into account the challenges, priorities and characteristics of the Republic of Artsakh and valuing the national value system, to prepare technologically competent personnel capable of facing and solving national, social and professional challenges. In order to fulfill the mission, the following 6 goals were defined:

- to implement academic programmes aimed at preparing high-quality specialists who are in demand in the local and international labor market, who have the skills of modern technologies, are competitive with social responsibility and a national value system,
- to have modern research directions, expand the involvement of teaching staff and students in research works, contribute to the expansion of academic cooperation and the internationalization of research works,
- to ensure stable and diverse financial flows of the University and increase the efficiency of their management, establish University infrastructures that meet modern requirements,
- to improve the management system of the University and contribute to increasing its efficiency and transparency, to ensure the continuous development of human resources,
- to contribute to the continuous development of internationalization, activate exchange programs, activate cooperative relations,
- to develop relations with the public and social responsibility, activate the University's participation in national events.

GNU organizes education in 5-7 levels of NQF.

After the war in 2020, the University reviewed the short-term plan-schedule of the strategic plan (SP) and the following changes were made depending on the situation: Pedagogical qualifications were given priority in a number of specialties, the number of hours allocated to information technologies and foreign languages were increased in the academic programmes (APs), as well as each chair reviewed its scientific directions.

The university's unique, mission-oriented "Narekagitutyun" course is embedded in all academic programmes.

1.2 The mission statement, goals and objectives of the Institution reflects the needs of the internal and external stakeholders.

According to the SER, GNU considers students, teaching and administrative staffs, scientists as internal stakeholders, and applicants, graduates, employers, government bodies responsible for the sector, civil society organizations, parents, who mainly participated in the development of the SP of the University as external stakeholders. The final version of the SP was adopted by the Scientific Council of the GNU, where both internal and external stakeholders are involved.
During the site-visit, it became clear that highlighting and reflecting the needs of external stakeholders in the mission of the University is more clear, because as a result of meetings and discussions, changes were made based on the needs of the region (pedagogical orientation of specializations, adaptation of scientific directions to the crisis situation), but highlighting the needs of internal stakeholders and the mechanisms for fixing in the mission are not yet operational, because there is no qualitative analysis of the results of surveys and discussions, and there are no corresponding changes.

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

Until 2019 the evaluation of the results of the University's mission and goals was carried out only through the Rector's annual reports and the twenty-year (1996-2016) chronicle of the University. In 2019 "Time-schedule for the implementation of GNU 2019-2024 Strategic development plan" was developed according to which evaluation indicators are defined for the implementation of each strategic goal. As well as in 2019 the University has adopted an accountability plan that clarifies the relationship between the SP and the accountability of the University structural units.
However, it should be noted that based on the performance results of the SP, the University still does not have a developed improvement plan, which is necessary for the review of strategic goals in the current changing situation of the region.

Considerations:

The expert panel considers it positive that GNU has a mission that indicates the priorities of the region, the policies and activities carried out by the University generally correspond to the mission adopted by the institution.

It should be noted that the works carried out during the crisis period were the basis for raising the problems that require urgent solution in the University and ensuring the continuity of education. Those works were the result of cooperation with both external and internal stakeholders, but the active involvement of internal stakeholders (mainly students) in the process of solving strategic problems will contribute to the development of a student-centered culture in the University.

It is positive that both the Governing Board and the Scientific Council include recognized representatives of various fields of education, science and economy, employers, who have the opportunity to make positive changes in the strategic plan with their recommendations.

The mechanisms and procedures for evaluating and improving the results of the University's mission and goals have been newly introduced, and the annual reports of the departments are submitted to the University's QA Center and posted on the website, but they are informative in nature, and analyzes are not made based on them, which would enable the implementation of strategic goals. solving existing problems and continuously improving the quality of various processes.

Summary:

Taking into account that the activities of GNU since 2019 and then in 2020 in the crisis situation after the war are aimed at the review of the strategic plan and the implementation of the mission, and the University is clearly aware of the priorities of the issues related to the implementation of its mission with the maintanance of national and spiritual values in the region, as well as the active involvement of the University's external stakeholders in the implementation of the mission and goals, the expert panel finds that the University meets the requirements of Criterion 1.

Conclusion*:*

The complience of institutional capacities of GNU with the requirements of Criterion 1 is assessed satisfactory by the expert panel.

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.

Findings

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.

The management of GNU is carried out on the basis of the legislation of the Republic of Artsakh, the University charter, the Code of Ethics and internal legal acts, on the basis of the principle of sole and collegial management.

According to the University charter, the governing bodies of the University are: the General Meeting of Participants, the Governing Body of the University operating attached to the General Meeting of Participants, the Scientific Council, the Rector of the University (the head of the executive body).

The highest governing body of GNU is the General Meeting of Participants, which has the right to finalize any issue of University management and activity. As it turned out during the site visit, the Rector of the University is a member of the General Meeting of Participants.

The University developed and adopted the Regulations of the Scientific Council, the rectorate, the chair's activity, ethics regulations, internal disciplinary rules.

According to the SER an optimalization of the University structure was carried out based on the decision of the Scientific Council, the positions of the deans of the faculties of natural sciences and humanities were dissolved, the functions were revised and redistributed between the Eeducational Department of the University and the chairs, the functions of the Department of External Relations came under the responsibility of the Vice-Rector for Science. However, as it became clear from the meetings with the expert panel, the Department of External Relations has been reopened, although there is no clear responsible person and position.

All departments of the University are provided with material and technical resources necessary for work (office, technical means), but there are departments where human resources are needed (Quality Assurance Center, External Relations Department).

The financial resources of GNU are generated from student tuition fees. In order to diversify the financial inflows, the University carries out fundraising activities. During the site-visit, it was found that an inviolable fund was separated from the University's income, which was used for the University's needs during the 2020 war, and then replenished again.

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

According to SER the teaching staff and students of the University are given an opportunity to participate in decision making. Governing Board and Scientific Councils involve 25% of the teaching staff, 25% of the student body, and the stakeholders of the University can submit proposals through their representatives. However, it should be noted that not the heads of all chairs are represented in the Scientific Council.

It became clear from the site visit that the QA Center of the University carried out activities with the teaching and student staff (meetings, discussions) related to self-analysis, and as a result, the culture of participation of stakeholders in making the decisions related to them is beginning to be formed in the University.

Despite the involvement of teaching staff and students in different management circles of GNU, there are still few issues raised by students and teaching staff in different management circles, and there are no indicators for measuring the effectiveness of these decisions.

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.

In 2019, GNU developed and adopted a long-term plan for 2019-2023 SP, then a time-schedule to implement the SP was developed. Indicators for the evaluation of planned actions are defined in the SP, but their performance is expressed only in reports, key indicators of activities developed for the University as a whole are missing.

The University also developed the 2019-2020 and 2020-2022 short-term roadmaps showing the actions to be taken, timelines, responsible people and indicators.

It became clear from the site-visit that the University's chairs and individual departments also have their own short-term annual work plans.

The reporting mechanism is used to monitor the implementation of planned activities in the University. The reports are factual in nature and do not envisage performance evaluation and improvement. GNU has not developed a risk management plan.

2.4. The Institution carried out examination of facts affecting its activities and draws on reliable findings during the decision-making process.

According to the SER, the influence of external factors on the University's activities is great, and their study is carried out in accordance with the mission and strategic goals of GNU.

From the site-visit it became clear that the factors influencing the University's activities are highlighted mainly in the following ways: meetings organized with employers, surveys with teaching staff and students.

In particular, substantive and structural changes were made in APs (increasing the number of hours of information technologies and foreign languages, introduction of Narekagitutyun), as well as the assessment system and internship programs were revised.

However, the analysis of the impact of external factors is not carried out systematically and planned in the University.

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

The main guiding document of the quality management system in the University is the Quality Assurance Manual, that includes mechanisms through which processes of the University are assessed.

From the observation of the documents and the site-visit, it became clear that the processes envisaged by the SP are in the planning and implementation stage. The full quality management PDCA cycle is closed for online education, resource evaluation and the satisfaction of teaching staff.

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

In order to collect information on the effectiveness of APs and other processes, surveys were conducted among students, external stakeholders, graduates, benchmarking of APs as well as evaluation of the effectiveness of organization of internship were carried out.

The University has developed a procedure for ongoing monitoring and periodic review of APs. According to the SER, the University collects, processes and analyzes the information on the student flow, progress, resources, quality of online learning, student satisfaction with the teaching staff and learning environment, as well as the opinion of external stakeholders regarding graduates.

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

The University uses the official website as the main means of publishing information, as well as the Facebook social site, which according to site-visit is very active in the function of transmitting information and providing feedback.

Considerations:

The expert panel considers that the University has a highly qualified professional staff, which was able to ensure the continuity of education in a crisis situation. The Vice-Rectors, heads of departments of the University with whom the expert panel met, act as one team that can implement the mission and goals of the University.

The expert panel considers positive the existence of a document base regulating the activities of the structural units, the ethics regulation, but the duties and functions of the staff of structural units are very diverse. The University also mentions the decrease of experienced employees in the management system as a weakness, as a result of which there is an increase in the workload of the

departments. The assessment of human resources by GNU will contribute to the realization of the potential in the University and the effective use of resources.

Steps are being taken by the University towards the creation of financially stable funds: development of various fundraising mechanisms, existence of an inviolable fund, the successful implementation of which will lead to the financial stability of the University.

The expert panel considers positively the University's efforts to adopt the human resource recruitment policy, which emphasizes the involvement of practitioners of the field in the teaching process, generation change, salary increase.

It's positive that teaching staff and students have the opportunity to participate in decision-making related to them, and at the same time, increasing their activity will contribute to increasing motivation.

It is positive that long-term strategic planning has been initiated at the University and that short-term action mapping has been developed, but it should be noted that there is a lack of long-term risk planning that will arise from the current conflicts and the current situation in the country.

The expert panel considers it important to improve the mechanisms of data collection and analysis, which is necessary for data-based decision-making.

The expert panel positively assesses the fact that the principles of the PDCA cycle of quality management have started to be implemented in GNU. The quality assurance manual of GNU has helped in the preparation, approval, implementation and evaluation of APs. At the same time, the full implementation of the PDCA cycle in the administration processes will contribute to the problem-solving and effective planning of the University's processes.

The expert panel is positive about the fact that collection of information about the effectiveness of GNU APs and other processes is carried out regularly. Twice a year surveys are conducted among students and once a year it is carried out with teaching staff.

Summary:

Taking into account that the current management system of the University allowed ensuring the continuity of education in a crisis situation, as well as the principle of quality management is the basis of the administration, which was facilitated by the creation of the QA Center, the existence of ethics regulations and long-term and short-term planning, data on the effectiveness of the APs of the professions collection and analysis, the expert panel considers that GNU management system, administrative structures and their activities are effective and aimed at the implementation of the institution's mission and goals.

Conclusion:

The compliance of GNU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 2 is satisfactory.

3. ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

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

Findings:

3.1 The academic programmes 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.

Currently, Grigor Narekatsi University carries out education at the 6th and 7th levels of the NQF, a total of 16 academic programmes, of which 9 are at the bachelor's and 7 at the master's degrees. In 2018 the Regulation for developing and improving academic programmes was adopted at the University, it should be noted that the University switched to the credit system since 2008-2009 academic year, however comprehensively developed academic programmes (specification of the AP, course descriptions, definition of learning outcomes (LOs) final results, etc.) as such did not exist. The development of APs began in 2019, the LOs of APs were developed, which were also discussed with employers, course LOs were developed, the LOs were mapped and aligned with the NQF.

Alignment with the NQF was also carried out by increasing the percentage of foreign language and studying information technology in APs: the subjects "IT in professional field" (4 credits) and "English language in professional field" (2 credits) were introduced, with the involvement of relevant specialists. Although GNU has replenished IT resources and tools in recent years, the site-visit showed that the computer resource is still scarce for the full achievement of the LOs defined by the University.

In the APs the block of optional courses was also added, where the courses "Basics of Ethnography" and "Basics of Military Science" were included, In AP of Preliminary Military Preparation Azerbaijani in the spoken language and in military sphere was allocated 2 credits, thecourse on "Narekagitutyun" was introduced in all APs (2 credits) as a subject aimed at the formation and preservation of the national value system.

The observation of documents showed that the University has revised all APs in line with its mission. The APs are described in details in terms of the qualifications awarded and learning outcomes. It became clear from the site-visit that in addition to the 3 presented programs, other APs were also reconstructed. GNU has increased the proportion of practical hours while restructuring its APs.

Studying the specifications and curricula of the APs showed that most of the subjects included in the general professional and special professional educational blocks were mainly given 2 credits. During the meeting with the responsibles of the APs, it was clarified that the necessary/mandatory subject list for study was large and such a solution was given when developing APs, at the same time it became clear that many professional subjects complement each other or are different branches of the same subject, so the the given approach to the distribution of credits was acceptable for the specialized working group, as it was mentioned, the number of theoretical courses prevails in the educational block.

Taking into account the discussions with internal and external stakeholders and the requirements of the labor market of the Republic of Artsakh, GNU has emphasized the APs of pedagogical professions. During the site-visit, the external stakeholders stated that there is a need for specialists prepared by the University in the Republic of Artsakh, both in the fields of pedagogues and other professions and as a reason they mentioned the outflow of specialists from the labor market caused by the war in 2020.

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

In 2019 in the stage of restructuring of APs, GNU developed a unified format of course descriptions, where the correlation of subject/course LOs teaching, learning and assessment methods with the LOs of the academic programmes are presented. GNU tried to clearly define teaching and learning methods within the framework of each subject. The studies of the expert panel showed that identical methods and forms of assessment are presented for all groups of LOs: professional knowledge and understanding, practical professional abilities and general transferable skills of the APs (Jurisprudance, Armenian Language and Literature, Economics) (appendices 3.1 .6; 3.2.2; 3.2.1).

GNU mentions in the SER about the application of interactive methods however the observation of course guides and during the site-visit it became clear that the application of those methods is segmental and they are not even mentioned in the course guides.

During the class observations it became clear that verbal methods were mainly dominant: lecturing, conversations, discussions.

It should be noted that GNU values the involvement of professors from the practical field, as it turned out during the site-visit, on the initiative of the latter, practical and seminar classes of certain professional courses are held directly under the conditions of practical training (for example, examination of a case in a court, AP of Jurisprudence), creating an opportunity for students to get acquainted with practical work skills.

Conditioned by the Covid-19 epidemic, the University implemented distance learning, for the purpose of which the methods of teaching, learning and assessment were reviewed, a certain database of lecture recordings was also created for distance learning, which is currently being replenished by GNU, taking into account the large number of students in the remote education department. The site-visit showed that the teaching staff is ready to provide students with personalized advice, which was especially needed in the post-war period, as most of the students were from different regions of the Republic of Artsakh, so GNU provided hybrid education and individualized approaches to satisfy the educational needs of individual students in a crisis situation.

The Quality Assurance Center conducts a survey of students' opinions on teaching, learning and assessment methods, the results of which are provided to the chairs and lecturers.

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

Since 2018, the multi-factor system of knowledge assessment has been operating at GNU. Assessment of students' knowledge is carried out in 4 forms of assessment: a traditional test, a traditional exam, a test without a final assessment, an exam with a final assessment. It became clear from the site-visit that the internal stakeholders are aware of the assessment procedure, but the clear logic of diversifying the examination forms was not clear, in particular, why the traditional method of evaluation (test or 20-point scale exam) is used alongside the multifactorial assessment.

There are relevant regulations for the assessment of internships (2018), course papers and final theses papers (2016), as well as master's theses.

Individual diaries of internship provide a fairly detailed analysis of the student's experience, self-analysis by the student, and assessment of the internship. In the assessment sheet, the assessment is carried out taking into account the LOs of the APs.

The knowledge assessment procedure also includes the appeal procedure. In 2017, the University adopted the regulation of an academic honesty. The regulation defines the relationships

related to cases of academic fraud, unreliability, discrimination, application of non-unified standards and mistrust, as well as deviations of academic honesty.

During the site-visit, it became clear that GNU implements the bulletins of the mid-term, final exams and the calculation unit of the multi-factor assessment using MS Excel software.

3.4 The programmes of the Institution are contextually coherent with other relevant programs and promote mobility of students and staff.

GNU has conducted a benchmarking of the reconstructed APs (2019) with foreign state and non-state universities. The object of benchmarking was mainly the goals and direction of the academic programmes, the structure of the programs, as well as the program LOs.

The University does not yet have fully functioning agreements ensuring the exchange and mobility of students, there are inter-university cooperation agreements, procedures that were the basis for private cases of student mobility, which, as the internal stakeholders stated, are mostly the result of individual agreements. Meetings with stakeholders during the site-visit showed that internationalization is not being done due to objective and subjective reasons (for example the status of the Republic of Artsakh).

3.5 The Institution adopts policies in place ensuring academic programme monitoring, evaluation of effectiveness and enhancement.

As an example of monitoring, GNU presents discussions with external and internal stakeholders on the curricula of the APs and the improvements made based on the received recommendations. It should be noted that until 2019 the APs of GNU did not have a clearly defined content, the LOs were not mapped but after the adoption of the SP in 2019, the APs were revised and adjusted to the NQF and standards, as a result of discussions with internal and external stakeholders, amendments and improvements were also made in the APs, the results were discussed and approved at the meeting of the Scientific Council.

The site-visit showed that the monitoring, evaluation and review mechanisms of the APs are in the process of implementation.

Considerations:

The expert panel positively evaluates the work carried out by the University in the direction of reforming APs and aligning them with the descriptors of the RA NQF, it is worth noting that the development of documents was done at an appropriate level: unified formats have been developed both for AP specifications and for course descriptions. The expert panel emphasizes that the subjects "IT in professional field" and "English language in professional field" have been introduced, which can contribute to the increase of students' professional competences and language skills, but it is worrying that although there have been replenishment of techniques for the study of the IT subject, GNU still does not have an auditorium equipped with enough computers for students, we believe that the steps in this direction should be continuous.

The expert panel positively evaluates that the educational section of optional courses/subjects is also included in the APs, and also, taking into account the challenges of the Republic of Artsakh “Basics of Ethnography", "Basics of Military Science” courses and "Azerbaijani in the Spoken Language

and in the Field of Military Science" were added, which are of strategic importance and in line with the mission of GNU, the introduction of "Narekagitutyun" course in the educational process, which as such is unique for universities of Artsakh and Armenia, deserves an attention.

The increase in the proportion of practical classes in the APs is also highlighted, which, as studies have shown, has been carried out unevenly for different educational blocks although the University had previously agreed to provide a ratio of 30 percent theoretical and 70 percent practical, but has not yet reached that milestone. It is also emphasized that the ratio of 30/70 has been ensured in individual educational blocks of APs, for example, General Humanities and Socio-economic educational blocks. The expert panel believes that the University may make necessary changes in the near future after appropriate analyses.

The expert panel considers negatively the relatively low credits allocated to general and special professional subjects in the APs and the predominance of theoretical hours over practical ones, considering that the LOs of these subjects are mainly aimed at the formation of professional skills and competences. The expert panel notes that the University can optimize the subject list to a certain extent, taking into account the creation of subject modules, and accordingly revise the proportion of practical hours.

The expert panel positively evaluates the large-scale transformations carried out by GNU within the framework of all APs, in particular, the development of a unified format of course/subject descriptions, where the teaching and learning methods are presented, the compatability with the LOs of the APs. The self-analysis report states that interactive methods are used during teaching, but the observations of the expert panel showed that GNU classrooms equipped with computer resources and projectors are limited and do not allow interactive lectures to be used simultaneously in several groups, this indicator is still insufficiently ensured at the University.

During the classes, traditional lectures prevailed, on the other hand, it is positive that the lecturers involved in the practical field are given the opportunity by GNU to conduct practical and seminar classes of certain professional courses at their workplace under direct practical training conditions (for example, examination of a case in court, AP of Jurisprudence), and the students also expressed their satisfaction with this practice. This process is very important from the point of view of the formation of professional practical skills, but it is still not stable in nature, thus the APs would only benefit if the given method/form of organization of education in the GNU was regulated and documented, and also it would contribute to the spread of positive experience.

The expert panel also highlights the fact that in the conditions of the epidemic and in the post-war period, GNU was able to maintain the continuity of education, for which it took appropriate steps, conducted a study of students' opinions, provided certain solutions, including the organization of distance education and the creation of a database of recorded lectures.

Positively assessing the work done, it should be noted that GNU does not have a policy for selecting teaching, learning and assessment methods as such, the methods of teaching, learning and assessment found in the APs are identified for all LOs, at the same time, the work done allows us to conclude that in the future, the University can regulate and clarify the policy in this direction.

The expert panel positively assesses that GNU has a developed and functioning multi-factor assessment system, but it should be noted that the assessment system has different approaches, for example, for subjects of different educational blocks, for students according to the mode of education (full-time/part-time). Meetings with internal stakeholders made it clear that they do not have a unified

understanding of the assessment system. The expert panel believes that GNU has a problem to clarify the assessment system and adopt unified principles that will be comprehensible to a wide range of stakeholders.

The expert panel considers it positive that the University has standardized regulations for the performance and evaluation of course paper, final paper, master's theses, a diary of the final assessment of internship, and a regulation of academic honesty. Although specific cases of violations of academic honesty have not been the subject of study, the toolkit for ensuring academic honesty still needs improvement, for example, modern software for final and midterm exams, summarization of test scores and academic references would allow full control over the transparency and impartiality of the process.

The expert panel considers it positive that the MU has implemented benchmarking of APs, but the GNU still does not have an approved benchmarking methodology and policy. From the site-visit process it can be concluded that University considers itself limited in internationalization, taking into account the status of the unrecognized Republic of Artsakh. At the same time, the expert panel considers that GNU has unrealized opportunities to provide sufficient human and material resources for alternative mobility.

The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that the University has thoroughly reviewed all the APs, made comparisons with other similar APs, providing LO based approach, but essentially did not evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented changes, as the current programs are still in progress.

The expert panel also emphasizes that discussions with external and internal stakeholders were carried out during the development of the APs, as a result of which certain adjustments were made. The expert panel believes that such approaches give full grounds to believe that after the completion of the AP, the University has the appropriate potential for further evaluation of the results and implementation of continuous reforms.

Summary:

Taking into account the restructuring and detailed description of APs, mapping according to curricula and LOs, compliance of APs with NQF descriptors, implementation of AP benchmarking according to LOs and curricula, involvement of external and internal stakeholders in the development of APs, student-centred approaches in teaching, learning and assessment methods, the existence of academic honesty regulations and follow-up at the institutional level, the expert panel finds that GNU meets the requirements of Criterion 3.

Conclusion:

The compliance of GNU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 3 is satisfactory.

4. STUDENTS

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

Findings

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

The processes of recruitment, selection and admission of students at GNU are organized by the legislation of the Republic of Artsakh and the internal legal acts of the University. Admission to the master's program is organized through an interview.

In order to recruit students, a number of activities are being carried out, including university professors conducting media literacy and "Legal Status of the Child in the Republic of Artsakh" courses in schools (there is also a printed book provided to external stakeholders). According to the analysis of the results of the surveys conducted among the applicants (2021-2022), information about the University is also received through the University's website and Facebook page.

During 2018-2020, the number of both bachelor's and master's students increased at GNU. 30% of bachelor's applicants are graduates of a college attached to GNU, and about 20% of bachelor's students continue their education in master's degree.

At GNU, students are almost never expelled for non-payment of tuition fees, as the students mentioned GNU is taking steps to extend the deadlines for paying tuition fees, attract stakeholders and reimburse tuition fees. However, there are no well-defined procedures for fundraising, nor is there a department dealing with these responsibilities.

As it became clear during the expert visit, individual schedules for tuition fee payment are defined for students.

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

In order to highlight the educational needs of students, the following mechanisms are in place: round table discussions organized by the Students' Council, chairs, graduates, internship and career center, quality assurance center, surveys, work carried out by group leaders.

GNU has a policy and procedures for raising the educational needs of students, the raising of students' needs is partial, because for this purpose the surveys of the QA Center are used, the Students' Council also has its role in raising the needs.

The President of the Students' Council is involved in the Governing Board that was formed in 2021, so several issues (for example, regarding the reading hall and reimbursement of tuition fees) were raised, which were discussed and resolved at the Meeting of Participant.

During the site-visit, it became clear that among the students, using the Google forms tool, inquiries are being made regarding the services provided by the existing units and structures, satisfaction with the available resources, consulting services, and online education. The results of the student survey are discussed in the relevant chairs, as a result, relevant recommendations are developed aimed at improving the quality and are resolved by the Rector's decision. For example, as a result of a similar process, the number of hours for the course of foreign language and the course of IT in professional field were increased in the the AP of GNU. However, problems were also raised that have not yet been resolved (the problem of canteen).

In general, students are passive in raising their educational needs to governing bodies.

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

A procedure for the organization of additional individual consultancy has been developed at the University. According to the analysis of the results of the survey conducted in 2019-2020 87% of students are aware of consultancy services and 97% are satisfied with consultancy services. Based on the specifics of the University, according to the above procedure, similar services are mainly used by contract soldiers/military servants. Also, during the epidemic, those rural students who did not have access to the Internet used these services.

During the meeting with the students, it became clear that GNU organizes additional classes for students interested in Armenology on a free basis.

Consultancies are also provided on the eve of final attestation exams, final theses and master's theses defenses, when students contact the teaching professors.

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

A guide for applying to the administrative staff has been developed at GNU. According to the analysis of the results of the student survey of the 2019-2020 academic year, the problems of the students who contacted the administrative staff were generally solved.

As it became clear during the site visit, the administrative staff is ready to provide consultations, conduct additional trainings if necessary, apart from the defined reception days and hours.

Students were provided with social support in the form of tuition fee reimbursement from GNU and benefactors. The issue of tuition fee reimbursement was raised by the Students' Council.

4.5. The Institution has student career support services.

In 2019, the Center for Alumni, Career and Internship was established at GNU. The main goal of the Center is to contribute to the development of the competitiveness of University students and graduates in the labor market, to strengthen the permanent connection and development of cooperation between the graduates and the University, to regulate university-employer relations, and to solve the problems presented to the University. According to an analysis of the 2019-2020 student survey results, 78% of students are aware of career support services.

During the site-visit, it became clear that the above-mentioned center cooperates with a number of structures and organizations, including schools, Artsakh State University, banks, the Court of Appeals, etc.

During the meeting with the employers, it was noted that the University is open to hearing and implementing recommendations. Round table discussions, surveys with employers and graduates were organized by the Center for Alumni, Career and Internship, for example, in 2018, a meeting entitled "University-employer-graduate cooperation for preparation of the most competitive personnel in the labor market" was held. During the last year, other events were also carried out (for example, on the topic of "Economic problems after the 44-day war"), in order to raise cultural and educational problems, during which it was discussed what skills the student needs that should be added to the curriculum in the future. As a result of the meetings, it was proposed to introduce the subjects of "Scientific Work in Sports" and "Azerbaijani" in GNU. Topics of the final works were proposed by the employers, and there were also joint supervisors of the work.

Employers mentioned that in general, the abilities of the graduates do not always meet their requirements, but they achieve a certain result as a result of the trainings.

During the meeting with the graduates, it became clear that at the beginning of 2018-2020 they participated in the surveys conducted by the center, where they mentioned the positive and negative aspects of the University. Based on the recommendations of graduates and employers, the length of internship period and English class hours at GNU have been increased. Work is currently underway to create a contact database of alumni.

It should be noted that the announcements of vacancies are posted on the official website and Facebook page of the GNU.

4.6. The Institution promotes student involvement in research activities.

In the strategic plan of the University, the scientific research direction has been defined as a priority, and the task has been set to widely involve students in scientific research.

Under the BA and MA programs at the University, students are expected to carry out research works in the form of referats, course papers, final papers and master's theses. It can be noted that the research component is an integral part of the bachelor's and master's APs.

During the site- visit, it became clear that scientific researches are being carried out within the scientific directions established by the Lutovika and Jacob Aintaplean Research Center of Armenian Studies, as well as by the chairs. In GNU doing scientific work is encouraged, students are provided with certificates as an incentive. There is one scientific article co-authored by a lecturer and a student, and the involvement of students in scientific works is generally low.

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

The rights and responsibilities of students at the University are defined by the legislation of the Republic of Artsakh, the University Charter, the internal disciplinary rules of the University and the Students' Council Charter.

The Students' Council carries out works in the processes of protecting the rights of students, raising educational and other needs. The Students' Council performs its functions partially, in particular the Students' Council members are not fully aware of their duties and rights. However, during the meeting with the members of the Students' Council, it was noted that within the framework of their functions, there were cases of imposing disciplinary punishment, also a number of problems were raised by the Students' Council and received their solution.

Students are informed about decisions of the Students' Council and organized events from group leaders, who are members of the Students' Council.

Problems related to the rights and responsibilities of students are also discussed in the Governing Board, where the president of the Students' Council is involved as a student representative.

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

In 2021, a QA Manual was developed, which presents the quality assurance policy, the organizational structure and main areas of the quality assurance system, as well as the feedback mechanisms, quality management procedures and tools at GNU.

Surveys are mainly carried out at GNU regarding the satisfaction of students and lecturers with available resources, evaluation of services provided by existing units and structures, online learning, consultancy, career-promoting services, cooperation with administrative structures, surveys were also

conducted among applicants and graduates. Surveys were generally carried out in an orderly and periodic manner.

It should be noted that the conducted surveys were not targeted and did not fully reveal the needs.

Considerations:

The expert panel considers it positive that clear mechanisms for the recruitment, selection and admission of students are used in GNU, as a result of which the number of students has increased.

It is positive that students' educational needs are addressed through various mechanisms and that students have the opportunity to fill in the gap through additional classes. These processes contribute to studying the needs of students and improving various educational processes. Additional classes for students interested in Armenology are organized free of charge at GNU, and a procedure for organizing additional individual counsultancy has been developed, which contributes to the progress of students. At the same time, the expert panel notes that the creation of a psychological center or cooperation with other universities is an important circumstance for providing support to students from this point of view.

It is positive that at all levels the University is open to listening to the problems of students and providing solutions to them. This is a positive circumstance and contributes to increasing students' motivation.

The expert panel considers positive the presence of the Alumni, Career and Internship Center established at the University, which is active. At the same time, the expert panel notes that feedback mechanisms with graduates are still not fully applicable, which may hinder the acquisition of alumni opinions and the improvement of various processes.

The expert panel finds that the involvement of students in research work is weak, with few cases when students have done research work. Although the research component is included in the APs, the research and analytical skills of the students are still weakly developed. Assignments that build analytical abilities will contribute to the acquisition of similar abilities. In the process of protecting the rights of students, raising educational and other needs, mainly Students' Council carries out works. The Students' Council performs its functions partially, in particular the members of the Students' Council are not fully aware of their duties and rights.

Summary:

Taking into account the implementation of effective mechanisms of recruitment and admission of students at GNU, the efficiency of the procedures for raising educational needs, the organization of additional classes and the provision of consultancy, the provision of services promoting students' careers, the presence of the Students' Council, the expert panel considers that the GNU meets the requirements of Criterion 4.

Conclusion:

The compliance of GNU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 4 is satisfactory.

5. FACULTY AND STAFF

CRITERION: The Institution has a highly qualified teaching and support staffs to achieve the set goals for academic programmes and institution's mission.

Findings:

5.1. The Institution has policies and procedures promoting recruitment of a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff for the provision of academic programmes.

GNU has a procedure for competitive selection and appointment of teaching staff members (adopted in 2018), which includes the categories of professor, associate professor, assistant and lecturer. Although the University has main teaching staff with scientific degrees and titles in accordance with licensing requirements, the site-visit showed that during the recent crisis period there was an outflow of personnel, which they tried to some extent to manage through the inclusion of visiting professors, where preference was given to the employer's field and academic degree. According to that, the selection and recruitment of the teaching staff members in the university is carried out by the professional chairs according to the needs of the APs.

In the University, fixed-term contracts are signed with the teaching staff for one year, then 3 years and 5 years, on the basis of competition or without competition. At the beginning of each academic year, a commission of competition is formed as needed, as it became clear during the site-visit, a competition as such does not take place, because in practice one candidate applies for the given place, or the contracts are resigned. Chairs plan the next year's class distribution according to the staff list one year in advance. In the absence of appropriate personnel in the Republic of Artsakh, the University also tries to invite experienced professors from RA universities, including for distance education.

5.2 The requirements for qualifications of teaching staff per academic program are comprehensively stated.

Together with professional chairs GNU strives to attract lecturers with appropriate basic education, engaged in research and teaching-methodical activities for the implementation of professional APs. The site-visit showed that the chairs are able to choose the lecturers they need, despite the fact that there are currently a lot of hourly paid and double jobber lecturers at the University, professors with scientific degrees make up the majority of the teaching staff (55% according to self-analysis data).

The University states that the specific requirements for the professional qualities of the teaching staff of the AP are defined in the AP educational standard, however, during the observation of documents and the site-visit, it became clear that the requirements formulated at the level of the AP are absent, and the chairs are mostly guided by the professional experience of a lecturer when deciding the competence of the candidate for teaching at the chairs.

The University carries out an assessment of personnel-resource assurance through surveys and class recordings, but no analyzes have been made in this direction.

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

In 2018, GNU adopted the procedure for rating the professional activity of the teaching staff, but the study of the processes showed that the actual ranking has not yet been carried out. It can be stated that many processes are in the planning stage: for example, the general evaluation system of lecturers, the definition of indicators for ranking the effectiveness of the teaching staff, which are expected to serve as a basis for competitive selection, professional advancement, and the use of material and moral incentives.

From the observation of document and site-visit, it became clear that the evaluation mechanisms are the surveys by QA Center and class observations, which are carried out by the Vice-Rector, Heads of chairs and the Educational Department, and also the lecturers make reports in the chairs. As it became clear, in-depth analyzes of the results of class observations have not been carried out at GNU.

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

The University has the procedure "Order and conditions of training of teaching staff" (2018), as well as the procedure for rating the professional progress of the teaching staff. The studies showed that one of the main means of assessing the needs of the teaching staff is the surveys conducted by QA Center among students, based on the results of which the chairs give advice to the lecturer/s in order to improve the quality of teaching. As a result of the surveys, the need for training the lecturers on the organization of distance education was highlighted, and also English language training courses were organized based on the assessment of the level of language proficiency. At the same time, it should be stated that the University has not yet carried out an evaluation of the effectiveness of the conducted trainings. Professional trainings were not organized/implemented by GNU.

5.5 The Institution ensures that there is a permanent staff for the stable provision of the academic programmes.

55 % of the teaching staff of the University are full-time employees, and 45 % are part-time employees. The system of hourly paid teaching and visiting professors also operates at GNU, which to a certain extent ensures the provision of APs with specialists with narrow specialization and practical skills, with practical experience of the labor market.

Currently, the average length of service of lecturers is five years. Meetings with internal and external stakeholders showed that the teaching staff is highly motivated, ready both for the implementation of professional duties and for providing overtime consultations with students on a social basis. Conditioned by the last war in 2020 and the post-war crisis situation, the University had a personnel outflow, and in order to prevent it, the University decided to increase the salary of the teaching staff of the University.

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

In 2018, the University adopted the "Policy and Procedure for advancement of the teaching staff" and "Mentoring Policy and Procedure for Beginner Lectueres". The management of the University takes an active part in motivating the lecturers to obtain scientific titles and degrees, in the

last five years ten professors have received scientific degrees and titles under the direct supervision of the Rector of the University, currently seven are doing their dissertation works. The site-visit showed that the mentorship works in the University, there is a defined accountability according to the planned and implemented actions.

The University has a procedure for encouraging and rewarding the teaching staff, according to which monetary awards, certificates of appreciation, souvenirs, degrees pf honorary professor or doctor are awarded, and also bonuses are given according to the established procedure.

5.7 The Institution has necessary administrative and support staffs to achieve the strategic goals.

The department of human resources management at GNU coordinates the processes of admission and dismissal of teaching and support staffs. The University currently has 25 administrative and support staffs, optimization of administrative staff members has also taken place, for example, the position of the dean of the faculty has been reduced and the duties have been redistributed, but the latter has not been carried out as a result of a clear evaluation, because the mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of the University's administrative and educational departments are still in planning stage, and trainings aimed at the professional growth of the administrative and support staffs staff have not been carried out.

The site- visit showed that although the number of support staff is small, this does not hinder the realization of the goals of the SP, it is worth noting that, in case of necessity, the teaching staff supports the administrative and support staffs on a voluntary basis, within the framework of their competence.

Considerations:

The expert panel highly appreciates that in the post-war crisis period, GNU ensured the continuity of education by launching various mechanisms, including involving experienced professors with academic titles and degrees, managing to a certain extent the provision of the teaching staff with the necessary qualifications for APs.

Highly appreciating the efforts of specialized chairs of GNU in the direction of involving high-ranking specialists from the practical field in the teaching process, it is necessary to emphasize that the representatives of the practical field are least involved in research works, which can significantly affect the involvement of the teaching staff and students in the research processes.

The expert panel is of the opinion that the GNU chairs should develop clear requirements for the professional knowledge and abilities of the lecturers serving their APs, taking into account the LOs of the given program.

The expert panel considers positively that most of the members of the teaching staff are quite young, which is promising for the future of the University. On the other hand, it is negative that there is actually no clear scientific potential. The expert panel highly appreciates the University rector's personal efforts in the preparation and guidance of scientific personnel, which was also testified by many internal and external stakeholders.

The expert panel positively evaluates the presence of procedures that contribute to the professional progress of the teaching staff members, but their use in GNU is not satisfactory, because on the one hand, the opportunities are limited because of the high workload of professors with subject

courses, which does not allow them to be engaged in research activities, on the other hand, the extra payments defined by the University are inconsistent with the amount of work actually performed by the lecturer (for example, for the publication of a scientific article) in order to have a motivating effect. The expert panel believes that GNU should look for effective ways to motivate professors, for example, replace classroom hours with research hours.

The expert panel considers it positive that GNU is optimizing its administrative and support staffs, taking into account the current number of students and the priorities of GNU, but the lack of mechanisms for the evaluation of efficiency does not allow to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of decisions.

The expert panel emphasizes that there is a training procedure for the teaching staff at the University, based on which the trainings were carried out, it is also positive that the procedure for ranking the teaching staff has been confirmed. The expert panel is of the opinion that before the application of the procedure in GNU, guarantee prerequisites should be created for the objective ranking of the teaching staff, among which are also surveys conducted by QA Center, the quantitative component of the participation of target groups in the surveys and the content improvement of the questionnaires.

From the point of view of maintaining the stability of the relevant teaching staff of the APs, the expert panel considers it positive that the University is able to ensure the availability of appropriate personnel through mid-term planning, but the current staff turnover is a concern, which, as it became clear during the meetings with internal and external stakeholders, is caused by the status of the Republic of Artsakh. The expert panel believes that the University should implement long-term planning for the development of APs, taking into account the vision of how many lecturers are needed, with what title and at what level, to ensure the quality implementation of the APs.

Summary:

Taking into account that GNU ensures the availability of professors with the necessary qualifications for the implementation of APs, strives to attract professionals with practical skills and high professional qualities from the professional field, GNU has the necessary administrative and support staffs for the implementation of strategic goals for, has developed procedures and policies to ensure the professional advancement of young personnel, has incentive procedures for teaching and support staffs, there are mechanisms for highlighting and assessing the needs of the teaching staff, the expert panel finds that the GNU meets the requirements of Criterion 5.

Conclusion:

The compliance of institutional capacities of GNU with the requirements of Criterion 5 is satisfactory.

6. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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

Findings

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

In its 2019-2024 SP GNU aims to have modern research directions, to expand the involvement of teaching staff and students in research works, to contribute to the expansion of academic cooperation and the internationalization of research works. In order to achieve the stated goal, GNU has planned to implement the following objectives: a) setting research priorities in the university, taking into account first of all the areas of APs implemented in the University and labor market requirements, b) development and implementation of procedures, regulations, tools for the participation, accountability and efficiency of scientific activities of the teaching staff members, c) activation of the work of the Students' Scientific Council (SSC), application of mechanisms for involvement of students in scientific works, d) development of research cooperation with scientific research institutes of the Republic of Artsakh and the Republic of Armenia, universities, international organizations, foreign universities and enterprises.

According to the SER, the University does not have any document that includes the interests of GNU in the research field, and the research works are carried out in the chairs according to the set priorities, which were changed because of the post-war situation, but during the site-visit it became clear that not all chairs carry out active works in the indicated directions. An exception is the chair of Armenian language and literature, where certain researches are carried out, also due to the fact that the Lutovika and Jacob Aintaplian Research Center of Western Armenian operates at the University which greatly contributes to the implementation of research works in the field of Armenology. And during the site visit became clear that not all professors are actively involved, moreover, young professors are not actively involved either. Student involvement in research activities is also weak.

The budget provides expenses for the purchase of science, laboratory equipment and materials, participation in scientific business trips and conferences as well as publishing, which have increased by 2 to 5 million AMD over the course of three years. Research-oriented works at GNU are trying to be activated but it became clear from the site visit they still do not have outstanding results.

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

The University has developed a schedule-plan for the implementation of the Strategic Plan, in which the strategic objectives, actions, expected results, responsible persons, deadlines, necessary human and financial resources to achieve the goals set by GNU in the research field were indicated, but some of the expected results are not measurable, the responsible persons, financial resources and implementation dates are not clearly stated. GNU also has road maps for the implementation of the SPs for 2019-2020, 2020-2022. in which he also mentioned the growth indicators of the evaluation, but during the visit it became clear that most of the actions included in them are still in the planning stage, which does not give a clear idea of the planned progress of the University in the field of research.

GNU does not have mid-term plans in the field of research, and the annual work plans of the chairs were considered as short-term plans, in which the research component was included to a certain extent mainly in terms of final and independent works, master's theses.

During the site visit it became clear that there are still no visible results confirming the implementation of the goals and objectives of the research field defined by the SP, and there are no reports in this direction. Financial resources are also not specified in the presented plans. In the field of research, the activities of the University are in the stage of planning and implementation.

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

The responsibility for the coordination and development of scientific research activities at GNU is given to the Vice-Rector for Science and to the chairs. GNU does not have clearly defined policies and procedures in the field of research, it was reflected in the SP as one of the priority goals, it set priorities according to the chairs. According to the self-analysis, the initiative to carry out research can be both from the interests of the teaching staff, as well as at the initiative of the chairs and the University. It became clear from the site-visit that the work in the research field is not well defined.
GNU has a regulation of academic honesty that defines the basic rules for maintaining academic honesty and preventing plagiarism in scientific and academic work, which applies to course papers, final papers and master's theses, but the site-visit made it clear that in practice clear mechanisms for preventing plagiarism and ensuring academic honesty are not in place implemented, except for a mechanism that the topics of theses and final papers are changed every 5 years.

In order to encourage research activities, the University has developed and implemented the policy and procedure for encouraging employees (approved at the session No. 16 on May 15, 2018) and the procedure for calculating and paying additional fees for the performance of certain types of employee work (approved on December 2, 2019 by decree). However, during the site-visit it was found out that there were still no employees encouraged for research work. Although GNU has a procedure for calculating and paying additional fees to employees for certain types of work, according to which the employee is additionally paid for publishing an article in the scientific periodicals of a foreign university or research institute, publishing theses in the materials of an international or republican conference, in the first case - 10,000, in the second case, with 7,000 AMD, but the agreed-upon additional fees are low, which cannot stimulate the development of research at the University. The University does not have joint research programs, grants with Armenian universities and scientific-research organizations, but within the framework of cooperation with some universities and institutes, peer-review of research works, partparticipation conferences, conduction of seminars is organized, but the organization of scientific seminars in the chairs is not systematic, there are no schedules, plans and reports. Mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of the works performed in the scientific research field have not been introduced.

The University publishes the "Dpratun" journal of social sciences, approved by the RA Supreme Certifying Committee, which is published 2 twice a year and provides an opportunity not only to the teaching staff of the University, but lso to professors of various local and international universities to publish scientific articles. However analysis on how many articles are published by GNU yearly in the journal and what is their impact on the development of research field is missing.
Scientific-research works published in international journals and conference materials is missing.

6.4 The Institution emphasizes internationalization of its research.

In its new SP the University considered internationalization of research activity as a priority, before that it didn't have such a goal, however policy on internationalization of research activity is still missing. During the site-visit it became clear that GNU considers the status of the Republic of Artsakh as an obstacle for internationalization of research. The University considers the lecturing/seminars by specialists of foreign organizations conducted within the framework of cooperation, publication of

articles by foreign authors in “Dpratun” journal, the activities of the Lutovika and Yakob Aintaplian Research Center of Western Armenian and Armenian Studies as examples of the internationalization of research, however they cannot be considered as such.

GNU assessed the level of foreign language (English) proficiency of professors and students through a test, and found out that their foreign language proficiency level is very low, which is another reason that hinders the internationalization of research. In order to improve the level of English language proficiency of the lecturers the University conducted courses, as a result of which the participating professors passed the first level of English language proficiency, but the courses were not continuous. It became clear from the site-visit that this did not lead to the availability of articles published in international journals. And in order to increase the level of knowledge of English among students, the number of hours of English was increased in the modules, the impact of which has not yet been evaluated. During the site-visit, it also became clear that almost the whole teaching staff and most of the students know Russian very well, but they have not even tried to publish any articles in Russian scientific journals or conduct joint research with Russian-speaking specialists. In this direction GNU does not have a clear realistic plan.

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

The BA and MA APs of the University contain a research component. The interrelationship between research activities and the educational process at GNU is expressed through essays, individual works, final papers and master's theses, but the research and analytical component is weakly expressed in them. The mentioned mechanisms do not ensure the correlation between the research activities and the educational process, their effectiveness has not been evaluated. The University has not set the issue of developing and introducing clear mechanisms in this direction. The University has regulations on "Organization of educational process with BA and MA academic programmes", "Preparation and defense of course paper (subject-scientific)", "Preparation and defense of final paper", "Preparation and defense of Master's thesis", which define the procedures for the organization of those works, the requirements presented to them, but from the observation of the documents and the site-visit, it became clear that the final papers are mainly a study of theoretical material, the research component is very weakly expressed in them. In the case of master's theses, the connection between the topics of research works and the needs of the Republic of Artsakh is not visible, the research, analytical and application component is weakly expressed, moreover the application of results in the education process is not studied and emphasized, the level of application and innovation is low. During the site-visit, it became clear from the meeting with the external stakeholders that they are not of an applied nature.

There is also a positive experience in the field of Armenian studies, but this experience has not been extended to other chairs, the educational and research relations among the chairs are also weak. The University evaluates students' independent works with a separate evaluation component, which, according to the University, contains a research component, but the mechanisms for evaluating independent work are not clearly defined.

Some articles are published by the lecturers, but no research is carried out in the University regarding their application in the educational process and the results of the latter.

Student conferences create an opportunity to motivate students to do research work. Student conferences are organized at the University, but they are not clearly coordinated and periodic, and there are no approaches to encourage students' research activities. In some cases, students also participate in student conferences organized by other universities.
From the expert visit, it became clear that the University needs laboratories for research and the presence of appropriate software programs in them.

Considerations:

The expert panel considers it positive that GNU has emphasized the development of modern research directions, the expansion of professors' and students' involvement in them, the internationalization of research works in the SP, but the ambitions of GNU in research field have a high threshold. The potential of GNU (human and financial resources) have not been taken into account. Despite the setting of priorities in the chairs and the implementation of steps in the direction of Armenian studies, the University has not registered significant results in terms of research.

The planning of research activities at GNU is expressed by strategic long-term and short-term plans. However, there are still no reports according to these plans. The results are largely expressed by the creation of a document base, and there are still no systematic clear plans for the implementation of the goals set in them. Despite the implemented primary steps, the impact of created documents on results and achievements is not visible.

The expert panel considers positively that the development of the research orientation is in the center of attention of GNU, the chairs have set priorities, but considers that the work in that direction is not yet fully aimed at the realization of the goal of the SP, most of the processes are still in the planning stage. At the same time, the path outlined by GNU to achieve its vision in that direction is not clear. The expert panel also believes that the activity of the Lutovika and Jacob Aintaplian Center of Western Armenian, Armenian Studies at GNU is positive, but in this regard, the impact of the center on the research activities of GNU and its role in the development of scientific research processes in line with SP goals and objectives is still not visible.

Plagiarism warning mechanisms and the policy of encouraging research works are important in research processes, but the expert panel believes that these mechanisms have not yet been applied in GNU. The University does not have competitive directions and an academic team to conduct applied research.

The organization of scientific seminars and conferences with different universities of the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh creates opportunities for the exchange of experience and cooperation for the teaching staff of GNU, but their non-periodic nature, the passive involvement of the teaching staff and students in the conferences, the lack of academic literacy courses do not provide an opportunity for conducting up-to-date research and creating a scientific environment. GNU needs to expand the scope of cooperation in the field of scientific research to serve the realization of its strategic goals by having joint scientific research programs or joint researches.

One of the important achievements of GNU is the existence of a journal of social sciences, but the lack of quantitative and qualitative analyzes of the articles published by the teaching staff of GNU in them does not make it possible to assess the influence of the journal on the development of the research direction of the University.

It is a positive fact that the University is aware of the importance of internationalization of research (setting a goal in the SP), but it still does not have a clear policy in this direction, there are no certain steps and results.

The expert panel positively assesses that the presence of educational blocks for research in the BA and MA APs is a mechanism that ensures the interdependence of research activities and the educational process at GNU. However, the weakness of the research, applied and analytical component in final paprs and master theses can hinder the implementation of the tasks set for achieving the goal defined by the SP. The expert panel also emphasizes the presence of clear criteria and requirements for the evaluation of research works. At the same time, the expert panel believes that it is important for GNU to carry out research within the framework of internships that will meet the needs of the Republic of Artsakh and have an applied meaning, inter-chair research, the extraction and dissemination of best research practices in chairs that are not yet available at the University.

In scientific research processes, the activity and involvement of the SSC is important, but the University has not implemented clear processes formed in this regard, and the mechanisms of encouragement are missing. In terms of involving students, the expert panel also sees the need to motivate the teaching staff, the lack of which can affect the effective interconnection of educational and research processes.

Summary:

Taking into account that GNU does not have clearly defined policies, procedures and necessary resources to achieve the ambitions defined in the research field in its SP, it does not have a vision that will be realistic for the next few years, there are no mid-term plans for research development, and evaluation of the effectiveness of existing processes is not conducted, there is no internationalization policy in the field of research, there are no collaborations and results, the effectiveness of mechanisms for linking education and research is weak, the expert panel finds that GNU does not meet the requirements of Criterion 6.

Conclusion:

The compliance of institutional capacities of GNU with the requirements of Criterion 6 is unsatisfactory.

7. 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.

Findings

7.1 The Institution has an appropriate learning environment for the implementation of current academic programmes.

With its strategic plan GNU aimed to form university infrastructures that meet modern requirements. For this purpose, it is planned to develop the classroom and laboratory conditions necessary for the implementation of the educational process, to modernize the university infrastructures, the information systems and library infrastructures expecting the availability of

resources that provide an effective educational environment equipped with modern technical means and the active use of information systems in the education process, application of upgraded library services. According to the SER GNU has an area of 1540.92 sq/m, which includes offices (215 sq/m), classrooms (1125.72 sq/m), laboratories (37 sq/m), library and reading hall (26 sq./m), as well as a modern sports hall (137.2 sq/m). The University also has a hall for scientific sessions and poetry, a cultural hall equipped with speakers, microphones and projectors, a SMART classroom for distance learning designed for holding interactive, online courses, as well as for watching movies, a hall-auditory for a research center equipped with IT equipment (computer, projector), which, if necessary, can serve as two separate classrooms. The University also has a medical center and a shelter, the latter serves not only for the stakeholders of the University, but also people living in the surrounding areas. Ramps are available only on the first floor and there is no buffet/canteen.

During the site-visit, it became clear that the 23 classrooms of GNU are designed not only for University students, but also for college students. Although the SER states that the University was equipped with 10 new computers, during the site-visit it was revealed that mainly the chairs and offices were equipped with new computers, and there were 5 computers in the computer classroom, and the classroom also served as a chair for IT and subjects of natural sciences. It also became clear that the existing computers lacked, in particular, the licensed software programs necessary within the framework of the Economics AP. There are 8207 books in the library, which are not separated according to the APs, and an electronic library with 1350 books has been formed for each profession, but it still needs replenishment. The number of lecturers subscribed to the library is 45, and the number of students is 980, but there is no analysis of the frequency and interests of users of the library and reading hall. Internet access is provided in the reading hall.

For some subjects within the framework of the APs, the University does not have the necessary laboratories, such as a forensics laboratory, or a legal clinic.

According to the SER, in order to reveal the needs of the stakeholders, surveys are conducted by QAC according to which the satisfaction of students with the provision of resources is 77.5%, and the satisfaction of teaching staff is 78.5%, but it is not clear what percentage of them participated in the surveys.

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

The University has a financial resource management policy, approved by the decision of the Scientific Council of the University in the session N16 as of May 15, 2019 in which defined the main directions of the financial resources management policy, the main functions aimed at their management, coordination, current management, university competences, the main sources of financial resources formation and trends in the use of funds. It is carried out on a calendar year basis, in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Artsakh, the statute of the University and the internal legal acts of the University, through the preparation of the budget estimate and the analysis of the actual performance of the budget.

Most of the financial income at GNU fromed from student tuition fees (89.50%). It also has budgetary incomes (Government reimbursement of the costs of students studying by state order: 10.50% and other inflows: 2.20%). 62.20% of expenses are salaries, of which 28.70% are teachers' salaries, 54.10% are administrative estaff' salaries, and the rest are salaries of teaching support and

technical staffs' salaries (17.20%), state budget payments (6.00%), tuition fee discounts (10.00%), internship organization costs (0.40%), educational equipment and property acquisition costs (4.00%), library costs (0.40%), costs related to Students' Council (0.10%), quality assurance process costs (0.80%), travel costs (0.80%), representation costs (0.50%), science costs (0.80%) and economic expenses (12.90%). The University does not have grants and other stable financial streams. Steps are being taken to diversify financial resources, but the results are still not significant.

In 2018 on the direct initiative of the Rector, the University involved a Diaspora Armenian benevolent in academic activities, thanks to whom annual Armenian studies courses, conferences, workshops were organized free of charge. In 2019 free English language courses for lecturers were held at the University under the sponsorship of an American Armenian benevolent through the mediation of the Department of PR and Media, and in 2021 as part of the fund-raising activities of the QA Center, the American Organization of Armenological Studies sponsored the research work of V. Lalayan, a university lecturer, candidate of historical sciences.

Despite the allocation of the budget in different directions, during the site-visit, the expert panel noted that the allocation of the budget is not clearly connected with the strategic goals. The study of the budget estimate of the GNU for the last 3 years showed that many expenses have increased, for example, the expenses of science from 2 million became 5 million AMD, the expenses of scientific conferences as well, but during the visit it became clear that along with the increase in expenses, no significant progress was registered in the mentioned directions. Salaries were increased especially after the war in order to prevent the outflow of personnel, but it was found that GNU still has a problem of personnel turnover. There are no analyzes on the effectiveness of financial management.

7.3 The Institution has policy on financial distribution and capacity to sustain and ensure the integrity and continuity of the programmes offered at the Institution.

In its SER, University noted that GNU lacks a policy for the distribution of financial resources that ensures and guarantees the implementation and continuity of the goals of the APs and for the effective implementation of the goals of APs it is important to provide adequate human, material and technical resources. However from the site-visit, it became clear that the University needs both human and material-technical resources within the framework of the APs. Financial allocations for separate APs are not carried out in the budget. For each academic year, the University prepares a financial estimate. The latter, according to the SER, is drawn up by the chief accountant and the Rector, with the approval of the President of the Meeting of Participants of the University. The basis of the financial budget, in addition to the results of purely accounting performance analyses, is also the strategic plan of the University, the annual work plans of chairs and structural units, but the study of the plans revealed that the financial resources are not clear. And the salary of the lecturer is defined according to the workload, academic degree, title and position, which is clearly defined. Funds are spent in accordance with the orders issued by the rector of GNU.

During the site-visit, it was found out that the involvement of the stakeholders in the process of allocation of financial resources is weak, and the incomes received from different APs are considered in one universal budget, the expenses of which are planned for all APs according to priorities. It became clear that GNU did not set the minimum number of students to ensure the continuity of each AP, as well as the minimum costs.

7.4 The Institution's resource base supports the implementation of Institution's academic programmes and strategic plan, which promotes sustainability and continuous improvement of quality.

From the study of the resources and documents of GNU, the expert panel came to the conclusion that the University has classrooms, it has a computer classroom, but it is not completely sufficient for all the students of GNU, and the programs available on the computers are not reliable for the continuous improvement of the quality of some APs. Chairs and departments are generally provided with computers and necessary equipment. The library is also provided with literature, but the visit revealed that it needs to be replenished with professional literature, especially the electronic library, in which GNU has started to take steps. During the visit, it was also found out that in the research center of the University, which is provided with all technical conditions, distance classes and seminars are held, if necessary, but they are still not regularly conducted. In accordance with the SP goal of financial stability and compliance of infrastructures, the University has planned to ensure stable and diversified financial flows of the University and to increase the efficiency of their management, to form University infrastructures that meet modern requirements. Individual objectives and implementation steps have been identified in the action plan of SP, but it does not include clear indicators for resource provision. Comprehensive studies and analyzes of the adequacy of APs and resources have not been carried out. Surveys evaluating the satisfaction with resources have been conducted, but no improvement plans are in place. The University has carried out quite a lot of renovation works from its own funds, especially after the war. The budget includes financial allocations for the maintenance of educational equipment and property, as well as resources.

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

According to the SER, the document circulation at GNU is regulated by the Regulation of document circulation (approved in 2017) and the Charter of archive activity (approved in 2019), according to which the University carries out its document circulation in paper and electronic form, via e-mail, Mulberry, and archiving of documents in accordance with the requirements of the Law of the Republic of Artsakh "On Archival Case". All correspondence and applications received by the University are registered, recorded, circulated and stored in the General department of the University. GNU also has an internal network through which widely distributed documents are provided to employees. GNU has Internet access, and student satisfaction with Internet access is above average, with more than 60% of survey respondents rating it as good or excellent.

The University has an official website and a Facebook page, through which it also disseminates information about GNU. The University has conducted an analysis of website and Facebook page publications, according to which the number of Facebook followers increased by 34% and the number of views doubled within three years.

7.5 The Institution creates safe and secure environment through health and safety mechanisms taking into account the students with special needs.

GNU has a plan for the implementation of the civil protection of students and employees in emergency situations of the University, in which the mechanisms for the protection of the stakeholders of GNU in different situations are clearly defined. The University has a shelter, a basement, which are in good condition and ensure the safety of not only the University stakeholders, but also the citizens

of the surrounding area. In order to ensure safety, GNU has evacuation schemes posted in visible places, as well as fire extinguishers installed on each floor. GNU has night and day guards who are on duty 24hours, cameras are also installed. It also has a medical center with appropriate equipment that provides first aid if necessary. GNU does not have facilities for students with special needs.

7.6 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.

According to the SER, GNU considers the level of satisfaction of students and lecturers with the available resources as an important indicator of efficiency. For this purpose, the QA Center uses various mechanisms to assess the applicability, availability and efficiency of resources: surveys, working discussions, meetings, reports submitted to the Scientific Council and raised issues. The survey mechanism was introduced in the University in 2019-2020, but the survey needs to be reviewed from the point of view of full identification of needs. Surveys are not conducted on a regular basis, although the relevant order states that they should be conducted twice a year. Although it is stated in the SER that 10 new computers were purchased as a result of the surveys based on the suggestions of students, during the visit it was found out that there are 5 computers in the computer classroom and GNU still needs a network connection. GNU also conducted surveys on the quality of online learning, but did not address student needs.

Considerations:

The expert panel considers it positive that in its SP the University has emphasized the modernization of infrastructures, the provision of an effective learning environment and resources for the implementation of APs. GNU has created the appropriate conditions for implementing APs as much as possible and continues to improve in this direction. Although in the budget the University has not planned expenses for the improvement of building conditions, but if necessary, it implements it at the expense of its profit.

Despite the above mentioned, the expert panel finds that the University needs replenishment of infrastructure and resources in various directions. The expert panel considers a priority the addition of professional literature (including electronic literature) and computers and providing them with the appropriate licensed programs, membership in the online library networks of the Republic of Artsakh and the Republic of Armenia, which will also provide an opportunity to use foreign language literature.

The expert panel considers it positive that the University has a financial management policy, the annual budget has included the necessary expenses in the direction of resources, except for the improvement of building conditions, which is important for GNU. Expenditures in the budget still need to be clarified according to the objectives of the SP and the implementation of the APs, which will enable to effectively plan the financial resources allocated to each AP and ensure their sustainability through other financial flows. GNU also lacks grants, which would also be important for GNU's progress in various fields. Fundraising activities and diversification of financial flows are also a priority for GNU, as the University's main financial income is students' tuition fees, which can be worrying and risky as the number of students decreases.

The expert panel considers it positive that the gymnasium is equipped with the necessary equipment that can fully contribute to the physical education of students. Analyzes of the effectiveness

of financial management will enable effective budget planning, and the distribution of funds according to the implementation of the goals of SP and APs. The lack of stable financial funds in the University can hinder the provision and guarantee of the continuity of the APs. Weak involvement of stakeholders in the process of allocation of funds can hinder the transparency of financial management.

In terms of document circulation, the University has introduced certain mechanisms, but a periodic assessment of their effectiveness is necessary, particularly with regard to the website. It is also positive that the security and health care provision at GNU is on quite high levels, and GNU has been making continuous improvements in this direction, especially since the war.

Non-periodic assessment of mechanisms for applicability, availability and efficiency of resources and services provided to students and teaching staff at GNU may hinder their continuous improvement in line with the needs of their stakeholders, and the content of the questionnaires for the relevance of resources and APs and revealing the needs of stakeholders in this context needs to be reviewed. As a result of these surveys, the implementation of improvement works will significantly contribute to the formation of a management culture based on the principle of PDCA.

Summary:

Taking into account that GNU is able to provide an appropriate learning environment, has a certain policy of financial management, financial distribution has been carried out in conditions of limited budget and continuous improvement of the resource base, provides a safe environment, has some information management mechanisms, has invested some mechanisms for the evaluation of the efficiency of the applied resources, the expert panel finds that GNU meets the requirements of Criterion 7.

Conclusion:

The compliance of GNU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 7 is satisfactory.

8. 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.

Findings :

8.1. The Institution has clear policy on accountability.

In 2019, the University adopted an accountability program for administrative and teaching staffs, which clearly defines the mechanism for planning the work of University structural units and accountability of University departments. According to that plan, the Rector of the University makes a public report on the activities of the University in mass media during the academic year, and also ensures the publication of the report submitted to the Scientific Council of the University on the website of the University. At the end of each academic semester, the University Vice-Rectors submit a report to the rectorate, and upon the Rector's recommendation, the University Vice-Rectors can also present a report in the Scientific Council. At the end of each academic semester, the heads of the department submit a written report to the vice-rectors or the rector, who coordinate their work, as

defined by the university's management system. At the end of each academic semester, heads of departments present a report on the progress of their work plan during the reporting period at the rectorate meeting. Upon the recommendation of the Rector or Vice-Rectors of the University, the heads of the academic department may also submit a report to the Scientific Council of the University. University lecturers submit a report at the chair sessions at the end of each academic year according to the established report sheet.

From the site-visit and the observation of the documents, it became clear that the departments of the University have reports made in a clear format, in which, however, there are quantitative data. During the year, the University submits reports to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Artsakh, the Tax Service of the Republic of Artsakh, the Statistical Service and other state agencies in accordance with the law.

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

The University transfers information about its activities to the public through TV stations, the Internet and print media. The University also emphasizes the University's official website and Facebook page, through which information is transferred about daily activities. In the self-analysis, it is mentioned that the website is trilingual, but the materials are posted only in Armenian.

From the site-visit, it was found out that although the department is a newly organized, created in 2019, with very limited human resources, it clearly understands its role and function in the context of general problems and activities, and the stakeholders of the University are mostly satisfied with the work of that department.

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

According to the SER, the University mentions the official Facebook page as an effective means of feedback that contributes to the formation of relations with the public, thanks to which the processes of quick information transfer, providing feedback, advertising and activating public relations become more flexible.

The official website of the University (www.grigornarekatsi.am) allows website visitors to contact various administrative and educational departments of the University through the "Feedback" section for questions and additional information.

GNU also emphasizes the creation of connections with chairs and employers, specialists in the stages of approval and improvement of APs.

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

According to the SER, the University provides educational and consultancy services in two directions: for internal stakeholders and society with the problems of preserving national identity and values.

According to the identified needs, additional foreign language and computer literacy courses were organized, as well as professional seminars, trainings, open classes, which were mainly carried out at the chair level.

The University also conducts educational and counsultancy courses for the purpose of preserving national identity and values through the Lutovika and Yakob Aintaplean Research Center of Western Armenian, Armenian Studies. According to the charter of the center, the functions of the center are: supporting the publishing process by ensuring the publication of quality scientific results, organizing training courses, developing university and school textbooks, guidelines, new scientific methodical manuals, new teaching technologies, organizing the process of commercialization of innovative programs and the most important results of science, participation in the process of reforms in the field of science in the Republic of Artsakh.

Main applied mechanisms of transferring knowledge to society are visits to schools, military units as well as mass media and TV stations.

During the site-visit it became clear that the Chair of Jurisprudence of the University organizes courses of the theory of driving for public on paid basis.

Considerations:

The expert panel positively evaluates that there is an administrative and teaching staff accountability program at GNU, there is bottom-up and top-down accountability. The approved accountability format clearly states who is responsible, timelines, function, steps, respective resources and, most importantly, a link to the strategic plan. At the same time, it should be noted that the reasons for the possible failure of the function, their analysis and ways of improvement are missing in this format.

The Department of PR and Media of the University disseminates information about the activities of the University by all possible means: the official website of the University, social networks, mass media, local TV stations. The GNU website primarily reflects important realities and processes, but the University's APs and specifications (especially translated into English and Russian) are missing from the official website.

The expert panel considers positively the efforts of the University in the process of transferring knowledge to society based on the national value system, which contributes to increasing the visibility of the University.

Summary:

Taking into consideration that GNU has an accountability program, University functions and processes are accessible to the public, the University is aware of its commitments in transferring knowledge about national values to the public, the expert panel finds that GNU meets the requirements of Criterion 8 .

Conclusion:

The compliance of institutional capacities of GNU to the requirements of Criterion 8 is satisfactory.

9. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

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

Findings

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.

In GNU 2019-2024 SP the continuous development of internationalization has been considered as one of its important directions and aimed to contribute to the continuous development of internationalization, to activate exchange programs and cooperative relations. In order to achieve its goals, GNU plans to develop the University's internationalization policy, create an institute of visiting professors, develop cooperation with foreign universities, evaluate the potential and take steps for the participation in international grant and exchange programs, but the threshold of the defined goals is high. Actions have been planned in the SP plan-schedule in accordance with the defined goals, but the dates, financial allocations are not clear, there are no indicators of growth in assessment, and clear and purposeful steps have not yet been implemented in the direction of the planned actions.

As mentioned in the SER, during the visit it became clear that GNU connects the development of all directions related to internationalization with the status of the Republic of Artsakh, considering the latter as an obstacle, but it also became clear that local links with various organizations and local universities are not active at GNU either.

Analyzes and studies on mobility, steps contributing to it, programs of universities with the same status in the international field are missing. Moreover, mobility and exchange of students was absent even with the universities of Artsakh and the RA.

GNU does not have clear procedures for organizing international conferences, establishment of external relations, fixed clear mechanisms to encourage mobility.

Internationalization and external relations are mentioned in the SP as a direction to be developed, and in the SER it is highlighted, but the budget does not provide for expenses related to it. In order to promote the participation of internal stakeholders in the mobility programs, GNU also took steps to increase the level of knowledge of foreign languages of the employees, but they were not of a continuous nature. During the visit, it became clear that the issue of internationalization has not yet gone beyond the scope of the SP, that is, it has not turned into actions.

9.2 The Institution's external relations infrastructure ensures regulated process.

Activities on external relations and internationalization at GNU are regulated by the charter of the Department of Foreign Relations, which was approved in 2019. It defines the objectives, functions, structure and management of the Department. During the visit, it became clear that the external relations department is still newly established and does not yet have a stable team of employees, the coordination of work is put by the statute on the Vice-Rector for Scientific Affairs. It also became clear that for the full implementation of the department's functions, the department needs to be staffed.

The department does not have a separate work plan and reports.

According to the SER, the effective operation of the department is hindered by the insufficient knowledge of the English language, the lack of certain skills to participate in the programs, the lack of motivation of the relevant professionals, which was also confirmed during the visit, but GNU did not consider the knowledge of Russian as a foreign language, which is significantly high in the University.

Publications on the official website of GNU are only in Armenian, and no work is planned in that direction.

Although the University emphasizes business trips for the effectiveness of external relations and cooperation activities, for which costs are provided in the budget, there is no analysis of their effectiveness, and no performance evaluation is carried out.

9.3 The Institution effectively collaborates with local and international counterparts.

GNU has some contracts and memoranda of cooperation with local and international organizations, one part of which is RA universities and the other part is schools and other organizations of the Republic of Artsakh. There is one international agreement with Mesrop Mashtots College in Glendale, California, USA. However, during the visit, it became clear that targeted processes aimed at internationalization and development of external relations within the framework of cooperation have not yet been implemented, few of them provide results. Some collaborations are not documented. Cooperation with the organizations of the Republic of Artsakh is mainly carried out during internships. GNU has also cooperated with the RA universities for different purposes, and has also involved scientists from different foreign universities in the format of separate lectures, for example Dr. Hovsep Nalbandian, lecturer of American-Armenian "Mesrop Mashtots" University of Glendale, Professor Vladimir Alexandrovich Zakharov, PhD, Armenian public-politician, geographer, cartographer, philologist, Zhirayr Arami Kocharyan a lecturer of the Free University of Berlin, but no evaluation of the effectiveness of cooperation was carried out, and the implemented activities are not of a regular nature. Although the works carried out for the development of Armenian Studies are the result of cooperation of GNU, the implemented processes still do not serve internationalization. During the visit, it became clear that the implemented actions did not result from cooperation. Although the University has planned certain steps in the SP action plan-schedule for the purpose of cooperation, their intermediate results are not yet evident.

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

In order to realize its goal in internationalization, GNU has emphasized the knowledge of foreign language among its internal stakeholders. Taking into account the needs of internal stakeholders as well, it has carried out a periodic assessment of foreign language (English) proficiency among teachers, according to which teachers' knowledge of English in the 2020-2021 academic year was 33%, and among administrative staff members it was 50%, the knowledge of Russian language at GNU is 100%. GNU has also conducted a course to increase teachers' knowledge of a foreign language, but during the site-visit it became clear that these courses were not continuous. And in order to increase the level of students' knowledge of the English language, the number of hours of English in the APs has been increased, but the evaluation of the effectiveness has not been carried out yet. Increasing the number of English hours and courses have not yet contributed to increasing the level of English language proficiency. Despite having a sufficient level of knowledge of Russian, GNU has not undertaken to implement active cooperation programs with Russian universities or publish articles in Russian-language journals.

It turned out that GNU considers only English as a foreign language, and the steps taken towards increasing its level among lecturers and students have not yet provided results in line with strategic

goals. At the same time, the level of knowledge of the Russian language being high among both lecturers and students, did not direct GNU to lead the development of internationalization in that direction.

According to the SER, GNU plans to study the experience of internationalization of educational institutions of other countries, especially unrecognized countries, but during the site-visit it was found out that such studies have not been carried out yet.

Considerations:

Although GNU has defined goals and objectives in its strategic development plan in order to create an environment conducive to experience exchange, development and internationalization, the lack of clear deadlines, financial allocations and growth indicators for evaluation in the strategic plan-schedule may hinder the realization of the goal.

The expert panel considers that, although GNU has problems aimed at internationalization and the development of external relations, the threshold for them is high, at the same time in the conditions of the status of the Republic of Artsakh, not having a vision, clear policies and procedures in the field of internationalization can hinder both the implementation of goals and mobility, as well as development of active cooperation and scientific and educational activities. Another factor hindering mobility and development of internationalization is the low level of knowledge of English at GNU. From this perspective the expert panel considers that GNU should evaluate its advantages and strengths in the field of language knowledge and rely on them in the process of internationalization, in particular, the knowledge of Russian.

The fact that the SP does not contain a clear allocation of budget and resources, and not providing finance in the budget for internationalization as a priority may jeopardize the development of that direction.

It is positive that GNU has created The Department of External Relations, which has a charter and defined functions, but in the absence of mid-term and short-term plans, clear procedures, the study of international experience as well as human resources, the External Relations Department will not be able to provide the expected results and lack of performance evaluation mechanisms, indicators will not provide an opportunity to carry out monitoring and improvements. Publications only in the Armenian language on the website cannot make the activities of GNU known in the international sphere, which can be in the interests of both GNU and the Republic of Artsakh. It is important that the materials published on the website have clear information dissemination, accountability and long-term goals that will promote not only dissemination of information, transparency of accountability, but also student engagement.

The expert panel emphasizes various cooperations with various universities and structures of Artsakh and the RA, but effective mechanisms and steps are necessary to make their effectiveness outstanding. The expert panel considers the provision of academic mobility for students and teaching staff members as a concern, there are no plans for developing their abilities.

The expert panel notes that taking into account the status of Artsakh, the University can consider the possibility of internationalization on the spot, which will give lecturers and students opportunities to participate in international courses, trainings and conduct studies of international experience while being at the University. This will contribute to capacity building and the expansion of international links.

The expert panel also notes that the cooperation with foreign universities and organizations is important for GNU, which will also result from the SP goals, as well as the involvement of the potential of the Armenian diaspora not only from the point of view of financial support, but in various processes of the University, which GNU has not considered.

The expert panel noticed that GNU emphasizes the issue of students' and teaching staff's knowledge of the English language, the actions implemented in that direction, but the lack of evaluation of their effectiveness does not allow to measure the results and improve the process. In particular, there are no frameworks for cooperation with Russian universities, and some of the cooperations are not documented, which hinders the implementation of planned and targeted actions.

Summary:

Taking into account that the ambitions of GNU in the field of external relations and internationalization do not correspond to the existing potential, there is no clear vision and planning in the direction of internationalization, it has not yet implemented effective steps in the direction of the implementation of strategic goals, activities in the direction of language development have not led to the expected results, there are no opportunities for academic mobility, the expert panel concludes that GNU does not meet the requirements of Criterion 9.

Conclusion:

The compliance of institutional capacities of GNU with the requirements of Criterion 9 is unsatisfactory.

10. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

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

Findings

10.1 The Institution has quality assurance policies and procedures.

The issues of quality assurance are reflected in the five-year strategic plan. Among the actions listed are the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning, the student assessment system, the university management system and the internal quality assurance system (IQA). The QA policy, its objectives, principles, organisational structure, procedures, IQA mechanisms are defined in The Quality Assurance Manual (QAM), which is available on the GNU website. At the same time, the experience of several Armenian universities was used in designing the system.

The main goals of the quality policy are accountability and continuous process improvement aimed at developing a quality culture. Its scope covers 9 key areas of the University, including strategic planning, curriculum, teaching, research, personnel policy, mainly concerning the evaluation of academic staff, assessment of student performance and student support system, resources and infrastructure, relations with the socio-economic environment, IQA. The improvement of processes and procedures is to follow a PDCA cycle. Procedures and tools of the quality policy have been developed for the assessment of SP performance, academic programmes, teaching (also on line) including modules and classes, teaching and research infrastructure, GNU organisational units, student and academic staff needs, teacher performance and graduate satisfaction with the education received.

The main tools for gathering information about the quality of the processes are regularly conducted surveys of students, staff and graduates and various stakeholder meetings. The samples of the questionnaires are prepared in cooperation with sociologists The results of the quality analyses are included in the reports of individual organisational units, including QAC and the annual reports of the Rector. The latter are published on the GNU website.

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

The QAM provides a breakdown of the duties and responsibilities of the main actors involved in the implementation of the quality policy, i.e. the Scientific Council, the Rector, the Vice-Rectors, the university managers, the QAC, the faculties and the students. Other stakeholder groups, teachers and support staff, and external stakeholders were omitted. It is worth noting that no university or faculty level committee responsible for quality processes has been established.

The central role in the implementation of the quality policy is played by the QAC established in 2018. QAC, which has operational responsibility for quality processes. Among other things, the QAC prepares survey questionnaires together with sociologists, organises surveys and analyses their results, participates in class observations, and prepares the Rector's annual reports. This unit is directly subordinated to the Rector, who also appoints the director of the QAC. The QAC director is a member of the Scientifi Council and the Rectorate. The site-visit revealed that on the one hand the University leadership is involved in the implementation of the quality policy, on the other hand the QAC can directly address its comments and proposals to the central University authorities.

The QAC does not employ any staff member and its work is managed by an academic as part of his additional duties. In a meeting with the director of the QAC, the expert panel was impressed by her competence, her awareness of the challenges the University faces in this area, as well as the planned projects to improve the IQA. The QAC also carries out part of the strategic planning tasks. The Centre does not have its own budget. The QAC cooperates closely with the ANQA, among others 9 representatives of the University participated in training organised by it. It is noteworthy that IQA is benchmarked against analogous systems in Armenian universities.

The transposition of tasks to lower levels, i.e. to the level of chairs, is less transparent due to the passive role of faculties. There are no responsibles defined for separate actions.

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

Students and teaching staff can influence the implementation of the quality policy in several forms, first of all through the participation of their representatives in the collegiate bodies of the University. Secondly, they can express their opinions and make suggestions for changes in periodically conducted surveys, focus groups. Thirdly, they can take part in less formalised, but frequently organised meetings with University leaders, round tables, workshops, seminars and scientific conferences. Students and staff whom the review team met confirmed the functioning of these platforms and were generally satisfied with their quality. QAC established a student working group working closely with the QAC, especially in the organisation of the surveys. As it became clear, the Student Council provided comments on the draft SER and the group preparing this report included a student. The draft SER report was presented to the working group by QAC and they had the opportunity to comment.

The involvement of external stakeholders in policy implementation was identified in the SWOT analysis and in meetings with GNU representatives as a weak point of IQA. The site-visit showed that the new graduates have the most influence on the processes, as they formulate their demands and evaluations in surveys. However, due to the lack of an Alumni Association, they do not have their own platform to address their needs and suggestions for changes in the quality policy. Career Centre does not survey graduates' career paths in the long term. Although SER reports that employers

participate in AP reviews, it was not confirmed during the visit that their participation is systematic and institutionalised. On the other hand, employers are members and heads of committees for final examinations and thesis defence. The latter present reports after the examinations in which they can formulate recommendations to improve the APs. In addition, employers can make suggestions for process improvement during the above-mentioned round tables, seminars, workshops and feedback on the trainees. During the meetings, both alumni and employers positively evaluated the cooperation with the University so far and expressed interest in creating institutional forms of cooperation with the University.

10.4 The internal quality assurance system is periodically reviewed.

QAM does not define any procedure to evaluate IQA. Due to the short period of operation of the system disrupted by the war, a comprehensive review and evaluation of the effectiveness of the IQA is, according to the Director of the QAC, still to be planned. Evaluations of some parts of the IQA can be found in SER

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

In the history of GNU, the SER is the first document comprehensively presenting the University, its processes and results. It contains a lot of important and valuable information for external accreditation, analysis, judgments. At the same time, too many opinions are not supported by evidence, the analytical component is modest and sometimes important information is omitted. Sometimes the SWOT analysis is not relevant and pertinent to the content of a given SER chapter. However, these shortcomings can be understood as this was the first attempt at a comprehensive look at University processes and their outcomes.

The second useful source of information for the EQA are the reports of the GNU organisational units and the annual report of the Rector. The Rector's report evaluates annually the achievements of particular organisational units and the implementation of objectives defined in annual plans. According to SER information, this evaluation is based on a set of performance indicators. Templates of the reports are presented in the QAM.

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

The University has a centralised information system in place with a supporting structure which is the Department of Public relations and Media. Basic information about IQA processes, procedures and tools is available to all stakeholders in the form of QAM publications. The results of the processes are published in the above mentioned reports. Information is available on APs, including LOs, the student performance assessment system and graduate qualifications. Information is collected on the position of new graduates on the labour market, student satisfaction with studies, teaching staff, resources and infrastructure, quality of teaching. However, some of this information is available only to internal stakeholders and some only to selected groups. For example, full information on the results of periodic teacher reviews, including student opinions on the quality of teaching, is not published. By the date of the visit, no relevant information was published on the Russian and English language website.

Considerations:

From the above review of evidence, it appears that the University has an adopted institutional QA policy and quality statements included in the strategic plan. Pro-quality activities up to 2018 done in an uncoordinated and spontaneous manner have been framed in a formal internal QA framework and published in the QAM. The relatively comprehensive approach to the construction of IQA and the adherence to European standards in the sphere of quality assurance are to be commended. The benchmarking of IQA against other Armenian universities and the participation of GNU representatives in the training courses organised by ANQA are to be praised. The inclusion of the Rector and Vice-Rector in the quality processes ensures the link to strategic management and confirms the institutional commitment to quality.

From the meetings with internal and external stakeholders it appears that the QAC is functioning well. The Director of the Centre, as a member of the collegiate bodies, has opportunities to directly address needs to both the governing and other bodies. The QAC should be strengthened by the hiring of a specialist(s), because in the long run, it can be difficult for one person to carry out many tasks in combination with teaching. Students and staff are involved in the designing and implementation of the quality policy. The establishment of a student working group at the QAC can be considered a good practice. Such a group, in cooperation with the Student Council, could prepare independent annual report presenting the student's perspective and evaluation of processes and its quality. The expert panel finds that a good transparency of the functioning of IQA has been ensured through the publication of relevant materials. These achievements should be appreciated all the more given the lack of a tradition of developing quality assurance systems in higher education at the national and GNU level, and the perturbations caused by the war.

Thus, GNU has a framework for core processes and quality assurance structures, but the review of the expert panel also shows that much of the IQA is still in the planning or implementation phase. The IQA would be more useful for developing a quality culture and easier for stakeholders and the public to understand if all processes were identified and the interdependencies between the primary and secondary processes were shown, all stakeholders place and all procedures developed. This applies especially to research, university governance, community relations, internationalisation, IQA performance evaluation, participation of external stakeholders in improvement processes.

It would be worthwhile to appoint staff members of individual processes responsible for their improvement. Processes of improvement could be strengthened by establishing standing committees at the university level as well as at the level of individual spheres of GNU. Some of them are already active, e.g. the Programme Development Team responsible for the preparation of new academic programmes. A University-wide Quality Assurance Committee could support the activities of the QAC. Its activities would also contribute to strengthening the participation of students, teachers and external stakeholders in quality processes. This is all the more important as the faculties hardly fulfil their role as a platform for the exchange of experience and good practice. A commendable exception is the analysis of student performance by the Chair of Pedagogy and its recommendations for the improvement of teaching and learning addressed to the chairs. The establishment of permanent committees with the participation of staff, students and employers responsible for monitoring and evaluating academic programmes would strengthen their influence on the shape and development and bring them closer to the needs of the labour market.

During the site-visit the QAC director mentioned that the current system is based on a combination of elements of quality control, quality improvement and quality culture. However, the expert panel finds that quality control seems to dominate with elements of improvement in some areas. The quality assurance system seems to be based on the top-down approach (according Quality Manual "QA is a compulsory process") and it leaves little room for bottom-up initiatives. The reasons for insufficient stakeholder involvement in the implementation of the quality policy are not analysed within the University. Therefore, it is not clear what the actual involvement of stakeholders is, e.g. in the work of collegiate bodies, and to what extent they are merely providers of information and

opinions, and to what extent they are influential co-decision-makers. For example, at a meeting with graduates it was found out that only half of their proposals for change are implemented. This passivity can be explained by the post-war trauma, by the lesser involvement of part-time students and teachers, while part of it is the result of imperfections in the functioning of the feedback mechanisms. The expert panel had some difficulty in answering the question of how the information collected is used to promote and continually improve quality, and how the mechanisms for informing stakeholders of the follow-up actions taken function.

Moreover, not all designed solutions, procedures have been implemented. Even in a relatively well-developed sector such as academic programmes, there is no system in place to monitor them. Thus, improvement processes are selective rather than comprehensive. In the current IQA, measuring progress is difficult due to the lack of well-defined quantitative as well as qualitative quality performance indicators.

The policy pays more attention to the description of the processes themselves and less to their results and follow-up activities documenting their impact. There is no analysis of the reliability of the data collected, so decisions may be subject to considerable risk of inaccuracy.

To conclude the opinions of the expert panel and the observations it is important to state that the quality cycle is not closed in many spheres of University activity. Despite many positive developments, the key risk for quality policy remains the insufficient involvement of stakeholders in quality processes. It seems that the implementation of a quality culture under the described conditions will be a long process and will require strong support from university leaders and changes in individual attitudes and awareness of the university community. Success will depend to a large extent on the extent to which leaders, teachers and students recognise the improvement changes introduced in IQA as a response to the internal needs of the University and not only because of external accreditation requirements.

Summary:

Taking into account the implemented foundations of the QA system, the professionalism and change plans shown by the QA director, the prerequisites for the further development of the quality assurance policy, the involvement of new stakeholders in the QA implementation processes, the large-scale works performed and the creation of necessary structures for the prospective improvement of QA processes, the expert group considers that GNU meets the requirements of Criterion 10.

Conclusion:

The compliance of GNU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 10 is satisfactory.

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERION	CONCLUSION
I. Mission and Purposes	Satisfactory
II. Governance and Administration	Satisfactory
III. Academic programmes	Satisfactory
IV. Students	Satisfactory
V. Faculty and Staff	Satisfactory
VI.Research and Development	Unsatisfactory
VII. Infrastructure and Resources	Satisfactory
VIII. Societal Responsibility	Satisfactory
IX. External Relations and Internationalization	Unsatisfactory
X. Internal Quality Assurance System	Satisfactory

25 July, 2022

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Hermine Grigoryan, Head of the Expert Panel

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1.CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

Hermine Grigoryan: In 1992 shegraduated from the faculty of physics-mathematics of Vanadzor State Pedagogical Institute. Candidate of physical and mathematical sciences (2008), associate professor (2011). She has been teaching at Vanadzor State University (VSU) since 1992. In 2014-2020 she was the Dean of the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics of VSU. Since 2020 she is the Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences of VSU. She conducts the courses "Mathematical Physics Equations", "Differential Equations", "Complex Analysis", "Differential and Integral Calculus of a Function of One Variable", "Differential and Integral Calculus of a Function of Many Variables", "Financial Mathematics". She deals with boundary value problems of anisotropic slabs of variable thickness.

Mischeslav Soha -He graduated from the University of Lodz (Poland) in 1969 getting the Master's degree in Economics. In 2000 became a doctor of sciences at Warsaw University. Currently he is a professor at Warsaw University, Kozminski Academy of Leon, at State Northern University, European College, State Administration School. Since 2014 he has been a member of Advisory Board of Polish Accreditation Committee, and since 2017 has been a member of International Advisory Board of Hungary Accreditation Committee. Since 2002 he has been an expert at Polosh Accreditation Commission of Higher Education and since 2014- a member of European Concortium of Higher Education Accreditation (ECA) financial Committee, Poland. He has participated in more than 90 scientific-research programs, national and international courses and conferences. He is an author and co-author of more than 120 scientific works and more than 40 conference reports which were published in a number of local and international journals.

Asya Simonyan- In 2013 she graduated from Gyumri State Pedagogical University (GSPU) "Physical Culture and Sports" master's program. In 2013-2017 was a post-graduate student in the "Teaching Methodology" specialty of the GSPU. She is a Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences. Since 2017 until now she is a lecturer at the Chair of Physical Education and Theory of Shirak State University. Since 2017 she has been an artistic gymnastics coach and educator at Gyumri Higher Sports Mastery School. In 2017-2021 she is a referee of the international class of individual and group forms of artistic gymnastics in the Olympic cycle. She is a member of the Artistic Gymnastics Referee Council of the 128 RA Gymnastics Federation. She is a master of sports in artistic gymnastics of the Republic of Armenia. She has participated in a number of professional trainings. She is the author of 11 scientific articles.

Narine Sirakanyan: In 2006 graduated from the Faculty of Physics of the Armenian State Pedagogical University after KH. Abovyan, 102 "Mathematics" specialty. In 2006-2011 was a PhD applicant at the "Chair of History and Theory of Pedagogy" of the Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan. She has been a Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences since 2016. In 2014-2019 worked at the National Institute of Education of the RA Ministry of Education as a teacher training course instructor. In 2019-2020 was the Head of the Quality Assurance Department of the Northern University, she also lectured at the same university. Since 2020, she has been working in the RA Education Inspectorate as an expert in the Department of Risk Assessment, Inspection Planning, Analysis and Evaluation. She is the author of a number of scientific articles.

Anahit Abrahamyan- First-year master's student of the Faculty of Economics of Gavar State University, majoring in Accounting /by branches/. Participated in the training course for student-experts within the framework of the "Students' Voice" project of ANQA.

APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT

Join Zoom Meeting

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83894106047?pwd=akM1dDNGTnd0SDQyQzNmNEhWOTRJUT09

Meeting ID: 838 9410 6047

Passcode: 929109

	02.05.2022	*Launch*	*End*	*Duration*
1.	Meeting with GNU Rector	09:30	10:10	40 minutes
2.	Meeting with the Vice-Rectors for Educational affairs and Scientific Affairs	10:20	11:20	60 minutes
3.	Meeting with the self-evaluation working group	11:30	12:10	40 minutes
4.	Meeting with the representatives of the Meeting of Participants and Governing Board	12:20	13:10	50 minutes
5.	Break	13:20	14:20	60 minutes
6.	Meeting with employers	14:30	15:30	60 minutes
7.	Meeting with alumni	15:40	16:40	60 minutes
8.	Observation of documents, close meeting of the expert panel	16:50	18:00	70 minutes

	03.05.2022			*Launch*	*End*	*Duration*
1.	Class observations			09:30	10:40	70 minutes
2.	Meeting with the responsible(s) of "Armenian Language and Literature" AP	Meeting with the responsible(s) of "Economics" AP	Meeting with the responsible(s) of "Jurisprudence" AP	10:50	11:40	50 minutes

3.	Meeting with the teaching staff of "Armenian Language and Literature" AP	Meeting with the teaching staff of "Economics" AP	Meeting with the teaching staff of "Jurisprudence" AP	11:55	12:55	60 minutes
4.	Break, discussions of the expert panel			13:05	14:05	60 minutes
5.	Meeting with the students of "Armenian Language and Literature" AP	Meeting with the students of "Economics" AP	Meeting with the students of "Jurisprudence" AP	14:15	15:15	60 minutes
6.	Meeting with the representatives of Students' Council (10-12 representatives)			15:25	16:05	40 minutes
7.	Observation of documents, close meeting of the expert panel			16:15	18:15	120 minutes

	04.05.2022	*Launch*	*End*	*Duration*
1.	Meeting with the heads of structural units (Department of Oragnization and Control of the Education Process, Center for Alumni, Career and Internship, External Relations Department, Department of PR and Media, Economic Unit, Library, General Department)	09:30	10:30	60 minutes
2.	Meeting with the heads of chairs	10:40	11:40	60 minutes
3.	Meeting with the main and part-time teaching staff members (10-12 representatives)	11:50	12:50	60 minutes
4.	Break, discussions of the expert panel	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
5.	Meeting with BA and MA students both part-time and full-time (10-12 representatives)	14:10	15:10	60 minutes
6.	Open meeting	15:20	16:00	40 minutes
7.	Observation of documents, close meeting of the expert panel	16:10	18:00	110 minutes

	05.05.2022	*Launch*	*End*	*Duration*
1.	Meeting with QA representatives	09:30	10:30	60 minutes
2.	Meeting with the staff selected by the expert panel	10:40	11:30	50 minutes
3.	Observation of documents, close meeting of the expert panel	11:40	12:50	70 minutes

4.	Break, discussions of the expert panel	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
5.	Observation of documents, close meeting of the expert panel	14:10	17:20	210 minutes
6.	Meeting with GNU Rector and management, summary of the site-visit	17:30	18:00	30 minutes

APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

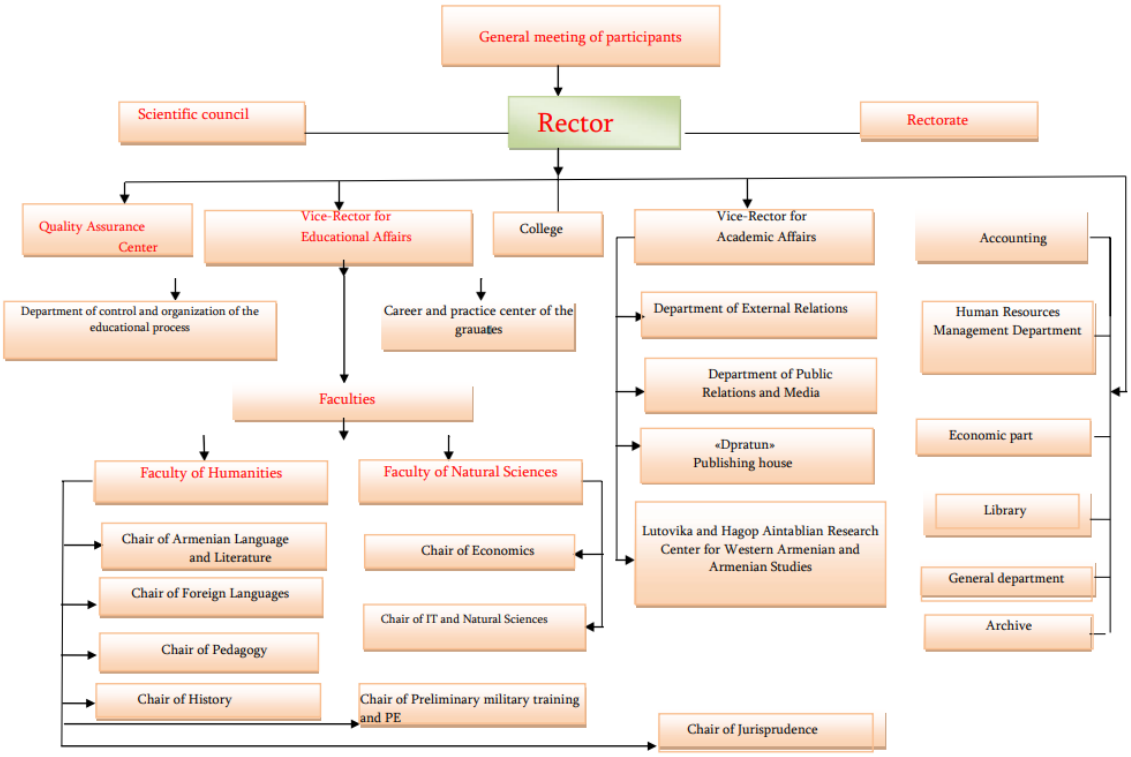
	Name of the Document	Criterion
1.	Evaluation/analysis of the implementation of SP goals	1
2.	Previous charter	1
3.	Analyses of surveys, package of proposals, protocols or other document proving the involvement of internal and external stakeholders in the SP	1
4.	Minutes of the sessions of the Students' Council, minutes of the chair where it is stated that internal stakeholders presented a suggestion or addressed an issue	2
5.	Annual plans and reports of chairs (some samples)	2
6.	Mid-term plans /if available/	2
7.	Analyses of the factors influencing the activities of the University or minutes of discussions /if available/	2
8.	Information or excerpt about providing additional payment/bonuses to staff /for the last 3 years/	2
9.	Reports of the President of final attestation committee /within the framework of 3 APs/	2
10.	Surveys on the study of the opinion of external stakeholders about the graduates	2
11.	Evaluation of the satisfaction of students with the online education	2
12.	Working plans and reports of the structural units	2
13.	The package of course on IT within the AP of Economics	3
14.	Employers' opinions about APs	3
15.	Mappings of other APs besides the presented 3 APs	3
16.	Course descriptions of amended programs	3
17.	Sample formats of registers of exams and checkings	3
18.	References of internships and course works	3
19.	Sample of the report on AP monitoring	3
20.	Samples of course papers, final papers, theses papers (within the framework of 3 APs)	3
21.	Education standards of the 3 APs /if available/	3
22.	MA programs of the 3 presented BA programs	3
23.	Diaries of internship or other documents stating the content	3
24.	Assignments given to students within the framework of 3 APs	3
25.	Recordings of discussions of the results of student surveys	4
26.	Analysis of surveys conducted among the applicants	4
27.	Questionnaires and analysis of surveys conducted among the graduates	4
28.	Job description of a lecturer	5
29.	Registers of class observations	5
30.	Results and conclusion of the ranking of the teaching staff	5
31.	Staff list for the last 3 years	5
32.	Sample of mentoring report	5

33.	List of the teaching staff according to the countries (Republic of Artsakh and Republic of Armenia)	5
34.	Publications, activities carried out by Lutovika and Jacob Aintaplian Center, provision of data	6
35.	Samples of chair SPs	6
36.	List of articles co-authored by lecturers and students	6
37.	Quantitative data about the teaching staff and students with special needs	7
38.	Financial plans for the last 3 years	7
39.	Analyses/statistics on the publications on GNU website	8
40.	Results of monitoring conducted by the Department of PR and Information	8
41.	Works plans and reports of QA Center	10
42.	Rector's order N34, as of 01.10 . 2019	10

APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED

1. Hall for poetry and scientific sessions,
2. Hall for physical training, dressing room,
3. Chairs (Foreign Languages, Pegadody, Armenian Language and Literature, IT, Jurisprudence, History),
4. Cabinets (Military science, IT),
5. Structural units (QA Center, Department for Organization and Control of Educational Process, Department for PR and Information),
6. Scientific Research Center of Western Armenian and Armenian Study,
7. The cabinet of Students' Council,
8. Medical unit,
9. Laboratories (Chemistry, Physics),
10. Archive,
11. Reading hall, library.

APPENDIX 5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION



APPENDIX 6. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GNU-Grigor Narekatsi University

ANQA-National center For Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation

AP- Academic Programme

TLI-Tertiary Level Institutions

QA- Quality Assurance

NQF-National Qualification Framework

SQF- Sectorial Qualification Framework

SP- Strategic plan