"NATIONAL CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE"
FOUNDATION

EXPERT PANEL REPORT
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
MESROP MASHTOTS UNIVERSITY

Yerevan – 2022

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of Mesrop Mashtots University (hereinafter MMU, the University, or the Institution) is carried out based on the educational institution's application. The process of institutional accreditation was organised and coordinated by the "National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance" Foundation (hereinafter ANQA).

ANQA was guided by the Regulation on ''State Accreditation of RA Education Institutions and Their Academic Programmes'' set by the RA Government Decree N978-N, dated June 30, 2011, as well as the Decree N959-N, dated June 30, 2011, on 'Approval of RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation.

The external review was carried out by the independent expert panel formed in accordance with the requirements set by the ANQA Regulation on 'Formation of the Expert Panel'. The expert panel consisted of 4 local experts and 1 international expert.

Institutional accreditation is aimed not only at external quality assurance, but also at the continuous improvement of the quality of management and academic programmes. Therefore, local and international experts had two tasks:

1. To carry out institutional capacity assessment in accordance with the RA state accreditation criteria;
2. In order to improve the quality, to carry out an expert assessment in terms of compliance with international developments and integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The report contains the results of the MMU institutional capacity assessment according to the RA tertiary education accreditation criteria and international expert's peer review for EHEA integration.

CONTENTS

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION 4
EXPERT EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO RA PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION ACCREDITATION CRITERIA 4
PEER-REVIEW FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EDUCATION INSTITUTION'S INTEGRATION INTO EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA 12
COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL 14
PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW 14
EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA 17
BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION 17
I. MISSION AND PURPOSES 19
II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION 22
III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES 26
IV. STUDENTS 31
V. FACULTY AND STAFF 35
VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT 39
VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES 43
VIII. SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY 47
IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALISATION 49
X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM 53
EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA 57
APPENDICES 58
APPENDIX 1. CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS 58
APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT 60
APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED 63
APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED 65
APPENDIX 5. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION 65
APPENDIX 6. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS 66

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION
EXPERT EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO RA PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

The expert evaluation of Mesrop Mashtots Univeristy (MMU) was carried out by the independent expert panel formed in accordance with the requirements set by the ANQA Regulation on 'Formation of the Expert Panel'. The evaluation was carried out according to 10 accreditation criteria set by the RA Government Decree N959-N, dated June 30, 2011.

The 2005-2010 APs of the university were accredited, and the academic programmes and MMU were awarded with indefinite state accreditations of the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh. In 2022, MMU in undergoing institutional accreditation for the first time, for which the TLI administrative and teaching staff have undergone a series of trainings at ANQA. For the first time, the university has also developed a strategic plan based on the SWOT analysis. The expert panel recorded that a number of important works were carried out in the university in the direction of introducing a culture of quality assurance, developing AP specifications and learning outcomes, introducing new academic programmes, adding a research component to the latter, as well as activities in the direction of research, internationalisation, and creating external connections, which makes a good base for further development.

During the entire process of institutional accreditation of MMU, the expert panel took into account all possible subjective and objective factors that could affect the normal and effective operation of MMU, in particular, COVID-19 pandemic, and the 44-day Artsakh war with its disastrous consequences: with life losses, as well as emerged economic and financial problems.

Mesrop Mashtots University is a private university operating in the Republic of Artsakh, which has about 615 students who receive education in the full-time and part-time learning systems of Level 6 and 7 of education.

MMU implements 10 full-time and part-time bachelor's and 11 full-time and part-time master's programmes in two faculties: Humanities, and Economic and Law.

During the reporting period, the development of the AP specifications presented in the institutional accreditation self-assessment was carried out, with the formulation and mapping of the relevant learning outcomes, and the review of learning plans. If necessary, revision of curricula is carried out on an annual basis, based on the results of surveys among students, round table discussions held at the end of the trainings.

The expert panel considers that it is necessary to spread the experience of these APs during the development of other academic programmes implemented in the university. At MMU, there are still no APs for master's programmes, where the learning outcomes will be formulated, and which will provide the opportunity to ensure the interconnection and continuity of bachelor's and master's programmes.

APs and the observation of their implementation mechanisms highlight a number of positive aspects, such as the introduction of a research component, advanced English teaching within the framework of several APs, provision of optional courses, cooperation with various scientific and educational centers, etc. The topics of bachelor's and master's theses are chosen in accordance with the speciality awarded by the academic programme, and most of them have a research component.

In MMU, 'Regulations on the Formation of MMU TS and SS' have been developed, where the requirements to be submitted to the TS are defined. Although these requirements are not formulated for a specific academic programme, in general, the teaching staff list of the chairs shows that their

qualifications match to the academic programme of the corresponding speciality. However, MMU has a problem of maintaining the TS stability, which is due to a number of factors, such as getting a job in other universities, leaving Artsakh after the 44-day war, etc.

The expert panel positively assesses the fact that the university emphasises the staffing of the TS with teachers with academic degrees, offering a relatively high salary. It will certainly contribute to the research activities of the university. Currently, the number of full-time teachers with an academic degree is inferior to the number of teachers who work part-time, but in recent years, this ratio has changed in a positive way, as the managerial staff of the university has taken steps in this regard. The TLI signs annual contracts with the TS. Although, according to the regulations, the TS must be selected by a competitive or non-competitive procedure, in reality, the non-competitive procedure is applied. The contract is concluded based on the results of the analysis of the teacher's work, or if a new position is needed.

The use of a number of tools for evaluating the quality of TS, such as anonymous surveys among students, lesson observations, open classes, teacher's self-assessment and the chair head's report, is also a positive fact.

The TS trainings are conducted at MMU, but they are ad hoc and not regulated. On the other hand, it is a positive fact that the TS often participates in trainings on its own initiative. Judging from the conducted lesson observations and meetings with students, it can be concluded that currently, part of MMU's TS, in particular, specialists invited from other organisations, need methodical training, especially in terms of introducing student-centred methods in their teaching process. The university has limited material and technical resources, insufficient infrastructure to implement the APs in the full-time and part-time departments simultaneously. The university has furnished classrooms, but their number and material and technical equipment also needs improvement.

Judging by the processes and results of the academic programme implementation: curricula, subject descriptions, teaching, learning and evaluation methods, organisation of experimental training, defense of final theses, as well as professional qualifications of the TS ensuring the implementation of these programs, it can be concluded that MMU awards credible qualifications, and the existing problems do not have a key impact from the point of view of credible awarding of qualification, grounds are created for improvements.

The 2019-2023 SP of MMU defines the university's mission, goals and vision. The TLI strives to train qualified specialists, offer competitive academic programmes that meet the needs of external and internal stakeholders, and provide applicable knowledge, abilities and skills based on improved educational technologies and teaching methods, in line with the fundamental principles of the European higher education area and the NQF, to respond quickly to the tasks set by the state and society, to have sufficient material and technical means and procedures for regular improvement, to create scientific and practical platforms for the expression of Artsakh scientific thought, contributing to the recognition of the independence of the Republic of Artsakh and the establishment and development of the state. Taking into account the consequences of the 44-day Artsakh war and the resulting financial, security and demographic situation, the above vision can be considered somewhat unrealistic and in need of reformulation.

In the strategic plan, the goals of the university are defined briefly with several provisions and the measures aimed at their implementation are formulated in the implementation plan of the strategic plan, in which some of the results defined are not measurable. Due to the limitations of human and financial resources, some provisions of the strategic goals may also be unfeasible for the specified period, therefore the mid-term priorities should be reformulated. It is necessary to develop several development scenarios and present them an assessment of the risks of their implementation. Reports from all levels of the

university should be based on the evaluation of the implementation of the SP. The expert panel assesses positively the fact that the university tries to fulfill its strategic goals as much as possible, responding to the needs of the state and society, developing new APs, offering additional courses and organising international conferences.

It is also positively evaluated that a number of regulations and procedures have been developed in MMU to coordinate the work of different departments, as well as different aspects of the educational process.

The management of the university is carried out on a collegial basis through the decisions of the Board of Founders, the Academic Council and the Rectorate. The Board of Founders has two members, the Rectorate - 9 members, and the Academic Council - 30 members. Representatives of the TS and students are included in the Academic Council and faculty councils.

Due to the decrease in the number of students and the limitation of financial opportunities, structural optimisation has been carried out in MMU: unification of faculties, cancellation of the position of the vice-rector for external relations, the unification of several scientific centres into one, within the framework of the Center for Caucasus Studies. On the other hand, the IQAC, the Center for Internal Quality Assurance, was established. The university has a limited AS and TS, which leads to overwork of the AS: the departments have only heads that carry out many functions, including scientific and pedagogical ones. Not only the lack of financial resources, but also such a distribution of functions may hinder the full implementation of the SP. In general, the managerial staff of the university tries to find situational solutions, which proves that there is no clear strategic planning with risk accounting. The latter is extremely important in the context of Artsakh, when the situation can change at any moment.

The managerial staff of the university also does not analyse the financial profitability of existing APs, and the competitiveness of some APs is not high. Such an analysis can contribute to effective budget planning, particularly in terms of developing a competitive academic programme.

The expert panel notes that during the reporting period, MMU has taken great and important steps to implement internal quality assurance mechanisms. IQAC was founded, which developed the Quality Assurance Manual, which is the methodological basis for the implementation of the internal quality assurance system. The IQA Center monitors the implementation of strategic plans of the university and faculties and the implementation of accountability of all departments. The head of the IQAC actively supervised the process of developing the AP specifications, learning outcomes, curricula and subject descriptions, organised anonymous surveys among TS and students on the effectiveness and satisfaction of the educational process, organised focus group meetings, analysed the results of pilot studies, summarised reports and provided feedback and maintained communication with department heads and other AS.

As an important positive trend, MMU's aspiration to effectively implement the PDCA cycle in terms of academic programmes can be pointed out. Although the first cycle has not yet been completed and it is not possible to give a final assessment, it is commendable that the university conducts the quality assessment regularly on an annual basis and tries to implement the necessary improvements in the curricula without waiting for the end of one cycle.

However, the quality assurance policy is not yet fully connected to strategic management and does not cover all areas of MMU activity, such as scientific research or university management.

The TLI allocates resources for staff training at ANQA workshops and events organised by the IQAC. The university provides all necessary material and technical resources requested by the Center,

including software for conducting surveys among applicants, students, staff and alumni. The IQAC has developed tools for faculty, students, APs, and research.

There is also no analysis of how effective individual processes, mechanisms, procedures and tools are. It is necessary to pay particular attention to the compliance of the reports submitted by the AS with the implementation plan of the SP and the presence of an analytical component in them.

It is also necessary to more actively involve TS and students in quality assurance processes, not leaving the entire burden on the IQAC head and other administrative positions, so that the quality culture is fully formed and established in the university. Raising the awareness of internal stakeholders is considered the biggest challenge in the process of effectively developing a quality culture. In this regard, there is a need to initiate an intra-university discussion about the quality assurance policy, the internal quality assurance system and its results.

The processes of selection and admission of students at MMU are regulated by general state legal documents and internal regulations of the university. Thus, a first-year student admitted part-timely is given the opportunity to attend the existing classes as a free auditor and, if 80 per cent of the attendance is secured, to participate in the exams and transfer to the existing department.

Anonymous student surveys, focus group meetings, and discussions are held at MMU to identify the educational needs of students. Students are able to voice their problems through the Student Council, they are included in the Academic Council of the university and faculty councils. They can also voice their personal problems in chairs and dean's offices: as the university is small, in this respect, it creates a friendlier environment and conducts a more flexible policy. Part-time students do not participate in the activities and organised events of the Student Council and Student Scientific Society, which is due to the fact that they work, and solving social problems is a priority for them.

The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that MMU provides students with the opportunity to participate in optional and additional courses, and consultations, tries to increase the motivation to carry out research work, encourages their participation in conferences organised at the university, as well as in other universities of Artsakh and RA. With the support of the South Caucasian Foundation of Switzerland, the TLI also organised their external training in Armenia, particularly at YSU and the Russian-Armenian University. MMU students, however, do not have the opportunity to participate in other mobility programmes due to the status of the Republic of Artsakh, as well as the financial capabilities of the TLI.

It should be noted that the promotion of research has been one of MMU's top goals for years. MMU has managed to ensure the regular organisation of international conferences with the involvement of funds from the university, as well as foundations. In recent years, the university has also defined its research priority, Caucasian studies, which is important for a university like MMU, as it allows to allocate scientific potential and scarce resources. It is also positive that all MMU chairs have chosen their own research priorities, which again helps to make optimal use of limited opportunities.

The MMU TS is active in publishing scientific articles in ''Mesrop Mashtots University Newsletter'' periodical, but is not so active in terms of publishing in RA, RF and foreign periodicals. This can also be explained by the TS's low proficiency in English, and the university has much work to do in that direction. Moreover, there are no mechanisms for evaluating the quality of scientific works at MMU. The expert panel believes that there is a need to introduce quality assurance mechanisms here.

The expert panel considers that increasing the quality of scientific works can greatly contribute to the internationalisation of MMU. It is natural that it is an important, but not the only guarantee for the internationalisation of the TLI. Over the years of its activity, MMU has sought to establish international

ties with universities abroad, which has been facilitated by international conferences organised at the university. In addition to Armenian universities, MMU managed to sign cooperation agreements with the RF TLIs, as well as universities of unrecognised states. However, the TLI is still not able to ensure the mobility of TS and students, which is also an important component of internationalisation. Although the limitation of mobility is caused by objective factors, it is possible to ensure internal mobility, for example, between the TLIs operating in RA and Artsakh, which requires programme alignment, acceptance of the programme outcomes of other universities and signing of relevant contracts.

MMU is taking steps to establish external links as well. After the abolition of the position of vice-rector for scientific and external relations, the head of the Career Center performs this function. The university signs contracts with other organisations for the purpose of conducting internships. In addition, according to some agreements with state and non-state organisations, it provides additional courses, for example, teaching the Azerbaijani language, etc. In this context, it should be noted that MMU needs to develop a separate policy related to internationalisation and external relations, which will enable to coordinate the work being done, so that they do not have a situational nature.

Strengths of the Institution:

1) Undergraduate APs detailed by qualifications awarded.
2) Implementation of new specialisations in line with the strategic needs of Artsakh.
3) Teamwork aimed at the realisation of the mission and goals of the university.
4) Motivated TS dedicated to the university.
5) Relations with the universities of the USA, RA and abroad.
6) Constant development of external relations of the university.
7) Existence of the Scientific Center for Caucasian Studies.
8) Promotion of research works.
9) Provision of short-term projects and other services to society.
10) Internal quality assurance system implemented.
11) Transparency of activities through the website and social networks.

Weaknesses of the Institution:

1) Inconsistency between the mission, objectives and available resources for their implementation.
2) Situational management, weak strategic management, lack of risk assessment and management system.
3) Unfavourable building conditions and limited logistical resources.
4) Absence of master's academic programme specifications.
5) Insufficient knowledge of foreign languages among teachers and students.
6) Lack of involvement of part-time students in governance bodies and quality assurance processes.
7) Lack of English language information on the website.

Main recommendations:

Mission and Purposes

1) To revise the vision of the university, making it more measurable and accessible, and, based on that, make changes in the Strategic Plan. Since the end of the SP is one year away, it is possible to make

those changes in the operational plan and put the development of the new SP on a more realistic basis, taking into account the challenges and threats of the Republic of Artsakh.

2) To improve the format of the SP implementation plan, in which, in addition to the objectives, tasks, and the persons responsible for the actions, the expected results and the quantitative and qualitative indicators verifying their implementation will be specified.

Governance and Administration

3) Based on the SP for each year, it is advisable to develop an operational plan with expected results and quantitative and qualitative performance indicators, both for the entire university and for departments.
4) In the context of modern global and regional developments, it is advisable to reassess the strategic plan and its implementation tactics every year.
5) To evaluate the profitability of APs and make strategic budget planning accordingly.
6) To carry out the reports of the subdivisions according to the KPIs.
7) To develop a monitoring plan, the results of which should be presented to stakeholders and governing bodies at fixed intervals.

Academic Programmes

8) To review academic programme learning outcomes and alumni competencies.
9) To reduce the number of subjects in the undergraduate curricula, which will make it possible to review the distribution of credits by courses, to match teaching, learning and assessment methods to the outcomes.
10) To clarify the amount of assignments according to the credits (number of hours intended for independent work). This will lead to an increase in credit credibility.
11) If possible, to expand the list of optional courses and revise their content so that they are aimed at preparing for practical training and providing additional transferable skills and competencies.
12) To take advantage of online platform courses (for example, Coursera) by investing appropriate resources for subscription.
13) To expand training bases for APs. If possible, the internship should be organised in rural schools as well, which will give students the opportunity to face their problems and the peculiarities of the organisation of the educational process there.

Students

14) To improve the mechanisms of involving students in research works, contributing to the development of analytical thinking and the quantitative and qualitative growth of works containing a research component,
15) To improve the SC activities from the point of view of attracting more students (including part-time students) and carrying out work of identifying students' needs.

Faculty and Staff

16) To develop a procedure for TS trainings to coordinate activities.
17) To organise TS trainings on modern student-centred methods of teaching and learning.

18) To review the content of surveys on students' satisfaction with teaching, dividing it into professional and pedagogical blocks.
19) To define professional knowledge, skills and abilities requirements for teachers in APs.
20) To give a big place to the organization of online lectures with the involvement of specialists from RA and abroad.

Research and Development

21) To develop a long-term perspective plan for the development and expansion of research works of the university.
22) To develop mechanisms and tools for evaluating the quality of conducted research.
23) To organise English courses for the TS, which will contribute to the publication of scientific works in foreign languages, and, therefore, also to their internationalisation.
24) To carry out work to receive new grants or cooperate with new foundations to maintain the continuity of the organisation of international conferences.

Infrastructure and Resources

25) To ensure the mechanisms of assessment of the needs based on the study of the APs and the effectiveness of the applicability of the resources based on it.
26) To implement automation systems for university process management, which will contribute to improving the quality of the management and administration process.
27) To add up-to-date professional literature, prioritising the list of core literature listed in the AP.
28) To ensure access to various RA and international electronic libraries for the students and TS.
29) To equip classrooms and laboratories with the latest technologies.
30) To undertake measures for stakeholders with special needs.

Societal Responsibility

31) To study the local and international experience of knowledge transfer to society. To continue to develop the mechanisms of knowledge transfer to society, contributing to the increase of awareness about the activities of the university and its competitiveness. To involve the university in the programmes of local and international applied significance that have a research component.
32) To involve the university in the programmes of local and international applied significance that have a research component.
33) To improve the accountability system, making it more analytical.
34) To use the potential of students to translate materials on the university website into English.
35) To build a legal clinic where free services will be provided to the public, which will also contribute to the process of training experienced professionals in the future.

External Relations and Internationalisation

36) To conduct benchmarking with international university policies and procedures.
37) To improve English language skills among the staff. To complete the training process with language proficiency certification.
38) To continue to develop the English and Russian sections of the TLI website, publicising international links and providing quotes about its work from colleagues and guest speakers.

39) The existence of a department for the implementation of international processes in the university will contribute to more systematic and planned work for the realization of the defined goals.
40) To develop and implement a joint academic programme with the universities of RA and/or unrecognised states, as far as possible. To activate the participation of domestic stakeholders in international programmes.
41) Invite well-known alumni of the Diaspora as invited teachers, experts.

Internal Quality Assurance System

42) To continue staff development within QA policies and procedures.
43) To continue to use the benchmarking tool with other institutions.
44) To involve students more actively in the QA processes, to make them participate in the work of the QA working group.
45) To create a database based on the revised SP KPIs and enable monitoring of SP performance and outcomes. They will especially contribute to the continuous collection of information on AP improvement and will create sufficient grounds for their internal and external evaluation.
46) To continue to promote the university's QA policy by publishing the QA manual and departmental reports on the university website.
47) To make the work of the Internal Quality Assurance Center (IQAC) more visible to external stakeholders with more information on the website. It is important to demonstrate the QA impact on teaching and learning.
48) To publish QA announcements on the university website to demonstrate clear departmental policies and procedures.

_____

Lilit Badalyan
Chair of Expert Panel

17.06.2022

When judging whether the university is fit to be integrated into EHEA, it is important to consider both the external environment, which is outside of the control of the university, and the internal environment and policies, which university can develop and control. Based on the self-assessment report and SWOT analyses provided by the MMU and discussions taken place during the site visit, we can mention several issues from the external environment that has a negative impact on this perspective:

1. Non-recognition of the Republic of Artsakh;
2. Legislative changes in the field of education of the Republic of Artsakh;
3. Reduction in the number of foreign students due to the war.

At the same time, the panel has noted that university, even in these difficult circumstances, has included internationalisation as important part of the Strategic plan of 2019-2023 and tried to follow it. Before the war of 2020, MMU has had strong cooperation with SSCF (Swiss South Caucasus Foundation) and implemented 13 joint projects together, including involvement of foreign specialists in the preparation of degree programmes, alternative courses for modular framework, international business trips for students and staff, organisation of international conferences. Cooperation agreement with the ICRC mission in the NKR included language-training courses for the staff.

The university has developed effective collaboration with various Russian and Armenian universities. MMU Rector is a member of the 'Club of the Rectors of Europe'. The university has signed 8 cooperation agreements with various universities and organisations. Foreign lecturers participate in the teaching of some programs and lecturers from MMU also teach in other universities. Staff from the Centre for Caucasian Studies has organised international conferences at the MMU, as well as taken part in various international conferences. The university is planning another international conference for 2023.

One of the issues that university should address is the level of knowledge of English among staff and students. Currently, it is only 27%. If the university wants to be considered to be integrated into the EHEA, it needs to raise that level. It will also allow lecturers to use open-source resources in English. It should be noted that students in Caucasian studies have proficiency in 5 languages and employers praise their level of knowledge.

For foreign students, all documents are prepared in Russian and English.

To further promote the university internationally, it needs to redevelop the website and include more visual and contextual information. More information about courses, projects, mobility should be provided in English. Current student mobility is rather limited and university should look into online mobility as one of the options.

University has developed and implemented an internal quality assurance system, which is a necessary part of the inclusion into EHEA. At its heart is IQAC, which was founded in 2018. It has developed its policies and procedures and published QA manual in 2020. Centre organised training for staff with ANQA, ran its own development workshops and supported staff in developing AP. They also involve internal and external stakeholders in the evaluation, development and enhancement of AP.

Recommendations

As mentioned in the observations, the TLI can only affect the internal position and environment of its prospects to be included into EHEA. MMU is actively participating in internationalisation and strives to develop strategic relations with various universities. Panel recommends for internationalisation:

1. To enhance knowledge of the English language by staff;

2. To further develop English and Russian sections of MMU website, publicising its international connections and providing quotes about its work from partners and guest speakers;

3. To benchmark international policies and procedures.

Panel has also noticed that the university developed and implemented IQA system, provided resources for its work and staff development.

Panel recommends on quality assurance:

1. To continue with the staff development in QA policies and procedures;

2. To continue to use benchmarking of EDS in other institutions;

3. To further promote the university's QA policies by publishing on university website QA Manual and reports from the departments.

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The external evaluation of the institutional capacities of Mesrop Mashtots University was carried out by the following expert panel[1]:

1. **Lilit Badayan:** head of the Linguistics and Communication Theory Department at Brusov State University, Candidate of Philological Sciences, Armenia.

2. **Inna Pomorina:** Associate Professor, Bath Business School (Bath Spa University), Doctor of Economics, Great Britain.

3. **Lilit Zaqaryan:** director of the Quality Assessment and Assurance Center of the National Agrarian University of Armenia, Candidate of Historical Sciences, Associate Professor, Armenia.

4. **Mariam Gevorgyan:** head of the Quality Assurance and Management Department of the Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan, a teacher at the French University in Armenia, Candidate of Physical and Mathematical Sciences, Doctor of Philosophy, Armenia.

5. **Alla Sargsyan:** master's student of the MA programme on 'Finance' of Gavar State University, Armenia.

The composition of the expert panel was agreed with the educational institution and approved by the ANQA director's order.

The works of the expert panel were coordinated by ***Anahit Utmazyan.***

The translation was provided by ***Kristine Ohanyan.***

The protocols were compiled by ***Elena Harutyunyan.***

All the members of the expert panel, the coordinator and the translator signed a confidentiality agreement and a declaration of exclusion of conflict of interest.

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

Application for State Accreditation

Mesrop Mashtots University applied to ANQA for state institutional accreditation by filling out the application in the prescribed format and submitting copies of the license and its annexes.

The ANQA Secretariat has reviewed the data submitted in the application, the attached documents. After the decision to accept the application was made, a bilateral agreement was signed between ANQA and MMU. A schedule for the accreditation process has been drawn up and approved. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, war and martial law, the accreditation process has been interrupted. On September 14, 2021, the University requested to restart the process. As a result, a new schedule for the accreditation process was revised and approved.

Self-evaluation

According to the format approved by the Accreditation Procedure, the university presented the Armenian and English versions of the self-evaluation of institutional capabilities, as well as the enclosed document packages, within the period provided by the schedule. The self-assessment of the university was carried out by the working group formed specifically for this purpose by order of the rector.

[1] APPENDIX 1. CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

The group involved representatives from the university's administrative, educational, teaching staff, as well as students and alumni. The ANQA coordinator reviewed the self-assessment to verify technical compliance with ANQA requirements. Afterwards, the self-assessment, the attached document package, and the electronic questionnaire completed by the university were provided to the expert panel.

Preparatory Phase

In order to prepare the expert panel for the work and ensure the efficiency of the processes, ANQA discussed with the experts the RA accreditation procedure, criteria and standards, the main functions of the expert panel members, the preliminary evaluation as a stage of the preparation of the expert report, the main requirements for the report, the ethics and techniques of holding meetings and questions.

The expert panel, having studied the MMU self-evaluation and the package of accompanying documents, carried out a preliminary assessment according to the prescribed format, preparing a list of necessary documents to be further studied, as well as problems and questions, and also indicating the relevant departments or target groups.

Within the scheduled time, the expert panel summarised the results of the preliminary evaluation and made a plan-schedule of the site visit[2].

Guided by the ANQA Accreditation Manual, the schedule includes expert meetings with all groups, open and closed meetings, document reviews, etc.

Preliminary Visit

On May 1, 2022, a preliminary meeting was held at MMU. During the meeting, the schedule of the site visit was discussed and agreed upon with the university, the list of additional documents to be studied was presented, and mutually agreed decisions were made regarding the organisational, technical, and informational issues of the site visit, and ethics norms during the meetings. The conditions for the work of the focus group meetings and the expert panel were discussed.

During the preliminary visit, panel members also observed the resources and infrastructure of the university. The international expert reviewed the resources through videos produced by ANQA.

Site Visit

The site visit was preceded by an online closed meeting of the expert panel, the purpose of which was to discuss and agree the scope of the expert assessment with the international expert, the issues to be studied during the visit, the strengths and weaknesses according to the criteria, the procedure of the focus group meetings, as well as to clarify the next steps.

The site visit took place on May 2-5, 2022. The entire expert panel, the ANQA coordinator and translator participated in the visit. The international expert joined the site visit and discussions online. Zoom platform was used.

The site visit started with meetings with the MMU rector and ended with meeting the managerial staff of MMU. All meetings and document reviews scheduled for the visit were carried out[3]. During the visit, professional meetings were held within the framework of 3 academic programmes nominated by MMU: 'Caucasus Studies', 'Jurisprudence' and 'English Language and Literature'.

[2] APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT

[3] APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

The experts, according to their specialisation, had parallel meetings with the staff responsible for academic programmes, teachers and students, as well as visited places of internships and participated in lesson observations. Before the site visit, the experts has studied the subject programmes and the assignments given to the students in the framework of their profession to find out how much the assignments are aimed at achieving the learning outcomes defined by the programme.

The information obtained during the various meetings, as well as the main results of the document reviews and observations were summarised at the end of each working day and at the conclusion of the expert panel meetings organised at the end of the visit. The panel discussed the key findings and came to a general agreement first on the accreditation criteria and then on meeting the criteria requirements. Conclusions regarding the correspondence to criteria were reached through an open discussion by all panel members using the principle of consensus.

The expert evaluation was performed according to the standards, with a two-level rating scale: satisfactory and unsatisfactory.

Expert Report

The expert panel prepared the preliminary version of the report based on the self-assessment presented by the university, the study of the documents attached to it and the observations during the site visit, as a result of regularly organised discussions. Based on the observations made after the discussions, the chair of the panel, assisted by the ANQA coordinator, prepared a preliminary version of the expert report, which was agreed with the experts. The international expert prepared her conclusion and a separate peer review opinion and recommendations. The documents were translated and provided to the expert panel. The peer review opinion has been incorporated in full into the text of the report. The preliminary report was submitted to MMU on 24.06.2022.

On July 2, 2022, Mesrop Mashtots University stated that it fully agrees with the facts and remarks presented in the expert report, and has no objections to the justifications of the report.

The final expert report was approved by the experts and submitted to the TLI on July 18, 2022.

Anahit Utmazyan
Expert Panel Coordinator

July 18, 2022

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA
BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

History. Mesrop Mashtots University (MMU) is one of the first non-state universities in NKR, founded in 1996. The university is guided by the motto 'Doing everything that can benefit the country'. The university considers the autonomy and mobility its competitive advantage, which has made it possible to quickly orientate and open professions that are in demand in the labour market. In 2002, at NKR, Mesrop Mashtots University, new specialities have been opened: 'Information systems in economics', 'Management', "Automated system software". Then the 'Caucasus Studies' department was opened, and the 'Social Work' speciality is on the way. The 2005-2010 APs of the university have been accredited and the academic programmes and MMU have been awarded with indefinite state credentials of the NKR.

Education. MMU in the Republic of Artsakh has about 615 students who are receiving education at the educational Levels 6 and 7 of the NQF in full-time and part-time learning systems. MMU implements 10 full-time and part-time bachelor's and 11 full-time and part-time master's programmes in two faculties: Humanities and Economic Law. MMU prepares specialists in the fields of information technology, management, law, humanitarian sciences. Prior to the 2018-2019 academic year, MMU did not have APs developed and approved. Then, the chairs, in collaboration with the IQAC, have developed expected learning outcomes for the undergraduate academic programmes, that are consistent with the mission adopted by the TLI and are comparable to the NQF. The university emphasises having a faculty with the necessary qualifications for the implementation of the APs, attracting and retaining the best specialists in the field, as well as making a smooth generational transition. In order to increase the quality of education, highly qualified specialists are invited from the Republic of Armenia and the Russian Federation.

Research. MMU, emphasising the research factor, has included this idea in the TLI in its vision to create scientific and practical platforms for the expression of Artsakh academic thought, contributing to the recognition of the independence of the Republic of Artsakh. In this case, MMU also strives to form cooperation platforms with external stakeholders in the field of research for the benefit of the development of the state and the region. The Caucasus Studies Center operates in MMU, which has its own development concept. It was created as a result of merging 3 research platforms. As a separate structure, the university also operates the Student Scientific Society, whose activities are regulated. In order to carry out quality research, the TLI strives to clarify the main scientific directions, the implementation of which contributes to the expansion and development of scientific activity.

Internationalisation. MMU's external relations and internationalisation derive from the TLI mission. One of the university's goals is to support the socio-economic development of the region, taking into account the demands of external stakeholders and providing alumni with appropriate skills. MMU emphasises the joint research activities of the faculty and internal stakeholders, highlighting the issues of the region and ways to solve them. Being a representative of its country in the CIS and abroad, the TLI creates scientific and practical platforms for the expression of Artsakh scientific thought and contributes to the recognition of the independence of the Republic of Artsakh. At MMU, advanced English language instruction is provided to the students in 'Management', 'Information Systems', 'Informatics /Computer Science', 'English Language and Literature', and 'Caucasus Studies'. Advanced teaching of the Azerbaijani

language is provided to the 'Caucasus Studies' students. All students and teachers of the university speak Russian. In the master's programmes, professional English is taught according to educational level.

Quality assurance. The implementation of the internal quality assurance system at the TLI started in 2018-2019, and measures to ensure these processes are included in the implementation plan of the 2019-2023 SP. The mission of the center is to contribute to the formation of a culture of quality at MMU, based on mutual trust and a stable value system. The university creates an educational environment, which is aimed at the complex formation of educational and scientific research activities of the learner and the teacher, as well as the encouragement of innovation and creative thinking. The QA system is based on three main principles: honesty, impartiality and awareness.

Source: *the sources of evidence in the above areas are the documents provided by the TLI (e.g. self-assessment, strategic plan, schedule, department plans, 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).

MMU was founded in 1996. The first APs were selected spontaneously, but over time, the managerial staff of the university began to study the labour market and introduced more sought-after professions. The TLI was accredited for several specialities in 2005-2008, according to the acting procedure.

MMU implements its programmes in accordance with NQF Levels 6 and 7. The university presents itself as a student-centred university.

Currently, the university is performing the activities approved by the Charter in 2013. From 2014-2018, the university built a development concept. The new vision of the TLI was completed in 2018, a SWOT analysis was made, and the 2019-2023 SP plan was developed based on the university's strengths and opportunities. It includes the goals and mission of the university, as well as the vision. The motto of the university is 'To do everything that can benefit the country'.

During the site visit, it became clear that the SWOT analysis was done by group brainstorming, during which the problems of the university were raised. In the SP, the vision of the university is defined by 10 points, some of which have become unfeasible due to the decrease in the financial possibilities of the university due to the status of the Republic of Artsakh. The strategic goals and priority directions of the university are also presented in the SP: management and comparability, excellence in education, excellence in research, and national and international communication, with their sub-items, which, however, are not presented in detail in this document. They are presented in more detail in the '2019-2023 MMU Investment Plan', a document developed to ensure the implementation of the SP, in which measures are planned, tasks are set, and the implementation period, scope of performers and results are indicated.

Recently, the university has clarified its goals and is implementing APs in the fields of Armenian studies, pedagogy, humanities, socio-economics and IT based on the characteristics of the region, with bachelor's and master's qualifications.

The university is aware of its role and importance for the Republic of Artsakh and considers its mission to be the implementation of activities in three directions: the qualified alumni, the scope of scientific research activities on important topics for Artsakh, and the education of civilised citizens of the Republic of Artsakh. The faculties and chairs of the university have also developed strategic plans.

Until the 44-day war in 2020, the university had consistently fulfilled its mission, and after the war, it started its activities from November 24, 2020. The year 2021 was a transitional one, during which the university tried to restore its potential and fulfill its mission.

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

While determining the mission, goals and objectives, the university mainly took into account the potential of the internal stakeholders, the obligations it took upon itself to fulfill, and brought out the

needs of the labour market through discussions with external stakeholders. According to the AP strategy implementation procedure, the university should analyse external factors, find out the needs of the market in the direction of each specialty and evaluate the competitive field related to other universities in Artsakh. However, as it became clear during the site visit, an in-depth analysis of the labour market has not been carried out, because, according to the administrative staff, Artsakh is a small republic and the needs of the labour market are obvious.

The concepts of the developed APs are discussed in the faculty councils, in the study and methodical council of the university, and approved in the Academic Council. Discussions provide an opportunity to highlight the attitudes of internal stakeholders. According to the concept, in case of a positive conclusion of the Academic Council, the internal stakeholders are involved in the AP development process. After the development of the AP, the latter is submitted for external review. Meetings with employers and other external stakeholders are held in the form of round tables, which is an accepted form at MMU, during which issues related to staff training are discussed, and together they try to find solutions to the problems that have arisen. In order to identify the needs of internal and external stakeholders, surveys are regularly conducted among them.

One of the university's goals is to 'support the socio-economic development of the region, taking into account the demands of external stakeholders and providing alumni with the appropriate abilities' (see the 2019-2023 MMU SP). The university emphasises the joint research activities of the faculty and internal stakeholders, highlighting the issues of the region and ways to solve them.

With its strategy, the university has committed itself to responding to the problems and instructions set by the state and society. Some findings were presented to the expert panel, which confirmed that the university is committed to this obligation to the best of its ability. For example, one of such findings is the development and implementation of the AP on 'Caucasus Studies', within the framework of which only this university prepares regionalists, in particular, Azerbaijan specialists, which the Republic of Artsakh definitely needs, or the master's AP on 'Social Work', whose alumni are especially needed in post-war Artsakh. The managers of the university have developed a document by which they tried to combine the strategies of Artsakh Republic and MMU.

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

An accountability mechanism has been implemented in the university, which enables structural units to submit reports on the SP performance. The reports reflect the annual results of the activity, and the completed works. Based on them, the rector presents a comprehensive report at the end of each year. According to the self-assessment, ´´Reports are printed and delivered to board members, internal and external stakeholders, presented on the University's official website, ensuring publicity and transparency´´. The mechanisms for evaluating the mission and goals are also the surveys among internal and external stakeholders, the evaluation of the learning outcomes achieved by the students by the final attestation committees and the provision of the relevant opinion to the university, the round table discussions with employers after the organisation of internships.

After the 44-day war of 2020, a change in the SP objectives, a reformulation, has not yet been implemented, although it is planned.

Considerations: As a university of the Republic of Artsakh, the TLI understands its role and importance for the republic, strives to fill the gaps that exist in the professional field of the country. The university implements APs at the NQF Levels 6 and 7.

The university is not big, the managerial staff managed to create a psychologically comfortable and healthy atmosphere for the employees, which greatly contributes to their unification around the mission and goals of the university. The expert panel noted that the AS and TS are dedicated to the university and are making efforts to achieve the goals of the SP.

The expert panel was convinced that the university is constantly developing and is able to create competitive advantages compared to other universities of the Republic of Artsakh, thereby also creating its own unique place in the educational environment. The university provides various services to the society of the NKR, which increases the reputation and recognition of the university. MMU flexibly responds to the needs of the state and Artsakh society, including introducing innovative professional programmes for Artsakh (APs on Caucases Studies, Social Work) and short-term courses.

The expert panel considers that the vision of the university is a bit ambitious even for the reality of pre-war Artsakh (especially in points 5, 6, 8, 9). After the war, when the university was deprived of important sources of funding, the possibilities of achieving the vision were greatly reduced. The expert panel also considers that after the war, it was necessary to review the SP, to make it more realistic.

According to the expert panel, the existence of a large number of specialities for a small university makes it difficult to ensure their quality. Discussions with the management of the university on this issue showed that the managerial staff accepts it and agrees; moreover, the opening of a large number of APs was typical in the initial period of the university's activity, and now the university follows the needs of the republic and the demands of the labour market more closely.

Although financing from abroad was stopped after the war, other opportunities to replenish finances were created, for example, the implementation of additional educational courses. Their demand is greater than MMU can fulfil now, therefore the university has the opportunity to expand in this direction.

The expert panel considers it positive that the university has developed an SP implementation plan, but draws the attention of the university managerial staff to the fact that the results mentioned in it are not measurable, and there are no clear and measurable quantitative and qualitative indicators to evaluate their performance.

It is necessary to note that the university uses a number of tools to evaluate the results of the mission and goals, which enable monitoring the implementation of the SP, but they need to be improved. It is important that the managerial staff of the university noticed their weaknesses and reflected them in the SWOT analysis, planning their improvement.

Summary: Considering that the policies and activities carried out by MMU correspond to the mission adopted by the university, which corresponds to the NQF Levels 6 and 7, the mission and goals reflect the needs of internal and external stakeholders, the activities are aimed at meeting the needs of the Republic of Artsakh, and the evaluation mechanisms exist and are constantly being improved, the expert panel considers that the TLI meets the requirements of Criterion 1.

Conclusion: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of MMU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 1 as **satisfactory**.

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 purposes 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 governance of the university is carried out on a collegial basis through the decisions of the Board of Founders, the Academic Council and the Rectorate. Since 2013, the university has raised its activity to a new level of regulation. The new charter was approved. In 2013, the following documents were approved: the regulations of the Academic Council, the Chair, the HR Department, the Student Council, the Student Scientific Society, the organisation of the educational process with the system of accumulation and transfer of academic credits and the verification, assessment and recording of students' knowledge, the procedures for the preparation and evaluation of the master's thesis, the organisation of student internships and the rules of conduct. In 2014, the procedure for managing students' personal affairs at the university was developed. In 2016, the regulations of the Rectorate, the regulations of the Ethics Committee, the Career Center, the Accounting Department, the Archiving Department, the first-aid post, the regulations for the formation of TS and AS, the regulations of the course head, the procedure for the functions of the course boy head/ girl head, and the procedure for part-time admission were developed and implemented. Changes were made in the regulations of the MMU master's degree learning, as well as the regulations of the university's teaching methods. In 2017, the regulations of the study methodical council were approved; and in 2018, the regulations of the IQAC, theAcademic Library, and the internal disciplinary rules were developed. In 2019, the accounting policy and clerical procedure were developed, and after ANQA's monitoring, the 'Student's Knowledge and Ability Assessment and Complaint Handling Procedure' was revised. In 2020, the procedures for the TS evaluation and definition of monetary reward, academic integrity and plagiarism prevention, as well as the Quality Assurance Guide were developed.

The university also has a procedure for the implementation of the strategy of APs of the university, the regulations of the Caucasus Studies Center, the faculty, the procedures of the Educational part, the regulation of the preparation and defence of term and graduation papers, the procedure of consultation are approved. In 2021, the 'Documented Procedure: Preparation of the Educational Process of Higher Education' was developed in Russian. The document describes the processes and accountability for human resources accounting, budget performance for the academic year, APs, library stock review, and classroom readiness. Mesrop Mashtots University has 2 faculties with 8 chairs and 2 research centers.

MMU has certain human resources for the implementation of educational and other goals, but the number of AS is limited and overloaded with a number of functions. Material and financial resources are very limited, but the TLI tries to use them as much as possible for the realisation of strategic goals.

MMU financial resources come from student fees, government funding and other sources. After the war, due to objective reasons, the provision of financial resources worsened. The working conditions of the governing bodies are not normal; the working conditions at the level of dean's offices and chairs are not good, although the employees did not express any dissatisfaction with such conditions. It should also

be noted that the management of financial resources is often situational and the distribution of income is not always planned in advance.

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

The MMU governance system has a regulated decision-making process. The TS and student representatives participate in the work of the Academic Council, the Rectorate, and the Council of Faculties in accordance with the regulations of these bodies. Students make up at least 25% of the members of decision-making bodies. Although the students are represented in the decision-making bodies, as it turned out during the focus group meetings, they do not always imagine the seriousness of the participation. The study of the minutes of the Academic Council did not give an opportunity to find examples of active participation of students who are members of the AC.

Teachers have the opportunity to raise their concerns at chair sessions, and students - at the Student Council. In addition, students can raise the issues through the course head boys/head girls and course heads. However, full-time students participate in these processes, and the part-time, whose number is quite large, do not participate in the work of the decision-making bodies. They are not part of the SC either. As it became clear from the meeting with the AC, the reason for this is that part-time students work and do not have the opportunity to show any activity at the university.

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

MMU's strategy is planned for 2019-2023. The SP is a 6-page document, the first 4 pages of which present the university's mission, vision, and values. The SWOT analysis is presented on page 5. Priority directions and strategic goals take only one page. Based on the university SP, the departments have developed their strategic plans. The departments also have annual plans.

The IQAC has developed the annual self-assessment of the teacher, the annual report-analysis of the chair head, the annual report-analysis of the faculty dean, and the analysis of the MMU events. Reports are a mechanism for evaluating results and collecting data on a semi-annual and annual basis. In the SP implementation plan, the deadlines for the implementation of the planned measures are indicated, but the study of the reports showed that they are not presented according to the data of the implementation of the works planned for that year of the SP. According to the performance of the SP goals and measures aimed at their implementation, only the report of the MMU vice-rector was presented. The reports do not present the measures planned by the SP implementation plan, but not implemented.

The self-assessment states that mid-term planning is implemented in the implementation and monitoring processes of the undergraduate and graduate APs. However, there are no APs developed yet for MA. There are only curricula. The university also has other mechanisms for monitoring APs: lesson observations and open classes, teacher's self-analysis and evaluation of teachers by students, which make it possible to evaluate the 3rd and 4th sub-points of point 4.2 of the SP.

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

The self-assessment states that 'the study of factors influencing MMU activity is carried out mainly during the development of the TLI's SPs and during the adjustment of the SP implementation plan for each year'.

The decisions of the university are made during the sessions of the Rectorate and Academic Council, faculty councils and chairs. The study of the minutes of the Rectorate and Academic Council sessions did not show that the factors affecting the university were discussed during them. The expert panel did not find any evidence that the university seriously analyses the factors affecting it. For example, there were no labour market analyses in the APs. Although it was mentioned in the self-assessment that benchmarking was done, there was no benchmarking analysis at the university. In the self-assessment, it is stated that employers are not sufficiently involved in the educational processes; both meetings with employers and AP management studies confirmed this.

The current situation of the Republic of Artsakh is changing very quickly, and situational management is being implemented at the university. Since the collection of perspective factors is not enough, the university is not able to identify and reduce possible risks.

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

MMU has implemented the QA cycle since 2019. The logic of the PDCA cycle is laid out in the 'MMU Internal Quality Assurance Guide' package, in the legal documents of the TLI, but in 2020, the war and the post-war realities did not allow at least one cycle to be fully implemented, and this makes it impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of the system. The TLI envisions to plan its activities, some tools have been developed to evaluate the implementation, there are cases of improvement that create a basis to say that the PDCA cycle can work in the normal operation of the university. The university has planned to introduce a Quality Management System. Some procedures and packages have been developed for this.

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.

At MMU, a procedure for the implementation of the AP strategy has been developed, which, although not yet fully implemented, is a good start for evaluating the effectiveness of AP implementation. The university uses the following evaluation mechanisms: events aimed at organising and conducting internships: round table conferences, inviting the employers, survey reports developed by the MMU IQAC of the heads of final attestation committees, which include clear questions about the AP quality, chairpersons reports, surveys among employers and alumni (by the Career Center). However, the system is still in its infancy, so there are no clear mechanisms for evaluating the collection, analysis and application of findings.

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

Although the university is doing some work to collect quantitative and qualitative information about the quality of APs and qualifications awarded, there is a lack of publications about it. The university links to its website and social media pages in its self-assessment, but expert observations have shown that this information is missing or limited. What is posted on the website is not enough to evaluate publications; moreover, such mechanisms have not yet been developed.

Considerations: The expert panel confirms that a number of regulations and procedures have been developed to ensure the effectiveness of governance and administration at the university, but most of them do not have a history of implementation, so it is impossible to assess their effectiveness.

The expert panel was convinced that the university has a dedicated AS and TS, but it is not enough for the implementation of all the strategic goals of the university. The expert panel noticed that the lack of financial resources and the lack of qualified staff led to the fact that some people occupy several positions at once, which calls into question the complete and quality performance of all the functions provided by these positions. Although the TLI is trying to change the top-down approach to decision-making, there is still a lot of work to be done in this direction, as many positions are not competitively selected. The material and financial resources of the university are also not enough to solve the ambitious problems that the university has set before itself with its strategy. The issue with the availability of material, technical and educational resources for the implementation of educational and research goals is worrying.

The expert panel draws the attention of the TLI managerial staff to the fact that the situation in Artsakh is changing so quickly that it is not possible to ensure the progress of the university without the introduction of a reliable risk management system. The governance bodies of the university are able to implement situational management, but there are problems from the point of view of strategic planning. The developed strategic plan is rather a declaration of goals than a serious plan developed with consideration of possible risks. Its implementation plan does not specify the results to be achieved, and the lack of KPIs does not allow the IQAC to carry out effective evaluation, collect reliable data, based on which governance bodies can make improvement decisions.

The managerial staff of MMU planned to implement the administration of policies and procedures according to the principle of quality management and for this, developed a number of documents in 2019, but the 44-day war and the disruptions caused by it did not allow to summarise at least one cycle to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented mechanisms.

The university has created a number of mechanisms for collecting, analysing and evaluating the effectiveness of the APs and other processes, but it has not yet turned into a solid and complete system.

The university lacks objective mechanisms for evaluating the publication of quantitative and qualitative information about the quality of the APS and awarded qualifications, the website needs serious improvement, the information spread on social networks needs to become more targeted and evaluation tools need to be implemented.

Summary: Considering that the university lacks a risk management system, the planning processes, particularly in terms of resource allocation, are not carried out qualitatively, the university does not conduct a study of the factors affecting it, but conducts situational management, the administrative staff is heavily overburdened because there is no appropriate AS, the expert panel considers that there are risks for the implementation of some strategic goals, the deficiencies in all other criteria are usually derived from the deficiencies of the management system, so the expert panel considers that the university does not meet the requirements of Criterion 2.

Conclusion: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of MMU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 2 as **unsatisfactory**.

III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

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

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.

In the MMU two faculties, 10 bachelor's and 11 master's APs are implemented in full-time and part-time learning forms.

The presented APs ('English Language and Literature', 'Caucasus Studies', 'Jurisprudence') are in line with the MMU's mission: 'According to its charter and the justification of the licenses for the implementation of higher education programmes of the NKR MoESCS and in accordance with the NQF levels framework, MMU provides higher education with bachelor's and master's qualifications in the fields of Armenian studies, pedagogy, humanitarian, socio-economics and IT' (see the 2019-2023 MMU SP).

In the 2019-2023 MMU SP, 'Establishing APs for the existing academic programmes' and 'monitoring and improving them' are formulated as measures under the 'Educational excellence' goal. In the 2019-2020 year, the development of the AP specifications presented in the self-assessment was carried out. A comparative analysis with the corresponding APs of other universities was carried out by the people responsible for the programmes appointed by the chairs, but the benchmarking done was not documented. Learning outcomes and alumni competencies are formulated by chairs, with the steps in AP development in different order for different programmes. Within the framework of the 'English Language and Literature' programme presented in the self-assessment the learning outcomes were formulated, then the learning plan was developed, and within the 'Jurisprudence' programme, where there was a plan that had been in place for years, which, according to the TS of the chair, was implemented quite effectively, and the outcomes were formulated based on the results of the subject descriptors. While introducing the AP on 'Caucasus Studies', benchmarking was done with similar programmes of several universities, and AP goals, objectives, and outcomes were developed taking into account the problems of Artsakh.

During the meeting with the expert panel, the members responsible for the APs mentioned that the learning outcomes were also discussed during the round tables organised with the employers. The AP on 'Caucasus Studies' was sent to the Russian-Armenian University for review.

All AP specifications considered have a series of mappings: linking the learning outcomes to the NQF specifications, linking alumni competencies to learning outcomes, and then linking course outcomes to AP outcomes and alumni competencies, respectively.

Preliminary expert panel discussions and then meetings with the members responsible for the APs and TS showed that both in terms of learning outcomes and alumni competencies, common transferable, general vocational and practical professional skills and competencies were presented, which mostly overlap. It is natural, because competencies should also be included in the learning outcomes, according to the RA NQF characteristics. Such a separation in APs has created additional complexity for the development of course descriptors. For example, the descriptors of practical foreign language courses in the 'English Language and Literature' AP do not indicate that they contribute to the formation of communication skills, since the latter is not included in the study of the general outcomes, and is separated

only in the framework of the alumni competences. The panel saw the same issue in the 'Caucasus Studies' AP, where there are, for example, C6 points in point C of the outcomes (General (transferable) abilities) and point C of the competencies (Professional competencies), which are almost incomparable.

As for specific programmes, it would be appropriate to emphasise pedagogical and foreign language teaching rather than research skills and abilities within the 'English Language and Literature AP, taking into account the fact that alumni will be qualified as pedagogues. During the visit, it was found out that MMU has not yet developed the specifications of the master's APs with learning outcomes, which would make it possible to more clearly distinguish the expected outcomes of the bachelor's and master's APs.

In general, based on the discussions of the expert panel and the findings obtained during the site visit, it can be concluded that the developed curricula are realistic and can be successfully implemented. The 'English Language and Literature AP optimally present the pedagogy component, as well as the practical and theoretical courses of the English language. It is commendable that students are given the opportunity to participate in optional English classes taught by a native speaker. The optional courses are aimed at increasing students' communication skills, as it became clear from the meetings with TS that some of the students have low proficiency in English when they enter the first year.

The expert panel also positively assesses the work of MMU in the direction of improving the internships. The regulations for conducting internships, student files for passive internship in the second semester of the 3rd year and active internship in the first semester of the 4th year, as well as the evaluation procedure, have been developed. The TLI attaches importance to summarising the results of the internship, which is why they chose the format of a round table together with employers. As a result of the discussions, the number of hours allocate the internship and the corresponding credits was added to the APs. The pedagogical internship is effectively organised in schools, where students work together with teachers, methodologists and psychologists. Even at the end of passive learning, students organise activities. For example, after the kindergarten internship, students are also offered a short-term employment contract.

The MMU IQAC analysis of the internship results in various APs has highlighted a number of shortcomings, such as clarity and relevance of assignments, evaluation criteria, and steps are being taken by chairs to correct and improve them.

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.

The APs reviewed present a range of teaching and learning methods that are applicable to the development of AP learning outcomes and these methods are also reflected in the subject plans. During the visit, during the meetings with the TS, they stated that the subject descriptors were clarified due to their comparison with the AP outcomes, and the students noted that the subject descriptors provided to them at the beginning of the course give them an opportunity to have a clearer idea of the work to be done, assignments, independent work and deadlines. However, from meeting with students, it became clear that they were more interested in the types of assignments and deadlines than in the outcomes.

From the meetings and lesson observations conducted with students during the site visit, it can be concluded that although many student-centred teaching and learning methods are presented in APs, which are effectively applied (role-playing games, debates, etc.), some teachers still use traditional methods such as dictation or non-interactive lecture presentation.

As a positive fact, the variety of teaching methods and assigned tasks within the 'English Language and Literature' AP should be noted. The practical English language courses include the features of the Cambridge.com platform, where students complete tasks aimed at developing communication skills from the Cambridge Unlock textbooks. Assignments are checked automatically by the system, but in the case of essays, the teacher performs rechecking, since the platform cannot detect cases of plagiarism. Another important effective approach is the cooperation with the "National Acceleration Public Initiative", through which students contribute to the development of the Armenian national corpus through the tasks included in the courses. In this context, the 'Research Methodology' course was also introduced, the content of which is well developed and can contribute to the development of students' research skills.

The results of the lesson observations conducted within the framework of 'Caucasus Studies' AP, the focus group meetings conducted with students and alumni showed that teaching and learning methods are aimed at the formation of critical thinking, which is especially important for this profession.

It should only be noted that some subject descriptors indicate teaching and learning methods, the application of which is not so understandable within the scope of the given course material, in particular, that the presented descriptors did not include the weekly distribution of the material, which would help to understand the necessity or effectiveness of using the method.

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

'Procedure for Evaluating Student Knowledge and Abilities and Considering Complaints', 'Procedures for Performance and Evaluation of Final Theses and Master's Theses' and 'Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Prevention Procedure' were developed and implemented at MMU.

The evaluation of all courses in the curricula is carried out through the following components: attendance, activity, independent work, mid-term exams and final exam. Some courses are graded as a checking without a final exam. Grading scales are presented in course descriptors. It should be noted that the subject descriptors present a number of evaluation methods, which, as in the case of teaching and learning methods, are sometimes not justified, if we take into account the purpose of the course and the learning material.

Final exams are conducted verbally based on pre-given questionnaires. Mid-term examinations of theoretical courses are also conducted based on questionnaires, which proves that knowledge is mainly tested and evaluated. Students' research skills are assessed only within the framework of independent works, term papers and final works, but some of them lack the analytical part and end only with the recording of findings.

According to the procedures for the completion and evaluation of theses and master's theses, their final evaluation is also multifactorial.

During the site visit, samples of term papers and final theses were presented. The topics of the bachelor's theses of the 'English language and literature' undergraduate AP for 2020-2021 year met the qualification, were within the framework of the English teaching methodology, and it is commendable that they were carried out on the basis of school textbooks or research carried out in schools.

The 'Caucasus Studies' AP assessment methods are generally credible and meet the expected outcomes, but not entirely in the case of general (transferable) competencies. For example, not all evaluation methods correspond to the outcomes of H 3.

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

For the APs submitted for institutional accreditation, a comparative analysis with similar programmes at other universities was conducted, but was not documented. These APs do not completely repeat the programmes of other universities, but in terms of content, they do not show a big difference, which made it possible for the transfer of students from, for example, ArSU, Grigor Narekatsi University, Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University, RF Doni Rostov State Technical University, State University after Kh. Abovyan, and a number of other universities to MMU in particular in 2018 and 2019.

Within the framework of cooperation with the South Caucasus Foundation of Switzerland, in 2018, 22 students of MMU's 'Caucasus Studies' AP completed a 3-day internship at YSU and the Russian-Armenian University; and in 2019, the students of the 'Law' and 'Management' APs completed an external internship in the corresponding programmes of the Russian-Armenian University. The 'Law' AP students were also sent to the Russian-Armenian University, in particular to the criminology laboratory.

MMU teachers taught mainly at Goris State University. More often, teachers from different RA universities, RA Yerevan State University, and Russian-Armenian Slavonic University, were invited to teach within the framework of different MMU APs. As of 2022, the invited teachers are working within the framework of the master's AP on 'Social Work', simultaneously training the TS of MMU, and also conducting additional courses on the same topic for external stakeholders.

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

In the 2019-2023 MMU SP, the problem of periodic processing and updating of APs is highlighted, which is also reflected in the faculty and chair SPs.

In 2019, a procedure for the implementation of the AP Strategy has been approved by MMU, where the procedural steps for the development of a new AP and the review of implemented APs are established. AP monitoring is carried out through annual analysis-reports of chairs, opinions of internship employers-supervisors, results of internship round-tables, reports of attestation committee chairpersons, focus group discussions and surveys organised among students. A part of the above-mentioned documents was presented in the documents attached to the self-assessment carried out within the framework of MMU's institutional accreditation, and a part was presented in the framework of the site visit.

The implementation of the curriculum of the APs submitted for accreditation started in 2019, therefore, a whole cycle has not yet taken place to conduct a final evaluation, but based on the already held focus group discussions, external opinions, and self-assessment of the chairs, a number of issues were raised that were also raised by the expert panel while discussing APs, as well as during the site visit. They mainly related to the excessive number of courses in the curricula, the reliability of the distribution of credits, the time allotted for the completion of the assignments included in them, and the semester load of students in general.

For example, in the 'English Language and Literature' AP, the credits allocated to Russian as a second foreign language are distributed so that a student must complete two independent works within a 1-credit course. The mentioned problem was also voiced during the meeting with the students. The expediency of teaching four foreign languages in addition to Azerbaijani, Persian, English, and Russian within the framework of the 'Caucasus Studies' AP was also discussed.

It is also necessary to note that within the framework of the Quality Management System introduced from 2020-2021, the APs of the new academic year are being reviewed at MMU based on the results of the discussion of the issues raised and approved. As the study of the curricula approved already in 2021 showed, some changes have already been made.

Templates of subject descriptors have been developed, including for internships. Internship descriptions are quite clearly and thoroughly worded.

Considerations: The expert panel considers it positive that the development and processing of APs of the existing academic programmes at MMU have begun, in particular with the definition of learning outcomes and their mapping with course outcomes. The expert panel considers it appropriate to combine learning outcomes and alumni competencies formulated in APs, because they repeat each other and complicate the formulation and mapping of course outcomes, besides, according to the RA NQF Level 6 characteristics, competencies are part of learning outcomes.

APs modified on the basis of expert panel consultations can serve as a good basis for developing APs of other programmes operating in MMU. It is especially necessary to consider the development of bachelor's and master's programmes as a whole, which will allow to maintain continuity, avoid repetitions and clearly separate the learning outcomes, emphasising the research component in master's programmes.

The introduction of the research component in the APs, which is carried out both through independent works within the courses, and specially designed courses, can also be positively evaluated. Subjects of term papers and final theses are also chosen in accordance with the AP aim and the learning outcomes, although in some cases their analytical part is incomplete. The fact that students in the 'Caucasus Studies' AP choose a research topic in the first year and work on that topic during the four years of study also proves the importance of developing research skills.

Active use of online platforms in the process of foreign language learning is also a commendable initiative. Organising courses with the involvement of an English-speaking teacher is also a positive experience. The expert panel suggests that the stakeholders of these courses are not only students of the 'English Language and Literature' and 'Translation' APs, but also students of other programmes, in particular, if we take into account the fact that MMU emphasises foreign language learning, for example 'Caucasus Studies' AP provides English language teaching in 1-4 years.

The expert panel also emphasises the description of assignments in the subject descriptors of the courses, which will contribute to increasing the effectiveness of learning.

According to the observations of the expert panel, MMU still has work to do in order to implement student-centred teaching and learning methods in all courses. Lesson observations can reveal the range of teachers who need methodological training, and for whom additional courses can be organised. In order to reveal the effectiveness of teaching and learning methods, a comparative analysis of students' achievements in the first and last years of study can also be carried out.

Improvement works should also be carried out in the direction of APs, for example 'Caucasus Studies', 'Jurisprudence', internship assignments. The structure of optional courses also needs to be revised in terms of the content of the courses and their purpose.

It is commendable that APs are periodically monitored through lesson observations, self-assessments, chair head's and final attestation committee chairperson's reports, surveys, roundtables, and focus groups, and curriculum changes are made at the end of each year without waiting for a cycle to end.

The improvement of APs through comparative analyses and benchmarking with the relevant programs of Artsakh and RA universities will provide an opportunity to ensure the internal mobility of MMU students. MMU should take steps to sign appropriate agreements with Artsakh and other RA universities where students can collect and transfer credits.

Summary: Taking into account that MMU has begun to align APs with European approaches in terms of outcomes and credit system, APs are regularly monitored using a number of tools and reworked, a clear assessment system has been developed, including graduation theses, master's theses and internships, an attempt was made to increase the use of student-centred methods of teaching and learning in the courses, as well as the research component, the topics of final works and theses are selected in accordance with the AP requirements, alumni are in demand in the labour market, the expert panel considers that MMU meets the requirements of criterion 3.

Conclusion: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of MMU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 3 as **satisfactory**.

IV. 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.

In MMU, the selection and admission of applicants to the full-time and part-time learning systems are based on the current regulations. The admission of applicants to the full-time bachelor's system is carried out according to the provisions of the Resolution N 409-N of the Government of the Republic of Artsakh dated May 4, 2021. Applicants are admitted to MMU by taking part in national joint exams.

Admission to the part-time learning system is organised according to the provisions of the 'Mesrop Mashtots University part-time learning admission' procedure approved on December 16, 2016. The process is organised in the university according to the order of NKR MoESCS Minister N 57/M of April 25, 2008. We should also add that the examination is organised by the committee formed within the university, and the supervision is carried out by NKR MoESCS.

Admission to the master's programme is organised in accordance with the relevant provisions of MoESCS order N 53/M of April 25, 2008. The admission process is carried out in 2 stages.

The TLI also has a free auditor institute. Those admitted to the part-time learning system can participate in the classes of the full-time one and if they ensure 80% participation, they get the opportunity to pass the exams and transfer to the full-time learning system.

For the purpose of professional orientation and recruitment of students, tours to secondary and high schools are organised, and advertising campaigns are carried out on the TLI's social network accounts. The website also has a bilingual section for applicants, where the necessary information about the admission regulations, deadlines, required documents, and the existing APs is presented.

Since 2017, the 'Open Door Day' event has been held by the Career Center, which, as it became clear during the meeting with students within the framework of the site visit, has become an incentive in

choosing the university. It should also be added that according to the IQAC 'Student Recruitment Survey Analysis and Improvement Policy', 60% of respondents learned about the university from students, and another 20% from - employees.

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

The TLI has some elements of a policy to address student needs. In particular, the identification of educational needs in the TLI occurs mainly as a result of regularly conducted anonymous student surveys in the formats of course/instructor and overall satisfaction evaluations. According to the accepted standards, the students are also included in the MMU governance bodies: the Academic Council, the faculty councils and the Rectorate.

Since 2019, focus group discussions have been conducted at the TLI at the initiative of the IQAC, which are summarised and presented to the governing bodies.

The MMU students, through the SC and individually, have the opportunity to raise the needs of students in the governing bodies of the TLI. It also became clear from the site visit that the problems raised by the students are discussed and solutions are found. In case of problems, students also raise them in the relevant faculty councils, and during meetings with deans and heads of chairs, but the process is not regulated.

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

In order to increase the efficiency of the students' learning process, the TLI emphasises the creation of opportunities for organising additional classes and providing consultations. Consolation is organised according to a pre-approved schedule, within which each teacher provides consultation at least once a week. Consultation classes are held for those students who, due to not mastering or missing the class, need additional support or additional explanation of a topic. The consultation schedule is made available to students by posting it next to faculty class schedules.

Students' satisfaction with consultation activities is evaluated through student surveys; however, there is no analysis of the evaluation of the effectiveness of their implementation.

In order to provide consultation to students, the TS also uses the e-mail option and the tools created in social networks.

MMU also organises optional English classes with the participation of an English-speaking teacher, which contributes to increasing the level of English proficiency of students.

In the framework of the 'Computer Work' course, if students get a score higher than 17, they are given a certificate.

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

The processes for providing support and guidance to students at MMU are set out in relevant regulations and are also described in the MMU Student Guide. Since 2019, there has been a procedure for applying to administrative bodies and structural divisions, however, it became clear from the meeting with the stakeholders that in case of need, they can apply to the administrative staff without any obstacles and receive appropriate assistance and guidance.

During the site visit, it also became clear that at the beginning of each academic year, students receive the MMU Student Guide to their e-mail addresses, where they get acquainted with their rights and responsibilities.

According to the summary of the survey data, more than 91% of the students participating in the survey are satisfied with the services provided.

4.5 The Institution has student career support services.

The Career Center is responsible for providing career-promoting services for students at the TLI, which operates in accordance with the relevant regulations approved in December 2016. MMU also has a regulation on the alumni employment monitoring system, according to which information on the employment of alumni is collected, mainly through telephone conversations.

The Career Center conducts surveys among employers, the results of which are presented to the chairs. However, in practice, changes implemented based on employers' requests have not yet taken place.

The MMU Career Center is an intermediary link between external and internal stakeholders of the university, it contributes to the establishment of cooperative relations between them, in particular, round-table discussions and meetings with employers are organised, within the framework of which employers present the requirements and characteristics of the labour market for the period in discussion. However, awareness of the information provided by the centre is still low among students and alumni.

4.6 The Institution promotes student involvement in research activities.

The involvement of students in research works at the TLI mainly takes place through individual works, courses, graduation theses and master's theses.

The University Student Scientific Society (SSS) has been operating at MMU since 2011 according to the regulations approved by the Academic Council in February 2013. During the site visit, it became clear that 12 students were members of the SSS, 3 of them representatives of the 'Caucasus Studies' AP. The body organised round-table discussions, intra-university as well as international conferences, the results of which were later published in the TLI's scientific collections.

There is a research component in some works, particularly in the works of the Caucasus Studies Center, but it is not widespread and is mainly based on individual initiatives, lacks an institutional approach, and also does not extend to other professions.

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

The Student Council, which was founded in 2000 and operates in accordance with the provisions of the regulations approved by the Academic Council in February 2013, acts as a body for the protection of students' rights at the TLI.

As it became clear within the framework of the site visit, at the beginning of each academic year, students were sent the Student Guide manual through e-mails, through which they were informed about their rights and responsibilities. Basically, in case of questions and problems, students turn to the AS, faculty council, SC, and rectorate.

The SC members also cooperate with charitable and non-governmental organisations.

Within the framework of the site visit, it became clear that there is a cooperation between the faculty councils and the university council; at the same time, it should also be added that part-time students were not included in the SC.

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

Evaluation of the educational, consultation and other services provided to students at the TLI is mainly supported by anonymous surveys conducted by students regarding the organisation and conduct of internships. During the surveys organised by the IQAC, students evaluate the quality of teaching and learning of subjects, resource provision of the educational institution, and infrastructure. As such, the TLI does not evaluate the effectiveness of surveys conducted to evaluate the educational, consultation, and other services provided to students.

We should also note that some works planned by the Internal Quality Assurance Center have been temporarily postponed due to the war situation.

Considerations: The expert panel positively evaluates the regulated implementation of the processes of recruitment, selection and admission of students by the education institution within the framework of full-time bachelor's and master's degrees, as well as the part-time learning system.

The expert panel considers it positive that in the context of creating an environment conducive to learning by the TLI, importance is given to the use of mechanisms for highlighting students' problems and needs. At the TLI, there are some elements of the policy of raising the educational needs of students, for example, anonymous student surveys, and round-table discussions, which create a tradition of raising the needs of students. In the framework of the meeting with the students, it was also mentioned that they are free to voice their problems in the dean's offices and chairs of the faculties. At the same time, highlighting educational needs and responding to them is important, the effective and purposeful organisation of which will contribute to increasing students' motivation and improving the educational process.

In order to make the study process more effective, the MMU students are provided with additional consulting services, and it should also be added that the process takes place in accordance with a regulated and pre-approved schedule. Students' satisfaction with consultation activities is evaluated based on student surveys; however, there is no qualitative analysis of the evaluation of the effectiveness of their implementation.

At the TLI, there is no fixed schedule for contacting the AS, but students can contact the deans of the faculties, heads of chairs and other AS without any obstacles to get appropriate assistance and guidance. This circumstance also proves the efforts made by MMU to organise effective studies.

The expert panel also positively evaluates the work carried out by the Career Center with students and alumni, in particular, steps are taken in the context of the development of student-employer cooperative relations. Within the framework of the visit, the students also documented the regularly organised round-table discussions and meetings with employers by the Career Center. The more coordinated work of the Career Center and the creation of a large employer base will contribute to the deepening of employer-TLI cooperation.

In general, the expert panel considers the level of students' involvement in research works to be problematic. The implementation of research works by students is mainly limited to the presentation of individual course works, which contain little research and analytical component. The research component within the study was most obvious in the case of Caucasus studies, which, however, did not extend to the rest of the professions. The dissemination of this approach will contribute to the coherent development of all APs and the introduction of a research component in all programmes.

Various departments of MMU, including the SC, are involved in the processes of protecting the rights of the TLI students, and raising educational and other needs. The presentation of qualitative analyses of the surveys conducted for the evaluation of the work of the latter will also contribute to the more targeted and effective implementation of the SC works.

The collection of information on the satisfaction and evaluation of students from educational, consulting and other services mainly takes place within the framework of anonymous student surveys, as well as through self-analyses presented by teachers and reports of chair heads.

Summary: Considering that the TLI has clear mechanisms for student recruitment and admission in both full-time and part-time learning systems, there are mechanisms for highlighting students' educational needs, the institution organises additional training and consultation for students, and there is a body for the protection of students' rights, students are also involved in the decision-making process concerning them, the expert panel concludes that MMU meets the requirements of Criterion 4.

Conclusion: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of MMU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 4 as **satisfactory**.

V. FACULTY AND STAFF

CRITERION: The Institution has a highly qualified faculty and staff 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 programme.

In 2016, MMU developed and approved the 'Regulations on Formation of MMU TS and AS', which came into force in 2020. According to the regulations, the following categories of the TS are defined: teacher, assistant, associate professor and professor, the requirements for whom are also presented in this document. However, it is necessary to note that the appendix 'Mandatory Conditions for Employment on a Full-Time, Part-Time and Hourly Basis' attached to this regulation does not mention the category of assistant, and in the MMU's institutional accreditation self-assessment it is stated that '"Regulations on the TS and AS Formation" define the TS assistant, teacher, senior teacher, associate professor, and professor category characteristics' ('MMU Institutional Accreditation Self-Assessment', p. 55). In other words, according to the self-assessment, the assistant is a lower category than the teacher, while the opposite is defined in the presented regulation. Moreover, the category of senior teacher, which is not defined in the regulations, is also mentioned.

Clause 1.4 of the general provisions of the 'Regulations on the Formation of TS and AS' stipulates that the TS is formed in a competitive and non-competitive manner. According to the MMU self-assessment, 'the MMU TS is formed in a non-competitive way, and if necessary, in a competitive way, labour relations are established on a contractual basis' ('MMU Institutional Accreditation Self-Assessment', p. 55). Since the above wordings are not clear, an attempt has been made within the framework of the site visit to highlight the procedures. During the meetings, it became clear that the process of concluding or revising contracts with the TS is carried out on a bottom-up basis; at the end of each year, based on teacher self-assessment and surveys conducted among students, the head of the chair

proposes to revise the contract with the teacher or, in the case of sufficient number of hours, to invite and sign a contract with a new specialist with the appropriate qualifications, and no tenders for the post of the TS are announced. The selection of deans and heads of chars is also not carried out in a competitive way.

MMU has adopted a policy of expanding the full-time TS, particularly by offering higher salaries to professionals with degrees and titles. The university also invites specialists from the RA and RF universities to conduct modular lectures. According to the self-assessment data, during the 2020-2021 academic year, 34 teachers with a scientific degree worked at MMU, while in 2015-2016 - 23. In the 2021-22 academic year, MMU has 34 full-time and 36 part-time teachers, including 1 teacher, 24 associate professors, 8 senior teachers, candidates of sciences, 28 assistants, and 22 teachers. It should also be noted that 1/3 of the TS is over 60 years old.

In 2020, the TS evaluation and monetary reward setting procedure was developed and introduced, which, as it turned out during the site visit, unfortunately, was not implemented after the 44-day Artsakh war, because of which financial problems arose in MMU. However, it became clear from the meeting with the teachers that some TS members were given financial incentives on the anniversaries, and also received letters of gratitude and certificates of honour.

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

In the 'Regulations on the Formation of MMU TS and AS', the qualitative standards for each category of the TS are defined, but such standards are not defined within the framework of a separate AP. There is no 'Human and material resource provision' section in APs specifications. Data about the TS of the chair working in the given AP is also not mentioned.

Despite this fact, it is clear from the TS list of MMU chairs that the teachers have qualifications appropriate to the profession, as well as academic degrees and titles.

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

MMU regularly evaluates the TS using a number of tools, the most important of which are students' assessment of teachers' professional and pedagogical qualities and teacher's self-assessment, which is carried out in a clear format according to the one given in the IQAC manual, and the procedure for determining the TS evaluation and incentives, where the teaching and methodical work, scientific activity and public activity of the teacher are emphasised.

The MMU IQAC conducts anonymous online student surveys and the results are forwarded to the respective chairs and taken into account when revising the contract with the teachers. Recent surveys conducted by the IQAC show that MMU's TS is generally rated between 4-5 points (on a 6-point system), rarely 3-4. However, the data could have been different if the assessment was carried out with separate questionnaires for professional and pedagogical qualities. As the students mentioned during the meetings, they would rate the professional qualities of all teachers more highly, but they would rate less the pedagogical skills of some, including their skills in building student-teacher relations.

Other TS evaluation tools are lesson observations and open classes. The lesson observations not only promote the exchange of experience but also help to highlight the problems of young professionals and take appropriate measures to attach them to more experienced teachers - mentors. The results of the work with the mentors are again evaluated by periodic lesson observations. During the site visit, examples of

lesson observation and open lesson reports were presented, where the entire course of the lesson, the purpose, and the methods used and the issues raised were described in detail.

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 'TS training procedure' is being developed by the MMU IQAC, which implies that the university does not yet have a systematic approach to TS training.

The TS participated in a number of trainings in Armenia and abroad with the support of MMU, as well as the South Caucasus Foundation of Switzerland. Before the 44-day war, MMU had also conducted internal trainings, such as English language, and computer skills.

The TS and AS of MMU actively participate in trainings organised by ANQA. The TS also participates in trainings on its initiative. Teachers inform their colleagues about training opportunities in their internal messenger group. The head of the MMU IQAC is particularly active in this regard.

Currently, teachers of the MMU Pedagogy and Psychology Chair are being trained by teachers invited from YSU who teach in the 'Social Work' master's programme.

Lesson observations are the main tool for eliciting needs. As already mentioned in point 5.3, they monitor the professional growth of young teachers and also highlight their training needs.

From the lesson observations conducted as part of the site visit, as well as from the discussions with the students, it became clear that some teachers, particularly specialists invited from various organisations who do not have pedagogical education, need methodological training, because they do not always use student-centred methods of teaching and learning.

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

One of the important goals of MMU is to equip the main TS with specialists with scientific degrees and titles. This is also evidenced by the dynamics of the ratio of main and part-time teachers in the period 2015-2022. If in the 2015-2016 academic year, 23 teachers with scientific degrees and titles worked at the university, of which only 7 were full-time employees, in the 2021-2022 academic year, 16 of the 34 with scientific degrees and titles are full-time employees.

The university conducts a policy of awarding teachers with a scientific degree and title with a high salary, the procedure for the evaluation of TS and the determination of the monetary incentives has also been developed, which is half functioning. Evaluation of teaching methodical work, scientific activity and public activity of teachers is carried out; however, due to the limitation of financial possibilities caused by the 44-day war, no additional payments are provided.

Within the framework of the site visit, it became clear that the TLI is not always able to maintain the stability of the provision of the corresponding TS due to a number of factors. Some teachers, having reached a high professional level, move to work at another university. There was also a TS leakage after the 44-day Artsakh war. In such cases, the TLI applies to the personnel reserve, which is made up of the list of specialists who applied to work at MMU, but due to the lack of hours, a contract was not signed with them. However, as the head of the HR Department mentioned, the TLI does not have a reserve for all professions. The lack of TS is filled by inviting teachers from Artsakh and other RA universities or specialists from other organisations. An attempt is also made to ensure the employer-TLI connection through the mentioned specialists, as they are also able to transfer their experience to the students.

On the other hand, due to the decrease in demand for some professions, MMU also faces the problem of providing TS with an adequate workload.

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

At MMU, there are no clear procedures for ensuring the professional advancement of TS, but a number of activities are carried out to provide training and promote their research work.

In recent years, trainings have been organised by ANQA and invited teachers from different RA universities. During the reporting period, 14 teachers participated in training and exchange of experience at European partner universities, mainly with the support of the South Caucasus Foundation of Switzerland.

International conferences, seminars and round tables are organised in order to promote the research activities of TS. The TS research activities are also highlighted when reviewing the contract with them. A procedure for the TS evaluation and definition of monetary incentives was also developed, where a large place is allocated to scientific research activities.

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

In 2019, MMU underwent structural changes - optimisations, particularly in the uniting of faculties and chairs, due to the need for resource redistribution and optimal management. The position of the vice-rector for scientific and external relations was also reduced and the functions were distributed among other administrative positions: vice-rector, head of the Career Center, and head of the Caucasus Studies Center.

Centres operating in MMU, such as the Career Center, IQAC, and Caucasus Studies Center, do not have AS and all functions are performed only by the heads of these centres, or they are distributed among the deans and heads of chairs as well.

According to the 'TS and AS Formation Regulation' the heads of study cabinets of the chairs and the library staff are considered AS.

MMU does not conduct surveys on student satisfaction with AS. The MMU self-assessment also does not provide data on the foreign language proficiency among AS.

Considerations: The expert panel considers positively that MMU conducts a policy of replenishing its TS with teachers with scientific degrees and degrees, although the number of full-time teachers is still inferior to the number of part-time employees. A relatively high salary can be a good motivation, but the MMU should implement other mechanisms to ensure the stability of TS for specific professions as well. A mechanism for maintaining the TS stability can be not only training staff on the spot or inviting teachers from Artsakh and other RA universities, but also more frequent use of online learning platforms, including involving staff from RA.

The expert panel also considers that it is necessary to clarify the TS categories, particularly assistant and senior teachers. Although the requirements for the TS are defined in the 'Regulations on the Formation of MMU TS and AS', it is not sufficient for specific APs. It would be expedient to additionally present in the specifications of individual APs the part of human and logistical resources necessary for their effective implementation. Fixation of the TS professional abilities resulting from the AP outcomes will enable the selection and evaluation processes of teachers to be carried out based on the mentioned

outcomes. It will also provide adequate basis for competitive recruitment of teachers as laid down in the above regulation.

The expert panel also considers positive the fact that MMU has a student survey system for teacher evaluation, taking into account the practice that survey results are used during the review of teachers' employment contracts. During surveys, it would be advisable to clearly separate the questionnaire according to the teacher's professional knowledge and pedagogical-methodical skills and abilities, which can also serve as a tool for highlighting training needs.

Conducting lesson observations is of great importance in increasing the quality and efficiency of teaching. Considering the fact that lesson observations are documented is positive, we should note that there was no analysis and summary of the problems raised, as well as the systematic organisation of measures necessary for their correction. In this context, the expert panel positively evaluates the appointment of mentors for beginning teachers, as well as the introduction of the teachers' assessment meant system.

Positively evaluating the fact that the TS training is one of MMU's priorities, we should note that there is a need for periodic and systematic training of teachers, where the skills of mastering a foreign language, information technologies and modern student-centred methods should be central. It is also necessary to focus on the issue of filling the TS with young specialists.

MMU has limited AS, which may affect the organisation of education in some circumstances. There are also no mechanisms for evaluating the quality of the AS activities.

Summary: Considering that MMU chairs are staffed with specialists with appropriate AP qualifications who are ready to be constantly trained and to improve their professional knowledge and abilities, the APs are taught by practical representatives of the field, and students are satisfied with the high-quality of the TS, and the observed shortcomings are related to management, the expert panel considers that the institution is equipped with faculty members with the necessary professional qualities to achieve the mission of MMU and fulfil the objectives of the APs and meets the requirements of Criterion 5.

Conclusion: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of MMU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 5 as **satisfactory.**

VI. 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 MMU's SP for 2019-2023, 'Research excellence' is defined as one of the priority directions of the TLI's activity, which is also reflected in the vision: 'to create a scientific and practical platform for the development of Artsakh academic thought'. In this context, MMU attaches particular importance to the organisation of international conferences, including 'student conferences, promotion of motivation to conducting research among students with the support of mentors, as well as through joint scientific work with the TS' (the 2019-2022 MMU SP implementation plan).

Since 2015, MMU has clarified its interest in the field of scientific research, recognising Caucasus Studies as a priority direction. In 2015, the Caucasus Studies Center was opened, where three different centres operating at MMU were united, which proves the purposeful activity of the TLI to coordinate the work. Later, the 'Caucasus Studies' AP was introduced, which, on the one hand, ensured a steady flow of students, and on the other hand, an opportunity to train new specialists who will continue research work in the given field. Note that in 2016-2021 five of the seven organised international conferences were initiated by the Caucasus Studies Center. During the site visit, it was also found that the students of the 'Caucasus Studies' AP are particularly active in the SSS, which may be helped by the fact that in this academic program, students are given research topics in the first year, on which they continuously work throughout the study.

The fact that the 'Research Methodology' course has been introduced in some APs is also commendable. A research component has also been included in various courses in the format of independent assignments.

The fact that, despite the limited financial resources, MMU also allocates money in the budget for publishing academic works and organising international conferences is also appreciable. Before the 44-day war, the TLI had managed to solve its financial problems with the support of international funds.

Although MMU does not have a policy clearly formulating its research priorities or a separate research strategy, apart from a few general-type provisions and measures included in the MMU SP and its implementation plan, it is clear that MMU has chosen its research priority: Caucasus Studies. The Caucasus Studies Center has its own regulations and development concept. However, it is necessary to note that MMU should also focus on other scientific research directions in order to be able to effectively implement other APs operating at the university.

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

The 2019-2023 MMU SP presents the long-term planning strategy of the research sector, for the implementation of which an investment plan has been developed. According to the SP implementation plan, the organisation of international conferences, the promotion of scientific research activities among TS, the publication of scientific works and the promotion of students' research works are important. The mentioned priorities are also defined in the SPs of the chairs. It is natural that each chair has its own scientific priorities. The Chair of History deals with the recording of the history of Artsakh villages, the Caucasus Studies Center attached to the chair has its own development vision, the Chair of Armenian Language and Literature deals with dialectology, and the Chair of Foreign Languages cooperates with the National Acceleration Initiative and implements the development of important tools and components of language digitisation and artificial intelligence, in which the teachers and students of the chair participate.

The TLI considers organising annual conferences as a short-term project. It should be noted that conferences are also organised jointly with other universities with the support of international foundations. Proceedings of the conferences are printed and transferred to a number of libraries and centres. They are also available in an electronic version on the website of the Artsakh electronic library, a project of the Union of young scientists and specialists of Artsakh, which is an MMU partner. It is also a positive fact that the MMU students and teachers also participate in academic conferences organised in RA universities.

It should be noted that MMU had successfully used the support of international funds until the 2020 Artsakh war. Currently, in order to maintain the continuity of the organisation of international conferences, the university will have to apply to other funds or grant programmes.

The 'Academic Bulletin' published at the university since 2006 is also a part of scientific research development, which in 2007 was renamed into 'Mesrop Mashtots University Newsletter' (a collection of academic articles). It is published by the decision of the Academic Councils of MMU and YSU, and was included in the list of periodicals acceptable for publishing the main results and provisions of dissertations by the RA Supreme Certifying Committee.

MMU considers the creation of a student scientific platform as an important factor in promoting research activities. Although the university has a SSS, it became clear during the site visit that it still could not ensure the comprehensive inclusion of students in the university's academic activities. In this regard, it should be noted that the social problems of students are also an obstacle for the promotion of students' research activities; many students have to combine education with work, which naturally has a negative impact on the quality of their education and opportunities to engage in research work.

Despite the implemented works, in general, the research activity of the university would be more coordinated if a research strategy was developed, where short-term, mid-term and long-term plans would be clearly separated.

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

At MMU, a number of rules and regulations have been developed to develop research implementation, in particular, 'Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Prevention Order', 'TS Evaluation and Promotion Order', where academic research activities are emphasised. Research activities are also highlighted in the faculty self-assessment format. In order to increase the motivation of research work, MMU has a differentiated salary system. The university also encourages the academic research activities of TS by publishing their academic articles or educational manuals, and textbooks.

In general, the expert panel considers that the developed procedures are not sufficient for the full and effective implementation of the strategic goal of 'Research Excellence', and MMU should develop a more comprehensive research strategic plan and a number of other regulations to carry out more coordinated work, improve inter-university connections, and promote of interdisciplinary research.

6.4 The Institution emphasises internationalisation of its research.

The main tool for the internationalisation of research for MMU has been the organisation of international conferences for years. The cooperation of the TLI with universities and scientists of other unrecognised states is commendable. MMU also cooperates with a number of universities and centres of RA and Russia ('Caucasus World' International Research Center, (RF, Doni Rostov), 'Expert Support Center' (South Ossetia), Caucasus Institute (Yerevan).

The MMU TS are quite active in participating in university-organised conferences and publishing articles in the university periodical. However, it should be noted that the number of publications of academic works by university teachers in international periodicals is limited. During the reporting period, 12 articles were published in Russian and foreign periodicals, 22 articles were published in the RA and Artsakh periodicals, and 58 were published in 'Mesrop Mashtots University Newsletter'.

It should also be noted that MMU does not have data on the index of citations of academic works published in international periodicals. In 2018, MMU jointly published a collection of articles with the 'Center for Systemic Regional Research and Forecasting of IPPK YUFU and ISPI RAN', which is the second such collection. The first one was published in 2013.

The participation of students not only in MMU, but also in international and intra-university conferences organised in RA universities is also commendable.

Currently, the Caucasus Studies Center is cooperating with the Agency for the Protection of Cultural Heritage to publish a 4-volume series dedicated to the endangered cultural heritage of Artsakh.

It should be noted that although MMU has contracts and agreements with a number of RA and foreign universities, they are not implemented based on a number of subjective and objective factors. The TLI TS is not active in conducting joint research works with other universities, including foreign ones. It should also be noted that only 27% of the teachers know a foreign language, English. Moreover, there are no mechanisms for evaluating the quality of academic works at MMU.

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

One of the mechanisms of linking research activities and the educational process at MMU is the performance of independent/individual work by students in the courses, which implies analytical work. However, there are no clear mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of independent works. As a result of the study, it became clear that the research and analytical part is little represented in independent works, including term papers. It is worth mentioning the independent work included in practical English language courses, within the framework of which students work on improving the Armenian national corpus. A 'Research Methodology' course has also been introduced in some APs.

Continuity of research work is also encouraged at MMU. Thus, students continue the topic of their term paper as a final work. In the 'Caucasus Studies' AP, students choose a research topic from the first year. A research component is also included in this AP internship framework. At the end of the internship, students present a report.

The organisation of lectures for MMU students by scientists participating in the international conference can be noted as a positive fact.

During the site visit, it became clear that TS is quite active in creating textbooks and manuals. For example, Azerbaijani language textbooks have been prepared for all courses of the 'Caucasus Studies' specialty, which are successfully used in the teaching process.

Considerations: The expert panel positively assesses that MMU prioritises the development of research direction and throughout its activity has sought to promote it by attracting the opportunities of foundations and grants.

MMU's predetermination of Caucasus studies as a priority research direction is also commendable, which is important for a small university with limited financial resources. The expert panel also positively evaluates the fact that other chairs of MMU are also trying to define the scope of their academic interests.

On the other hand, the expert panel considers the strategy related to scientific research to be incomplete. The definition of a clear research strategy, and the development of appropriate regulations, particularly the regulations related to the mechanisms of ensuring the quality of academic works, will contribute to the development of the field and the creation of high-quality research products. The expert panel positively evaluates the introduction of the 'Research Methodology' course, the presence of an

independent work component in most courses, the relevance of term papers, bachelor's and master's thesis topics to AP requirements and learning outcomes. All of this can contribute to the development of students' research work, examination and analytical thinking skills, as well as stimulate the interest of a certain range of students in science and scientific research works. From the meetings held within the framework of the site visit, it became clear that such students are involved in the MMU SSS and who participate in conferences with great enthusiasm. If MMU provides appropriate guidance and favourable conditions, for example, foreign language courses, it is possible to create a team of young scientists who can engage in researching the problems of Artsakh and later also internationalisation.

The desire to promote scientific research activities among the TS can also be positively evaluated, which is expressed by the relatively high salary payment. Research work is also an important prerequisite for revising their employment contracts.

It is natural that the development of the academic research sphere has not yet reached the appropriate level, where not only quantitative data will be taken into account, but also the quality of academic works and their importance in terms of solving the problems of Artsakh, as well as their internationalization, will receive more attention. Therefore, it is necessary to develop indicators for the evaluation of the quality of academic works.

MMU also has work to do to find new sources of research funding.

Summary: Considering that MMU has defined the priority direction of its research and is consistently developing it, it tries to develop and introduce mechanisms to encourage the academic research works of TS, it is important to introduce the research component in the courses, it is also important to match the topics of bachelor's and master's theses with the AP qualifications, and acknowledging that the work carried out at the university still does not fully address all the issues facing the research sector, particularly in terms of quality assessment, the expert panel considers that MMU meets the requirements of Criterion 6.

Conclusion: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of MMU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 6 as **satisfactory**.

VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

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

Findings

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

MMU has one building. According to the self-assessment, there is a project for a new educational building. However, during the site visit, it became clear that the works are delayed due to financial resources. The university has about 615 students, whose studies are organised in 12 classrooms. Due to the limited number of classrooms, the university works in the existing two-shift teaching system, and part-time learning system classes are organised during internships.

The study and research functions of the students are performed by the reading room/library, equipped with literature, WiFi connection, as well as the computer classroom, hall, etc. However, the

reading room and the library are not separated. During the visit, it became clear that a list is regularly submitted to replenish the library with new literature, but when compiling the list, the basic literature mentioned in the AP is not taken into account in order to provide the necessary professional books. As it became clear from the site visit, professional literature is available in the libraries; MMU also uses the opportunities provided by the Artsakh State University library, as well as the YSU library. Some electronic literature resources are also available to students. At the same time, it should also be noted that the TLI library does not cooperate with international libraries, nor is it subscribed to any information electronic database, which is due to the situation prevailing in the country. It should also be noted that digitisation works are not carried out in the library.

In order to develop students' practical abilities, a criminology classroom was established. The TLI has two computer classrooms for organising courses and exams, but the computer base also needs replenishment and updating.

The university does not have a gym hall, they use that of the 8th school near the university; in this direction, the TLI is taking steps to have a gym hall in the near future.

There is a first-aid post equipped with medicines for first aid; there is a register of patients.

Based on the results of the surveys conducted and the meetings during the site visit, it can be stated that the resources provided for learning are scarce and to some extent hinder the formation of outcomes.

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

According to the self-assessment, the TLI expenses are planned based on needs and financial capabilities, for 2019-2023 - according to the strategic development plan. Most of the TLI's financial income comes from student fees, as well as other income, such as state aid, and additional courses, but there are grant collaborations that are no longer ongoing due to the war situation in the country. According to the decision of the NKR Government, the tuition fees of MMU students for the 2020-2021 year were paid by the government. However, the amount reimbursed by the government decreased by 50 mln AMD.

Most of the financial expenses are allocated to the salary fund. However, the TLI is trying to find other sources of funding to improve the resource. The planned new building would significantly improve the level of resources and organisation of the educational process, but it is not clear when the process will be implemented.

The need to acquire or update the necessary funds and equipment is mainly determined by the requests submitted by the subdivisions.

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.

According to self-assessment, financial activities are based on the MMU Charter, Law on Accounting, accounting policy, and financial management policy. The adoption and implementation of the budget is controlled by the Board of Founders.

At MMU, there is actually a certain mechanism for the distribution of financial resources, according to which the next year's budget estimate is drawn up every year. Current financial management of the TLI budget is carried out by the rector. Budget execution control is carried out through reports.

Budget planning mechanisms are not formed in the university according to the AP goals. At the end of each year, the chairs present the necessary resources for the academic year: the workload of the TS, a list of necessary literature and other resources according to the documented procedure for the preparation of the educational process of higher education, but there is no policy for the distribution of financial resources that ensures and guarantees the implementation and continuity of the AP goals.

University expenses are planned based on priority needs and financial capacity. The TLI budget is mainly formed from the basic financial resources formed from student fees, which, according to the expert panel, creates a certain dependence for the university on the number of students and tuition fees.

During the site visit, it was noted that the TLI accepts the importance of expanding the financial sources of the budget. To this end, steps are being taken to ensure a steady increase in the flow of applicants, as well as an increase in alternative sources, such as the organisation of additional courses. However, it became clear from the visit that risk identification and management are situational in nature.

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.

At MMU, many surveys are carried out, during which the problems of resource provision of the APs are also highlighted; the results are presented to the management bodies for a solution. However, the evaluation of the effectiveness of the allocation of financial resources and the planning and management of risks is incomplete at the university.

The distribution and planning of the classroom fund are carried out by the faculties at the beginning of the academic year, based on the number of students studying in each speciality. From the site visit, it became clear that the classroom fund is not enough; the university works in two shifts, and in some cases, the class process also takes place in the offices of the AS.

AS also does not have separate offices, and two or three AS work in one room. There are no offices assigned to chairs in the university, they are located in the corresponding dean's office. Chair heads are forced to use one computer. The above may negatively affect the work of the chairs and the general educational process.

At MMU, there are two computer classrooms, a forensics room, a foreign language classroom, where professional literature is available. Projectors are also used. However, during the visit, it became clear that the lack of resources could hinder the planning and effective implementation of the learning process.

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

The university operates certain tools aimed at managing information and documentation processes. In particular, mmu.am website and social media accounts serve this purpose, through which stakeholders are informed about educational, administrative, research and other types of processes.

According to the self-assessment, dissemination of information through the website significantly contributes to the dissemination of information in the university and raising the awareness of stakeholders. The website contains information on reports, admission, faculties, and current news, SC and SSS activities. At the same time, during the site visit, it was documented that the process of implementation of administrative decisions and orders of the educational institution cannot be considered regulated, the employees are informed about the meetings through the messenger group, and not through the website.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, MMU has managed to ensure uninterrupted work in the conditions of online learning.

The procedure for submission and discussion of proposals, applications-complaints is approved in MMU, but applications are accepted only in paper form. The university does not have an internal electronic document circulation system.

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

During the site visit, it was documented that security officers/guards are also involved to ensure and control the security of the university premises. From the site visit and self-assessment, it became clear that currently, MMU is not able to meet the requirements of students with special needs. There are no ramps for people with special needs, and no other additional conditions have been created. However, they try to organise the courses for students with special needs in the most comfortable classroom/in terms of space/. The TLI does not have a dormitory. There is a first-aid post at the university. Employees and students can freely use its services; a nurse works there and provides first aid on the spot.

According to self-assessment, the TLI does not have a centralised catering system. As a result of surveys conducted by the IQAC, it was found that a buffet is a necessity for students. An opportunity to use coffee and sweets were created.

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

The IQAC regularly conducts surveys to assess resource satisfaction. During the site visit, it was documented that the surveys conducted by the university include certain questions that refer to the satisfaction with the necessary technical means, professional literature and other educational materials of the APs, but not their applicability and effectiveness evaluation.

Considerations: The expert panel positively assesses the MMU's efforts to create a favourable learning environment and atmosphere. However, the lack of classroom funds, professional literature, as well as other necessary resources, including offices for AS and TS, can hinder the effective organisation of the educational process.

There are some procedures for the distribution of financial resources, but the priorities for the distribution of resources or the principles of their determination are not defined. It is worth noting that university expenses are planned based on needs and financial capacity. Budget planning mechanisms according to the AP goals are incomplete. Similar problems can threaten the proportional development of the goals defined by the strategic plan. External and internal information circulation processes at MMU are based on certain principles: accessibility, transparency, and convenience. However, there is no regulated internal electronic document circulation system. The education institution operates adequate safety measures, but overall safety, health services and conditions for beneficiaries with special needs still need improvement. The data of surveys conducted at the university document that most of the students and TS are not satisfied with the material and technical support of the university. During the meetings organised during the site visit, the resources of the MMU were identified as the main problem that needs to be solved first. The university still does not carry out resource evaluation from the point of view of the effectiveness of the implementation of a specific AP.

The expert panel offers planning of resource updates, which will allow estimating the necessary financial costs.

Conclusion: Taking into account the existing resources of MMU, in particular the classroom fund and its material and technical saturation, the lack of a number of infrastructures, such as a gym hall, cafeteria, etc, hinder the effective implementation of APs, the expert panel considers that the TLI still does not have the necessary resources for the effective implementation of the defined mission and goals, the expert panel considers that MMU does not meet the requirements of Criterion 7.

Summary: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of MMU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 7 as **unsatisfactory**.

VIII. SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY

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

Findings

8.1 The Institution has clear policy on accountability.

According to the MMU's institutional accreditation self-assessment, the Quality Assurance Guide developed by the IQAC to regulate the accountability process in the university provides templates for departmental reports, as well as the deadlines for the submission of these reports. Accountability in the university is systematic and implemented on a subordinate basis: teacher's self-assessment, chair head's report, self-assessment, faculty dean's report, vice-rector's annual report, rector's annual report. The annual work plan of the Academic Council defines the reporting dates of the remaining subdivisions of the university. The report presenting the year's activities also includes the financial report, which is prepared by the accounting department.

There is a culture of accountability in the university. However, the reports are mostly descriptive, recording findings, and do not reflect the objectives of the strategic development plan and the measures of their implementation plan.

Reports are posted on the TLI official website for stakeholders.

8.2 The Institution ensures transparency of its procedures and processes and makes them publicly available.MMU ensures transparency and accessibility of procedures, and processes through the university's official website, Facebook page, various social networks and other means of communication. The website includes applicant and student guidelines, information about the TLI, its majors and the qualifications awarded. The website publishes information about public events and events taking place at MMU. The TLI website and Facebook page contain information on news, announcements, events and other ongoing work, which ensures accessibility and transparency of information about the MMU activities. The Facebook page regularly presents information about the everyday life of the university and covers the events. Particular attention was paid to the participation of university students and alumni in the 44-day Artsakh war,and cases of material and moral support provided by university teachers and students. It became clear from the site visit that the management of the university promptly responds to the problems raised on social networks and individually and does everything possible to solve them.

A review of the website shows that the information provided to applicants does not include the content of the APs offered.

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

The development of public relations and active involvement of the university in public programmes is one of the most important tasks of the strategic plan. In this context, MMU emphasises the provision of public services, particularly through additional courses. Currently, the university has contracts with the Red Cross and a number of other organisations to conduct trainings for their employees.

According to self-assessment, feedback mechanisms are the website, Facebook and other social network pages, surveys conducted among stakeholders, etc. An important feedback mechanism is, in particular, the holding of round tables with the participation of employers after the internship, which gives an opportunity to raise issues and improve APs.

We consider it worth noting that from 2021, in order to raise public awareness of the university's activities, the TLI managerial staff is inviting press conferences.

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

Within the framework of its mission, MMU stresses the importance of not being left out of Artsakh's public life and development and supporting the solution of the state's problems by all possible means. The university is trying to respond to Artsakh's challenges within its capabilities.

The university emphasises raising the educational, academic and cultural level of society. Short-term courses are implemented by external and internal stakeholders.

According to the self-assessment, events, such as discussions organised by faculties and chairs, round tables, SC cultural and patriotic events, are carried out at the university. The SC participation in national events is appreciated.

The expert panel recorded that there is no information about, for example, the extent to which the results of bachelor's theses or master's theses are presented to the representatives of the business sector and to what extent they are applied to solving specific problems of the given sector. On the other hand, it is necessary to note that the Caucasus Studies Center has started publishing a series about the endangered cultural heritage of Artsakh.

Considerations: The expert panel positively assesses that MMU has a defined and clear system of accountability, which is periodic in nature. The reports presented by the rector, departments and faculties are positively evaluated. At the same time, the panel notes that the introduction of an analytical approach to increase the efficiency of work organisation will contribute to the identification of problems, the analysis of the causes of unfulfilled works and the introduction of a culture of continuous improvement. The expert panel positively evaluates the university's aspiration to make its activities available to the public. It is important that the university has various feedback tools, such as surveys, seminars-discussions, round tables, website, social networking platforms, etc. The QA infrastructure can raise the problems of relations with the public, the communication system, while the operation of the system itself, the solution of the raised problems should be under the responsibility of another unit. A comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms and, in general, of the public relations system will allow highlighting the existing potential problems and their causes, targeting possible ways of reform. In order to provide feedback to external stakeholders, particularly employers and alumni, it is highly necessary to activate the activities of the TLI Career Center.

The expert panel highlights the efforts of the university in the work carried out in the direction of knowledge transfer. The conducted trainings, visits within the framework of internships, etc, contribute to increasing the awareness of the university's activities among the public, as well as to the transfer of the values created by MMU to the general layers of society.

Conclusion: Taking into account that MMU has an experience of accountability, which is able to contribute to raising the problems of the university's activity, the TLI realises the need to introduce reports with an analytical approach, there is a website, a Facebook page, which are quite active and cover the internal processes, the university presents to the public is additional services, the expert panel considers that the MMU meets the requirements of Criterion 8.

Summary: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 8 as **satisfactory**.

IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALISATION

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

MMU emphasises the internationalisation of education and the exchange of experience, which is clearly reflected in 2019-2023 in SDP, according to which an important component of the TLI's mission is the joint development of curricula and courses in foreign languages, ensuring the mobility of students and TS, MMU's contribution to the development of the region and Artsakh. Although MMU does not have an elaborate policy on the development of external relations and internationalisation, since its establishment, the university has strived for the comprehensive development of external relations and the internationalisation of its activities, with the involvement of external financial sources in recent years.

In cooperation with the SSCF (Swiss South Caucasus Foundation), 13 joint projects were implemented, including the involvement of foreign specialists during the development of APs, alternative courses of modular programmes, international business trips of students and staff, and the organisation of international conferences. The cooperation agreement with the ICRC mission in NKR included language training courses for the staff. There are examples the TS mobility, but the number decreased during the war, as well as with the termination of the activities of the Swiss South Caucasian Foundation in Artsakh.

Every year, international conferences are held as a result of cooperation with local and foreign universities. In particular, international conferences were organised within the framework of the Caucasus Studies Center, in which scientists from the Republic of Armenia, the Russian Federation, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia participated. The employees of the Caucasus Studies Center organised international conferences at the TLI and also participated in various international conferences. The researchers of the Caucasus Studies Center participated in international conferences and round tables. Foreign and Armenian scientists participating in international conferences read lectures to the MMU students.

MMU cooperates with education institutions of unrecognised countries for the purpose of exchange of experience for the development of internationalisation.

It became clear from the site visit that the university constantly develops its ties with various organisations and educational institutions of Artsakh and RA, as a result of which students get the opportunity to do internships in the RA universities. There is an exchange of teachers' experience; specialists from RA education institutions deliver lectures at MMU. For example, the TS of the Chair of Law participated in various international seminars. An attempt is made to use the potential of the Diaspora to activate faculty and student mobility.

According to the MMU self-assessment, university diplomas are recognised in the CIS and other countries. University alumni work in CIS countries, Dubai, China, European countries, Iraq, USA.

MMU signs contracts with organisations operating in Artsakh to provide additional services. For example, cooperation agreements have been signed with the ICRC NKR mission office to conduct language training courses for the staff. MMU also continuously cooperates with the schools of the Artsakh Republic in professional orientation, organisation of joint intellectual and cultural events for students and pupils, and other directions.

Some of the university's regulatory documents, educational and information packages are presented in two languages: Armenian and English, on the university's official website.

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

According to the MMU self-assessment, by November 2020, the process of foreign relations and internationalisation was coordinated by the vice-rector for scientific and external affairs, then, after the cancellation of this position, the functions were distributed between the heads of the Career Center and the Center for Caucasian Studies, and the work is supervised by the MMU vice-rector.

International conferences were successfully organised by the Caucasus Studies Center during the reporting period. Within the scope of the functions of the career centre is the creation of external relations, in particular the cooperation with various organisations of Artsakh.

The university spent expenses aimed at the internationalisation and development of external relations in connection with signing contracts, visiting various international universities, regularly organising international conferences, etc.

The university's external relations staff ensure that the process runs smoothly.

9.3 The Institution effectively collaborates with local and international counterparts.

According to the MMU self-assessment, MMU is open to cooperation. The rector of the university is a member of 'The Club of the Rectors of Europe'. As a result of international conferences, agreements were signed with other universities. The university has signed cooperation agreements and memoranda with a number of local and international institutions and structures. The organisation of international conferences provides an opportunity not only to present Artsakh to teachers and students from RA and abroad, but also to help university students and TS improve their knowledge of a foreign language and establish contacts with foreign colleagues and students with the expectation of future cooperation.

Teachers from abroad and RA are invited to MMU, who deliver lectures, and organise seminars, online or in person. There are cases when the TLI teachers visited other universities.

Cooperation with local organisations: schools, colleges, universities, state administration bodies, and banks, is mainly limited to organising internships and inviting teachers from these organisations. The collaboration does not cover the field of academic research.

According to the MMU self-assessment, the managerial staff of the university was trained in Great Britain, Dubai in cooperation with Contract Global Conferences Ltd. The training of teachers in various foreign universities was carried out remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There are studies of international experience by teachers to improve the quality of teaching, but these cases are few.

As a result of the site visit, it became clear that the signed contracts are valid. The university has signed 8 cooperation agreements with various universities and organizations. Some programmes are taught by foreign teachers, and TLI teachers also teach at other universities. The university implements various research and academic programmes in cooperation with other international universities. The university is planning another international conference in 2023.

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

The rector and the TS realise the importance of knowing a foreign language for increasing the quality of education, and internationalisation of research activities. In order to expand involvement in international cooperative programs, the university strives to ensure a sufficient level of knowledge of foreign languages for students and faculty members. Advanced English language training was carried out at the university before the war situation, now it is planned to continue the training aimed at increasing the foreign language proficiency among TS.

According to surveys, 27.5% of the TS know a foreign language. All university students and teachers speak Russian. Master's degree-professional English is taught according to educational level. According to self-assessment, advanced English language training at MMU is provided to the students in 'Management', 'Information Systems', 'Informatics/Computer Science, 'English Language and Literature', and 'Caucasus Studies' APs. Advanced Azerbaijani language learning for the Caucasus Studies AP students. Thus, students and staff of the university are actively engaged in the study of foreign languages, and up to 5 languages are offered to the students of the Department of Caucasian Studies.

All documents for foreign students studying at MMU are drawn up in Russian and English. Foreign students are mainly from Turkmenistan.

Employers value students and alumnies foreign language skills, and during the war, many students worked as translators for the army.

Considerations: The expert panel considers it positive that MMU is undertaking many activities to promote external relations and internationalisation activities, which will create a basis for future development. Based on the relevant objectives of the SP, which guides its functions in the given field, it carries out consistent activities aimed at internationalisation and the development of foreign relations, even in the war situation prevailing in the country.

There is no separate unit for the implementation of international processes in the university, but its presence would contribute to more coordinated and planned work, and the realisation of the set goals. The expert panel positively evaluates the development of internationalisation carried out by the TLI in the last 3 years, also takes into account the political and economic environment of MMU and believes that the TLI is trying its best to develop further international cooperation. The university develops cooperation with RA and unrecognised states, as well as RF universities. Cooperation agreements with foreign partners have been signed. The performed works contribute to the strengthening of external ties. Before the war and the restrictions caused by COVID-19, students from abroad studied at the university. Foreign students are mainly from Turkmenistan and the number of foreign students may decrease as a result of the war. The university should offer more information about its APs in English and Russian on its website. It would be useful to have more information in Russian and English on the TLI website. The university should also explore online international mobility programmes for staff and students. Therefore,
MMU must continue to take measures to attract financial sources to ensure student mobility.

The TLI students and staff have a high level of proficiency in Russian, but not so good English, and need to further improve their knowledge of English and professional communication skills, which will also allow access to the professional literature in English. MMU emphasises the knowledge of a foreign language and creates opportunities for additional training and improvement of students and TS. The continuation of this process can have a tangible impact on joint education and APs, will contribute to the study of foreign good practices and improve localisation, agility and internationalisation.

The expert panel considers that the university can continue to apply for international grants, as this will activate student and staff mobility and provide additional contacts and possible partners in the future. Online mobility also needs to be considered. Students can participate in online courses organised by partner universities, continue to learn about available free courses, and use open educational resources available on the Internet.

In order to be attractive to foreign universities, it would be good to improve the quality of research. Inviting well-known diaspora alumni as guest teachers and experts is very necessary.

We consider it necessary to mention that due to the unrecognised Republic of Artsakh and the limited financial resources of the TLI, the implementation of the activities listed above is quite difficult.

The expert panel suggests establishing closer ties with other local universities, organising joint student and staff events, games, quizzes and conferences, as well as continuing cooperation with external stakeholders and involving them in further developments of the university.

Conclusion: Considering that in such difficult conditions, having limited financial opportunities, the TLI has been active in the continuous development and coordination of the internationalisation component of its mission, signed a number of existing agreements with local and international structures, regularly organises international conferences, emphasises increasing the English language proficiency among students and TS, the expert panel considers that MMU meets the requirements of Criterion 9.

Summary: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of MMU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 9 as **satisfactory**.

X. 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 University has QA policies and procedures, which are presented in the QA manual. The QA manual is a methodological basis for the implementation of the internal quality assurance system. The QA system has been implemented in the university since 2019. Before that, in 2018, the NQA centre was created and its regulations were developed. The TLI's QA Manual was published in 2020. QA is based on established university principles, policies and strategic goals and objectives.

According to the QA manual, the goals of implementing the QA system are to ensure the comparability of university education to European and local standards, to contribute to the formation of a QA culture, and to support the formation of a self-learning community. The goals of the QA system are consistent with the university's mission and strategic plan.

The QA centre has set itself the task of constantly collecting data using QA tools, which will provide an opportunity to analyse and ensure the ways of development of the university according to the SP. The centre reports directly to the rector. The QA centre monitors the implementation of the strategic plans of the university and faculties and the accountability of all departments. The QA principles are presented in the QA manual. The manual defines 5 levels of IQA (applicant, chair, faculties, methodical council and academic potential). For each level, QA tools have been developed, which should collect data for that level. QA tools also include stakeholder surveys, which are done by SURVIO and SurveyMonkey, Google Forms on online platforms. The manual also presents other tools: teacher's self-assessment, chair head's and dean's report formats, etc.

IQAC is involved in the development and review of APs. The QA manual presents the AP strategy implementation procedure, the education quality feedback system with its map, the university's SP and its implementation plan.

The consultations provided by RA ANQA during the implementation greatly contributed to the development of QA processes at the university. The TS and AS participated in them.

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

The QA Center has one paid position. The centre as such is not separated in a separate office, but is provided with the necessary property and logistical resources.

By the order of April 11, 2019, the IQAC working group was formed, which includes specialists from relevant departments. A budget is allocated to the QA centre from the scarce funds of the university. According to the head of the QA centre, the minimum programme is still being implemented, for which there is no shortage of human and financial resources. It is planned to establish paid positions of QA officers in the faculties in the future.

The 2018-2019 budget implementation defined funds for the participation of the TLI employees in various QA trainings. In 2020, implementation of the budget, for understandable reasons, the articles of the measures were not implemented and were transferred to the implementation of the 2021-2022 year.

The TLI allocates resources for staff training at ANQA workshops and events organised by the IQAC. The main work related to quality assurance is carried out by the head of the centre together with the department heads and other staff members. The university provides all necessary material and technical resources requested by the Center, including software for conducting surveys with applicants, students, staff and alumni. Thus, university personal pages (accounts) on the SURVIO and SurveyMonkey online platforms are financed by the budget article.

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

The university involves internal and external stakeholders in the QA process. For example, students are involved not only in regular surveys during semesters, but also at the end of the year; they participate in round table discussions with employers and alumni, as well as participate in the activities of the SC and the AC. Staff together with employers are also involved in surveys and round table discussions.

The involvement of TS and AS is expressed in:

- the AP development and review process,
- the involvement in working groups and committees, participation in the self-assessment process,
- the use of different QA tools,
- The IQAC working group works particularly actively. Expert panel meetings showed that there is a division of labour within the group.

Stakeholder involvement was also seen during the expert meeting with the self-assessment group, which demonstrated the truly participatory nature of the process.

Employers are less involved. They participate in round table discussions after the internship. Employers are also included in final attestation committees. Their opinions are always welcome, but they are quite reluctant to respond to further practical steps. It can be suggested to formalise their relationship with internal and external stakeholders. The participation of employers in programme reviews was mentioned, but it should become the rule, not an individual case. The TS is involved in lesson observations and regularly attends each other's lessons.

10.4 The internal quality assurance system is periodically reviewed.

Until 2019, the QA system had not been fully developed, all evaluations had been verbal and descriptive in nature. Due to the development of the QA manual in 2020, the work became better organised and more important. Although the QA system was implemented recently, it managed to revise some tools. The QA Center planned to achieve greater results, but because of the 44-day war, some of the work was not done. For example, reports have gone from being descriptive to being more analytical. In order to add an analytical component, the IQAC has developed appropriate forms. The AP specification formats were developed. However, the interruption of the normal implementation of the educational process for about half a year did not give the opportunity to fully apply all the tools.

Despite this, the expert panel had the opportunity to get acquainted with the accountability mechanism and compare the 2-year reports (for the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 academic years). The changes made had a tendency to improve, from descriptive to more analytical.

A new AP development format has been introduced by the QA Center, according to which APs have been revised. Subject descriptions of APs have been reviewed.

At the suggestion of the IQAC working group, the evaluation scale was revised, the share of independent work was increased, and a map of independent tasks was created.

As a result of the IQAC working group's internship effectiveness discussion, the accountability and internship evaluation format was revised.

The experience of a number of universities was studied to improve the QA processes. The TLI uses standards when developing its own programmes.

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

The TLI has been participating in accreditation processes since 2005. In 2005-2010, 11 programmes of the university were accredited. In 2011, a new system of accreditation has been introduced in the Republic of Armenia. In 2019, with the introduction of the new QA system, the university started the process of creating new tools, one of the goals of which was also to create grounds for external evaluation.

The toolkit provided in the QA manual is extensive, but as the system is newly implemented, only the following data is currently collected:

On students:

1. Student mobility,
2. Progress indicators,
3. Student satisfaction with resources and TS,
4. Assessment of internships:

On TS:

5. Teachers' self-assessment,
6. Teacher's portfolio,
7. Organising and discussing lesson observations,
8. Teacher assessment by students,
9. Assessment of chair heads,
10. Revealing staff satisfaction with resources.

On APs:

11. Evaluation of APs based on data from final attestation reports,
12. After the end of the internship, students, employers, teachers and the head of the QA centre have a round-table discussion,
13. AP monitoring through lesson observations,
14. Alumni employment data (collected from 2020).

On research:

15. Based on the ANQA questionnaire data (for teachers and students).

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 IQA system ensures the transparency of processes in the institution by providing internal and external stakeholders with valid and up-to-date information on their quality. The QA manual developed by the IQAC ensures transparency of processes in the facility using relevant data and critical self-analysis.

The basis for the transparency of the TLI's activities are the reports submitted by the departments, they are available to internal stakeholders on the MMU internal network, and the end-of-year rector report based on them is presented on the university's website and is also available externally.

Information about the TLI is also given through mass media. The Caucasus Studies Center is particularly active, providing information on university research through mass media and electronic newspapers.

Along with that, the expert panel noted that the information on quality assurance processes on the university's website is not fully presented and needs improvement.

Considerations: MMU, emphasises QA processes, and established a QA centre and provided a position from the scarce funds of the university. The IQAC task force also has other administrative responsibilities. QA policies and procedures were developed during the 2019/2020 year. The QA manual was developed. The QA centre reports directly to the rector. The QA Center has the necessary financial and logistical resources for short-term and mid-term projects. The university tends to create a QA network system.

Units present their analyses, followed by an internal assessment by the IQAC using appropriate tools. All this is further reflected in the annual report of the IQAC and the rector.

The tools developed by the QA centre facilitate the assessment of many processes for external experts, and increase the visibility of the work being done. The QA centre, using these tools, collects a variety of data that enables the evaluation of the educational process and APs from different perspectives. Over time, the planned data collection by the QA Center may provide necessary material on the learning process and AP management, but the implementation time has been short and a database has not yet been created. For example, there are no credit verification tools implemented in APs, the Expert panel did not notice any work in that direction. However, the QA Center observed the time presented to the assignments given to students and realised that it was not reliable; they saw the way out in reducing them and forming interdisciplinary assignments.

The QA centre has a policy of adopting a transparent working style. During the site visit, the experts were convinced that it does not hide the shortcomings of the university, on the contrary, it is not only ready to openly discuss and raise the weaknesses, but also tries to find a solution for them in the current difficult conditions of the Republic of Artsakh.

Due to the consistent work aimed at the gradual implementation of the QA system, the expert panel noticed improvement trends in a number of processes of the university (creation of AP packages, improvement of APs taking into account the needs of the labour market, highlighting of needs and their presentation to management bodies, creation of internship programs and implementation of the efficiency evaluation mechanism). The IQAC has become an important part of the TLI's management, which will contribute to the improvement of the university's governance system. The QA centre has adopted the approach of spreading the PDCA cycle in all processes and implementing a quality management system.

Conclusion: Given that MMU has developed quality assurance policies and procedures, the QA system has certain resources to accomplish the tasks set before it, the QA structure involves internal and external stakeholders in the QA processes, largely ensures the transparency of activities internally and to some extent, external stakeholders; a number of QA mechanisms and tools have been reviewed and the QA system contributes to the continuous improvement of all MMU processes, the expert panel considers that the MMU meets the requirements of Criterion 10.

Summary: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of MMU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 10 as **satisfactory**.

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERION	CONCLUSION
1. Mission and Purposes	Satisfactory
2. Governance and Administration	Unsatisfactory
3. Academic Programmes	Satisfactory
4. Students	Satisfactory
5. Faculty and Staff	Satisfactory
6. Research and Development	Satisfactory
7. Infrastructure and Resources	Unsatisfactory
8. Societal Responsibility	Satisfactory
9. External Relations and Internationalisation	Satisfactory
10. Internal Quality Assurance System	Satisfactory

_____

Lilit Badalyan
Chair of Expert panel
17.06.2022

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

Lilit Badalyan: In 1992-1997, she studied at Yerevan State Linguistic University/former Yerevan Pedagogical Institute named after V. Bryusov/ at the Faculty of Romance and Germanic Languages. In September 2008, she defended her PhD thesis on the topic 'The Word-Forming Possibilities of the English "Destruction" Verbs in Combination with Armenian' and was awarded the Candidate of Philology Degree. In 1997-2019, worked as an associate professor at the English Chair of the Yerevan State University of Languages and Social Sciences. Since December 2019, she has been the head of the Chair of Linguistics and Theory of Communication at YSLU. Participated in ANQA trainings. As a member of ANQA expert panel, conducted site visits to many universities of the country.

Inna Pomorina: In 1999, she graduated from the Leningrad Institute of Finance and Economics and the University of the West of England master's programme. In 1984, she became a Doctor of Philosophy in Economics. In 1976-1995, taught at the Leningrad University of Finance and Economics. In 2000-2013, was a researcher at the University of Bristol, then was a senior researcher, and since 2013, she has been lecturing at the University of Bath Spa, Great Britain. She is a member of a number of international agencies and associations, an author and co-author of a number of academic articles and researches.

Lilit Zaqaryan: In 1988, she graduated from the Armenian State Pedagogical Institute named after Kh. Abovyan, receiving the qualification of a certified specialist in history and Soviet law. In 1989-1992, studied PhD at the Institute of History of the RA National Academy of Sciences. In 1993, became a Candidate of Historical Sciences, in 2008 - Associate Professor of History. The scope of academic research includes topics related to the transformation of the political system in Armenia, the formation of civil society, and the gender aspects of politics. She taught at Northern University, Yerevan State Pedagogical University named after Kh. Abovyan, Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University. She was the Dean of the Department of Law and Journalism, Head of the Chair of Journalism and Social Sciences, Head of the Education Department, Head of the Quality Assurance Department at the Northern University. At the Northern University, she participated in pilot programme accreditation activities organised by ANQA in 2009-2010; in 2012-2013 - in institutional pilot accreditation. In 2015-2020, worked at ANQA as a Senior Specialist in Policy Development and Implementation. Since 2021, she has been the director of the Quality assessment and assurance center of the National Agrarian University of Armenia.

Mariam Gevorgyan: In 2013, she studied PhD under the co-supervision of the University of Burgundy (Laboratoire Interdisciplinaire Carnot de Bourgogne, ICB uB) and the Institute of Physical Research of the RA National Academy of Sciences, Boursière Gouvernement Français, thèse cotutelle internationale. In 2016, became a Candidate of Physico-Mathematical Sciences in RA; became a Doctor of Philosophy in Physics in France. Since 2013, she has been a researcher at the Institute of Physical Research of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia. In 2015-2016, taught master's students at the University of Burgundy, France. In 2017-2018, she was theoretical physicist at YSU. Since 2017, she has been the head of the Education Quality Assurance and Management Department of ASPU after Kh. Abovyan. She has been ANQA expert since 2018. Since 2020, she has been teaching physics in English at the French University in Armenia and Gladzor University of Yerevan. Since 2012, has been a member of SPIE of the International Organisation for Optics and Photonics, and uince 2013 - of the IPERA Union, integrating the National Institute of Statistics of the RA NAS with European research. She is the author and co-author of many scientific articles. Has published 3 books, international grant programmes.

Alla Sargsyan: She is a 1st-year master's student at the Finance Department of the Faculty of Economics of Gavar State University. Authored 6 articles. In 2019-2020, she got the 2nd place in the field of social studies in the 'RA Best Student' competition. In 2020, participated in the ANQA training for student-experts of the ANQA 'Student Voice' project. As a student-expert, she was included in ANQA's expert panels and participated in accreditation processes.

APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT

02.05.2022 - 05.05.2022

	02.05.2022 **Join Zoom Meeting:** **https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83692293681?pwd=WHVNSzNRNlB3NG03NlUzdVRrb25QUT09** **Meeting ID: 836 9229 3681** **Passcode: 745706**	*Launch*	*End*	*Duration*
1	Meeting with MMU Rector	09:30	10:20	50 min
2	Meeting with the self-assessment working group	10:30	11:20	50 min
3	Meeting with the vice-rectors and deans	11:30	12:30	60 min
4	Meeting with the SC and SSS representatives	12:40	13:30	50 min
5	Break, expert panel discussions	13:40	14:40	60 min
6	Meeting with employers	14:50	15:50	60 min
7	Meeting with alumni	16:00	17:00	60 min
8	Review of documents and closed session of the expert panel	17:10	18:30	80 min

	03.05.2022	*Launch*	*End*	*Duration*
1	Lesson observations	09:00	09:30	30 min
2	Meeting with the members of the Board of Founders	09:30	10:20	50 min

3	Meeting with heads of chairs	10:30	11:30	60 min
4	Meeting with the representatives of the main teaching staff (10-12 representatives)	11:40	12:40	60 min
5	Break, expert panel discussions	12:50	13:50	60 min
6	Lesson observations	14:00	14:50	50 min
7	Meeting with the full-time and part-time bachelor's and and master's students (10-12 representatives)	15:00	16:00	60 min
8	Review of documents and closed session of the expert panel	16:10	18:00	110 min

	04.05.2022			*Launch*	*End*	*Duration*
1	Meeting with staff member(s) responsible for the AP on 'Law'	Meeting with staff member(s) responsible for the AP on 'Caucasus Studies'	Meeting with staff member(s) responsible for the AP on 'English Language and Literature'	09:30	10:20	50 min
2	Meeting with teachers of the AP on 'Law'	Meeting with teachers of the AP 'Caucasus Studies'	Meeting with teachers of the AP on 'English Language and Literature'	10:30	11:30	60 min

3	Meeting with students of the AP on 'Law'	Meeting with students of the AP on 'Caucasus Studies'	Meeting with students of the AP on 'English Language and Literature'	11:45	12:45	60 min
4	Meeting with the heads of departments (Educational part, Economic department, HR department, Career Center, Information department, Library)			13:00	14:00	60 min
5	Break, expert panel discussions			14:15	15:15	60 min
6	Open meeting			15:30	16:10	40 min
7	Review of documents and closed session of the expert panel			16:15	18:15	160 min

	05.05.2022	*Launch*	*End*	*Duration*
1	Meeting with Internal quality assurance representatives	09:30	10:30	60 min
2	Meeting with members chosen by the expert panel	10:40	11:30	50 min
3	Review of documents and closed session of the expert panel	11:40	12:50	70 min
4	Break, expert panel discussions	13:00	14:00	60 min
5	Review of documents and closed session of the expert panel	14:10	17:20	210 min
6	Meeting with MMU rector and managerial staff, summary of the visit	17:30	18:00	30 min

APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

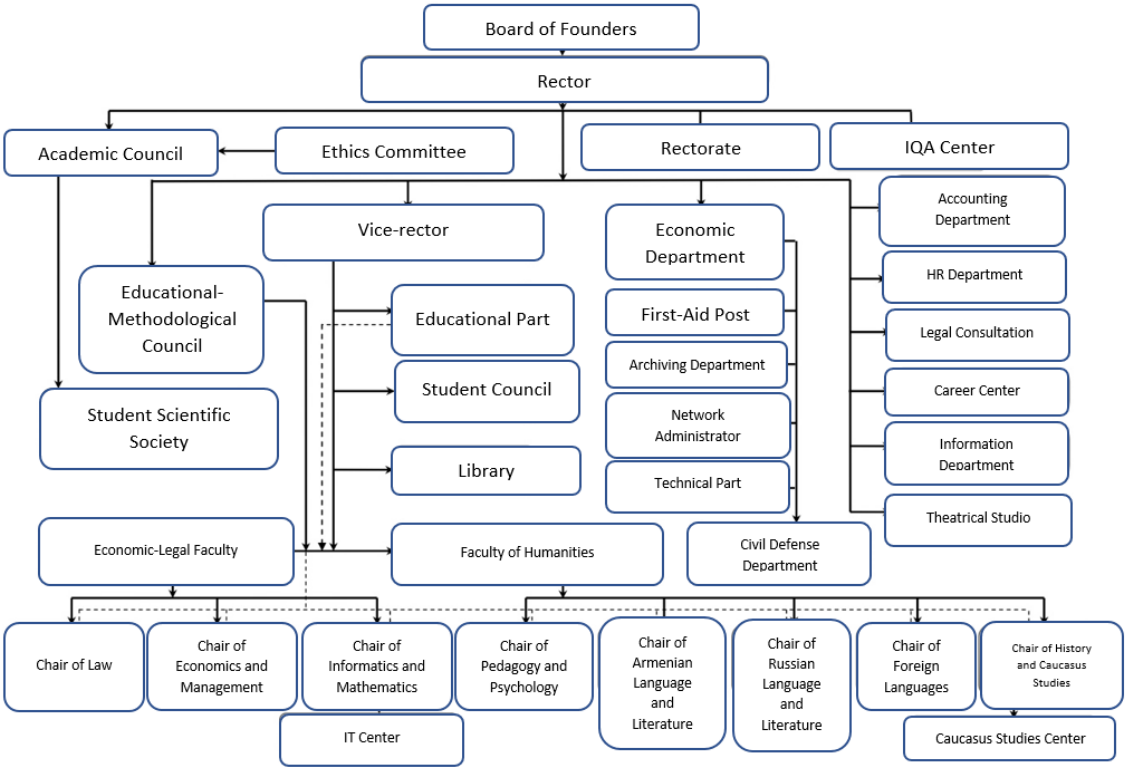
	Name of the Document	Criterion
1.	SWOT analysis of the current situation.	1
2.	Feedback, and documents confirming the PDCA cycle.	1
3.	Academic Council minutes, Faculty Council minutes, Student Council session minutes.	2
4.	Documented procedure on the 'Preparation of the educational process of higher education	2
5.	Annual plans of chairs and faculties	2
6.	Example of labour market analysis.	2
7.	Chair report with the AP effectiveness analysis.	2
8.	Samples of subject descriptions with weekly presentation of the material.	3
9.	Benchmarking document, basics of benchmarking.	3
10.	Course papers and theses (including the ones by individual and free auditors).	3
11.	Old and new examples of the presented academic programmes.	3
12.	Registers.	3
13.	Minutes of final attestation exams.	3
14.	Reports of the chairpersons of the final attestation examination committees.	3
15.	Samples of student independent work.	3
16.	SSS activity report, SC reports.	4,6
17.	Document analysing the results of student surveys.	4
18.	List of scientific works by students.	4,6
19.	List of joint articles with students.	4,6
20.	Year-end teacher ranking data.	5
21.	Examples of individual plans.	5

22.	Examples of completed questionnaires.	5
23.	Examples of lesson observation conclusions.	5
24.	Annual chair plans, training effectiveness assessments.	5
25.	Samples: 'Teacher's self-assessment', 'Chair head's report', as well as anonymous online teacher assessment survey data by IQAC.	5
26	Teachers's portfolio / CV, training certificates, self-assessment, subject description /.	5
27.	List of publications in foreign international peer-reviewed professional journals.	6
28.	Analysis of the results of resource satisfaction surveys.	7
29.	Development and evaluation of production training programmes.	3, 10
30.	Basics of developing a master's programme on 'Social Work'.	10
31.	Teacher evaluation questionnaire.	10
32.	IQAC annual work plans and reports.	10
33.	Cases when the issues identified as a result of the internal evaluation of the implemented measures have received their solutions.	10

APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED

- Chairs, subdivisions
- Computer classroom,
- Forensics classroom,
- Foreign language classroom,
- Library, reading hall,
- Center for Caucasian Studies,
- First-aid post.

APPENDIX 5. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION



APPENDIX 6. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANQA - National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance
AP - Academic programme
AR - Artsakh Republic
AS – Administrative staff
ICRC - International Committee of the Red Cross
IQAC - Iternal Quality Assurance Center
MM – Mass media
MMU- Mesrop Mashtots University
NKR - Nagorno-Karabakh Republic
NQF – National Qualifications Framework
PDCA – Plan-do-check-act
QA – Quality Assurance
RF - Russian Federation
SC - Student Council
SP- Strategic plan
SSS – Student Scientific Society
TLI - Tertiary Level Institution
TS - Teaching staff