NATIONAL CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE FOUNDATION

EXPERT PANEL REPORT

ON INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF

THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ACADEMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

Yerevan – 2014

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation procedure of the Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia (hereinafter – the Academy) was made possible through the grant project under the auspices of the World Bank and implemented by the Project Implementation Unit, Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia. The accreditation procedure was organized and coordinated by the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (hereinafter - ANQA).

In its endeavors, ANQA followed the Government Decree No 978-N, dated 30 June "On Approving the Order on State Accreditation of Tertiary Level Institutions and Academic Programmes in the Republic of Armenia" and the Government Decree No 959-N "On Approving the RA State Accreditation Criteria".

The external evaluation was conducted by a panel of four local and one international independent experts in compliance with the requirements of the Regulation on Expert Panel Formation developed by ANQA.

The institutional accreditation was focused not only on external quality assurance, but also on the management of the institution and the continuous improvement of the quality of academic programmes. Hence, there were two objectives for the expert panel to pursue:

1) for the purpose of accreditation, to conduct an external evaluation of institutional capacities in accordance with the RA accreditation criteria;

2) for the purpose of quality enhancement, to conduct a peer review from the perspective of compliance with the international standards and the institution's ambitions to be integrated into the European Higher Education Area.

This report reflects the external evaluation of the Academy's institutional capacities against the state accreditation criteria and standards, as well as the peer review.

CONTENTS

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION
EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO ACREDITATION CRITERIA

The external evaluation was conducted by a panel of independent experts formed in compliance with the Regulation of the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation[1] on Expert Panel Formation. The evaluation was done pursuant to the 10 institutional accreditation criteria, as approved by the government Decree No 959-N, 30 June 2011.

While conducting the evaluation, due consideration was given to the fact that the Academy provides Master and post-graduate basic and additional academic programmes to prepare professionals in the administrative, political, social, legal and economic fields of the RA pursuant to the civil service requirements. The Academy has Master programmes in public administration, jurisprudence, economics, psychology and political science.

Previously the Academy has not been accredited, thus the self-evaluation in accordance with the ten criteria was the first step of the Institution in the process.

The Academy provides tertiary level education, which is in line with the levels 7 and 8 of the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (ANQF). The Academy considers the integration into the European Higher Education System as one of its top priorities. Overall, academic programmes are designed in line with the mission and goals of the Academy and the requirements of state educational standards. Internationalization perspectives, however, require that more efficient benchmarking mechanisms be set in place in order to promote mobility, which remains limited at present.

Efforts have been made in the Academy to improve the infrastructure and to adapt it to the needs of the academic programmes, by making sure that there are sufficient equipment and facilities for the management of the educational processes. The Academy implements its activities by means of both budgetary and the extra-budgetary funding. Such funding is generated from tuition fees, training courses, the sale of its periodical review and income from other sources. A new location of 4318.3 square meters has been provided to the Academy by RA government decision, which will significantly enlarge resource capacities of the Institution.

The Academy has a comparatively small number of permanent teaching staff. Given its specificity in preparing public administration professionals, the Academy strives to involve practitioners in the teaching process with a view to transfer to students practical skills and to tailor their knowledge and capacities to the demand on the labor market. Although the activities of the Academy are managed by motivated teaching staff, there is still a need for more systematic procedures for the recruitment, promotion and professional development of the staff.

The admission of students is carried out pursuant to the Master Programme Admission Procedure, based on a competition consisting of two phases: testing and an interview. In the last three years, the number of Master programme students has increased: 463 students in 2011, 520 students in 2012 and 545 students in 2013. Consultation meetings with the teaching staff and optional courses are available for students. Some steps were taken recently to set up a career and alumni Center. The level of participation of students in research activities is comparatively low.

The Academy's system of governance, administrative structures and their functioning require shared decision making processes based on the involvement of both teaching staff and students. Institutional decisions are carried out by collegial bodies as set forth in the organizational structure. However, there is a need for more extensive cooperation with the external stakeholders and a closer evaluation of the efficiency of the management structure.

The Professional Education Quality Assurance Division was established in the Academy on August 1, 2010, and since 2012, the Division has performed its activities more dynamically. The Concept Paper of quality assurance that has been developed defines the relevant requirements and principles as

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[1] APPENDIX 1. Curriculum Vitae of Members of the Expert Panel

well as the organizational structure. The Quality Assurance Manual has also been developed. The internal quality assurance system is still in progress. Currently, the development of quality assurance mechanisms and their implementation frameworks are still in progress.

STRENGTHS OF THE INSTITUTION
1) clear and shared vision of the Academy's mission and vision: institutional commitment to employability and support from public administration sector;
2) a strategic plan with clearly defined mission and goals,
3) regulated decision-making organizational structure reflecting the needs of internal stakeholders,
4) motivated management team, teaching staff and support staff,
5) tradition of enrolling civil servants with hands-on, practical knowledge as teaching staff,
6) mission-based academic programmes developed in compliance with ANQF and based on the experience of external and internal stakeholders,
7) a targeted admission procedure for applicants and opportunities for effective learning by students,
8) learning programmes and methods aimed at the effective acquisition of practical skills,
9) strong student motivation and confidence, student/alumni satisfaction: the Academy is most students' first choice,
10) proven success with the increase and diversification of financial resources, hence diminishing dependency on governmental subsidies,
11) good existing base for further improvement in upcoming years (a strategic plan as a guiding tool, experience with the case study method, new quality assurance tools, promising international cooperation).

WEAKNESSES OF THE INSTITUTION
1) dependency on the recruiting policy applied by public administration entities in Armenia,
2) insufficient experience in organizing and implementing the activities defined by the Strategic plan,
3) insufficient involvement of external stakeholders in the decision-making process,
4) unclear mechanisms for the assessment of learning outcomes,
5) lack of mechanisms for assessing the needs of teaching staff and implementing training sessions for them,
6) insufficient financing from the Academy for effective implementation of research programmes; unclear definition of the role and purpose of research in the teaching process,
7) weak teacher-student collaboration in research frameworks, low level of student involvement in research activities, insufficient international cooperation in the field of research,
8) insufficient level of establishing external relations, carrying out international cooperation and recognition,
9) inadequate library and information facilities.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS
Mission and Purpose
1) To improve the evaluation and improvement mechanisms of the outcomes of mission and purpose and to develop clear procedures for it; to clarify expected outcomes as defined in the Strategic Plan and their assessment indicators;
2) To expand the scope of external stakeholders of the Academy and to foster more active participation in defining its needs, strategic goals and objectives, as well as in governance;

Governance And Administration

3) To move towards a three level planning system by developing also medium-term programs;

4) To clearly define the role of collegial governance bodies in the coordination of activities between various units of the Academy and to increase the participation of students in such structures;

Academic Programmes

5) To develop adequate mechanisms to evaluate the provision of up-to-date, objective and impartial (quantitative and qualitative) information on the quality of academic programmes offered and on qualification awards; to apply measurable indicators for overall quality assessment;

6) To expand the spectrum of teaching methods, to direct such methods to the objective of achieving the defined competences and to improve the appropriateness of available resources;

7) To review the student assessment system and to clarify the assessment criteria;

8) To apply effective measures to increase the international mobility of teaching staff and students.

Students

9) To improve the indicators applied by the Academy to evaluate educational, consultancy and other services for students (especially part-time students) and quality assurance mechanisms, and to consider the results in the development plans or strategic plans of the Academy;

10) To improve the mechanisms identifying learning needs of the students;

11) To draft and implement clearly articulated procedures for extra-curricular activities. In particular, it is advisable to develop supervision mechanisms for these activities based on syllabi;

12) To enlarge the activities for the orienatation meetings;

13) To define a procedure and schedule for students to apply to the administrative staff;

14) With a view to promote the career of students, to acquaint them with relevant procedures (especially with civil service competitions) for applying to specific positions;

15) To form a Student Scientific Organization, Student Scientific Council; to attach more importance to research activities performed jointly by professors and students; to increase the level of teacher and student involvement in research activities;

16) To pay more attention to advocating the rights of students by extending such functions to certain structural units of the Academy; to establish a legal structure to consult and to provide other services.

Teaching and Support Staff

17) To review the policy of recruitment, promotion and professional development of teaching and support staff; to develop mechanisms for the evaluation of these procedures;

18) To provide trainings for invited and newly-recruited teaching staff;

19) To define qualification requirements for the teaching staff as per course and to make improvements in the competition system of teaching staff recruitment.

Research and Development

20) To develop a clearly defined policy on research activities and appropriate procedures to make it possible to evaluate the quality of research activities;

21) To draft effective mechanisms to relate research to teaching, to involve students in scientific activities and to introduce research results in the teaching process; to develop tools to promote research activities among teaching staff and students;

22) To attach strong importance to the development, planning and implementation of medium and short-term plans to underpin the Academy's aspirations and ambitions concerning research;

23) To pay due attention to improving language skills among teaching staff and publishing more articles in foreign renowned reviews;

24) To pay closer attention to publishing up-to-date articles in the review "Public Administration" and to the scientific proof-reading of the articles; to develop a policy for the distribution of facilities and financial resources underpinning this objective.

Infrastructure and Resources

25) To develop a comprehensive policy on the distribution of funds; to define effectiveness criteria and tools for the evaluation of policies;

26) To undertake firm actions aimed at scaling up the library fund, to develop partnerships with other libraries, to improve the professional skills of librarians, to keep in digital format the books used in educational processes and to adapt the library to the needs of students and teaching staff;

27) To develop tools to evaluate the applicability, availability and efficiency of information resources used by students and the teaching staff;

28) To regularly monitor the applicability of acquired equipment and other means against the mission and goals of the Academy and to develop indicators for measuring the effectiveness of updating the resources to support the implementation of academic programmes and the Strategic Plan;

29) To set up a medical room and to provide appropriate facilities for the disabled;,

30) To have a language laboratory for students and teaching staff; to set in place tools to evaluate the effectiveness of language classes.

Societal Responsibility

31) To expand the transparency of procedures and processes and to enhance public outreach mechanisms, by means of new tools for the identification and evaluation of stakeholder needs;

32) To create a single alumni information center;

33) To have more active participation in the identification of the educational needs of various target groups.

External Relations and Internationalization

34) To improve the cooperation between the Academy, public administration entities and other organizations;

35) To have more targeted exchanges of international experience to better serve the needs of the Academy and interact with local institutions;

36) To revisit the ambitions of the Academy with respect to internationalization, by adapting it to its mission and strategic objectives;

37) To develop tools to strengthen the linkage between the inter-institutional agreements and the educational processes of the Academy, thus promoting the development, of educational activities, the exchange of experience and the internationalization process;

38) To introduce effective mechanisms for the evaluation of the cooperation with other organizations and of external relations.

Internal Quality Assurance System

39) To review the quality assurance procedures and their evaluation mechanisms, to define quantitative indicators for the enhancement of educational quality and effectiveness;

40) To develop more efficient feedback mechanisms and to ensure their effective implementation; to review the content of surveys and questionnaires; to improve the format and methods of conducting surveys;

41) To have incentives for the internal quality assurance staff;
42) To have regular training sessions for staff working in quality assurance structures;
43) To strike a better balance between the participation of internal and external stakeholders in quality assurance;
44) To develop tools for the evaluation of compliance and effectiveness of human, physical and financial resources;
45) To refine the expected outcomes of academic programmes according to specializations, in order to better reflect the needs of labor market;
46) To clarify the principles and purposes underlying the monitoring and survey processes conducted within the Academy; to develop a policy for the analysis of the results of these monitoring and survey processes.

Date: 11 July 2014

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Samvel Pipoyan	Anna Karapetyan
Signature of the Expert Panel Chairman	**Signature of the Coordinator**

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

The following observations and recommendations are provided with regard to the Academy's ambitions to be integrated into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Observations

The Academy is a young institution with a successful itinerary since its creation in 1994 and in particular since it was placed under the purview of the President's Services of the Republic of Armenia. It is a comparatively small institution specialising in Public Administration programmes for the education of students and the training of civil servants in Armenia. It offers graduate programmes (mainly at the Master level, with small research programmes of the PhD type) and a broad range of training programmes for active civil servants. For its Master programmes, the Academy is directly dependent on the quality of its intake coming from other Armenian higher education institutions offering bachelor-level education.

The Academy enjoys a unique position and a solid reputation in Armenia among the public administration and governmental circles, with some recent inroads into the spheres of private management.

The Academy's programmes are seen internally and externally (by potential students and employers) as attractive, mainly because they are oriented towards the acquisition of practical skills and competencies needed on the Armenian labour market (mainly public administrations, but also private companies) and hence offer better employment opportunities than traditional university degrees from other Armenian universities.

This success builds on a series of positive features that the Academy has been able to develop as a virtuous circle over time:
- a targeted and effective selection procedure for applicants that has gradually been sharpened and focused on the profile sought for graduates;
- the development of targeted curricula and active teaching/learning methods (psychological profile and support of learners, case studies, small groups, etc.) that are significantly different from what is offered at other higher education institutions in the country;
- the mobilisation of a diverse and dedicated teaching team equipped with hands-on, practical knowledge of public administration in Armenia;
- the gradual development of new support services underpinning these efforts (quality assurance unit, research-based programmes, internship unit, international liaison and PR department, career unit, etc.);
- with satisfied graduates and employers, the Academy has been able to attract more/better applicants and teachers and thus increase the competitive advantage of its graduates on the labour market, and has thus activated a virtuous circle benefitting the Academy.

Recommendations

Academic Programmes

- As a core dimension of its strategic planning the Academy should evaluate in detail its overall offering of degree courses and training activities in terms of their pertinence to social needs, their role in the Academy's strategy (established and new programmes, national and international programmes, initial and continuing programmes, programmes of high prestige and less appealing ones, programmes contributing to level and diversification of funding and programmes in need of financial support, programmes answering to current needs and programmes anticipating future needs, etc.). This should guide the Academy in the strategic planning of its medium term "product policy".

- The academy should not consider developing bachelor degrees of its own and should remain exclusively focused on post-bachelor education and training.

- The Academy should develop a small number of strong PhD programmes focused on Public Administration themes in the national, European and international context, in order to strengthen its research capabilities, its academic credibility and its national and international visibility.

Internationalisation

The Academy should include in its strategic objectives the aim to become a full and recognised member of the European and international Public Administration education community; this means in particular:
- Acknowledging that real and sustainable prestige and recognition needs to build on a basis reaching well beyond national boundaries;
- Acknowledging that in this era of globalisation and interdependency, the Academy will only be better serving the needs of Armenian society if it educates and train civil servants able to cooperate, negotiate and compete with their peers in other countries;
- Enhancing the contacts, exchanges and benchmarking with leading foreign Public Administration HEIs;
- Seeking in due time (some three years from now) the international accreditation seal of EAPAA.

This also means that while there is a minimal level of mobility without which true internationalisation is unlikely to happen, the internationalisation strategy of the Academy should focus mainly on the use of international references and benchmarking rather than on large-scale teacher and student mobility.

Staff and Quality Development
- The Academy should develop a formal, medium term staff development plan encompassing permanent teaching staff and support staff as well as academic and institutional managers. PAA should plan for a gradual strengthening of its permanent teaching staff – even though the importance of part time lecturers providing hands-on experience is not challenged. There should be a formal procedure for the development of study programmes, with special attention to interdisciplinarity, foreign languages and international references.

- PAA needs to build up its internal QA unit, providing at least one more member of staff and investing in training aimed at development effective evaluation methods in line with international best practice; it should be very clear that while the development of regulations and manuals is useful it does not by itself guarantee that the procedures described in them are applied and effective.

Name and Public Relations Policy
The name of the Academy may be misleading internationally, even though the Armenian law may define clearly what is required from institutions called "Academy" and there are other examples of HEIs offering professional education/training calling themselves "academies" (e.g. Germany's "professional academies"). This also means that the Academy should decide whether its future course should be planned mainly on its reputation as a centre for professional qualification or on its aspiration to be recognised as an "academic", university-like institution.

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW
COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The external evaluation of the institutional capacities of Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia was carried out by the following expert panel (see Appendix 1. Curriculum Vitae of the Expert Panel Members):

1. **Samvel Pipoyan –** Professor at Chair of Biology of Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan, Ph.D. in Biology.
2. **Guy Haug** - Advisor to the Rector of the University of Technology of Valencia, one of the founders of the European Higher Education Area with hands-on experience with QA, Ph.D. in Political Science.
3. **Tigran Mnatsakanyan** - Assistant professor at the ASUE Chair of Management, Ph.D. in Economics.
4. **Gohar Iskandaryan** – Lead Research Assistant at Oriental Sciences, Department of Iran of RA National Academy of Sciences, Scientific Secretary to Division of Diaspora, RA NAS Presidium. Lecturer at Yerevan State University, holds a Doctor degree in History
5. **Arus Haroutiunyan** – Fourth-year student at Faculty of Management, Department of Enterprise Economics and Management of Yerevan State University. Head of the Educational Reforms Commission to National Association of Students of Armenia.

The coordination of the evaluation procedure was carried out by Anna Karapetyan, senior specialist at the Institutional and Academic Programme Accreditation Division of ANQA.

Translation and interpreting were performed by Mariam Movsesyan.

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

Application for State Accreditation

For the purpose of state institutional accreditation, on June 17, 2013, the Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia applied to ANQA by filling out an application in the defined format and submitting copies of the license and the attachments thereto.

The ANQA Secretariat reviewed the data presented in the application, the documents attached and the ANQA electronic questionnaire completed by the institution.

After the decision to accept the application taken on June 21, 2013, a trilateral contract was signed between ANQA, the Center for Educational Programs and the Academy. The implementation timetable was prepared and approved.

Within the timeframes set in the timetable, on December 16, 2013, the institution submitted the self-evaluation report in the Armenian and English languages, in compliance with the format defined by ANQA, as well as the required package of accompanying documents.

Preparatory phase

After receiving the coordinator's positive opinion on January 26, 2014 based on a preliminary assessment of the application package, the self-evaluation report was submitted to the expert panel, the composition of which was agreed upon with the Academy and approved by the ANQA Director.

To prepare the expert panel for the procedure and to ensure the process efficiency, relevant training actions were conducted.

After examining the self- evaluation report of the Academy and the package of documents over the period from March 3 to May 8, 2014, the expert panel conducted a desk review in accordance with the defined rules, preparing a list of the documents required for additional review during the site-visit, as well as a list of issues and questions to be reviewed, and defining the target groups for the meetings. Within the envisaged period, the expert panel summarized the desk review results and prepared the schedule[2] for the site visit. Based on ANQA's Accreditation Manual, meetings were planned with all relevant target groups, as a sequence of open and closed meetings, document reviews and visits to the institution's units.

Preparatory Visit

The preparatory visit took place one week prior to the site-visit by the head of the expert panel, the head of ANQA Secretariat and the procedure coordinator. During the preparatory visit, the schedule of the site- visit was agreed with the Academy, the list of teaching staff members selected by the expert group for the meeting was submitted, the principles of the selection of representatives of employers, graduates and students were discussed, and mutually agreed decisions were reached on organizational, technical, informational issues in relation to the site visit, including with respect to the conduct and ethical code for participants. The rooms envisaged for the meetings were considered and the issues related to technical provisions were clarified.

Site-Visit

The site visit of the expert panel took place during the week May 12-16, 2014. In accordance with the schedule, the site visit started with a closed meeting, the purpose of which was to discuss with the international expert Guy HAUG the scope of the external evaluation, the issues subject to further examination in the course of the visit and the procedure to be followed during the various meetings.

The whole expert group, including the coordinator and the interpreter participated in the site visit.

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[2]APPENDIX 2. Site-visit schedule

The site visit started and ended with meetings with the Rector of the Academy. The academic staff and students were selected randomly for the meetings. All the meetings envisaged by the schedule took place. During the site-visit, the expert panel conducted document reviews[3], observations of resources[4] and meetings in various units of the Academy.

At the closed meetings of the expert panel that took place at the end of each working day of the visit, interim results of the external evaluation were discussed among panel members, and at the end of the visit the main results were summarized and presented to the Rector of the Academy.

The external evaluation was conducted within the framework of State Accreditation Criteria and Standards and ANQA procedures, which provide for a two-level assessment scale – ***unsatisfactory or satisfactory***. The preliminary evaluation during the desk review considered each standard within each criterion. At the end of the procedure, the evaluation was presented in the accreditation report on the basis of each criterion.

Expert Panel Report

The desk review process was conducted by the expert panel as a result of regularly organized meetings to discuss the self-evaluation report submitted by the Academy and the documents attached. Based on the discussions, as well as on observations made during the site visit, the chair of the panel and ANQA's coordinator prepared the draft version of the accreditation report. Upon the agreement with the expert panel, the report was submitted to the Academy for approval or comments related to facts and data. The report was then finalized by the expert panel based on the comments received from the Academy.

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[3]ANNEX 3. List of the documents reviewed.
[4]ANNEX 4. Observation of resources

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA
BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND. The "Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia" is non-commercial organization is the successor of the Management School of the Republic of Armenia established pursuant to the Republic of Armenia Government Decision No. 240, dated as of May 24, 1994. The goal of the establishment of the school was to increase the professional capacity of civil servants for employment at the executive and middle management levels within the RA President's Staff, the RA Government, the Republican and local bodies of the executive authority. According to Decision No. 338 of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, dated April 8, 2002, the "Management School of the Republic of Armenia" was reorganized into the "Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia" as a State Non-Commercial Organization.

As per Decree No. 370-A of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, dated April 10, 2003, the Academy established Master's programs in the following disciplines: Public Management, Law, Economics, Psychology and Political Science.

The self-evaluation and strategic documents provided by the Academy contain insights in its various areas of activity.

EDUCATION. The goals related to the academic programmes are mainly defined in the Academy's strategic document "Ensuring quality education in line with the developments in the Bologna process", where the following issues are set out:

1. To introduce and develop an internal system for quality assurance in conformity with the requirements of the European standards for internal evaluation of the tertiary education quality;

2. To initiate reviews of the content and structure of the current academic programmes and to introduce in stages new academic programmes in line with the current requirements of the labor market.

3. To improve the credit system introduced by the Academy;

4. To ensure favorable conditions and provide incentive mechanisms for the continuous increase of the quality and efficiency of teaching and learning;

5. To prepare the Academy for the external quality assessment and accreditation processes of its academic programmes in conformity with the requirements of the unified state criteria for the external quality assessment of Tertiary level education.

RESEARCH. In the research sphere, the main emphasis is on the enhancement of the Academy's scientific mission and its role and contribution in the country's economic development, which will require the establishment of the necessary innovative structures and a strong increase in the efficiency of applied research. The Academy has a core scientific mission – to respond to the RA management needs, to contribute inasmuch as possible to the resolution of the challenges related with the modernization of the public services and to promote innovative processes in the sphere of public management. In addition, the Academy plans to make research work more attractive for its academic staff, considering it as an incentive for the lecturers' professional progress a tool for the increase of the quality of teaching. The Academy prioritizes also the activation and enhancement of its participation in international scientific programs.

INTERNATIONALIZATION. The goals related to this sphere are mainly defined in the framework of the Academy's Strategic Program "Academy's foreign relations expansion and internationalization process development", which provides for the enhancement and diversification of the Academy's international relations in the educational and scientific spheres, its cooperation with European universities and international tertiary education organizations as means for its involvement in the

Bologna process, and the boosting of the internationalization processes of the Academy's research activities as means for the integration of the Academy into the European Research Area and the development of a comprehensive foreign relations policy .

QUALITY ASSURANCE. The Academy has chosen the quality standards of the European Higher Education Area as a benchmark in the quality assurance field. To achieve its own strategic goals, the Academy attaches importance to the establishment of an effective quality assurance system. The Academy considers that the mission of the internal quality assurance system should be to strengthen the confidence in its various activities and ensure that the quality of the qualifications granted by the Academy is retained, continuously improved and efficiently managed.

When conducting the evaluation, the expert panel was guided by the principle of "conformity to goals" and considered the above information as the core ambitions and goals of the educational institution.

CRITERION I. MISSION AND PURPOSE

The institution's mission and purpose are in accordance with the relevant reference levels and are consistent with the policies and practices that guide its operations.

FINDINGS

1.1 The institution has a clear, well articulated mission that represents the institution's purposes and goals and is in accordance with the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (hereafter ANQF).

The Academy has developed and in October 2013 approved its Strategic Plan 2013-2018, which defines the Academy's mission and presents its ambitions, goals, objectives and indicators for progress assessment.

The main strategic objective of the Academy is to provide the public service sphere with highly qualified and competitive specialists through professional education and training. In this respect, the Academy provides academic programs at two levels of higher education: master programs and basic or additional postgraduate programs, which corresponds to the 7th and 8th levels of NQF. At the same time, one of the main goals of the Academy is to find its way into the European Higher Education Area and to introduce the procedures of that system in the Academy's management processes. To achieve the above mentioned goals the Academy has adopted a number of approaches for improvement: efficient allocation of resources and assurance of the best results, continuous implementation of reforms, creation of a favorable environment for the development. All this is to some extent reflected in the mission, goals and objectives of the Academy. At the same time it should be mentioned that the mission statement is more like a list of actions and is too concentrated on the current situation. To achieve the mentioned goals and to solve the problems, the Academy has developed and in April 2014 approved its Action Plan 2013-2018 based on the strategic goals and objectives. According to the strategic goals and objectives, 104 actions were set and their expected outcomes, indicators for assessment, responsible and deadlines were defined.

1.2 The mission statement reflects the needs of the internal and external stakeholders.

The strategic plan of the Academy was developed by a working group set up from internal stakeholders. Then the plan was discussed in the seminar "Guarantees for Professional Education Quality Assurance" in May 2013. In July the plan was sent to external stakeholders (to 8 state government agencies including the RA Office to the President, 6 ministries, the Civil Service Board (appendix 1.6)) for their suggestions and remarks.

Only 5 of all the above mentioned agencies gave feedback and only one of them had a suggestion. Very few stakeholders made suggestions and gave remarks about the strategic plan. After summarizing the results and elaborating the strategic plan it was presented to the Academy Council, which approved the strategic plan on October 5, 2013.

It should be mentioned that the mission, goals and objectives of the Academy were shaped according to the needs of internal stakeholders - rather than external ones. The Academy is more concentrated on the short-term needs and less on the foreseeable upcoming changes in the labour market. Yet the mission and objectives are in line with the employers' expectations.

1.3 The institution has formal mechanisms and/or procedures to evaluate the achievement of its mission and purpose and to further improve them.

It is planned that the Academy's Council and Scientific Council should regularly discuss the reports and performances of the action plan during their sessions and with the Rectorate as needed and make relevant adjustments and decisions if necessary.

At the same time the action plan for the implementation of strategic goals and objectives defines indicators for the evaluation of the results and the programming of the improvement processes. Some of the above-mentioned mechanisms are still in the process of development. They should be more comprehensive and should include mechanisms of assessment and monitoring and should thus

become much more than just an immediate regulation of the institution's processes or the study of stakeholders' satisfaction.

On 31 March, 2014 new mechanisms for improving the quality assurance procedures were introduced according to the decision of the Scientific Council and the Rector's order.

CONSIDERATIONS

The strategic plan of the Academy reflects well the alignment of the Academy's mission with ANQF and defines the goals and objectives derived from the mission. They mainly reflect the needs of internal stakeholders and partially the needs of external stakeholders. The mission, vision and strategic plan of the Academy provide evidence for the serious efforts made by the Academy, yet at the same time they show that the Academy has little experience in this field. So, even though the mission, vision and strategic plan are reasonably well identified, the concentration on the main priorities and mid-term trends is still insufficient. The mechanisms and procedures for the evaluation of the implementation of mission and goals are still in their initial phase and have some shortcomings because the strategic plan and the action plan are still new and not fully implemented. In this regard, it is too early to speak about the achievements and results of the goals and objectives defined in the above-mentioned documents.

CONCLUSION: The corrspondance of Academy's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 1 is **satisfactory.**

CRITERION II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The institution's system of governance ensures ethical decision-making and efficient provision of human, material and financial resources to effectively accomplish its mission, educational and other purposes.

FINDINGS
2.1 The institution's governance and administrative structures and practices promote effective and ethical leadership and decision making congruent with the mission and purpose of the institution.

The governance of the Academy is carried out according to RA legislation and to the charter of the Academy as is based on the regulations of its different bodies: Academy Council, Scientific Council, Rectorate, Student Council and Chairs. The institutional decision making procedure is carried out by the collegial bodies included in the organizational structure (organogram): Academy Council, Scientific Council, Rectorate. The management structure of the Academy, its administrative units and their functioning imply participatory decision-making processes with the involvement of teachers and students. All the decisions made at different levels of the Academy's management system are put into action by the Rector's orders. The suggestions made at the lower levels of the management system are discussed as part of a bottom-up approach preserving the principles of democracy and labor ethics. The staff of the Academy's management system is provided with relevant technical resources and adequate financial resources based on relevant procedures that ensure the implementation of regulatory and strategic objectives of the Academy. At the same time, there is a need to improve the Academy's structure and management system to enhance the efficiency of the institution. Particularly, the effectiveness of the organizational structure of the Academy has not yet been evaluated and precise mechanisms for that evaluation are still missing. The separation of functions of the various structural units, their hierarchy and mechanisms of collaboration are not fully clarified, even though the structural units operate in an environment of mutual trust.

The management of the Academy acknowledges the importance of the elaboration of quality management policies and procedures and is committed to the quality management principles (plan, do, check, act). In this regard, there are some problems concerning the targeted use of the gathered information about the efficiency of the Academy's structure and the performance of its structural units.

Particularly, if the feedback mechanisms used by the Academy are in general satisfactory for getting the necessary information, the mechanisms evaluating the availability and objectiveness of these information do not ensure full and reliable results. It should also be mentioned that part of the gathered information is not of immediate use from the point of view of enhancing the quality of educational services provided by the Academy. Besides, the study of internal and external factors as well as the surveys which are important both in strategic planning and education quality assurance processes, have not been carried out regularly by the Academy and do not show sufficient involvement of possible stakeholders. The SWOT analysis for this as well as for other criteria of the self-evaluation are often incomplete and in some cases they are not based on a comprehensive analysis of survey results carried out among the corresponding stakeholders.

In general, the management structure and its functioning are effective in ensuring the employability of the graduates and the Academy enjoys public trust.

2.2 The institution's system of governance provides for student and teachers input in decision making in matters directly affecting them.

The management system of the Academy, the current charter and regulations give the teachers and students an opportunity to be involved at different levels of the Academy's management structure and to participate in the management processes of the Academy and in the discussion of issues related to them. Both students and teachers are involved in different councils according to the requirements of the regulations set for those councils. Besides, the indirect ways of students' participation in the management procedures are based on surveys carried out among the students, analytical reports and regular meetings with the administration and the results of these processes are taken into consideration during the decision making procedures.

2.3 The institution carries out short, medium, and long term planning consistent with its mission and purpose as well as appropriate monitoring tools ensuring implementation of the plans.

The Academy developed a five-year strategic plan for the period 2013-2018 where the objectives and the actions presented are more likely to solve tactical problems without precise priorities rather than the more strategic issues. The Academy also develops short-term plans for one calendar year and/or one academic year. Mid-term planning, as such is not developed in the Academy. The monitoring mechanisms of planning are still in the initial phase and tend to just check the implementation of the initiatives rather than to evaluate their impact.

2.4 The institution conducts environmental scanning and draws on the findings to enhance its effectiveness.

To reveal the factors influencing the quality of education ad hoc surveys are conducted among students, graduates and employers of the Academy. The Academy gives much importance to these surveys. After the analysis of the gathered results, a SWOT analysis is used to identify the strong and weak points and the external opportunities and threats of the Academy.. New reforms are expected to be planned based on such analyses.

2.5 The management of the processes draws on the quality management principle (plan-do-check-act).

The overall evaluation of the activities of the Academy is carried out through annual analyses and reports according to the indicators set for the different spheres. Recently the effectiveness of the Academy, its progress and achievements are assessed and the shortcomings are overcomed according to the principle of quality management: plan, do, check, act. To use it more effectively, in 2013 the Academy elaborated and the Scientific Council approved the document "Quality Assurance

Concept of RA Public Administration Academy". This document defines the general principles and requirements of quality assurance, the certification and monitoring cycle of the Academy as well as its organizational structure. But they are mainly described through general formulations reducing the precise measuring opportunities and the effectiveness of implementation of the institution's mission and goals.

2.6 There are mechanisms in place ensuring data collection on the effectiveness of the academic programmes and other processes, analyses and application of the data in decision-making.

At present the Academy carries out a multi-step process for the evaluation of its activities. For this reason a great deal of information was gathered and analysed through the results of the surveys carried out among students, graduates, employees and other stakeholders. The analysis of the surveys provides an opportunity to evaluate the activity of the Academy and to improve the effectiveness of educational and other processes. The quantitative indicators of professional employability are considered the main indicators of the effectiveness of the academic programs. Clearly set indicators are not used for the evaluation of the courses taught. There is a reference to the learning outcomes in the syllabi of each individual course, but there are no general expected learning outcomes set for each academic program as a whole.

2.7 There are mechanisms in place providing up to date, objective and impartial quality (quantitative and qualitative) information on the academic programmes offered and qualification awards.

The Academy disseminates qualitative and quantitative information about the quality of its academic programs and awarded qualifications through its web-site, promotional materials, the "Public Service" weekly publication, the "Public Administration" scientific review and various types of seminars. Yet, clear mechanisms for the evaluation of the publication of qualitative and quantitative information about the quality of academic programs and the awarded qualifications are still missing in the Academy. In this regard, the Academy's priorities are expected to be the publication of methodical instructions for the formulation of new academic programs and the development of mechanisms for the revision of the current academic programs.

CONSIDERATIONS

The Academy highlights the necessity of improving the management system for the effective implementation of its mission and goals, but it still has some problems concerning the full analysis of internal and external environment, the setting of indicators for the effectiveness of its activities, the planning of data collection and the targeted use of the information it gathers and analyses. Besides, the absence of mid-term plans can cause gaps between long-term and short-term plans. At present the management of this process is carried out more intuitively, using individual experience. Hence not everything is clearly regulated. However, a number of positive structural changes, such as the setting up of the quality assurance unit, can serve as a sound basis for the implementation of more regulated and constructive processes.

CONCLUSION: The corrspondance of Academy's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 2 is **satisfactory.**

CRITERION III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

The programmes are in concord with the institution's mission, form part of institutional planning and resource allocation, are intellectually credible and promote mobility and internationalization.

FINDINGS

3.1 The academic programs are thoroughly formulated, according to the intended learning outcomes, which correspond to an academic qualification and are in line with the state academic standards.

The Academy mainly provides academic programs for master-level, postgraduate as well as additional and continuous education in the administrative, political, social, legal and economic spheres in line with the needs of the public administration system in RA. All academic programs have curricula with compulsory and elective courses. The Academy has developed drafts of qualification descriptors for all the professions. The area of studies of the teachers is taken into consideration when designing academic programs. Benchmarking is carried out for the implementation of academic programs. The Academy has developed and published "Methodical Instructions for Elaborating Academic Programs Based on Expected Learning Outcomes". The Academy has started to provide education with ECTS. The academic programs, which are in line with state academic standards, are clearly in line with the Academy's mission and goals and are aimed at achieving the intended learning outcomes. However, clear mechanisms for the evaluation of the effectiveness of academic programs are still missing and the processes for the selection of the most appropriate teaching methods need to be improved (the choice of teaching methods on the basis of student surveys is not considered really effective).

3.2 The institution has a policy that promotes alignment between teaching and learning approaches and the intended learning outcomes and ensures effective learning.

The Academy is determined to apply teaching and learning methods that are in line with the expected learning outcomes. This is highlighted in the strategic plan, which emphasizes the need to foster student-centered learning and to ensure that the learning methods and approaches allow students to acquire the defined learning outcomes. This requires the conduct of surveys for the gathering of data about students' progress and master thesis defense on the basis of surveys among students and staff as well as among the chairpersons of the final attestation committees. At the same time the choice of teaching and learning methods is not systematic yet, since on the one hand it depends on each teacher's preference and on the other hand there is no requirement that certain courses are taught in accordance with modern expectations.

3.3 The programme ensures impartial evaluation of students' level of achievement against the learning and educational objectives and promotes academic integrity.

The Academy has a regulation on student assessment according to the expected learning outcomes. The assessment of the students is carried out according to the regulation on organizing teaching, with a credit system based on the principles of ECTS. The knowledge assessment is carried out by committees in order to ensure academic honesty. All the exams and tests of students as well as the final attestation of the graduates are recorded. However, the assessment regulation remains incomplete in terms of academic honesty and has some shortcomings concerning the clarification of criteria of assessment mechanisms and appealing processes. At the same time the monitoring procedures of academic programs do not guarantee that they are evaluated on the basis of their effectiveness and on clear indicators, which limits their use for the purpose of education improvement. Nevertheless, the assessment methods that are used seem to be really effective and fair and during the site visit there was no reason at all to doubt the existence of academic honesty.

3.4 The programmes are intellectually credible, designed coherently, and articulate well with other relevant programmes, promote mobility of students and staff as well as internationalization.

The content of academic programs of the Academy is mainly in line with similar programs; this is ensured by means of benchmarking against programmes offered at other institutions, including abroad. A number of activities aimed at the promotion of student mobility are implemented at the Academy, even though they are still limited to one-month internships for students at foreign partner institutions. Within the frames of the existing partnerships some such programs are offered and many teachers from foreign partner institutions give lectures at the Academy on different topics. Due to the use of the ECTS credit system, the credits of the courses are accumulated and remain valid,

which contributes to the fostering of academic mobility amongst students and encourages those who did not complete their degree to resume their studies.

In general, the various master programs enjoy the trust of applicants and clearly contribute to the employability of graduates, even though they do not significantly promote the internationalization of the institution and the mobility of students, which are increasingly considered important factors. The limited internationalization and mobility at the Academy is due – at least in part - to a lack of resources and to the orientation of the Academy to the local labour market, since is main ambition is to prepare specialists for the local public administration system.

3.5 There are mechanisms in place ensuring academic programme approval, monitoring, and periodic review.

The "quality assurance manual" of the Academy presents the processes of academic program certification and the procedures for the monitoring and periodic review of academic programs. In addition to the monitoring procedures, surveys are carried out among students and will increasingly also target other stakeholders. There are procedures for the approval and improvement of academic programs at the level of the various departments ("chairs") and of the Scientific Council, but they would be more effective id the Academy were to develop more formal and standard procedures at the institutional level. Generally, the various academic programs are elaborated within each chair and there are not many efforts to liaise with the other chairs, which results in a lack of interdisciplinary courses. The monitoring of learning is carried out for each separate course rather than for the whole of an academic program. At present there are no formal procedures for the regular review and updating/improvement of programs.

CONSIDERATIONS

The attention given to the teaching and learning of practical skills, which ensures the employability of graduates, is clearly a strong positive point for the alignment of the academic programs with the mission of the Academy. It is based not just on academic learning, but also on the psychological assistance provided to students and on the organization of internships and practical parts of master thesis. It is however not clear whether the different academic programs taught in the Academy are consistent with one another. For example, the various master programs leave the impression that they are designed more in accordance with the structure of the various chairs, while they should be based on the broader strategic issues of the institution.

In general, the Academy provides currently a number of solid and efficient master programs which are all aimed at meeting the needs and demands of the public administration market in RA. In this regard, both students and employers confirm that the Academy is fulfilling its mission in an effective and efficient way.

The mobility of students and teaching staff is not seen as a priority, but it may be seen as acceptable in view of the specific mission and goals of the Academy. However, when formulating future priorities the Academy should pay more attention to this increasingly important dimension.

CONCLUSION: The corrspondance of Academy's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 3 is **satisfactory.**

CRITERION IV. STUDENTS

The institution has student advising and support services which provide for productive and learning environment.

FINDINGS

4.1 The institution has set mechanisms for promoting equitable recruitment, selection, and admission procedures.

There are a number of precise mechanisms and tools used at the Academy for the purpose of student recruitment, selection and admission, which currently fully ensure the sustainable recruitment of students at the Academy. Such mechanisms and tools in use at the Academy include announcements, booklets, mass media and website for the dissemination of information and the stimulation of students' interest and applications. The selection of students is carried out according to the regulation on organizing admission for master degrees in a two-phase competition: written test and interview. During the last three years the number of master students at the Academy has increased: 2011- 463 students, 2012- 520 students, 2013- 545 students.

The Student Council of the Academy organizes study visits to different universities with the aim of gathering future applicants for the Academy.

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

Taking into consideration students' individual needs the Academy has developed educational and other mechanisms so the students have real opportunity to choose among different courses and teachers. The mechanisms for the reporting of difficulties and for appeals are not formally and clearly defined but there is evidence that the Academy does really its best to solve students' problems as soon as possible and to avoid turning to the formal process of appeal. Surveys are carried out in order to check the educational needs of students and evaluation questionnaires are periodically administered. These surveys conducted among students are mainly aimed at finding out about problems concerning education quality, the organization of educational processes and the effectiveness of the educational environment. However, the accuracy of the outcomes of these surveys may sometimes seem questionable.

The identification of students' academic needs is carried out by the Educational-Methodical Department of the Academy, as well as by department chairs, teachers and the Student Council. The meetings with students as well as their suggestions and complaints also play an important role in identifying students' needs and meetings aimed at satisfying these needs are organized in the collegial and executive management bodies of the Academy.

4.3 The institution provides opportunities for extra-curricular activities aimed at supporting student learning.

Though there are no precise procedures for the programing of extra-curricular activities, the Academy organizes meetings and faculty courses aimed at satisfying the academic needs of students. The process is partially regulated by the options defined in the points 16.2.1-16.2.4 of the procedure on organizing the learning and credit system at the Academy. At the Academy teachers offer professional consultancy hours. They also provide learning materials for students via email. The Academy's process of providing additional consultancy, academic support and guidance is also available during the managerial and scientific-research internships of students. However, the quality assurance and assessment mechanisms for the provision of consultancy and other additional educational services for students need to be further developed, clarified and improved.

4.4 There are special hours set for students to visit the faculty administrative staff for additional support and guidance.

The students of the Academy can turn to the Rector and to the Educational-Methodical Department if they have some troubles. For the Rector's reception there are set hours. The issues raised are dealt with and resolved in the corresponding chair and, if necessary, they are discussed in a discussion session of the Rectorate. The Academy gives students sufficient opportunities to communicate with teachers and administrative staff. All documents related to the educational processes are visibly posted on the announcement board of the Academy. The same documents are available on the Academy's website and are sent to each individual student by email. The support and guidance by the administrative staff is evaluated through surveys. Many of the above-mentioned processes do not

need formal regulation because of the close relationship between students and teaching staff, which is encouraged by the Academy at institutional level.

4.5 The institution has special student career support services that prepares graduates for employment.

The Academy tries to promote its students' career through different mechanisms ensuring the possible link between the students and employers, e.g. by organizing internships, providing the employers with data about the best students, etc. Recently a new Career Center and Alumni Union was created at the Academy. The department that organizes internships was created previously and is already fully active. The students of the Academy carry out internships mostly in state governmental agencies. The Academy carried out an expert survey aimed at assessing to what extent the professional knowledge, skills and competencies of graduates match the demands of the labor market. Questionnaires are sent to the governmental agencies where internships are organized, as well as to major private organizations. In the academic year 2012-2013 the Academy organized a workshop for the ministries and the heads and staff of different state government agencies. The aim of the workshop was to promote the dialogue with stakeholders about the quality assurance of professional education, the organization and enhancements of internships and the alignment of professional abilities of graduates with the needs of employers. The current services promoting students' career risk concentrating too much on the short-term needs and paying less attention to the skills and competences that will be needed in the future. At the same time, the evaluation of the effectiveness of these methods is not clear, since the graduates of the Academy would mainly be employed in the public service sphere, where there is a specific mechanism of personnel selection. As the Academy also mentions, the activities aimed at supporting graduates to enter the labor market do not have enough basis. In this regard, the effectiveness of providing students with career support services is low and there is a formal communication with the employers which does not always ensure feedback. These services should be improved continuously to give the graduates more opportunities of career promotion.

4.6 The students are actively involved in the research the university majors in.

The involvement of students in scientific research activities and the effectiveness of the processes of identification and discussion of students' educational needs are clearly insufficient. Neither the indicators for the evaluation of the provided services nor the quality criteria for these services are clarified. The Academy considers the work carried out within the frames of master theses as scientific research, but usually the results of theses do not go beyond the borders of the institution. The process of involving students in scientific research activities is not systematic and the percentage of students really involved in research activities is low. The library is poor and significant systematic support for scientific research activities is not provided. Besides the procedures for the defense of master theses, the Academy organizes conferences aimed at enhancing the scientific research potential among its students. Representatives of the Academy participate in other conferences, outside the Academy. In this respect the Academy is still taking its first steps, but it is encouraging to see that the institution is aware of the importance of these steps.

4.7 The institution has established policies and procedures that promote student active involvement in the institution's governance.

The Academy has a unit dealing with the students' interest- the Student Council which is a newly created unit. Students are involved in the main bodies of the Academy and in different procedures. The psychological atmosphere in the Academy fosters the effective implementation of the processes of students' rights protection without any obstacles. The relationship between the students and the Rector is direct and close, which is due on the one hand to the relatively small number of students in the Academy, and on the other hand to the Rector's student-centred orientation. The peculiarity of the students of the Academy is their maturity, not only because they are already graduates of other universities but also because of the effective selection procedure in place at the academy.

There is actually a dual mechanism for the protection of students' rights at the Academy: a self-governing body and a positive attitude among administrative staff. Nonetheless, even though the administrative bodies of the Academy are open to listen and discuss the opinion of students, there is still no clear and formalized procedure for their questions, complaints and suggestions. The exception is only the reception of students by the Rector, where there are clearly set hours.

So the general procedure of turning to the administrative staff of the Academy seems to work well at this time, but it is not clearly regulated.

4.8 The institution has a special body that promotes students' rights protection.

Most of the above-mentioned mechanisms exist at the Academy, but many of them are not organised in a formal way. The main tools of evaluating the quality of provided services and identifying students' needs are the surveys among students. Students evaluate the academic programs, the educational services provided by the Academy, the technical equipment of the Academy and the effectiveness of internships, but the methodology of the conducted surveys is not beyond criticism. The analysis of the survey results are taken into consideration by the administration of the Academy.

CONSIDERATIONS

In general, students are satisfied with the educational environment at the Academy and with the support provided to them. They are sure that after graduating from the Academy they will have good career progression prospects. Nonetheless, even though most services and procedures fostering students' learning do exist at the Academy, they are not formalized and not all of them operate fully. Students appreciate the importance of the knowledge they acquire at the Academy, the Career Center, and the Student Scientific Union in their professional development; they are however not very aware of the importance of quality assurance processes in the development and improvement of these services.

On the other hand, there is a necessity to do more efforts aimed at enlarging and strengthening the links with the employers, which is necessary in order to continue ensuring the employability of students.

CONCLUSION: The corrspondance of Academy's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 4 is **satisfactory.**

CRITERION V. FACULTY AND STAFF

The institution provides for a high quality 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 capable of ensuring programme provisions.

The procedures of choosing relevant teaching staff and support staff for the implementation of academic programs are based on a number of documents: contracts of employment, biographies, regulation on the selection of the heads of the chairs.

The teaching staff and support staff employed by the Academy is in line with the institution's mission and vision, particularly because most of them have professional experience in the sphere of public administration. The current hiring procedures give the Academy an opportunity to involve senior officials in the teaching process, as regular lecturers or on a per hour basis. They are hired as "invited specialists" in accordance with RA labor legislation.

In general, the current policy for the selection of teaching staff and support staff is determined first by the content of academic programs and the procedures defined in relevant documents.

5.2 The teaching staff qualifications for each programme are comprehensively stated.

The requirements for the teaching staff of each academic program of the Academy are not clearly predefined in the form of a suitable profile. There are only qualification requirements and job responsibilities for those applying for a position as Head of chair.

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

The procedures of evaluating the teaching staff are implemented through surveys and class recordings, but the Academy has not yet a systematic and comprehensive policy in place in this field. The questionnaire used for the evaluation of the quality of teaching staff by students was developed with a focuses on the professional skills and preparedness of the teaching staff, their peculiar features and the use of teaching methods. The scientific and research activities of the teacher are of great importance (published scientific articles, monographs, books, manuals as well as participation in workshops and conferences), but they are of course not reflected in these questionnaires. It seems that the regular evaluation of courses by students has indeed become a part of the institutional culture at the Academy, and this has already led to the replacement of a number of poor-performing teachers.

There are no special tools and mechanisms in the Academy for the evaluation of the matching teaching staff with the requirements of the various academic programs (there is no peer-review of the teaching staff and no systematic evaluation of the teaching staff by the Academy's administration). Systematic analysis of the results of class recordings is not carried out either.

Since the academic year 2012-2013 the system of elective courses and the selection of the teachers for these courses were introduced at the Academy. Starting from the first semester the students evaluate and select both the teachers and the courses. As a result, the teacher who is best rated by the students is normally chosen. In case two teachers are chosen for the same course the curriculum, questionnaire and the list of professional literature is developed by both of them jointly.

5.4 The institution promotes teacher professional development in accordance to the needs outlined during regular evaluations (both internal and external).

A policy aimed at the professional development of teaching staff is not yet in place at the Academy, but the institution is aware of the need for a professional development policy not only for the teaching staff but also for the support and administrative staff. This requires investments in new teaching and management methods as well as the development of an information management system. There are some encouraging mechanisms such as courses of a foreign language, the organization of conferences or mobility opportunities aimed at enhancing the motivation and professional qualification of the teaching staff. Some specific activities have been carried out for the professional development of the teaching staff. With the support of the Academy, 12 employees participated in professional training sessions. Courses of English and French were organized for employees and were attended mainly by support and administrative staff. The efficiency of the activities aimed at the professional development of the teaching staff is evaluated through surveys. Yet the Academy does not carry out systematic full internal (and even less external) evaluation surveys aimed at identifying the training needs and most suitable activities for the professional development of the teaching staff. Hence, there are no (or not yet) comprehensive strategic directions for the professional development of the staff at the Academy.

5.5 There is necessary permanent staff to provide for the coverage of qualifications adequately.

The Academy benefits from a high level of stability among full-time teaching and support staff, which has led to the adoption of a number of important common approaches, beliefs and a high level of trust in the importance, role and future of the Academy. The number of teaching staff at the Academy has increased by 50% between 2010 and 2013, increasing from 95 to 143 persons. The number of full-time teaching staff has also increased. Although the self-evaluation report does not provide an analysis of the sustainability of current and new academic programs with respect to the teachers'

qualification, the increase in the number of students and teaching staff is an indirect indicator for this process.

In addition, the development of an elective system for teaching staff and courses requires some reserve teachers and creates opportunities for competition. But at the same time the Academy does not implement a clear policy for the evaluation of qualified personnel and the prevention of brain drain.

5.6 There are set policies and procedures for the staff promotion in general and the young ones in particular.

There are no specific policies and procedures in place at the Academy for the assurance of the promotion of teaching staff. The high level of stability among core staff implies a limited staff rotation at the Academy. But the regulation on the evaluation, promotion and penalties for the administrative, teaching and support staff are currently in a stage of development.

5.7 There is necessary technical and administrative staff to achieve the strategic goals.

The structure of the Academy was changed in the academic year 2011-2012 and was staff was replenished with young specialists holding the necessary qualifications. The Academy has succeeded in establishing new support services that contribute to the activities of teaching staff and lead to the development of student-centered methods, even though further investment in these areas is till necessary. According to the viewpoint of both administrative and teaching staff, these procedures will develop faster when the Academy moves as planned to a larger building. As part of its policy in favour of the stability of administrative and support staff the Academy has introduced a mechanism of awards for seniority.

CONSIDERATIONS

The Academy has qualified teaching staff and support staff for the implementation of its academic programs. The objective of the activities aimed at increasing the qualification of both categories of staff is to make the teaching and learning process more effective and hence to promote the image and appeal of the Academy. The uniqueness of the Academy is directly related to the preparation of targeted specialists for the public management sphere and the transfer of practical skills to the students. In this regard, the Academy effectively selects teaching and support staff with the necessary professional qualifications. To achieve its mission and to achieve the goals of its academic programs, the Academy tries to invite professionals from the management sphere to better align the knowledge and skills of the students with the skills demand on the labor market. However, the Academy has a small number of full-time teaching staff which was not trained in identifying and meeting specific skills and labour market demands. The recruitment of non permanent teaching staff is also carried out more in accordance to the actual teaching performance, which determines the retaining or replacing of individual teachers. An important hint for the future is that teaching staff should be better aware of the strategic directions and priorities of the Academy and should also develop the necessary scientific-research activities. In this regard, there is a need to develop a policy and regulations for the systematic recruitment and promotion of staff.

CONCLUSION: The corrspondance of Academy's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 5 is **satisfactory.**

CRITERION VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
The institution promotes its research objectives, projects and expected outcomes. There is a research ethos and culture, and mechanisms for the validating research outcomes.

FINDINGS

6.1 The institution has a clear strategy promoting its research interests and developments.
The mission, the strategic plan and the 8th goal of the Academy define the institution's research priorities and ambitions. According to these documents they are aimed at the sustainable development of the scientific potential and the enhancement of the efficiency of research at the Academy. But at present their role and influence are not really clearly defined and still lack an adequate structure and qualified human resources. There are no mechanisms for the development of the above-mentioned priorities and ambitions, even though a few limited scientific-research activities are carried. A main limitation is related to the library, which is not rich in professional literature, does not contribute to the implementation of research and even limits international and higher level scientific activities.

6.2 The institution has a medium and short term programs which address its research interests in a due manner.

The Academy implements some limited scientific-research and publication activities. At present only one scientific mid-term project is being carried out in the Academy. The RA State Committee of Science has approved the mid-term project application presented by the Academy for the years 2014-2016 about the creation of a "Managerial Psychology" laboratory and a "Center for regional research". The institution has its magazine where the articles produced by teaching staff and students are presented. Some scientific-research work is performed within the framework of master theses. The recent appointment of a Vice-Rector for scientific-research affairs is a positive step and an incentive, even though the new unit will also have other responsibilities and will function only for an initial period of two years. The strategic plan of the Academy has been developed and approved only recently, which is why clear policies and procedures for the development and implementation of mid-term and short-term research plans are not yet fully elaborated. The Academy acknowledges this situation in its self-evaluation report and admits that "at present the Academy does not ensure the implementation and development of research through clear policies and procedures, except those for the preparation and defence of master theses, PhD and doctoral dissertations, for which there are state regulations that serve as a basis.

6.3 The institution promotes development and innovation through sound policies and strategies.
At present, the scientific activities and the level of involvement of the teaching staff and the students are too low to put the Academy in a position to achieve its ambitions in research. The strategic plan and the concept of quality assurance have recently been approved, but their implementation in the research sphere is still in the planning stage (for example, the project about the monitoring of teaching staff's pedagogical and scientific-research activities or the introduction of systematic tracking of plagiarism), which does not currently provide a real opportunity for evaluators to fully analyze the institution's policy and potential in research and development. At present, no concrete activities on the institutional level to promote scientific-research activities and to ensure a research-friendly environment could be identified.

6.4 The institution emphasizes internationalization of its research.
In its strategic plan the Academy highlights the internationalization of research activities and refers to plans for the involvement of international experts in them in the expectation of the integration of the Academy in the European Research Area. However, at the current stage of development, there are not yet concrete achievements to be reported. The library and the current availability of international publications and databases are obviously insufficient for scientific research. The existence of some old materials in Russian, French, English or German does not change the real situation. However, some positive steps are in progress. In particular, an expert from Germany now holds the position of Vice-Rector for scientific affairs and there are firm expectations that this will give the Academy's staff and leadership a real opportunity to learn from good practice and will thus

contribute to the further development of research activities. A number of employees of the Academy participated in international conferences, workshops or research activities. The Academy has involved distinguished professionals from CIS countries and Canada in the editorial board of its "Public Administration" scientific journal, which now also publishes scientific articles of international authors. While some progress in terms of international collaboration for research activities can be noticed, resources, policies and extensive operations for the organization and regulation for the internationalization of research are still missing. The issue about teachers and students fluency in foreign languages also hinders the internationalization of research. The main milestones for the involvement of the Academy's teaching staff and students in research activities in the coming years are not yet in place.

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

There are some mechanisms which operate mainly through master theses (inasmuch as these theses can be viewed as research), the publication of some articles in the Academy's journals and the involvement of some students in the preparation of evaluation and teaching tools in applied psychology. The Academy highlights the interconnection of research and educational activities thanks to the involvement of master and PhD students in these activities, but they remain marginal and the current situation is that no fundamental work is currently being done in this field. At present only one master student and one PhD applicant are involved in a mid-term research project.

CONSIDERATIONS

The research sphere is currently little developed at the Academy, but the institution has expressed in its long-term strategy and mid-term and short-term plans its orientations and priorities for the research sphere, even though they are not yet clearly formulated. At present the few mid-term research projects that are carried out at the Academy are not enough to assess whether or not the Academy's good intentions will be carried out effectively. The intended link between the research and the educational processes at the Academy is encouraging, but no clear mechanisms for the involvement of students in research activities and for the introduction of research results in the educational process have not been introduced hitherto. Though the Academy gives much importance to the internationalization of research activities in its future plans, its current activities are evidently insufficient to reach any significant level of success in this field.

The Academy should make a decision for the upcoming years about the role of its research activities, their type and volume. While the Academy has successfully achieved its mission and goals in preparing young and skilful specialists for medium and high level position in public administration in the RA, its future ability to continue doing so hinges on the development of its scientific-research activities. Without this, it is unlikely to be in a position to play at par with its European and international partner institutions.. Even the (local) employers point out the importance of a research policy. This does not mean that the Academy should put at risk its strong basis as an institution preparing practical staff by developing traditional research and following the same pattern as other types of universities. For the Academy it will be particularly important to define the desired goal, type and volume of scientific-research activity called for in its strategic plan and implement its objectives in accordance with a clear, long-term action plan.

CONCLUSION : The corrspondance of Academy's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 6 is **unsatisfactory.**

CRITERION VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

The TLI has its own property and resources, which effectively support the implementation of its stated mission and objectives and create a learning environment.

FINDINGS

7.1 The institution takes due care to create a learning environment appropriate to the academic programmes offered.

The current physical space and equipment of the Academy provide a modest but sufficient environment for the implementation of the academic programs.

The most evident weak point is the library. It is poor in appropriate literature, the attendance is low, there are no attendance statistics and there is no analysis about the efficiency of using the library. There is little digital literature and the library cannot effectively support the learning process and meet students' demand for literature needed for the academic programs. There is a sports hall, halls for conferences and other events and a food service place. The automatic system of keeping certain data has been developed and is used. There is an opportunity to connect to the Internet through Wi-Fi. Surveys are conducted among the students and the employees of the Academy in order to identify the needs for technical equipment and information. In the near future it is planned to significantly improve the technical base of the Academy. In particular, according to a decision of the RA Government awarded the Academy the free and unlimited use of a building offering 4318 square meters and adjacent land.

To organize the educational process more effectively a software (Student Info) was developed. It records personal data of the students and the results of their progress in education and to makes the work of the Educational-Methodical Department more effective. In the academic year 2012-2013 the library was replenished with 5027 books and works for making the library digital have started. But these efforts will remain limited until the Academy moves to the planned new premises.

7.2 The institution endeavours to secure adequate financial resources and distribution of the latter to provide, maintain and operate the facilities and equipment as needed to achieve its mission and objectives.

The Academy managed to provide enough resources for the development of its academic programs and other activities. Sound management has allowed the Academy to achieve the necessary greater diversification of resources. Budgeting at the Academy draws on financial resources from state and non-state sources. The latter include students' tuition fees, income from the organization of different training sessions, sales of the journal and some other sources. During the academic years from 2008 through 2012, the Academy implemented externally financed grant projects in the amount of AMD 273,807.7 and internally funded grant projects in the amount of AMD 1,222.0 . The Academy prepares regular reports about the use of financial resources and presents them to the competent state bodies.

The sound, conservative allocation of resources to the various activities of the Academy has allowed the development of much needed support services and has thus contributed to the stable development of the institution and strengthened its reputation and attractiveness.

7.3 The institution has sound financial policies and capacity to sustain and ensure the integrity and continuity of the programmes offered at the institution.

The Academy endeavours to ensure an effective and stable management of its financial resources, to harmonize its financial planning with its strategic goals and objectives, and to increase and diversify its revenues. In this respect, the Academy has developed a policy for the allocation of financial resources aimed at ensuring the sustainable implementation of its academic programs. The allocation of financial resources is based on the proportions of the previous years according to three main dimensions: expenses directed to the development of the Academy, salaries, and costs of the maintenance of the infrastructure. Adjustments are made according to the number of students admitted in the current year. The financial resources from tuition fees are the main source of income

of the Academy. However, the Academy acknowledges that no criteria for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the resource allocation policy have been set in place and there are no mechanisms or analysis in the Academy directly related to them.

While the Academy defines and implements annual budget allocations, it has no clearly defined, multi-annual investment plan for the staff development and equipment required for the achievement of the Academy's mission and goals.

A very positive development is that the Academy's resources are diversified and gathered not only from the state budget but also from tuition fees, international grant projects and from the organization of training activities.

7.4 The institution's resource base supports the institution's educational programmes and its strategic plans for sustainability and continuous quality enhancement.

The Academy managed to ensure a sound resource base for the maintenance and continuous development of its academic programs. However, the institution does not have a structured mid-term strategic plan able to lead the Academy through the further phases of its development. The Academy endeavours to ensure the development of the necessary resource base for the implementation of its strategic plan and academic programs through the continuous improvement of its technical and electronic resources. From the perspective of the Academy's development and progress, the introduction and use of modern technologies in the educational processes is of great importance. For this reason during the academic years 2012 and 2013 computers, laptops, printers, copying machines, projectors and other equipment were bought. However, the long-term policy on the allocation of financial resources ensuring the continuous and improved implementation of academic programs at the Academy is not formalised. As a result, this allocation is carried out on the basis of past experience and some principles of the previous years, with no formal system geared towards expected future demands.

Within the framework of Competitive Fund of the RA Higher Education Innovations grant project, the EU's TEMPUS project and the World Bank's grant project, the Academy plans to introduce in 2014 new software and 40 new computers that will be used for the development of interactive classrooms with relevant information boards and students' response systems.

7.5 There is a sound policy and procedure to manage information and documentation.

The Academy does not have a formalised policy on information management. But the regulations applied in the information and documentation systems and the quality of the technical provision of these systems underpin the conclusion that the Academy implements effectively the management processes of information and documentation. The organization of documentation management at the Academy is carried out according to the regulation on recordings. Since 2011 a formal email address (info@paara.am) has been used in the Academy and the applications and letters sent to this email are adequately processed. In 2011 an internal computer network was created at the Academy. The network is available at the Educational-Methodical Department and the various Chairs. In the near future it is planned to introduce the "Mulberry" internal electronic documentation system with a view to accelerate the communication between the administration and other structural units. Thus, the Academy actually increases the use of information technologies and does its best to develop its resource base, even though the longer term priorities of this development are not clearly defined and hence there is no formal process ensuring a continuous improvement in the quality and stability of these systems.

7.6 The institution ensures the environment is safe and secure through health and safety mechanisms that also consider special needs of students.

The buildings of the Academy are provided with a fire alarm system, the building is controlled with video-recording system and there is a civil defence office.

The Academy performs video surveillance security with cameras. There is a trade union which organizes health treatment and other events. Yet, even though the Academy ensures a safe environment for its students and staff, there is room for improvement with respect to health protection and students with special needs. There is no special unit for the provision of first aid and

other medical services and some equipment for students with special needs is missing, thus limiting the opportunities of education for these students and the flow of potential applicants.

When the new building is available to the Academy, it will improve probably immensely increase the physical and technical conditions and infrastructures and will allow the institution to take into account much better the needs of students with special needs. Until this happens, the Academy will not undertake any major renovation at its current building.

7.7 There are special mechanisms in place that ensure quality of the resources, their effectiveness, applicability and availability.

The Academy plans to use its web site (www.paara.am) to disseminate information about its activities, functions and structure among students, staff and the general public. The web site is regularly updated. The web site and the announcement board provide information to the teaching staff and to PhD and master students about opportunities to implement research activities, participate in seminars, conferences and international scholarship competitions. But there is no structured basis for the evaluation of the effectiveness and use of the resources provided to the teaching staff and the students. Overall, in terms of availability and quality of documents and sources of information, the Academy is still far from international standards, but it has succeeded in developing efficient teaching and learning methods that allow students to acquire the necessary competencies and skills. In recent years, the institution has also been successful in enhancing stronger and more comprehensive support services, which are an essential factor for competitiveness under the current circumstances of reduced state funding.

CONSIDERATIONS

There are serious reasons to believe that the current increase and diversification of resources of the Academy will keep ensuring the development of the institution. The expert panel cannot really assess the positive impact of moving to a new place at the end of 2015, but a more functional physical space will undoubtedly create more favorable conditions for new services. At the same time it is bound to generate higher maintenance and operating expenses and thus require a further increasing and diversification of the institution's income. The shortcomings referred to in the previous paragraphs can be corrected effectively without too much difficulty if mechanisms are elaborated to evaluate the availability, use and effectiveness of the resources provided to teaching staff and students. Overall, the panel is of opinion that the Academy has enough resources and funds for the creation of a good educational environment and for the effective implementation of its mission and goals. However, the Academy does not carry out any evaluation of the effectiveness of its processes of resource allocation and development and this will affect the longer term enhancement of the effectiveness of the organization and implementation of the educational process.

CONCLUSION: The corrspondance of Academy's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 7 is **satisfactory.**

CRITERION VIII.SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY

The institution is accountable to the government, employers and society at large for the education it offers and the resources it uses to meet these objectives.

FINDINGS

8.1 There is clear policy on institutional accountability.

The Academy, as a public institution, deeply understands its social responsibility and importance with respect to the development of the public administration sphere in RA. In this regard, there is a regular exchange of information between the Academy and the corresponding levels of society: President's Staff, public administration and civil service bodies. The Academy considers the enhancement of the transparency and accountability of its activities as one of its main priorities.

Internal and external forms of accountability are regulated at the Academy. The reports of the various structural units are included in the final annual report of the Academy, which is first discussed in the different collegial bodies, particularly in the Scientific Council, before it is made public. During these discussions shortcomings and non-performed actions are identified and this gives the Academy an opportunity to plan improvement actions for the next year. The Academy follows a regulated procedure for its annual reports: production of draft, consultation, discussion and adoption in a session of the Academy's Council, presentation to the RA President's Staff and publication in the "Public Service" weekly newspaper and on the Academy's web site in order to ensure the transparency and availability of the procedures and activities to the public. However, the transparency of the institution's activities and the availability of the information are currently evaluated only by means of surveys among Academy students and staff, which is not fully satisfactory from a quality assurance viewpoint.

8.2 The institution ensures transparency of its procedures and processes and makes the results of the latter publicly available.

The Academy endeavours to meet the needs of the public administration sphere in RA, but many accountability procedures have not been formalized and made official yet. The Academy disseminates the necessary information about its main activities among the public through different means: web site, Facebook, booklets, mass media, announcements, etc. The institution's web site is regularly updated after every significant event and activity, which contributes to the transparency of the activities carried out in the Academy. The Academy pays much attention to the role of the web site for public relations and in view of this the Academy continuously updates its web site in Armenian, Russian and English.

8.3 There are strong links with the society and it is expressed through firm feedback mechanisms.

The feedback mechanisms used by the Academy mainly relate to students, employers of the public administration sphere and indirectly to the larger circles of society. The Academy underlines the importance of paying more attention to the exchange of information with the Armenian society. The Academy collaborates with TV, radio programs, electronic and print media and press agencies and in this way gradually strengthens and diversifies its links with local and state self-governing bodies and stimulates the willingness of graduates and benefactors to invest in the Academy's programs.

There are feedback mechanisms in the Academy (surveys among employers, meetings with students and graduates, emails) aimed at gathering the opinion of stakeholders for the planning of further activities. All articles in mass media about the Academy have been archived since 2011 for the purpose of analysis. The Career Center which is about to be created is expected to create an electronic database on graduates and in this way to improve and strengthen the links with alumni to the creation of such feedback mechanisms able to promote strong links with the society are still in their infancy at the Academy.

8.4 The institution has mechanisms that takes care of knowledge transfer to the society and contributes to development of citizenship.

Precise mechanisms for the transfer of knowledge to society have not been formalised at the Academy yet, but its programs indirectly ensure the transfer of the Academy's knowledge and values to society through its graduates and training courses. The Academy stresses the importance of not just training its students as specialists in the public administration sphere but also preparing active and responsible individuals and citizens. The academic programs and the methods used at the Academy as well as the Academy's graduates have the potential to really influence the future development of RA. The Academy also provides additional educational services to the Armenian society and this activity has become an important tool to enhance the Academy's impact and ensure the diversification of its financial resources. In this regard, the Academy carries out training courses for civil servants, community leaders and council members. A club of psychological debate has been created. At the initiative of students of the Academy, various social programs (including charity) are carried out. In the period 2011-2013 the Academy organized training courses which were attended

by 2,793 persons and a steady increase of attendance is easily observable over the most recent years. The Academy organized "EXPO" initiative in which different educational institutions, psychological centers and other organizations took part and an exhibition-sale took place. The Academy is aware that the changes in its external environment require that new mechanisms of feedback should be planned and used. In addition to its focus on the education of qualified specialists in public administration, the Academy also pays attention to the issues concerning the education and development of individuals and citizens. The use of these mechanisms is in line with the peculiarities of the Academy, especially the orientation of its academic programs and its strategic plan. But there is a lack of formal procedures aimed at listening to the public and informing society.

CONSIDERATIONS

The Academy acknowledges its accountability to the country and society for the different spheres of its activities (education provided, programs offered, resources used), even though the feedback mechanisms are still somewhat weak and under-developed and transparency is not fully achieved. At its current stage of development, the primary problem of the Academy is to design a systematic approach to public relations; in order to achieve this in a sustainable way, the Academy needs sufficient human and technical resources together with effective feedback mechanisms.

CONCLUSION: The corrspondance of Academy's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 8 is **satisfactory.**

CRITERION IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION
The institution promotes experience exchange and enhancement through its sound external relations practices, thus promoting internationalization of the institution.

FINDINGS

9.1. The institution promotes its external relations through sound policies and procedures aimed at creating an environment conducive to experience exchange and enhancement and internationalization.
The Academy has outstanding experience of contact with the RA Government and the public administration sphere in RA. The strengthening of internationalization is seen by the institution as a necessity for the future and the Academy plans to promote it, but the current situation of the Academy with respect to internationalization is ambiguous. On the one hand, the Academy has developed approaches to internationalization in line with its main mission (which does not call for a strong emphasis on the mobility of students) and has established links with a few renowned foreign partners. On the other hand, until now the Academy has not managed to integrate the international dimension in its strategic plan and its academic programs. In line with its strategic plan calling for the promotion of internationalization and the establishment of external relations, the Academy plans to extend its international activities, to develop its international collaboration and the exchange of experience and to create a favorable environment for the development and expansion of internationalization. The Academy has signed contracts of collaboration and memoranda of understanding with a number of RA and foreign educational institutions, for example with the RA Sargsyan Military Institute of the Ministry of Defense, the Eurasian International University, the Public Administration National Academy of the President's Office of Ukraine, the State Service Academy of the President's Office of the Russian Federation, the Belarus Administration Academy of the President's Office of Belarus, the Public Administration school of the Vice-President's Office of Poland, the University of Political Science ("Sciences Po") of France and others. The Academy also organizes joint projects and publications and participates in seminars, workshops and training activities abroad. During the reporting period the Academy became active in international grant projects that can become a mechanism for the continuous development of the institution and a source

of financial and technical means. In general, the Academy tries to encourage the internationalization process through the establishment of external relations and the exchange of experience. The policy promoting the establishment of external relations is defined in the strategic plan of the Academy and for the coordination of these processes the Academy has a Vice-Rector for external relations as well as a Department of International Collaboration and External Relations. While the Academy has collaboration agreements and procedures promoting the establishment of external relations, these activities are not formalised and seem to be mainly responses to opportunities or difficulties that lay appear randomly in the environment. There is a clear tendency in the Academy to enlarge its active collaboration with foreign partners, but these external relations are not always geared towards a strategic objective and the Academy does not carry out any effective evaluation of these activities.

9.2 The institution's external relations infrastructure ensures smooth flow of the process.

The activities of the Vice-Rector for external relations and the Department of International Collaboration and External Relations are the Academy's units in charge of the extension of the collaboration with international universities and scientific-research institutions, the promotion of the mobility of young students and teachers and the Academy's participation in different international projects. The Academy started the process of gathering data for the analysis of the activities of the Department of International Collaboration and External Relations. The number of contracts (42) signed with international partners may be seen as a signal of the growing effectiveness of the department, even though the academy has no mechanisms in place to assess the outcomes of international collaborative work or conferences, nor to use these activities as a basis for relevant reforms at the Academy. The Department has not yet carried out an evaluation of the effectiveness of international agreements and their usefulness for the Academy. The Academy acknowledges that it should monitor the effectiveness of the Department but no concrete evaluation has been carried yet. Recently the Academy has adopted a regulation on the organization of formal visits to the Academy and on meetings, public events and staff's business trips abroad.

9.3 The institution promotes fruitful and effective collaboration with local and international counterparts.

The Academy collaborates mainly with local employers of the public sphere and with the RA civil service community. Nonetheless, the Academy has started a number of successful collaborative activities with international educational institutions (grant projects from the EU and other international organizations, agreements with renowned foreign partners). However, these initiatives have hardly had an impact on the academic programs, the students, the teaching staff and the management of the Academy. Currently the Academy has 42 international collaboration agreements and participates in various international educational projects. Some of the best students of the Academy pass their internships at international partner institutions. A number of training courses and seminars involving partner institutions have been organized, e.g. "Risk Management in IT projects", "Expenses and Finances of Projects", "Methods of Negotiations", "The Implementation of Strategy of Stable Development", "Information System and Management of IT Expenses", "Project Management", "The Experience Exchange of the Human Resource Management in the Sphere of Civil Services". Recently some 18 educational trips abroad were organized and 13 employees of the Academy took part in them. During the last three years the employees of different units of the Academy were sent to partner institutions for the exchange of experience, and professionals from partner institutions were invited to the Academy for the same purpose. Since 2014 the Academy has been planning for the participation of more students in the managerial and research internships and in short-term and mid-term projects organized at foreign partner institutions.

9.4 The institution ensures the appropriate level of a foreign language for internationalization purposes.

The Academy has initiated two main activities in this respect: the organization of foreign language courses for the teaching and support staff and the growing attention paid to students' knowledge of a foreign language at the time of their admission and during their studies (inclusion of a foreign language course in the curricula, teaching of some courses in Russian or English, a minimal level of external mobility). Courses of English and French are organized free of charge for the students and

staff of the Academy and are attended mainly by support staff, with little participation from teaching staff and students.

While some steps have been taken at the Academy to ensure the knowledge of a foreign language, these activities do not contribute to the effectiveness of the Academy's internationalization. Evidence for this can be found in the small number of staff members travelling to international events and the small number of articles published abroad.

CONSIDERATIONS

In recent years, the Academy has gradually paid more attention to its internationalization and some tools that are very important steps for further developments in this area have been developed or improved. The Academy should benchmark its academic programs (especially with respect to learning outcomes) against those of leading international institutions. As a priority the Academy should review its mission, vision and strategic plan in line with the changing international reality, even though the Academy concentrates mainly on the satisfaction of the needs of the RA labor market. In the panel's view, it is important that the Academy acknowledges that henceforward the successful achievement of its mission in the sphere of RA public administration and public servants will require that they develop their international competencies, and that even within the RA the attractiveness of the Academy will hinge on its reputation among its international peers.

CONCLUSION: The corrspondance of Academy's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 9 is **satisfactory.**

CRITERION X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
The institution has a set infrastructure for internal quality assurance, which promotes establishment of a quality culture and continual development of the institution.

FINDINGS

10.1 The institution has internal quality assurance policies and procedures.
The Academy has developed quality assurance tools (especially in order to study the opinion of students and employers) and procedures (e.g. new regulations on the evaluation of academic programs, internships, and some other issues) and has established specific units (especially the recently created Center for Quality Assurance). These are considered inseparable parts of the Academy's internal quality assurance system, which looks into the main spheres of the Academy's activities and results. However, the above-mentioned tools are not complete and interconnected yet. While there is a shared opinion about the importance and the main goals of the Academy, there is not yet a "quality culture" based on systematic and cyclic monitoring and evaluation, except for the evaluation of courses. Up to now, the main task of the newly created Center for Quality Assurance has been to carry out a number of planned activities rather than to evaluate their implementation and effectiveness. The Academy's concept of quality assurance was approved by the Scientific Council on 31 October, 2013. It defines the Academy's quality assurance cycle for certification and monitoring, the main requirements and principles as well as the organizational structure that will be needed. On 29 November 2013 the Scientific Council recommended for publication the Academy's Quality Assurance Manual, which contains information about the Academy's strategic goals and its internal quality assurance system and procedures. Based on this, the Academy plans to implement a set of activities for the continuous enhancement of education.
10.2 The institution allocates sufficient time, material, human and financial resources to manage internal quality assurance processes.

QA tools, procedures and units are still new at the Academy, but in recent months they have been boosted by the allocation of more human and financial resources. Nevertheless, it is not enough for the Academy to have an integrated QA system ensuring the improvement of academic programs and educational processes: it ought to become more comprehensive. The QA processes in the Academy are mainly implemented by the Center for Quality Assurance, which has sufficient human resources (it was established in 2010 with 2 staff members), but in some quality assurance processes nearly all units of the Academy need to be involved. In 2013 an expert was invited to the Academy to study the QA system. In 2012 the Educational-Scientific Department and technical and student committees were created and they all have different functions in the development of the QA system. In this regard, the Academy provides human resources in addition to the number of the main staff of the QA center (2 people). While the Academy does not make a separate financial allocation for the QA system in the annual budget, it uses funds from grant projects to ensure the continuous development of the QA procedures in the educational, research and management spheres of the Academy. The allocation of financial resources by the Academy is thus also reflected in the salaries paid to the staff of the corresponding units. However, there are no mechanisms to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the activities carried out thanks to these allocated resources.

10.3 Internal and external stakeholders are involved in QA procedures.

The most advanced quality assurance process at the Academy is the regular evaluation of courses by students. The involvement of external stakeholders in these processes for the improvement of academic programs and educational outcomes is still limited. However, the Academy tries to ensure the participation of internal and external stakeholders in quality issues by means of involving them in the discussion of the strategic plan and the academic programs, organizing seminars, etc.. During the regular evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning, the opinions of students and graduates are taken into consideration thanks to surveys. Currently surveys are also carried out among employers, in order to assess to what extent the graduates are prepared.

The questionnaire with a formal accompanying letter was sent to 58 employers, in accordance with the regulation on conducting sociological surveys about education at the Academy. The Academy also emphasises the participation of external stakeholders in other processes. In particular, it plans to establish long-term collaboration relationships with the main employers and public organizations and to develop mutually beneficial strategic links between different chairs of the Academy and the main employers of the state and private sector. This is expected to help promoting the future career of students and to increase the participation of major employers in organizing internships and trainings.

Thus, internal stakeholders are involved more, and more regularly, in the Academy's QA processes than external stakeholders. There are deadlines for the conduct of surveys, but not for all QA tasks. Overall, while the Academy takes the opinion of internal and external stakeholders into consideration, there are no mechanisms for the evaluation of the effectiveness of internal and external stakeholders' involvement in QA procedures.

10.4 The internal quality assurance system is periodically reviewed.

The creation of the formal QA system is still in progress at the Academy. This is why it is too early to evaluate the cyclical review process as part of the system. Yet, in reality the main part of the already applied tools involves some kind of periodic review (for example, the surveys among students or academic program). The Academy does not yet have a procedure for the full evaluation and regular review of the academic programs. But methodological instructions for the design of academic programs based on the definition of the expected learning outcomes have been developed and published by the Academy. These instructions refer to the goals and objectives of the Bologna process and the aims, principles and approaches of the Tuning project and set out the phases of the planned review of academic programs.

Representatives of the Academy participated in a number of seminars and workshops organized by ANQA. Together with the development of the internal QA system, there are also new opportunities for external benchmarking.

10.5 The internal quality assurance system provides valid and sufficient background for the success of the external quality assurance processes.

While the internal QA system is still in the stage of development, it was able to provide relevant data that was used in the self-evaluation report and serves as a basis for the present external evaluation report. One of the main issues is that the QA tools used by the Academy are newly created or are in the planning stage, which makes it difficult to evaluate their effectiveness. Some of the QA processes - especially the self-evaluations - are carried out in accordance with the format for institutional criteria and methodology. Ten working groups were set up at the Academy as part of the process of self-evaluation and representatives of the administrative, teaching and support staff and of students were involved in these groups. To start the process of self-evaluation, the methodical instructions "Tools and Methodology of Self-evaluation in Higher Education Institutions" were established and published. To evaluate the level of satisfaction with the services provided by the Academy, surveys were conducted among 220 students, 81 graduates and 46 employees.

10.6 The internal quality assurance system provides for the transparency of the processes unfolding in the institution through providing valid and up to date information on the quality of the latter.

The new QA tools used by the Academy helped enhancing the transparency of activities (mainly thanks to the surveys conducted among students). As it was already mentioned, many tools are still in the process of elaboration. In the process of development of the internal QA system, the support provided by the Academy's authorities to the newly created QA center has been an important factor. The Academy endeavors to ensure the transparency of its QA processes and procedures and the participation of students, graduates, main employers and external experts in these processes. The self-analysis of institutional capacities was published on the Academy's web site. Information about the self-evaluation process was published in the Academy's weekly newspaper. There are various mechanisms for the transparency of the Academy's activities. The transparency of the Academy's activities and internal QA system is ensured by the regular provision of information though all possible internal and external means, meetings with students and teaching staff, weekly newspaper and web site, mass media, etc.

Overall, the Academy ensures the transparency and accountability of its activities, not least through its web site. But mainly this mechanism has no links with the activities of internal QA system of the Academy.

CONSIDERATIONS

The Academy does not yet have a fully operating, comprehensive QA system, but over the recent years significant progress can be noticed in this area. The Academy has created an internal QA system (infrastructure, methodical guidance and procedures which are aimed at the continuous improvement of activities and the development of a "quality culture"), but many tools are still in the process of consolidation and have results have not yet been observed. Mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of the involvement of internal and external stakeholders in QA processes are still missing. There is still significant work in progress to define QA mechanisms and formats for their implementation. Under these circumstances it is not yet possible to come to conclusions about the periodic review cycle of the Academy's internal QA system. At the same time, it is clear that the existing QA infrastructure and the current procedures contributed to the present process of external evaluation.

CONCLUSION: The corrspondance of Academy's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 10 is **satisfactory.**

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERION	CONCLUSION
1. Mission and Goals	**Satisfactory**
2. Governance and Administration	**Satisfactory**
3.Academic Programs	**Satisfactory**
4. Students	**Satisfactory**
5.Teaching and Support Staff	**Satisfactory**
6. Research and Development	**Unsatisfactory**
7. Infrastructure and Resources	**Satisfactory**
8.Social Responsibility	**Satisfactory**
9. External Relations and Internationalization	**Satisfactory**
10. Internal Quality Assurance System	**Satisfactory**

11 July 2014

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Samvel Pipoyan

Chairman of the expert panel

APPENDICES
APPENDIX 1. CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

Samvel Pipoyan: In 1987, he became a diploma specialist in biology. In 1993, he got a PhD degree in biological sciences. In 2010, he got his doctor's degree. His scientific research includes the fields of zoology and vocational education and training. In 1991- 2008 he was appointed Head of the "Vocational education and training" Department of the MoES. In 2008-2010 he became the director of the National Centre for Vocational Education and Training development. From 2010 till now he has been the head of the staff department in The National Security Council. Since 2012, he is a professor at the biological chair of the Armenian State Pedagogical University. He has published more than 85 scientific articles, 1 monograph and 1 learning manual in the field of biology, as well as 15 articles, 1 learning manual and 4 other scientific texts in the field of professional education. He is a co-founder and a Board member of the NGO "Reforms in the professional education" , one of the founders and board member of Armenian league for Lifelong learning, the president of the committee of the agricultural field, a board member of the CIC adult-learners educational base, the co-founder of the NGO "adult-learners and life-long learning", a member of the management board of the Meghri state college and of the Armenian State Pedagogical university. He participated in more than 20 scientific conferences in the field of professional education.

Guy HAUG - Internationally recognised European expert on the development of tertiary education policies and institutions in an international perspective. He is currently working as advisor to the Rector of the University of Technology of Valencia, Spain. He is one of the "fathers" of the European Higher Education Area. He served 2001- 2006 as principal advisor to the European Commission (Directorate for Education) for the creation of an agenda for university modernisation as part of the EU's Lisbon Strategy for the Europe of Knowledge. Before that he was centrally involved in designing and initiating the "Bologna Process" when he served (1998-2001) as principal advisor to the European Association of Universities. Between 1991 and 1998 he was Director General for Europe of the Council on International Educational Exchange, New York/Paris. He worked for the EU for the inception of the ERASMUS, TEMPUS and ASIA-LINK programmes. He cooperated with the Council of Europe, the Nordic Council of Ministers, OECD, UNESCO, the World Bank and many NGOs and university networks in Europe, North and Latin America and Asia. Until 1991 he was in charge of institutional/international development at the Reims School of Management (France), a major institution with large double-degree programmes. He was also the main author of the European Commission's Progress Report on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Europe (2009). He has also hands-on experience with QA and accreditation, as a member of national agencies (Austria, Spain, Kosovo), through the evaluation of universities (in Russia, Switzerland, France, Romania, Chile) and QA agencies (in Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Colombia, Switzerland) and his active involvement in the creation of a "quality label" for engineering studies in Europe (EUR-ACE). He is the author of many articles, book chapters and communications on higher education development at the system and institutional level, the European Higher Education Area, cooperation with other world regions, management education and engineering education in an international setting, etc. He holds a Master's degree in Law (Strasbourg), an MBA (Ottawa), a Ph.D. in Political Science (Tübingen) and a Doctorate honoris causa from HETAC (Ireland).

Tigran Mnatsakanyan - In 2008 he graduated from the Armenian State University of Economics as a qualified specialist in the field of Management. In 2011 he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Economics in the field of "Economics and Management of the Economy and its branches" with a thesis dealing with "The Ways of Increasing the Efficiency of Public Administration (based on RA materials)". His research area includes public administration, strategic management, risk management, etc. He is an Assistant professor at the ASUE Chair of Management since 2011. He was the Chairman of the Students' Scientific Association of ASUE from 2008 to 2011. He has publications

and papers referring to the theory of management, the history of public administration, modern issues, efficiency increasing and evaluation methodology in public administration, and local self-governance systems. He participated in a conference on quality enhancement of tertiary education.

Gohar Iskandaryan – She is a diploma specialist, holds a Doctor degree in History and is an assistant professor. She defended her scientific thesis on "Iran-US relations (1941-1960) in 2003 and published it in 2010 as a monograph. She is a Lead Research Assistant at Oriental Sciences, Department on Iran, of the RA National Academy of Sciences; she also acts as Scientific Secretary to the Division of Diaspora, RA NAS Presidium and as a Lecturer at Yerevan State University. The majority of her scientific articles relate to the internal and external policy of Iran and its relations with the countries within and outside the region. She is the author of 20 scientific articles, one monograph, one methodical manual, and a second monograph is in the publishing process. She participated in several international symposiums, including the international conference on "Events and trends occurred in the Near East" (Aghveran, October 2012) and the International symposium on "Armenia-Iran relation in the current phase" (Institute of Asian and African Countries of the "Lomonosov" Moscow State University, June 2000). In 2003, she was awarded the Certificate of Honor of the RA National Academy of Sciences as the best scientific worker of the year in her field.

Arus Haroutiunyan - Fourth-year student at the Faculty of Management, Department of Enterprise Economics and Management of Yerevan State University. The topic of her thesis is "The Peculiarities, Differences and Ways of Improvement of Staff Management in the RA Education Sphere". In 2011-2012 she was the Deputy-Chair of the Educational-Scientific Commission of the YSEU Student Council, Head of the Educational Reforms Commission of the National Association of Students of Armenia (2012-2014), member of the quality assurance expert panel of the European Students' Union (2014 to present). She is a graduate of the Future Leaders' Exchange Program (FLEX) and she participated in various international symposiums.

APPENDIX 2. SHCEDULE OF SITE VISIT

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Public Administration Academy of RA
12.05.2014–16.05.2014

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	12.05.2014	Launch	End	Duration
1	Meeting with the Rector	14:00	14:45	45 minutes
2	Meeting with the self-assessment working group	15:00	16:00	60minutes
3	Observation of resources	16:00	17:00	60minutes
4	Internal meeting of expert panel	17:00	18:00	60minutes
	13.05.2014	Launch	End	Duration
1	Meeting with the Vice-rectors	9:30	10:30	60 minutes
2	Meeting with the Heads of the departments	10:45	11:45	60 minutes
3	Review of documents, observation of resources	12:00	13:00	60 minutes
4	Lunch (Expert panel discussions)	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
5	Meeting with the teaching staff	14:00	15:15	75minutes
6	Meeting with the members of Student Council	15:30	16:30	60minutes
7	Internal meeting of expert panel	16:30	18:00	90 minutes
	14.05.2014	Launch	End	Duration
1	Meeting with Quality Assurance Division	9:30	10:30	60 minutes
2	Meeting with alumni	10:45	11:45	60 minutes
3	Review of documents, observation of resources	12:00	13:00	60 minutes
4	Lunch (Expert panel discussions)	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
5	Meeting with students	14:00	15:15	75minutes
6	Meeting with the members of Scientific Council	15:30	16:30	60minutes
7	Internal meeting of expert panel	16:30	18:00	90 minutes
	15.05.2014	Launch	End	Duration
1	Meeting with support staff	9:30	10:30	60 minutes
2	Meeting with employers	10:45	11:45	60 minutes
3	Open meeting with the expert panel	12:00	13:00	60 minutes
4	Lunch (Expert panel discussions)	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
5	Review of documents, observation of resources	14:00	15:00	60minutes
6	Internal meeting of expert panel	15:00	18:00	180minutes
	16.05.2014	Launch	End	Duration
1	Meeting with other target group selected by the expert panel	9:30	10:30	60 minutes
2	Internal discussion of the expert panel	10:45	11:45	60 minutes
3	Meeting with the Rector	12:00	12:45	45minutes
4	Lunch (Expert panel discussions)	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
5	Internal meeting of expert panel	14:00	18:00	240minutes

APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

N	DOCUMENT TITLE
1	Charter of the Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia
2	Strategic Program of the Academy for 2013-2018
3	Activity Report of the Academy for 2012
4	"Personal composition of the workgroup responsible for the Academy's strategic program development and the timetable for the activity implementation"
5	Work procedure of the Academy's Board
6	Regulation of the Academy's Scientific Board
7	Regulation on election of the Academy' Rector
8	Work procedure of the Academy's Rectorate
9	Charter of the Academy's Student Council
10	Procedure of the Academy's administrative work
11	Charter of the Academy's Trade organizations
12	Samples of Master's thesis
13	Analysis of the questionnaire results conducted among the graduates for 2012-2013 academic year
14	Quality Assurance Concept of the Public Administration Academy of the RA
15	Analysis of the questionnaire results conducted in relation to the professional education quality assurance among the employees and students of Master's educational program in Academy.
16	"Methodology and tools for the tertiary level institution's self-assessment process" methodical instructions
17	Quality Assurance concept of the Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia
18	Quality assurance manual of the Public Administration Academy of the RA
19	"Student's Guide" Manual
20	Agendas of the seminars held
21	Specialty descriptions, syllabus, subject programs
22	The procedure for organizing learning through credit system
23	Methodical instructions for development of academic programmes on the basis of expected outcomes
24	Reports on the questionnaires on the professional education quality assurance conducted among the staff and students involved in the Master's programs in Academy
25	Procedures fororganizing acceptance in Master's program and administering examination (testing and interview) within the State Management Academy of the Republic of Armenia.
26	Procedure for organizing and conductinginternships for the Academy's Master's Degree Students
27	Materials on participation of the Academy students in various international symposiums

APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED

- Computer room
- Conference hall
- Lecture hall
- Scientific-Technical Library
- Gym-hall
- Educational-Methodical Department
- Master's Degree Program Department
- Internship Division
- Division for International Cooperation and Foreign Relations
- Division for the Professional Education Quality Assurance
- Division for Training, Quality Increase and Scientific –Research Activity
- Public Administration and Public Finances Chair
- Chair of Psychology of Management

APPENDIX 5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

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                              │    Board     │
                              └──────────────┘
        ┌──────────────────┐  ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
        │ Scientific Board │  │  Rector  │  │  Rectorate   │
        └──────────────────┘  └──────────┘  └──────────────┘
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Vice-Rector on Educational Affairs	Vice-Rector on Scientific Affairs	Vice-Rector on Foreign Relations	Vice-Rector of Economic Affairs	Scientific Secretary

- Division of Doctoral Studies
- Rector's Staff
- Division of Staff Management

Educational-Methodological Department	Chair of Languages and IT	Division of International Cooperation and Foreign Relations	Financial-Economic and Accounting Department	Division of Quality Assurance of Professional Education

- Chair of Public Administration and Public Finances
- Internships Division
- Chair of Law
- Master's Program Division
- Chair of Political Management and Political Analysis
- Chair of Psychology of Management
- Information Systems Service and Development Division
- Publishing Division
- Economic Division
- Scientific-Technical Library
- Division of Training, Qualification upgrading and Scientific-Research Activity