“NATIONAL CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE”

FOUNDATION

EXPERT PANEL REPORT

INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF THE NORTHERN UNIVERSITY

Yerevan – 2022

INTRODUCTION

Institutional accreditation of Northern University (hereinafter referred to as the institution or university) was carried out according to the application submitted by the institution.

In its activities ANQA has been guided by the Order "RA government decision N978-N from June 30 on the State Accreditation of RA Educational Institutions Implementing Academic Programmes and their Specialties" and the decision N959-N approved on June 30, 2011 "On approving the accreditation criteria of the RA professional education".

The external review was realized by the expert panel which was formed according to the requirements of the "Procedure on forming the expert panel of the "National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance" Foundation" and included 4 local and 1 international expert.

Institutional accreditation is aimed not only at external quality assurance, but also at the continuous

improvement of the quality of management and educational programs. Therefore, both the local and

international experts had two tasks.

1.To carry out an external review of the institutional capacities in accordance with the RA state accreditation criteria,

2. In order to improve the quality, to carry out an expert assessment in line with international

developments and in terms of integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

This Report contains the results of the expert assessment of the institutional capacity of the university according to the accreditation criteria of the professional education of the Republic of Armenia and the peer observations of the international expert from the point of view of integration into the EHEA.

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SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

The external review of the Northern University was carried out by the independent expert panel, formed in accordance to the requirements of the "Order of the formulation of the expert panel of the "National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance". The assessment was made according to 10 criteria of the institutional accreditation approved by the RA Government Decision N 959-N from June 30, 2011.

During the implementation of the the external review, the expert panel has considered that "The Northern University" Ltd is an educational and scientific independent higher education instutition with a legal status, which considers its mission "To implement scientific-educational activities in the field of economics, management, accounting, law, programming, journalism, philology, psychology, education, pedagogy, in combination with the best national traditions, the best international experience and access to education, accessibility, transparency of organization, humanitarian values, training of personnel capable of applying the knowledge in practice".

The panel also took into account the fact that the Northern University is in the process of accreditation for the third time, had a program to eliminate the shortcomings of the previous accreditation process. According to the expert panel, the previous two processes have undeniably had a positive impact on the development of different areas of the university.

The Northern University was able to take over its unique place in the field of highly competitive higher education, organizing studies at the 6th, 7th and 8th levels of the NQF. The university has a mission, which reflects the areas of implementation of educational programs. However, along with the challenges of the time, there is a need to re-evaluate the position of the university in order to ensure guarantees of sustainable development.

The university has strategic goals and has developed a Strategic plan and action plan for its implementation, but still does not provide guarantees for the achievement of strategic goals, which is due to the fact that the planning is not based on resource accounting, full review of capabilities, analysis and reporting system, imperfection of management processes.

The university has strategic goals and has developed a plan for its implementation, but still does not provide guarantees for the achievement of strategic goals, which is due

to the fact that the planning is not based on resource accounting, full review of opportunities, analysis and reporting system, the imperfection of management processes. Although it involves stakeholders in various processes, collegiality is not yet a well-established principle in the management system. To regulate a number of processes, the university has developed and introduced documents, some of which have no noticeable effects, and effectiveness evaluation has not been greatly implemented. The positive impact of employees with different experiences and a wide range of cooperation is noticeable in terms of the implementation of university processes and the creation of preconditions for the development of various fields. However, from the point of view of simultaneous development, the use of institutional-continuous mechanisms is possible.

The processes aimed at spreading quality culture in the university are already about 10 years old. The university has developed documents that have contributed to the effective implementation of these processes. The experience of institutional accreditation of the university and its positive impact on the university processes is possible. Now the university implements the quality assurance processes, polls are conducted, discussions are held, they are able to raise some local issues. However, despite all this, the role of the quality assurance body now needs to be clarified in the quality assurance system, there is a noticeable slowdown in quality assurance processes. The research methodology and mechanisms are imperfect, and the research and analysis are insufficiently comprehensive. There have been cases where the quality assurance system has had a significant impact, but this impact is now weak.

As a result of the above, the expert panel concludes that a culture of quality is formed in the university, there are some quality assurance mechanisms that have a certain impact on the processes, which is still weak, but these mechanisms need to be developed over time. In addition, data-driven management processes are not guaranteed, the management system is imperfect in terms of institutionalization, and the planning-implementation processes are not consistent, all this hinders the simultaneous development of the university.

The University has ensured the coherence of the academic programmes with the NQF, improved their content, and reviewed the outcomes, using their practical research capabilities and skills. The experience of conducting comparative analysis and the precedents of implementing joint educational programs are also achievements. At the same time, there are some mechanisms for monitoring academic programmes. However, the documents and course of events have some conflict (including the teaching and learning

methods, outcomes and assessment), there are no comprehensive analysis processes, as well as the effect on the development is weak.

Although the university emphasizes the importance of the students and academic staff mobility, the involvement of international students, the results in this direction are not yet tangible.

There are requirements to the academic staff members, evaluation methods, the involvement of the employers in the teaching process is appreciated. There are requirements to the teaching staff, although they are not yet fully applicable and measurable. There are mechanisms for evaluating the teaching staff at the university, but they also need continuous improvement and comprehensiveness. There is no clear institutionalized mechanism for the implementation of teacher improvement measures based on the needs of the teaching staff, however, the university is improving the teaching staff and implementing some measures aimed at it. There are mechanisms to ensure the progress of the teaching staff; it is also planned to introduce a more effective system.

The university is developing resources, and taking various steps towards it, but the expert panel is concerned about the lack of interconnectedness in the distribution of funding according to the priorities of the SP, the lack of funds allocated, the achievement of the achievement of the academic programmes' goals.

As a result of the above, the expert panel concludes that the university should review the policy of resource management, distribution of finances, ensuring the effective implementation, continuity, and simultaneous development of the university according to the priorities of the SP. However, as well as some issues related to the academic programmes and the academic staff, the panel noted that the Northern University, in general, provides a credible award of qualifications.

There are different approaches to identifying student needs at the Northern University, the staff is generally willing to meet those needs, although there is a need to institutionalize mechanisms to meet those needs, including making the Student Council an effective link. Student career support services need to review and improve the mechanisms for involving them in research processes.

The university has a policy of accountability to internal and external stakeholders, has done a lot of work to ensure the procedures, transparency and accessibility of processes, there are feedback mechanisms with the public, and continuously implements measures aimed at transferring knowledge (values) to the public. Although there is a need to improve certain processes, in particular, aimed at providing an analytical component of reporting, increasing the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms, etc.

In the field of research and internationalization, the lack of a clearly feasible strategy to express the aspirations of the university is a matter of concern, which is also due to the limited human and financial resources. The university organizes national and international conferences, but there are no tangible results in the field of research (including the internationalization of research activities), there are no research results aimed at the development of the university, the connection between the educational process and research activities is weak, mechanisms that encourage teachers and students are absent. The university values the language skills of the teaching staff, has carried out a number of processes to expand external partnerships (in which the role of experienced individuals is crucial), this may be a precondition for further effective organization of the process, but the university has not yet registered tangible results, tangible results within the framework of consultations provided as a result of the previous accreditation process are also not vivid.

Thus, the panel concludes that the Northern University seeks to ensure its long-term development, takes steps towards accountability, public responsibility, supports student processes, and has created some preconditions for establishing external relations, but the achievements of research and internationalization are still sufficient guarantees, have not been created for long-term development, which is also due to the allocation of very limited resources in those areas.

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Strengths of the Institution:

1. Consistency of the University academic programmes and strategic goals with the NQF.
2. Existence of a short-term planning mechanism.
3. Experience in developing procedures, policies and regulations.
4. Experience in conducting comparative analysis of academic programmes.
5. Existence of some mechanisms for monitoring academic programmes.
6. Existence of mechanisms to identify and support the needs of students.

7. Existence of appropriate academic staff for the implementation of the academic programmes.
8. Operation of “e-buh” electronic control system.
9. Processes aimed at ensuring transparency and accessibility of university processes.
10. Existence of feedback with the society.
11. Employees with relevant experience and competence in the field of internationalization.
12. Existence of quality assurance policy, valueing processes.

Weaknesses of the Institution:

1. Imperfection of the analytical component in the reports.
2. Little involvement of internal and external stakeholders in the processes of strategic planning, implementation, as well as development and review of academic programmes.
3. Imperfection of strategically feasible long-term planning, severance of connection with short-term planning.
4. Incomplete application of the principles of collegiality quality management in the management system.
5. Imperfection of the methods of teaching, learning and assessment of students' practical abilities and skills.
6. Imperfection of the evaluation and improvement processes of academic programmes.
7. The imperfection of the mechanisms for the academic staff improvement.
8. Absence of a viable strategy and effective internationalization policy in the sphere of research.
9. Lack of mechanisms to encourage and promote the development of research activities among the students and the teaching staff, their weak involvement in the processes.
10. Imperfection of effective management and distribution mechanisms of financial resources, and their weak connection with strategic planning.
11. Inconsistency of aspirations and processes towards internationalization.
12. Lack of risk management mechanisms to ensure the continuity of academic programmes.
13. Lack of mobility of teachers and students, insufficient knowledge of English.
14. Insufficient comprehensiveness of research in quality assurance processes, the weak impact of results on processes, breakdown of quality assurance documents and processes.

Main recommendations:

Mission and Purposes

1. Clarify the position, perspective, mission and goals of the university, taking into account the possible dangers, resource-cooperation opportunities, relying on data and studies, at the same time deriving them from the needs of stakeholders.
2. Ensure the achievement of strategic goals by introducing clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Governance and Administration

3. Provide strategic planning based on the human and financial resources of the university and opportunities, guaranteeing the feasibility of strategic goals, targeted management and simultaneous development.
4. Develop collegial approaches in management by ensuring the expansion of stakeholder motivated involvement.
5. Use subdivisions, strategic plans and process reporting based on data, risk assessment and analysis, while ensuring data base and effective management.
6. Improve the accountability system by ensuring evaluation objectivity.
7. Ensure full operation of processes, policies, and procedures, evaluating, improving them, and involving stakeholders in those processes.
8. Improve the information dissemination process by using clear mechanisms for evaluating them and providing content analysis.
9. Introduce mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of information collection, analysis and application processes on various university processes, ensuring their improvement.

Academic programmes

10. Review and improve the stated outcomes of the academic programmes as well as the connection between the outcomes stated in the academic programmes and teaching, learning and assessment methods, derived from those outcomes.
11. Improve the given tasks to the students, assigning a major role to the research in order to develop more skills and abilities.
12. Develop a policy of current student activity, assignment appraisal, appeals, which will help increase the objectivity of the assessment, ensure academic honesty, and give the student an idea of the outcome-assessment method relationship.

13. Carry out the process of evaluation of academic programmes, taking into account the requirements of the labor market, involving stakeholders, and ensuring continuous improvement of the quality of education.

Students

14. Evaluate the effectiveness of student recruitment and selection mechanisms and condition their selection on the needs of applicants.
15. Coordinate the process of providing students with additional classes and counselling.
16. Involve graduates in the processes of improving educational programs and other processes at the university.
17. Raise awareness of their rights among the entire student body (both full-time and part-time learners) by introducing effective, sustainable awareness tools.
18. Diversify evaluation mechanisms for student education, counselling, and other services, including quantitative, and qualitative data analysis.

Faculty and staff

19. Review the requirements for the academic staff in the educational programmes, making them measurable and targeted.
20. Review and adjust "Assessment of the quality and effectiveness of the teaching by the students in order to improve the quality and ensure higher quality education at the Northern University" and "Attestation of the teaching staff" regulations, considering the modern challenges and requirements.
21. Apply a multi-factor approach to make decisions more inclusive and complete when encouraging or imposing sanctions on the academic staff, taking into account not only student assessments but also classroom attendance, certification, research, experience, and more.
22. Continue to introduce various mechanisms to avoid staff turnover to ensure continuous rejuvenation and stability of the teaching staff.

Research and Development

23. To define clearly achievable ambitions in the field of scientific research, taking into account the current developments in the field, as well as the possibilities of the university and the needs of the stakeholders, the peculiarities of the university (particularly by developing applied research).

24. Develop and implement long-term, mid-term and short-term plans for the implementation of ambitions, ensuring measurable results that will contribute to the development of the university.
25. Develop and implement a policy for the internationalization of research, in particular by promoting joint research projects with international partners and increasing the number of publications in internationally ranked journals.
26. Take measures to involve students in the teaching staff's research projects and to conduct commercialized research.
27. Ensure the development of students' research skills by introducing effective mechanisms for interconnecting research activities and the educational process.
28. Introduce incentive mechanisms for students and lecturers, aimed at their involvement in research processes and the provision of research results, contributing to the development of the university.

Infrastructure and Resources

29. Take measures to raise other financial income for the effective implementation of the mission and goals of the academic programmes.
30. Clarify budget expenditures according to the goals of the strategic plan and the outcomes of academic programs.
31. Equip the library with the latest professional literature and create an opportunity to join online international library networks.
32. Involve internal stakeholders to ensure budget transparency and expenditure transparency.
33. Establish clear policies for managing information and document circulation processes in the institution.
34. Carry out studies and analyzes on the adequacy of the academic programmes and resources plan further actions.
35. To replenish the resource base of the institution in terms of achieving the goals and end results of the academic programmes.

Societal Responsibility

36. To make the reports analytical according to the PDCA cycle,
37. Improve feedback effectiveness assessment tools,

38. To develop the potential of the law clinic by concluding agreements with similar structures operating in the national and international educational systems, which will contribute to the internationalization of the university and the provision of additional financial income.

External Relations and Internationalization

42. Identify realistic financial resources for the implementation of internationalization programs.

43. Define clear methods for selecting international partners, clearly define the terms of the partnership, the obligations of the parties.

44. Expand external partnerships with local private enterprises to provide quality education and implement curriculum outcomes, as well as to organize student internships.

45. Strengthen the foreign language teaching component by offering long-term effective training for faculty and administrative staff and students instead of short-term training.

46. Add English language component in academic programs.

47. Facilitate the large-scale participation of students, faculty and staff in international projects.

Internal Quality Assurance System

48. Ensure consistency of internal quality assurance system documents and processes, ensuring the implementation of clearly planned targeted processes and the efficient use of resources.
49. Ensure the regulated planned (including human, material and financial resources) effective activities of the QA Board and committees, also by using the effectiveness assessment and accountability mechanism.
50. Ensure comprehensive research and analysis, including diversification of research methods.
51. Ensure motivated stakeholder involvement in quality assurance processes by facilitating quality analysis.
52. Introduce mechanisms for conducting comparative quality assurance analysis and evaluation of efficiency, ensuring its simultaneous development, which will contribute to the development of PDCA processes at the University.
53. Improve current data collection, analysis, accountability, accessibility, and publicity mechanisms, while facilitating external evaluation processes.

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Armenuhi Sargsyan
Chair of Panel

11 July, 2022

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

After the previous institutional accreditation of the Northern University, the expert panel has discovered a number of positive changes, siuch as the distribution of tasks among the divisions, clarifying the responsibilities of the vice-rectors and the ambition to fulfill the university with quality personnel. The HEi has been implementing the PDCA cycle in its strategic plan and action plan. However, it is not enough, and the HEi should take active steps towards the realization of its aim to be integrated in the European Higher Eduation Area.

Academic programmes

The academic education programs available at the institution do not adequately adapt not only to modern challenges and international standards, but also to the requirements of the local labour market, which is reflected in the fact that external stakeholders are little involved in these processes, and the HEi hasn't yet designed mechanisms allowing the employees be actively involved in the design of the academic programmes and their alignment to the local and international labour market needs.

In addition, some of the existing academic programmes at the institution are only of a formal nature, with low admission rates.

In addition, some of the existing academic programmes at the institution are only of a formal nature having low admission rates. The process of researching this issue hasn't been launched in the HEi yet. The institution has very little experience in implementing education based on educational outcomes. The HEi must take steps towards alignment of the aims and educational outcomes, teaching and learning methods, assessment in the academic programmes, as well as compliance with the European Credit Accreditation (ECTS) system.

Internationalization

Some students have participated in student mobility programs and some staff in international conferences. However, the institution does not yet have internationalization standards; the field of internationalization is not coordinated. It is desirable that the management of the institution take concrete steps in this direction and monitor the realization of the stated goals in accordance with the action plan. The institution should

select appropriate partners to ensure the effectiveness of cooperation at as many levels as possible.

The cooperation between the institution and the external partners should be aimed at effective cooperation. The reduction of the number of established partnerships and their targeted implementation will increase efficiency.

Quality assurance

The institution has created and built an internal quality assurance system. The institution has a complex, large-scale regulatory document, the implementation of which requires a large workload. It should be noted that the document was last edited in 2014.

There is a problem of adequate human resources in the internal quality assurance department, which hinders the implementation of specific functions of the department in the internal quality assurance system. The research conducted by this department is of a formal nature and has no impact on the planning of the institution's strategic plan or action plan. There are no appropriate monitoring mechanisms in the institution to help the department analyze its strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, it is necessary for the institution to give more independence to the internal quality assurance department, to increase its funding. It is also necessary that the internal quality assurance department be able to carry out really effective research, to influence the management process of the university.

It is also necessary that the internal quality assurance department be able to carry out really effective research, to influence the management process of the university.

The above-mentioned problems require urgent solutions, and the institution must work in that direction. This will help the institution to take a firm place first in the local market, then in the European Higher Education Area.

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The external assessment of the institutional capacity of the Northern University was carried out by the following expert panel[1]:

1. **Armenuhi Sargsyan:** Candidate of Physical and Mathematical Sciences, Associate Professor, Head of the Scientific Policy, Quality Assurance and Management Center of the Shirak State University, Head of the Expert panel.
2. **Gaga Gvenetadze:** Head of the Quality assurance department of the British University in Georgia, international member of the Expert panel.
3. **Hovhannes Yeritsyan:** Candidate of Economics, Associate professor, Executive Director of the International Business School, lecturer at the European University, member of the Expert panel.
4. **Geghetsik Grigoryan**: Candidate of Juridical Sciences, Associate professor of the Chair of Social Sciences of the Armenian State University of Economics, member of the Expert panel.
5. **Shushan Daveyan**: 2nd-year student of the Department of Public Administration, Yerevan State University, student member of the expert panel.

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

The work of the expert panel was coordinated by ANQA Policy Development and Implementation Specialist Meri Barseghyan.

Translation was carried out by Ani Mazmanyan and Zaruhi Sahakyan.

All members of the expert panel, the translators and the coordinator have on independence and confidentiality.

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

Application for state accreditation

To pass the state institutional accreditation, the Northern University has submitted an application of the relevant form with copies of the license and its appendices. The ANQA Secretariat examined the data provided in the application and the attached documents.

[1] APPENDIX 1: CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

After the decision on accepting the application was made, a bilateral agreement was signed between ANQA and the HEi. A work schedule has been drawn up and approved.

Self-evaluation

In accordance with the schedule set by ANQA, the institution submitted the institutional capacity self-evaluation in Armenian and English languages and the package of accompanying documents.

The ANQA Coordinator reviewed the report to check its relevance to the technical requirements set by ANQA. There were several technical and contextual issues which reasonated in returning the self-evaluation to the institution. Within the stated deadline the university presented the reviewed self-evaluation which corresponded to the stated common gauge, having the corresponding foundations and the appendixes required by the gauge. Afterwards, the self-evaluation and accompanying documents, the electronic questionnaire filled-in by the university were provided to the expert panel, which composition had been agreed with the university beforehand and approved by the order of the ANQA director.

Preparatory phase

To ensure the effectiveness of the process and prepare the expert panel for the work, ANQA conducted 4 trainings on the following topics:

1. The main functions of the members of the expert panel,
2. Preliminary assessment as a stage of preparation of the expert report, the main requirements for the report;
3. The methodology of examination of the documents and resources;
4. Ethics and techniques of conducting meetings and interviews.

The expert panel, having studied the self-evaluation of the university, and the package of accompanying documents, carried out a preliminary assessment by the previously set form, preparing a list of necessary documents to be further studied, as well as a list of tasks and questions, indicating the relevant departments or target groups.

Within the stipulated time, the expert group summarized the results of the preliminary evaluation, made a plan-schedule[2] for the site visit.

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

[2] APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT

Preparatory visit

On April 1, 2022 a Zoom meeting was held with the top management of the university. During the meeting the schedule of the site visit was discussed and mutually agreed with the university, the list of additional documents to be examined was presented, it was discussed and decisions were made on the organizational, technical, information issues, meetings, ethical norms of the participants. The conditions for the focus group meetings and the work of the expert panel were discussed.

Site visit

The site visit took place from April 11, 2022 till April 14, 2022. The work of the site visit kick-started with a closed meeting, which aimed at discussing and agreeing with the international expert Gaga Gvenatadze the evaluation scope, the issues that had to be examined during the site visit, the strengths and weaknesses of the HEi according to the criteria, the procedure of the focus-group meetings, clarifying further steps.

At the meeting was present the whole expert panel, the ANQA coordinator and the interpreter.

The site visit started with a meeting with the rector of the university and ended with a meeting with the management of the institution. The lecturers, student participants, deans, heads of departments, employers and alumni were selected from a list provided in advance by the university for the focus-group meetings. All the scheduled meetings were held. During the planned visit, the expert group also conducted a study of documents[3] and a review of resources[4].

During the closed meeting of the expert panel held at the end of each working day of the visit, the interim results of the expert evaluation were presented, and at the end of the visit, the main results of the visit were summarized in a closed discussion.

The expert evaluation was carried out within the framework of ANQA procedures of state accreditation criteria, standards, and procedures which envisage a two-level evaluation scale - **satisfactory** or **unsatisfactory**.

Expert report

[3] APEPNDIX 3 LIST OF OBSERVED DOCUMENTS

[4] APPENDIX 4 RESOURCES OBSRVED BY THE EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel carried out the preliminary assessment on the basis of the electronic questionnaire filled in by the university, the self-analysis presented, the study of the attached documents, the lessons conducted, the observations of the site visit, as a result of regular discussions. Based on the observations made after the discussions, the expert panel and ANQA coordinator prepared the preliminary version of the expert report.

The international expert also prepared a separate opinion on the peer review. The documents were translated and provided to the expert group. The peer review opinion is fully included in the text of the report. After the approval of the members of the expert panel, the preliminary report was provided to the Northern University.

The University sent its response about the initial report to ANQA on 17.06.2022. ANQA has provided the institutions' observations to the experts. ANQA has organized an online meeting between the institution and the expert panel, during which the observations, presented on the initial report were discussed.

Considering the observations of the institution, the expert panel has designed the final expert report.

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Meri Barsreghyan
Expert panel coordinator

11 July 2022

BRIEF INFORMATION
ON NORTHERN UNIVERSITY

History. Northern University was founded in 1996 with the aim of ensuring the principles of science, law-abiding, humanism, patriotism and justice. During the 25 years of its establishment and activity, the Northern University has been guided by the priorities of the educational system, carrying out its activities in line with the mission of the University, and considers its goal and priority tasks for the next 5 years the following:

- Improving academic programmes aimed at training high-quality staff through the study of international experience in organizing educational processes and identifying market needs and awarding credible qualifications in accordance with the NQF.
- Development of the university's research potential, modernization of resources and infrastructure necessary for teaching and research activities.
- Educating and strengthening the military-patriotic spirit of the students through educational activities, promoting the rooting and spreading of the ideas of humanity, democracy, moral and cultural values of the society
- Promoting the development of the university's international cooperation by expanding ties with foreign higher education institutions and activating the university's integration into international educational processes.

Education. Continuation of quality assurance processes, increasing the efficiency of the implementation of educational processes and educational programs in accordance with the modern requirements of the European educational and internal labor market, continues to be one of the strategic goals of the University, which is presented in 2020-2025 in the strategic development plan.

Based on 25 years of experience and experience in two rounds of accreditation, the University responds more effectively to external and internal challenges, makes the awarded qualifications more demanding due to the regular updating of professional curricula, and graduates' general knowledge, skills and abilities become more competitive.
Research. The mission and ambitions of the University in the field of research are included in the regulations of the "Scientific Research, Innovative Programs and Postgraduate Professional Education Center of the Northern University" approved by the Scientific Board of the University in 2014, as well as in the provisions of the strategic plan. The strategic goal of the institution for the development of research is to develop the

internationalization of the research activities of the institution, the research potential and to increase the research component in the academic programmes. The strategic goal of the institution in the direction of research development is to develop the internationalization of the university's research activities, the research potential and to increase the research component in the academic programmes.

Internationalization. Integration of the University in the international educational processes, in parallel with the measures aimed at the development of the internationalization of the processes developed by the University are enshrined in the concept of internationalization of the University and in the 2020-2025 strategic plan.
The strategic plan 2020-2025 defines the strategic goal of international university development and internationalization. "Develop and expand the university's foreign relations by contributing to the internationalization of the university's processes, bringing them in line with international standards, as well as promoting the university's foreign relations with partner universities".
Quality assurance. For managing the internal quality assurance processes, the Quality Assurance Department has been functioning for 11 years, the activity of which is carried out by the Charter of the department, the strategic plan of the Quality assurance department 2020-2025 derived from the 2020-2025 strategic plan of the University and a number of internal legal acts.
The aim of the quality assurance system of the University is to increase the efficiency of the implementation of educational processes and educational programmes in accordance with the modern European educational requirements in line with the continuity of quality assurance processes.

Source: *As the source of evidence in the above areas serve the documents provided by the institution (eg self-analysis, strategic plan, schedule, department plans, concepts, etc.).*

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

I. MISSION AND PURPOSES

CRITERION: The policies and procedures of the Tertiary Level institution (hereinafter TLI) are in accordance with the institution's mission which is in line with the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (ANQF)

Findings

1.1 The TLI has a well-articulated mission that represents the Institution's purposes and goals and is in accordance with National Qualifications Framework (hereinafter NQF).

According to the charter, Northern University is a limited liability company, which is a legal entity established for the purpose of making a profit, the authorized capital of which is divided into shares in the amount defined by the charter.

The charter and goals of the University are defined by the charter of the Northern University in 2016. According to that, the mission of the university is the "implementation of scientific-educational activities in the field of economics, management, accounting, law, programming, journalism, philology, psychology, education, pedagogy, combining the best national traditions with the supremacy of the quality of education, international best practice and accessibility, accessibility, transparency of organization, humanitarian values to train personnel capable of applying the acquired knowledge in practice. " There are 8 goals in the charter.

The strategic plan of the Northern University for 2016-2020 "presents the mission of the university, which is approved by the charter, presents the goals and objectives for those years." The period of implementation of actions is indicated, the result is responsible, there is no budget, there is no calculation of what budget the implementation of that strategic program requires.

The above-mentioned strategic plan was followed by the University's 2020-2025 development strategic plan and the corresponding action plan. The same mission is stated here as well, the main problems are mentioned:

- Improving the academic programmes, aiming at training high-quality personnel through the study of international experience in organizing educational processes and identifying market needs.
- Development of the university's research potential, modernization of resources and infrastructure necessary for teaching and research activities.

- Educating and strengthening the military-patriotic spirit of the students through educational activities, promoting the rooting and spreading of the ideas of humanity, democracy, moral and cultural values of the society.
- Promoting the development of the university's international cooperation by expanding ties with foreign higher education institutions and activating the university's integration into international educational processes.

The action plan presents the period of implementation of the action, timelines for final results, KPI, responsible people, the budget is either the university budget, or co-financing, or additional funding, but even in this case there is no calculation of what budget the implementation of that strategic plan requires.

There are 8 areas presented in both strategic plans (1. Effective governance and administration, 2. Quality education system, 3. Development of external relations and internationalization, 4. Student body, 5. Human resource management, 6. Infrastructure and resources, 7. Academic research and research potential, 8. Social responsibility and feedback), for which a goal, tasks and actions are indicated. The Northern University implements educational programs at the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th levels of the NQF.

The Northern University has no labor market research. It turned out from the site visit that the Northern University has not yet been able to clarify for which educational programs it will be able to ensure sustainability, but the University finds it crucial to be able to implement both professions with the qualification of a pedagogue and some other professions. In the case of a number of educational programs, they continue to organize studies only in the part-time education system, as they do not have applicants in the full-time system.

The university has not previously collected data on graduates' employment and, in particular, on employment by profession. Only recently a survey was conducted among undergraduate students of 2017-2021. About 37% of the graduates who participated in the survey, work in the professional field, and about 50% do not work. At the same time, it turned out from the site visit that the master's students are mainly already provided with jobs when they apply to the university, and they consider studying at the university as a way to strengthen their careers. A similar approach was observed in the case of the part-time bachelor degree students.

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

The Northern University has a number of mechanisms through which the internal and external stakeholders of the university have the opportunity to raise various issues, such as surveys of students, faculty, employers, involvement of students and faculty in thr Scientific Board, meetings, discussions with students and employers. However, it became clear from the site visit that the main circle of internal, and especially external stakeholders is not very aware of the strategic goals of the university, had not directly participated in their development. At the same time, it turned out that the students studying in the part-time system are only involved in some surveys, but not in other processes.

It was found out from the expert visit that the internal stakeholders consider the development of international research, establishment of international relations, establishment of foreign relations, as well as the steps taken by the latter according to the implemented educational programs, development of resources aimed at effective implementation of educational programs, ensuring the desired results.

At the same time, the site visit revealed that the stakeholders were emphasizing the fact that it is a non-state university, the need for a special approach to various processes, as it is still considered an obstacle. According to the stakeholders, the fact that it is a non-state university and the equality of admission conditions with state universities is an obstacle and the main reason is that the number of students studying in the current system has rapidly decreased, while organizing education in the full-time system is considered a priority for the stakeholders and top management of the institution.

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

At the May 20, 2021, University session, the document "Policy for Ensuring Accountability for Enhancing the Work of the University and Ensuring Accountability to Stakeholders" was approved. The document indicates the size of the reports according to the PDCA cycle, the body or the person receiving the report per each division or the rector. The self-analysis and site visit revealed that the monitoring of the activities of the subdivisions of the institution, the assessment of the compliance with the established procedures, work plans and procedures of the university is carried out by the QA department.

The subdivisions have work plans, in which the planning is carried out according to the processes deriving from the main functional frameworks of their charters.

According to the self-analysis of 2016-2020 due to the need to ensure the underperformance and/or the need to ensure their sustainability, the latters were also

included in the 2020-2025 strategic plan, however, the site visit revealed that they have not been specified, and the stakeholders are not aware of what processes the issue refers to.

The examination of the documents and the site visit revealed that the subdivisions had just started compiling reports. The Rector submits an annual report, the correlation of which with the strategic plan is not noticeable. Strategic Program NAPs have been developed, but the site visit revealed that according to them, there is no assessments yet, at the same time a number of indicators are not measurable (in particular, updated regulations for educational process planning, teaching quality, improved results of student surveys on efficiency, availability of agreements of cooperation with the local and foreign HEis, etc.).

Considerations:

The mission of the Northern University is fixed both by the charter and in the 2016-2020 and 2020-2025 strategic plans and has been unchanged since 2016. Strategic plans set goals - actions to achieve those goals, but it has not become functioning document. The goals of the university are in line with the levels of the NQF in which the university organizes studies.

No external stakeholders are involved in the development of the SP, and only a small circle of internal stakeholders, although the university has taken some steps to expand that involvement. On the positive side, there are some mechanisms (surveys, discussions, committees) that allow us to assess the needs of stakeholders (mainly internal stakeholders), but their impact on the achievement of strategic directions and goals does not appear, perhaps only in the form of some small problems. At the same time, the expert group notes that the university is not yet guided by the fact that part-time students are the main student body; how to take their needs into account when adopting strategic goals.

Based on the analysis of the results of the study, the expert panel concludes that the perspective of the development of the Northern University has not been specified yet, due to different circumstances, the processes may take different directions according to the main strategic directions, including the scope of the main educational programs is subject to being specified.

The expert panel outlines the importance of outlining the university's exact development perspective and ensuring its development. From this point of view, it is

important that the university is able to ensure the implementation of steps towards its development, effectively managing resources, and expanding the scope of cooperation, which in turn will contribute to the effective implementation of educational programs and guarantee the implementation of strategic goals.

From this point of view, the expert panel emphasizes the alignment of the goals and the mission with the opportunities, the peculiarities and the expectations of the stakeholders, which can lead to the implementation of clearly planned processes, which will guarantee the development of the university, form an accessible perspective for the university.

Nevertheless, the readiness of the management and the steps aimed at ensuring the normal course of the university processes, as well as the efforts aimed at establishing new contacts and the creation of preconditions for internationalization are appreciated.

However, the expert panel believes that the Northern University needs to "clarify" its position and strengthen it in the competitive field of its activity. From this point of view, it would be possible to clarify the mission, including clarifying the list of academic programs.

It is positive that the university already has the second experience of strategic planning, it has made reforms compared to the previous experience, it has established NAPs. At the same time, the university can take steps to introduce accountability mechanisms and regulate the accountability process.

However, the expert panel finds that the vague, non-measurable formulations in the RP hinders its transformation into fully operational document and the current assessment. At the same time, the lack of correlation between the annual plans of the subdivisions and strategic plans, the correlation of the reports only with the work plans and their descriptive nature are problematic. Meanwhile, the solution of these problems is possible from the point of view of guaranteeing the feasibility of the goals and tasks envisaged by the SP. Ensuring accountability according to the NAPs will regulate the process of implementation, evaluation and ongoing monitoring of the SP.

Summary:

Given that the Northern University has a strategic plan that reflects the main goals of the university, which are in line with the NQF, there are some mechanisms that allow to identify some needs of internal and external stakeholders, introduce accountability mechanism and value its improvement aimed at the enhancement the quality of reporting

and ensuring the realization of the goals, the expert panel finds that the Northern University meets the requirements of Criterion 1.

Conclusion:

The expert panel assesses the compliance of the institutional capacity of the Northern University with the requirements of criterion 1 as **satisfactory**.

II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

CRITERION: The institution's system of governance, administrative structures and their activities are efficient and are aimed at the accomplishment of mission and goals of the institution preserving ethical norms of governance.

Findings

2.1 The Institution's system of governance ensures structured decision-making process, in accordance with defined ethical rules and has efficient provision of human, material and financial resources to accomplish its educational and other purposes.

The management of the Northern University is carried out in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Armenia, its charter, on the basis of self-government. The management of the university is carried out collegially by the general meeting of the participants of the Scientific Board, as well as by the rector alone.

According to the charter, each participant of the university has the number of votes in the General Assembly corresponding to his / her share in the statutory capital of the university.

The charter defines the rights and responsibilities of the Assembly of participants, moreover, the Assembly of participants has the right to finalize any issue of the university management and activity.

The Scientific Board of the University is a collegial body that plans, coordinates and regulates the teaching-methodological, scientific-research-scientific-technical activities of the University. It operates under the supervision of the rector, in accordance with its charter, which was approved in 2016. The duration of the authority is 3 years. The meetings of the Scientific Board are convened at least 4 times each academic year.

The university's charter defines the functional scope of the rector. The Rectorate functions as an advisory body attached to the Rector.

The processes of the University are coordinated by 3 vice-rectors: Economic Affairs; on demic Affairs and Research and Internationalization; and on Admion and Financial Affairs.

The educational process at the University is organized through 5 chairs and 3 faculties. The collegial governing bodies of the faculties are the councils of the faculties.

By 2020, by changing the organizational structure of the institution, the goal is to ensure decentralization, transparency and objectivity of managerial decision-making. In particular, the control of the Quality Assurance Department has been transferred to the Rector's competence, and a new subdivision has been formed - the Department of Distance Learning and Technological Management.

The university has a financial resource management policy approved in 2016. According to the self-analysis, in order to improve the process of financial planning of the university's activities, financial planning according to the directions of the Republic of Armenia has been envisaged. The university budget or grant program is mentioned under the finances in the RA. It turned out from the site visit that there is no calculation of the budget required for the implementation of the SP.

The functional scope of the subdivisions is defined by the relevant regulations. The University has a Student Council in accordance with its charter, which was approved in 2015. There is also a procedure for electing a Student Council President approved at the same time.

According to the relevant decisions of the Scientific Board on December 13, 2016, the documents "Regulation of Ethics Code of Conduct for Employees of the Northern University" and "Internal Disciplinary Rules of the Northern University" were approved. At the same time, the site visit revealed that the relations between the internal stakeholders are dictated by a healthy partnership atmosphere conditioned by a small team, which corresponds to the norms of ethics.

According to the self-analysis, it was important for the university to complete the process of registration of university employees' job descriptions in terms of contributing to the awareness of the rights and responsibilities of the employees. However, a study of the documents showed that not all positions have job descriptions.

According to the self-analysis, all the employees of the institution are provided with employment contracts and material and technical resources required for the work stipulated by internal legal acts, but the expert visit revealed that the study of the required financial and other resources for each department is not carried out. At the same time, the study of the budgets shows that most of the financial resources are allocated for the

payment of salaries (about 50%) and the rent of building (about 35%), as well as student discounts (about 10%), the cost of equipment and educational materials is about a maximum. 1.5%, the science expenses - about 0.36%.
The head of the Center for Research and Innovative Programs is also in charge of the Chair of Law and Social Sciences, and the assistant to the Head of the center is also the clerk of the mentioned chair. The position of the head of the Foreign Communications' department is vacant, the work of the department is carried out by the chief specialist.
During the site visit, the position of the head of the Educational-Methodological Department was vacant.

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

The teachers are included in the composition of the Scientific Board, the Faculty Council, participate in the sessions of the chairs. 25% of the members of the Scientific Board are students, students are also included in the faculty councils. It turned out from the site visit that the students are nominated by the deans of the faculties to the Scientific board and the Faculty councils, at the same time the head of the Student Council is officially included.
It turned out from the site visit that the students do not show initiative or active participation in the sessions of the Scientific Board.

Examination of the documents revealed that there were cases when lecturers made suggestions to the Scientific Board to address specific issues (in particular, to ensure access to electronic resources in various libraries, to take into account students' opinions when making changes to curricula).

The management of the university considers the expansion of the participation of the stakeholders in various processes as a possible achievement.
At the same time, it turned out from the site visit that the students and lecturers are mainly unaware of the issues discussed in the Scientific Board; the representatives of the Scientific Board do not have discussions with them on those issues.

According to the self-analysis, students have the opportunity to influence the issues and decisions concerning them by participating in surveys. It turned out from the site visit that these are some technical issues, in particular, installation of water equipment, landscaping, etc. The students are planning to install a box it in the near future, thus having the opportunity to identify problems.

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

During the period under review, the University was guided by the strategic plans for 2016-2020 and 2020-2025. They started planning strategic programs according to the academic year.

The university does not carry out medium-term planning yet.

The subdivisions have started to make work plans according to the academic years, regulating their activities. The measurements indicate the execution period, the end result of the operation, the relevant justifications, the responsible financial resources for each step. Examination of the documents shows that they do not have a clear connection with the SP. The work plans are based on the main functional areas of the subdivisions, there are detailed actions and steps in the case of chairs and faculties, as well as in the case of Law Clinic, Scientific Research, Innovative Programs and Postgraduate Vocational Training Center. No financial reference is made to the financial resources. Not all the departments have work plans and reports.

KPI of the academic programmes have been developed, but there is no assessment of them yet. The document "Policy for Enhancement of the Productivity of the Work and Ensuring Accountability for Stakeholders", approved in 2021, and established in 2021, defines the report format according to the PDCA cycle, indicates the body or person receiving the report of each department. However, the examination of the documents during the site visit revealed that the monitoring of the activities of the subdivisions of the institution, the assessment of the compliance with the established rules, work plans and procedures of the university is carried out by the QA department. According to that, the report of each subdivision is summarized with the given total unit. The unit is generated for each pre-planned function according to the corresponding leaflet, according to the criteria set for the PDCA cycle set by the university. Thus, the total unit of each subdivision depends on both the number of planned actions and the degree of their implementation according to the criteria set out in the above document. The study of the documents shows that the planned actions can be of different complexity, different volume and comprehensiveness. There was an attempt to evaluate the defined approach for a semester work in a pilot version.

The study of the reports of the subdivisions revealed that they repeat the work plans, the implementation of the actions is confirmed here, protocols, references, reports are attached as bases.

According to the above-mentioned policy, the rector submits a report to the Scientific Board and the Meeting of Participants. The rector's report is a descriptive text, in which there are no analyzes, at the same time the report is not done according to the SP.

In 2020, the University prepared a report to ANQA on the work carried out under the Action Plan for Continuous Improvement of the Quality of Education at Northern University, which describes what has been done as part of the relevant activities. This document is of a descriptive nature.

It was also found out from the expert visit that the management still finds it necessary to adjust the development prospects according to the strategic directions. The study of the documents shows that the expected final results are not clear yet. At the same time, it is not assessed what actions of the previous SP were incomplete or to what extent. The reason for the underperformance is the pandemic of 2020 and the war, but the strategic planning is according to the academic year, the previous strategic program ended in the 2019-2020 academic year.

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

The Northern University conducts various surveys among students, faculty, and employers to determine their satisfaction with various issues.

There are no data collected on different processes, indicators of different years, their comparison.

On December 29, 2020, the concept paper on the principles of implementing a risk management system at Northern University was approved. According to the self-analysis, it also uses the introduction of a financial risk management system to ensure the financial stability of the university, but it turned out from the expert visit that such a system has not been introduced yet. At the same time, according to the same self-analysis, there are no analyzes of the possible impact of external factors, and risks on the activities of the institution.

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

A number of policies, procedures, and regulations were approved at the University in 2009-2010 (8 documents), only 7 documents were introduced in 2011-2015, most of the documents were approved prior to the previous institutional accreditation: in 2016 (number of 17 documents), then in 2019-2021, number of 14 documents.

There are no precedents for evaluating the effectiveness of policies and procedures used. Mostly newly developed documents have been introduced, in some separate documents (in particular, they have amended the charter of the Northern University, revised the criteria for tuition discounts, plan to revise the attestation procedure of the faculty) there are no grounds for evaluating the effectiveness of particular changes.

The introduction of a number of documents is conditioned by the advice given by the expert panel during the institutional accreditation.

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

Examination of the documents and the site visit revealed that the processes of implementation of professional educational programs have not been fully implemented yet.

According to the self-analysis, the university considers the surveys conducted by the QA department as the main mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of the mentioned processes, there are analyzes of their results. The site visit revealed that there are cases when they try to verify the authenticity of some revealed problems by direct observation or other means. However, there are no mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of such data collection and analysis.

At the same time, factual data indicators of different years are not mainly collected, compared and analyzed.

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

The Northern University uses electronic platforms to disseminate information, both the official website and the social network. There are some reports and inquiries on the official website of the university. There are also publications on various processes, but

they do not contain quantitative or qualitative information. The publication process is carried out in accordance with the Charter of the Educational and Training Centre of Media and Public Relations, according to which the center must also conduct evaluations to determine the satisfaction of the stakeholders with those publications. The study of the documents and the site visit revealed that the conducted surveys allow to assess the general satisfaction of the stakeholders on the publications, but they do not clarify to what extent the stakeholders are interested in the quality of the educational programs, the qualifications awarded, to what extent they meet their requirements. The university also uses other means to disseminate information, but surveys showed that electronic platforms are more preferable for stakeholders to obtain information.

Considerations:

The panel notes that the Northern University has both individual and collegial governance mechanisms, which are regulated by relevant documents. However, the panel is concerned that collegial governance processes are not yet fully operational, that stakeholders are not widely involved in the decision-making process, and at the same time they are not motivated to be involved. This can hamper targeted and effective management processes.

The expert panel notes the steps taken by the university to decentralize processes, as well as the introduction of some structural subdivisions, which can contribute to the achievement of strategic goals. At the same time, however, it is noticeable that there is still a concentration of processes that can jeopardize both their efficiency and objectivity.

The expert panel notes that the university is trying to clarify the functions, as evidenced by the definition of the passports of the positions, as well as the functions of the departments according to the regulations. The expert panel emphasizes the presence of professional staff, as well as their contribution to the development of the university. However, along with all this, there is a condensation of functions around one person, in some cases there is a problem of human resources, which can jeopardize the effective implementation and management of processes.

In the previous institutional accreditation process of the Northern University, the expert panel referred to the need to review the financial planning and resource allocation policy, although the current financial resource management policy has been introduced since 2016, but the resource (including financial) allocation strategy is strategic. There is no correlation with the goals; the guarantees of the realization of the strategic goals are endangered.

The expert panel considers positive the existence of mechanisms aimed at the rules of ethics and the appropriate environment, which is a necessary precondition for ensuring effective work.

The expert panel welcomes the experience of developing strategic programs of the university, as well as some steps aimed at improving them. However, long-term strategic planning has not become an effective mechanism that clarifies the prospects and goals of the university, and then also guarantees their availability. It is also possible that there is a short-term planning mechanism that is more effective, but, being related to the main functional frameworks, unfortunately, the interconnection with the SP is not expressed. All this hinders the simultaneous development of the university, which will be based on the full accounting of human, material-financial resources, as well as opportunities.

For the expert panel, the steps aimed at ensuring the accountability mechanism are visible, but the implemented mechanism does not ensure the strengthening of management links from the top, besides, it does not allow to really evaluate the efficiency of the processes, as it is not based on data analysis. At the same time, the expert group considers that the university will be able to use collegial mechanisms in the evaluation of reports, which can contribute to the increase of objectivity.

The expert panel compiles the surveys conducted by the NQA among the stakeholders at the university, through which the range of issues studied is also expanded. However, the expert panel considers that these studies are not enough to assess the realities objectively, to ensure certainty, to reveal the real problems. The collection and analysis of reliable data will ensure the risk management process, which will facilitate data-driven decision-making.

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The expert group compiles the surveys conducted by the QAD among the stakeholders at the university, through which the range of issues studied is also expanded. However, the expert group considers that these studies are not enough to assess the realities objectively, to ensure certainty, to reveal the real problems. The collection and analysis of reliable data will ensure the risk management process, which will facilitate data-driven decision-making.

The expert panel notes that the development and implementation of most documents at the university is a process prior to institutional accreditation. The expert group emphasizes the positive impact of the institutional accreditation process on the university, but it will be possible to make full use of these documents - to evaluate the effectiveness, which will lead to the regulation, efficiency, transparency of the university processes, as well as the implementation of reforms.

The expert panel considers it problematic that the mechanisms for collecting, analyzing and applying information on the various processes of the university are imperfect, besides, clear measures for their evaluation are not used.

The expert panel evaluates the steps taken by the university to ensure the dissemination of information through electronic platforms, as well as the use of surveys as an evaluation mechanism for the evaluation of popular publications. However, the disseminated information does not fully provide objective and impartial quantitative and qualitative information, and the above-mentioned evaluation mechanism did not lead to the inclusion of more quantitative and qualitative data.

Summary:

Given that the Northern University does not yet have a clear strategic plan, does not provide guarantees for the achievement of strategic goals, the lack of collegiality in the management system, as well as the lack of involvement of internal stakeholders in management processes, the lack of objective data in the decision-making, no risk evaluation and analysis, no evaluation of the policy and procedures, little data on the qualitative and quantitative data and its evaluation; the expert panel finds that the Northern University does not meet the requirements of Criterion 2, as well as the lack of evaluation of the effectiveness of policies and procedures, the lack of information with qualitative and quantitative objective data and the imperfection of their evaluation mechanisms.

Conclusion:

The expert panel assesses the compliance of the institutional capacity of the Northern University with the requirements of Criterion 2 as **unsatisfactory**.

III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

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

Findings

3.1 The academic programs are in line with Institution's mission, they correspond to the state academic standards and are thoroughly described according to the intended learning outcomes of the qualification awarded.

Within the framework of its 2020-2025 SP, the institution has defined the improvement of high-quality HR training through the study of international experience in the organization of educational processes and the identification of market needs, and the credible awarding of qualifications relevant to the NQF as one of the 5 goals.

The institution envisages introducing a quality education system among the primary goals and tasks of its 2020-2025 SP, in particular, to increase the efficiency of the implementation of educational processes and educational programs in accordance with modern European educational requirements.

The institution strives to develop its educational programs, to act in line with its mission, that is, to combine the best national traditions with the quality of education, international best practices and access to education, accessibility, organization transparency, humanitarian values, business management, law, training of personnel capable of applying the knowledge gained in the fields of programming, journalism, philology, psychology, education. In line with its mission, the institution has selected the areas of academic programmes, taking into account the professions in demand in the labor market.

In order to carry out the evaluation of the academic programmes, the University has established a framework for networking, consisting of experts from exemplary foreign universities and universities from the Republic of Armenia, who have been providing advice on the alignment of the HEi's academic programmes' national and European qualifications framework, alignmentof the educational outcomes to the educational goals, usage of the online teaching and learning tools, selection of the courses for the academic programmes, conducting benchmarking and other issues.

There are 37 educational programs implemented in the 3 faculties of the university, of which 18 are bachelor's, 16 master's and 3 third-level educational programmes, in the Alaverdi branch education is implemented only with 4 bachelor's degree programmes.

The academic programmes of the institution correspond to the NQF of the Republic of Armenia; they are aimed at developing professional qualities corresponding to the 6th, 7th, and 8th levels.

During the site visit, it became clear that the academic programmes were compiled before the previous accreditation process, taking into account the list of subjects. At present, their development is carried out taking into account the requirements of external and internal stakeholders. State University of Technology, George Washington University School of Law, University of Copenhagen, Berkeley Law School, Harvard Law School, Cornell Law School, European University of Armenia, Yerevan State University, Financial Academy. However, it should be noted that employers are not yet actively involved in these processes.

The specifics of all the academic programmes of the institution define the substantiation of the educational program, the goals, the description of the professional activity, the final results, the structure of the program, the conditions of implementation, the curricula, the terms of scientific-pedagogical-research internship, the outcomes of learning, teaching and assessment methods (oral or written).

As a result of the review of the academic programmes, the outcomes have also changed, with particular emphasis on "transferable skills", with new outcomes set to further enhance skills and competencies.

During the reporting period, an expert committee was formed with the participation of the heads of departments and representatives of the university's faculty to review the academic programmes, which identified structural and substantive issues on the way to improving the academic programmes, In particular, during the expert visit it became clear that the IHRs are regularly discussed during the sessions of the chair, there are cases when the feedback received from the students is voiced, in some cases also from the employers. In the field of Management, the subjects "Change Management", "Stress Management", and "Project Management" have been added.

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However, the expert meetings and classes also showed that some of the courses at the university dictate the material taught, and in many cases the students themselves are

interested in the use of this method by the lecturer. However, it should be noted that for the speciality "Law", the teaching methods are mainly verbal teaching methods. And in the knowledge section of the "Software Engineering" speciality, only the syllabus provided by the curriculum is presented.

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

Courses at the institution are reviewed on the basis of the "Manual for the development of the academic programmes", as well as the document "Methodology guide for universities in terms of educational goals, educational outcomes, assessment outcomes, development of assessment methods, adaptation methods". The institution's academic programmes define the final learning outcomes, on the basis of which the subject descriptions describe the teaching-learning methods.

In case of coronavirus, the teaching and learning elements have been revised, adapted to online or hybrid learning conditions to maximize the quality of education. In a short period of time, the university teachers were able to transfer the lessons to the online platform, using the ZOOM, SKYPE, MOODLE systems.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the process, the students were satisfied with the effectiveness of the online courses.

In the 2020-2025 SP, the institution aims to promote the wider inclusion of the research component in the training taught within the academic programmes, conduct internships, and to assess the knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired by the external stakeholders a tool that will make it possible to more effectively measure the level of achievement of results not only by internal but also by external stakeholders. Every year, students are asked about the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning methods used by the teaching staff at the institution, the results of which are analyzed and presented to the departments. According to the curriculum, the hours of practical training, discussions of situational issues, etc. have been increased.

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

The institution has a Student Assessment Procedure approved in 2015. The Northern University uses a 100-point system for assessing students' knowledge, abilities and skills.

The assessment of the knowledge of the students of the university is carried out through ongoing tasks, two midterm exams within each course and one final exam, the final work, the defence of the master's thesis, the evaluation of the internship, as well as tests. Each midterm exam values 15%, the presence of students - 10%, and the final exam - 60% from the overall assessment.

The Procedure for assessing students' knowledge at the institution defines the forms of assessment of students' knowledge, which describe the components of productive assessment of courses, internships and term papers assessed by the test. There are components for evaluation, such as presentation - 5 points, problem - 2 points, analysis - 4 points. Multi-factor evaluation is carried out at the university. Headings were developed for the presentation defencese of term papers. However, during the site visit it became clear that the developed rubrics are generally not used.

It should be noted that the evaluation tools are the same for all learning outcomes in "Software Engineering".

After the teacher's explanation, if there is a problem with the assessment, the dean is informed about the problem to find a solution. The institution does not have a procedure for appealing the current exams.

There is a procedure for defending master's theses and final works at the HEi, which describes also the technical and substantive requirements for the thesis.

Issues related to students' academic honesty are regulated by the Academic Honesty Regulation at Northern University, approved in December 2016. During the site visit, it became clear that there was a case when the grade was reduced due to the high rate of copied materials in the student's final thesis.

During the site visit it became clear that the students' internships are evaluated by the appointed supervisors from the organizations, but the employers are not involved in the process of defending the reports of the student internships and forming the final grade. And for the LO 8 of the speciality "Jurisprudence" - "Can make generalizations, analyzes, logically correct, substantiated, make clearly constructed oral and written speech", the oral test was chosen as a means of evaluation.

For the LO 5 of the same speciality "Has computer skills in terms of information management", the oral test was chosen as a means of evaluation.

There is no developed and systematic approach to assessing current assignments and classroom activity at the institution. From the meeting with the students, it became clear that the criteria for student assessment and approaches are different depending on the task,

they are presented to the students orally. There have been cases where students had not been aware of the grading system before submitting a job or assignment.

3.4 The academic programmes of the TLI are contextually coherent with other relevant programmes and promote mobility of students and teaching staff, internationalization.

The academic programmes of the institution were subjected to internal and external benchmarking from the following points of view:

- Outcomes of the academic programmes,
- Course outcomes,
- Teaching and learning methods,
- Evaluation methods.

Additional tools, in particular, opinion of graduates, employers, course outcomes, reports on the workability of graduates, reports on the completion of bachelor's and master's programs, chairmen of master's thesis commissions, availability of material and technical resources.

As a result of benchmarking, a decision was made to rate the institution's academic programmes according to the following criteria:

- Number of students enrolled in the academic programmes in the given academic year;
- Number of graduates in the given academic year,
- Reports based on surveys conducted among employers;
- Proportion of resident, foreign students from the RA regions included in the academic programmes;
- Number of students working in the specialty during their studies at the academic programmes;
- Number of new courses and modules developed in the academic programmes in the given academic year;
- Number of courses implemented with information and communication technologies.

The rating system of the academic programmes will be introduced in the 2022-2023 academic year; the results will be taken into account to determine the number of student

seats in the 2023-2024 academic year. For the academic programmes with low scores, the institution will decide whether to strengthen or discontinue them.

Several academic programmes of the institution have been revised in order to implement double-diploma programmes with foreign universities, in particular: Management, Foreign Language and Literature, Foreign Language, Russian Language, Law.

A double diploma master's degree programme “Management” was developed with the Varna University of Management, “Russian Language and Literature”, "Informatics and Computer Science" bachelor's joint educational programmes were developed with the Russian University of Humanities and Technology. The students of the university can study in the mentioned double diploma programme in the second semester of the second year and as a result of successful defense of the master's thesis they will be awarded qualifications from two universities: "Master of Management" of the Northern University and “Master of Business Administration” of Varna University of Management. In the ongoing year, two teachers will leave to Shetsin University within the feamework of a mobility programme.

Despite the benchmarking and external evaluation of the academic programmes, the actual mobility of internal stakeholders is still low.

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

The HEi has a Regulation of evaluation of educational programs and curricula: development, approval, monitoring, approved in 2010. The regulation refers to the processes of curriculum development, approval, monitoring and revision.

The HEi has also approved a manual for the Design and review of the academic programmes, which still plans to make a periodic review and monitoring of the ongoing academic programmes in the 2021-2022 academic year.

The institution conducted an online survey of employers on the quality of education, the labor market and the needs of society, as a result of which partial changes were made in the academic programmes. However, it should be noted that employers are passively involved in the improvement of academic programmes.

During the site visit, it became clear that there are good precedents when the academic programmes were discussed in the sessions of the chairs, the observations of the students and employers were taken into account, and some changes were made.

Considerations.

The expert panel positively assesses that the academic programmes of the HEi are in line with the mission, formulated taking into account the descriptors of the relevant levels of the RA NQF.

On the positive side, the institution is making efforts to introduce a research component in all academic programmes. The courses included in all educational programs contain a research component, and the institution tries to ensure the full implementation and development of that component through all its administrative and teaching-methodological processes. However, most of the assignments are only theoretical in nature, they do not encourage the research component.

The expert panel positively assesses that as a result of the counselling provided during the previous accreditation, the practical hours provided by the curriculum have been increased, which will contribute to the improvement of students' practical skills, but its significant results are not yet noticeable.

The institution has a policy of choosing teaching and learning methods in accordance with the expected learning outcomes of the academic programmes. The courses are reviewed on the basis of the "Manual for the development of academic programmes", as well as the document "Guidelines for methodology in terms of educational goals, educational outcomes, assessment outcomes, assessment methods, adaptation of methodologies within the framework of subject programs". The above contributes to regulated work. However, the site visit and the observation of the conducted lessons proved that the teacher-centered teaching methods still prevail.

On the positive side, the issues of academic programmes are regularly discussed during the sessions of the Chair, the feedback received from the students, and in some cases, also by the employers, is announced, which will contribute to the continuous improvement of the quality of the academic programmes.

Some of the institution's academic programmes have undergone internal and external benchmarking. It is positive that several curricula of the institution have been revised in order to implement double-diploma academic programmes with foreign universities. However, despite the existence of external benchmarking of the academic programmes, the number mobility of actual internal stakeholders is still low. At the same time, the passive involvement of external stakeholders, particularly employers, in the process of improving the academic programmes may hinder the modernization of educational programmes in line with labor market requirements.

As a result of the review of the academic programmes, the outcomes have also changed, with particular emphasis on "transferable skills", with new outcomes set to build more skills and capabilities. However, other relevant steps aimed at ensuring those end results are not yet noticeable. The connection between the teaching-learning methods used, the assignments given, the assessment methods and the final results presented in the academic programmes is not clear.

From this point of view, the expert panel finds that there is still a need to review and improve the outcomes mentioned in the academic programmes, as well as the methods of teaching, learning and assessment, with a view to bringing them into line with each other and the reality.

There's the "Students' Assessment Procedure" in the HEi which states the assessment requirements, which describe the courses assessed by tests, the criteria for assessing the internship and course papers.

However, the expert group finds that the institution does not have a developed, systematic approach to assessing current assignments and classroom activity. There are many oral exams that can cause problems in terms of assessment objectivity.

The institution has a Guideline for the development, approval, monitoring, evaluation of the academic programmes and curricula of the university, approved in 2010, and a Manual for the design and review of the academic programmes, however, a process of regulated and comprehensive review and evaluation of the academic programmes hasn't yet been carried out, such a process is being planned to be conducted. This process is crucial for aligning the academic programmes to the labour market changes, needs of the internal and external stakeholders, and insuring quality assurance.

Summary:

Taking into account that the academic programmes of the HEi correspond to its mission, are in line with the RA NQF, as well as the institution realizes alignment of its academic programmes to other famous professions' academic programmes in order to ensure mobility, there's a regulation on the review and monitoring of the academic programmes there's an external evaluation of the academic programmes and benchmarking experience, at the same time highlighting that the students' evaluation policy needs to be developed, the expert panel considers that the HEi fullfills to the requirements of Criterion 3.

Conclusion:

The compliance of the institutional capacity of the institution with the requirements of the standard is assessed as **satisfactory**.

IV. STUDENTS

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

Findings

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

There are clear mechanisms at the Northern University for the recruitment, selection and admission of students. Admission to the bachelor's full-time education system is organized through a joint competition: according to the regulation on "Admission to the state and non-governmental educational institutions (according to the bachelor degree programme)", approved by the Order N597-N of the Government of the Republic of Armenia from 26.04.2012.

In the part-time system of the bachelor degree and the master degree the admission process is carried out and coordinated on the basis of the university's internal legal acts, the university conducts exams to which the applicants may prepare by the questionnaires published in the "admission: applications/questionnaires" section of the official website.

The number of students at the university has decreased from 744 to 226 in the full-time system, from 1168 to 944 in the part-time system (according to the data of 2016-2020), and in the full-time system of 2021-2022 no admission was made due to the decrease of applicants. Compared to each previous year, there is a decrease in the number of expelled and restored students. According to the data of 2017-2020, the dynamics of the number of restored students is as follows: 133, 80, 67, 41, 19 students, and the expelled ones - 414, 273, 212, 220, 33. The most common reason for expelling is students' non-fulfilment of financial obligations (about 40%).

The Northern University organizes various events to recruit applicants. They visit schools, colleges, open days are organized, advertisements on social pages are activated. In cooperation with the Quality Assurance Division and Information and Public Relations educational and Practice Center surveys are conducted among the 1st year students in order to check the efficiency of the described mechanisms, in particular data is collected on the students' main source of learning about the Northern University, their motivation of entering the university. A report on university-applicant cooperation for the 2021-2022

academic year has been prepared, which presents the implemented measures, the results of the survey conducted among the participants, suggestions for improving the process and conclusion. The university website provides the opportunity to fill out online admission applications.

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

The main responsible for identifying the students' needs is the QA department . The latter regularly conducts surveys among students, which reflect on the satisfaction of students with the resources of the university, the teaching staff, the assessment system. The questionnaires contain suggestion fields, in which students mainly make suggestions on professional advice, teaching methods, literature updates and modernization. During the site visit it was vivid that there were precedents for solving the problems raised by the students (particularly regarding the updating of the literature). During the site visit, it became clear that in addition to formal inquiries, students also have the opportunity to identify their needs with the help of course supervisors and course advisors.

Students are involved in the Student Committee of the QA Board, the Scientific Board of the University, the faculty councils, which are also a tool to identify the needs of students, as well as to make the students' viewpoints heard. It became clear from the site visit that the students are mainly involved in the above-mentioned structures being nominated by the dean's office, chairs, or according to their position (for example, the chairman of the Student Council in the Scientific Board), and most of the students are simply not aware of the discussed issues and decisions made.

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

The University has had a procedure for "Identifying students needs and students counselling" since 2016. There is a practice of the group supervisor/mentor which activities and their productivity evaluation principles are stated in the above-mentioned procedure. At the university, according to the syllabus, there are counselling schedules (for each chair), but the meetings with both students and lecturers proved that regardless of the schedule, students apply to the lecturers for advice at any time, and the latter are ready to support.

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

There are no clear procedures or schedule for applying to the administrative staff by the students, however, during the site visit, it became clear that students can address their concerns to the administrative staff both individually, through the head of the group and the course advisor. Although there is no rule or schedule for coordinating these processes, the various documents available at the university (such as the Northern University Internal Disciplinary Rules, the Student Council Charter) set out certain provisions, deadlines for applying to administrative staff, and the ways of coordinating their proper response.

4.5 The Institution has student career support services.

The Alumni and Career Center attached to the Department of Education has been established at the University since 2020, and work is coordinated by the charter of the Alumni Career Center. During the site visit, it became clear that the communication between the graduates and the university is mainly provided by personal connections between the administration, the teaching staff and the graduates, as well as the fact that the graduates are not involved in any way in reviewing educational programs or other processes. However, the center has recruited a 2017-2021 alumni database, which also includes alumni employment status. It is not yet complete, but it is regularly updated through contact with the graduates. The center also works to ensure the university's involvement in the expo and to build cooperative relations with various organizations. The center distributes vacancies through a social network. The university organizes student-specialist meetings, and seminars on the development of various skills required in the labor market (for example, seminars on the use of Microsoft Excel tools, social entrepreneurship, human resource management and other courses).

A step to the career promotion by the university Is also the organization of the internship. A systematic work has been carried out towards increasing the number of internship organisations according to the responsible for the Alumni and Career Center, there have been 6 new memorandums of cooperation and 29 new agreements since 2020. The students' opinions are also being considered: the latters have an opportunity to choose their internship organization, offer new places, which are being agreed with the heads of Chairs. During the meetings with the employers, responsible for the Career Center, it was stated that there are cases when students continued to work in the places of their internship.

4.6 The Institution promotes student involvement in research activities.

During the reporting period, the main activities aimed at involving students in research activities were related to the activation of the Students Scientific Council (SSC) the mandatory participation of students in the internal grant competition, discounts promoting research activities, and the establishment of scholarships.

At the initiative of the SSC operating at the university, various events are regularly held. There are examples of original scientific-research activities. An interuniversity Conference "Discovering the Scientific Research Potential of Students by Combining Quality Education and Best Practice" took place in 2021, the materials of which were published with the guarantee of the Scientific Board of the University. Such events, however, are rare. The potential of the SSC is mainly used to organize seminars and meetings. According to the self-analysis, 2020-2021 surveys show a low level of awareness among SSC students about the activities of the SSC- 45.6%.

The involvement of students was a prerequisite for the internal grant program implemented in the university in the 2020-2021 academic year, who mainly supported the extra work by finding scientific articles, studying the works of new authors. The students were not the author or co-author of the published works. In general, according to the data of 2016-2020, there are almost no works published by the students as authors or co-authors (total number: 1).

According to the self-analysis, there are discounts and scholarships promoting the research work, however, the discount and scholarships according to the regulation of “Organization of the tuition-free, discount of the tuition fee, appointing nominal and special scholarships of the Northern University” are mostly conditioned with the social status or the students’ high performance.

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

Despite the fact that the survey conducted among students in 2020-2021 shows that the majority of students consider the QA department as the body responsible for the protection of their rights, the university considers the Student Council as the body responsible for the protection of students' rights. There is a necessary legal basis for the protection of students' rights by the Student Council activities . The Student Council is guided by the charter adopted in 2015, in which the issues and goals are mostly related to the protection of students' rights, but it became clear from the site visit that the activities of the Student Council are mostly cultural and entertaining. They are not considered as a

structure for revealing the violated rights of students. According to the charter, the Student Council is a representative body, it is a connection for students' effective membership in the Scientific Board.

However, during the site visit, it became clear that the process of including students in both the faculty councils and the academic council is carried out by the deans' offices' nominations. The Student Council freely uses the property resources of the University, but does not have a fixed budget, no preliminary calculation of annual expenses is made and financial allocations are provided by the University on demand. The SC actively cooperates with the QA department, using the data on the issues identified in the needs identification inquiries. According to the students, in case of problems with the protection of their rights, they have the opportunity to contact the course counsellor.

It was mentioned during the visit that the main source of students' rights and responsibilities is the agreement between the university and the student. The issue of raising the level of awareness of students about their rights is visible in a number of protocols of the Student Commission of the QA Department.

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

From the point of view of quality assurance of the educational services, the QA department is considered a responsible body. The main evaluation mechanism of the latter is the implementation of various surveys: among the students about the educational needs, lecturers, the level of satisfaction with the work of different departments, among the graduates about the provision of employment. Questionnaires are provided at the end of each event to assess the effectiveness of the event. The results are discussed in the Student Committee under the Quality Assurance Department, which, according to the QA Board's charter, organizes student discussions to identify circumstances that hinder the quality of education, supports quality assurance mechanisms, and procedures.

Considerations:

The expert panel positively assesses the stability of the mechanisms for student recruitment and admission to the Northern University, but the tendency of a steady decrease in the number of students is remarkable, which is a big risk for the university, taking into account the fact that the university budget depends directly on the number of students.

The expert panel positively assesses that the atmosphere in the university is favorable for the development of effective student-lecturer communication, implementation of consultations. The steps taken by the university to institutionalize the process of organizing additional classes and consultative meetings are noticeable. The latter, however, has not been developed as an effective mechanism.

It is noteworthy that based on the advice given in the previous expert report, career support services, alumni communication mechanisms were activated, in particular, an alumni database was recruited, but the alumni's career center has not yet become the main means of alumni-university communication. The potential of graduates as external stakeholders is not used, while, according to the expert group, the opinion and assessment from the graduates can become a tool for improving professional education programs and evaluating general processes at the university.

The university takes certain steps to promote students' research activity, which, however, the expert panel does not consider sufficient in terms of increasing students' interest in science and applying students' research potential.

It is noticeable that the university is trying to raise the level of awareness among students about their rights, but the steps taken in that direction, according to the expert panel, are not completely "effective". The unclear distribution of the functions of the student commission attached to the Student Council, the SSC and QA, their practical coincidences in practice can hinder the effective implementation of the functions of the mentioned three structures.

The expert panel positively assesses that the needs of the students are identified, the various services provided by the students are evaluated at the university; which, according to the expert panel, can not give a complete, objective picture in case of insufficient availability of other mechanisms operating in parallel, analysis of other qualitative data.

Summary:

Given that North University has a stable student recruitment, admissions, current needs and service evaluation policy, the university has had an increase in career support services, students high appreciation of the assistace from both the teaching and administrative staff, the expert panel finds that the university meets the requirements of criterion 4.

Conclusion:

The compliance of Northern University Institutional Capabilities with the requirements of Criterion 4 is assessed as **satisfactory**.

V. FACULTY AND STAFF

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

Findings

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

Criteria for placement of Faculty's positions have been set at Northern University, and passport have been developed for each position. The faculty of each educational programme is formed according to the relevant procedure of the competition, based on the lecturer's qualification, academic degree (title), professional-pedagogical skills, and personal qualities, which are presented in the Academic Program. At the same time, the institution uses the experience of working in the relevant professional field in the process of recruitment of Faculty.

The staff list of the institution has the following structure: Faculty - 58%, administrative staff - 29%, but Teaching support staff - 6%. The institution has 66 lecturers, 38 (57.6%) of which are general and 28 (42.4%) combined. The ratio of categories operating at the university is: professor - 6.06%, associate professor - 33.3%, lecturer - 60.6%, 48.3% of the University's Faculty has the title of associate professor, 39.4% have degree of candidate-doctor.

The attestation processes planned in the reporting period have been postponed for the 2022-2023 academic year.

Based on the observation made in the previous accreditation expert report, the selection criteria of the teaching and support staff have been changed at the institution, the selection is carried out through a competitive procedure.

The categories of the staff of the institute, the criteria for the placement of positions, as well as the criteria for the selection of administrative and teaching-support staff are set out in the "Procedure for competitive selection of positions for the staff of Northern University" and "Regulation of categories of jobs and their occupation".

The vacancy or the vacancy left on other grounds shall be filled on a competitive or non-competitive basis. An open competition is being held for the vacancy, the announcement of which is published by the Human Resources Department due to the

rector's instructions at least 15 days before the day of the competition (on the university website, on the job search platform of Facebook).

Human Resources Department is responsible for the processes of organizing, holding competitions and concluding employment contracts for the employees of the structural subdivisions of the institution and the Faculty. Various employment contracts are signed with the Faculty for the implementation of the academic programs of the institution: basic, internal-external combination, hourly payment, provision of services.

Employment relations at the institution are established on a contractual basis in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, the RA Legislation, the Regulation of the University and other internal legal acts.

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

The competencies of the Faculty and Staff at the university, the criteria for the placement of positions are defined by the "Competition for the selection of the Faculty and Staff of Northern University - the procedure for the placement of positions", the Academic Programs, the passport of the position developed for each category of the Faculty and Staff. The same procedure clearly indicates the indicators and components of the evaluation of the academic staff:

a) Qualification, academic degree, the title of the candidate for the higher and/ or postgraduate professional education;

b) Required professional and pedagogical skills;

c) The results of scientific research activities;

d) Qualification improvement and retraining,

e) The results of the lecturer's assessment through a student survey (if available).

According to the procedure of replacement of the positions of the Faculty and Staff, the following categories are defined in the HEI: professor, associate professor, assistant, and lecturer. The same procedure is used to determine the criteria for the appointment of the Faculty and Staff.

Due to the peculiarities of the qualifications awarded within the academic programs of each speciality, the requirements set for the scientific-pedagogical staff necessary for the implementation of the educational process are defined in the Academic Programs: professional, pedagogical, personal, research, organizational.

However, it should be noted that the requirements are not measurable. When forming its Faculty and Staff, the institution mainly uses the personnel base, with which the university cooperates with the included lecturers for more than 6 years.

The requirements and competencies of each category are clearly defined in the passports for the position of the Faculty and Staff introduced in the institution.

During the site visit, it became clear that the Academic Staff is generally satisfied with the needs identification process. However, at the same time, they mentioned several issues, in particular:

There is a need to rejuvenate the staff of the PD;

In some cases there is a lack of substitutes for items;

Salaries do not contribute to stability and fluency is observed and lecturers have to work in several places.

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

Within the framework of measures aimed at improving the quality and efficiency of the Faculty at the institution, there are several regulations: “Procedure for the assessment of the quality and effectiveness of the teaching processes by the students in order to evaluate the quality and ensure quality higher education at Northern University”, “Procedure for the attestation of the Faculty, "Procedure for the Employee Encouragement", "Best Chair" etc.

It should be noted that the assessment procedure was approved in 2011 and the attestation procedure in 2012. The most commonly used mechanisms in the assessment process are questionnaires, surveys conducted by the focus groups and a class observation. At the end of each academic year, the Quality Assurance Department, according to the pre-designed questionnaires, conducts an evaluation of the lecturers' teaching effectiveness among the students (full-time, part-time). In the 2019-2020 academic year, nearly 580 students took part in the survey, and about 68 teachers of the Faculty were evaluated.

The other tool of the assessment process, the class observation, is carried out by the vice-rector (s), the heads of the departments, the academic department. Class observations are conducted in accordance with the established procedure, as well as in order to assess the objectivity of the teaching quality of the lecturers, a proposal to organize class

observations can be submitted by the QA department and implemented with the participation of department representatives.

Based on the evaluation results, towards the teachers who got the maximum/minimum points, in accordance with the "Employee Incentive Procedure", incentives (Certificate of Appreciation, One-time monetary rewards, Souvenirs) or a disciplinary sanction (up to the termination of the contract or not signing of a new contract) are applied.

In particular, according to the results of the evaluation of the 2019-2020 academic year, 10 lecturers of the university, including lecturers from the Alaverdi branch, received a monetary award and a certificate as the "Best Lecturer of the Year". It should be noted that the involvement of the best lecturers was ensured according to all chairs, and the lecturers of the Chair of Economics and Management stood out with the maximum points.

During the site visit, it became clear that there are mutual class observations by the lecturers at the institution, the results of which are later discussed in the sessions of the chair. However, it should be noted that they are not regulated.

Another no less important tool is the attestation - the decision of the teacher's professional knowledge and the ability to match the position, which is carried out at least once every five years, for the main teachers of the university. Meanwhile, the 4th point of the "Attestation of the Faculty" procedure defines that the regular attestation of teachers is organized once in 3 years. The last attestation within the Faculty was organized in 2016.

The results of the evaluation are summarized, analyzed by the QA department and the developed results, the report with the relevant proposals, are presented to the rector of the university, to the relevant chairs. At the session of the chair, on the basis of the suggestions contained in the conclusion presented in the report, a corresponding decision is made in the direction of eliminating the shortcomings, if necessary, they also organize trainings and improvement courses for the lecturers.

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

One of the regulations aimed at raising the professional qualifications of the Faculty in the institution is the procedure of training of Faculty, the attestation rate of the teaching staff, the procedure of encouraging the employees.

Trainings at the institution are organized through courses, exchange of experience (open lessons, trainings, seminars), as well as discussions on the subject being taught. Within the framework of the program organized to improve English among the internal stakeholders

of the institution 9 employees of the university were trained in March-April (2019), 10 employees in October-February (2019-2020).

From the activities aimed at improving the professional skills of teachers, the academic mobility taking place within the framework of the "Erasmus + KA 107" program contributes to the acquisition of new skills and exchange of experience of the Faculty. Within the framework of “Erasmus + KEY Action 107” program, 3 lecturers of the University, 1 student and 1 lecturer from Poland taught for 3rd and 4th year students of the Faculty of Law.

Within the framework of the international grant programs (2018), training was organized for more than 45 lecturers of both the institution and the beneficiaries of the program aimed at studying the peculiarities of the use of the distance learning platform (MOODLE) in educational processes and the use of electronic resources, the creation of electronic databases, the placement of materials, the organization of complete courses.

The trainings organized at the institution are conditioned by the introduction of new technologies and the processes to increase the efficiency of organizing current work. In particular, due to the introduction of the e-higher education system, regular trainings are organized not only for administrative and teaching-support staff, but also for the Faculty. In that context, the Faculty of Alaverdi branch is also involved in the trainings. From the basics of organizing training at the institution is the presentation of specific methodological trainings by the vice-rectors, heads of departments, heads of chairs aimed at improving the weak points of the educational process, guiding and giving clear instructions to lecturers on how to compile outcome-oriented academic programs. Within the framework of the 2018 international grant programs, in order to ensure access to higher education in the regions through the balanced development of educational services and the use of modern information technologies in the regions, the “Organization of Distance Learning Courses: Distance Education In the framework of the "Combined Technologies" grant program, two-stage trainings of 2018 were organized for more than 45 lecturers of both the institution and the beneficiary of the program, as a result of which 15 full and 30 partial courses were created. The purpose of the trainings was to study the peculiarities of using the distance learning platform (MOODLE) in educational processes and the use of electronic resources, the creation of electronic databases, the placement of materials, the creation of complete courses.

During the site visit, it became clear that the teaching staff gives the importance of the professional trainings and highlights its need. The open lessons for the exchange of experience among the chairs are of great interest at the institution.

In parallel with the continuous development of the professional qualities of the Faculty of the institution, as well as various incentive measures aimed at attracting highly qualified staff (awarding, certificate of appreciation, awarding with souvenirs), the university regularly organizes internal, inter-institutional and international trainings.

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

During the last 3 years, the main staff base of the Faculty has not undergone drastic changes in the institution. In particular, 62% of the teaching staff are lecturers with more than 6 years of teaching experience at the university, 57% of the teaching staff work on a basic basis, lecturers with academic degrees and titles corresponding to the quality of the academic programs make up 60% of the Faculty. In the 2021-2022 academic year, almost 56% of the main scientific-pedagogical staff of the University is in the range of 30-45 years old.

Almost 50% of the faculty of the institution are lecturers with experience in the relevant professional field, which contributes to the theoretical material presented by the lecturer to the student combined with practical examples and discussions of sectoral issues. As for the student/lecturer ratio at the university, the coefficient for 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 was 17, which is one of the guarantees of securing the institution's Faculty.

The university uses the services of invited lecturers, in particular, during the period of distance education. In order to ensure sustainability with the qualified specialists appropriate to the Academic Programs, the implementation of improvement measures based on the satisfaction analysis of the Faculty is considered an ongoing process in the institution.

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

In parallel with the current procedures for encouraging and promoting the professional development of the Faculty at the institution, the Rector's Order No. 79/0 "On Regulating the Remuneration of the Faculty and Head of Chairs at the Northern University" has been in force since 2020 according to which, the rates of payments of lecturers with the academic degree or title, the head of chairs have been specified. As a result of the changes made, the calculated salary fund of the Faculty has increased by almost 7.8% as compared to the previous 2019.

The system of differentiated bonuses of the Faculty developed by the institution is aimed at raising and advancing the professional qualities of the teaching staff.

In order to ensure professional advancement, the institution uses the possibility of free publication of scientific articles in the subdivision “Younger researcher” of the scientific journal "Hyusisapayl", both for the Faculty and master's and postgraduate students of the university. The institution also gives lecturers the opportunity to regularly publish scientific articles in the digest of conferences organized at the university freely.

During the site visit, it became clear that the institution’s 4 lecturers received the title of associate professor during the reporting period.

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

The formation of the organizational structure of the institution, the staff list, the appointment of employees to the relevant positions, and the scope of the staff's competencies are defined by the regulation of the institution, internal legal acts and passport defined for each position. In addition to the Faculty, the university also includes administrative, teaching and support, engineering, administrative and economic staff and employees from other categories.

In the 2021-2022 academic year, according to the approved staff list in 2020, the university has 50 members of administrative and teaching and support staff.

The effectiveness of the activities of the staff of the institution is assessed by evaluating the performance reports of the annual work plans based on the strategic goals for each academic year, the analysis of the previous year's reports and the quality improvement program concerning the indicators of PIEI (Planning, Implementation, Evaluation, Improvement) cycle and/or Key Performance Indicators (KPI) defined in the annual plans of the departments. During the site visit it became clear that the application of such experience is relatively new and not systematic.

The effectiveness of the activities of the institution's administrative and teaching and support staff is assessed on the basis of satisfaction surveys conducted among internal stakeholders.

It became clear from the site visit that the position of Vice-Rector for Education, Research and Internationalization is held by one person, whose scope of work is very comprehensive. The head of the Chair of Law and Center for Scientific Research, Innovative Programs and Postgraduate Professional Education is the same person. It is worth mentioning that the International Relations Office had one employee who carried

out all the activities of the office, and there was a vacancy for the junior specialist in the office.

Considerations:

The expert panel assesses positively the fact that the institution has a competitive selection policy for the Faculty which allows the involvement of staff with experience in various fields. Based on the observation made in the expert report of the previous accreditation the criteria for the selection of teaching staff have been changed; the selection is carried out through a competitive procedure. However, it should be noted that the requirements for the Faculty defined in the Academic Programs are not measurable, which can interfere with its realism during selection and certification.

During the site visit, it became clear that there are mutual class observations by the lecturers at the institution, the results of which are later discussed in the sessions of the chair, which is positive. However, it should be noted that they are not regulated.

The expert panel welcomes the fact that trainings at the institution are organized through courses, exchange of experience (open lessons, trainings, seminars), as well as discussions on the subject being taught, but in general, the low level of knowledge of English is not satisfactory, as evidenced by low mobility rates and few articles published in reputable international journals.

During the site visit, it became clear that those in charge of educational programs address several issues, in particular, the need to rejuvenate the Faculty, the lack of substitutes for some subjects, the low salaries lead to a decline in stability, there is a flow of staff.

The expert panel welcomes the fact that the system of differentiated surcharges of the academic staff developed by the institution is aimed at raising and advancing the professional qualities of the academic staff, while emphasizing that they should not be based solely on students' grades, but the process will be done on a multi-factor evaluation basis. In order to ensure professional advancement, the institution also uses scientific articles in the "Hyusisapayl" scientific journal.

In addition to the Faculty, the institution also includes employees of administrative, teaching, administrative, engineering and other categories. In the 2021-2022 academic year, the institution employs 50 administrative and teaching and support staff. The expert

panel noted that in some cases, the same person holds two positions, which can be an additional obstacle to the efficient implementation of the work.

Summary:

Considering the fact that there are procedures for selection and evaluation of the Faculty in the Institution, the requirements for professional qualities are defined, there are passports for the position of lecturers, some of the administrative staff, the Institution has an appropriate Faculty for the provision of the Academic Programs, the expert panel finds that the institution meets the requirements of Criterion 5.

Conclusion:

The expert panel assesses the correspondence of the Northern University institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 5 as **satisfactory.**

VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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

Findings

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

A number of tasks have been put forward to increase the scientific potential step by step in the sub-division of the Strategic Plan "Research and Scientific Research Potential" (2016-2020).

The goal to develop the internationalization of the research activities of the institution, the research potential and to increase the research component in the Academic Programs is set in the Strategic Plan of the institution (2020-2025), 3 tasks are envisaged.

The perspective program of scientific-research and methodological works of the Northern University was approved for the period from September, 2016 to September, 2020.

It is mentioned that this program is aimed at- 1) Strengthening the role of scientific work as an important component of the University's activity, activation of scientific-research and scientific-methodological work implemented at the University, increasing their quality and effectiveness, 2) discovering the scientific and intellectual potential of the University academic staff, students its rational and targeted use, active involvement of this potential in scientific research and scientific-methodological work, implemented at

the University 3) developing the scientific research carried out at the university, strengthening both their scientific and practical orientation, 4) ensuring high output results of research, use of those results, 5) providing interconnection between scientific-research, scientific-methodological and academic programs, introduction of the practical results of researches in the educational process, 6) creating the necessary bases and preconditions for turning the university into a center of scientific research in the future. The document distinguishes 22 priority directions of scientific-research and scientific-methodological works and 56 main topics, 8 lecturers-student conferences and other scientific events are envisaged.

According to the self-evaluation the policy and priorities of research and development at the university are defined by the regulation of "Scientific Research, Innovative Programs and Postgraduate Professional Education Center", which was approved in 2014. The document presents the mission, goals and objectives of the center.

It became clear from the site visit and the study of the documents that the budget for research processes is a small (about 0-36%), but at the same time, the planned activities will be aimed at financing the publication of some works that will be used in the educational process or the organization of conference, the importance is given to the publishment of the collection of scientific works "Hyusisapayl" of the Northern University, as well as its including in the list of Supreme Certifying Committee, as it is considered as a way of commercializing science.

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

6 actions are envisaged for the solution of the problems set in the "Research and Scientific Research Potential" section of the University's Strategic Plan (2016-2020), and several steps for each of them.

Period of implementation of each action is 2016-2020, except for one activity, for which each academic year is marked. Responsible people and results are mentioned. With the action of "To activate the activities of the center of Scientific Researches, Innovative Programs and Postgraduate Programs", it is supposed to have the result of "Organization of scientific conferences, increase of published materials", "Clarify the interests and aspirations of Northern University in the field of research for each chair of the University", "Clarify the interests and ambitions of Northern University in the field of research for each chair of the University", "Clarify the interests and aspirations of

Northern University in the field of research for each chair of the University", "Publication of the best research works", “Conducting competitions for research works”.

Up to 2020, the result of the publications of the lecturers in the periodicals recognized by the Supreme Certifying Committee has been reduplicated with the action of the involvement in Grant programs in the field of research, activation of the cooperation - exchange of experience with local - foreign research institutions, enterprises – universities.

The result of establishing partnership relations with foreign universities, "implementing joint research programs", etc. No separate budget is mentioned.

4 actions are envisaged for the solution of the problems set by the university in the Strategic Plan of 2020-2025. In this case, in particular, with the action of "Promotion of International Scientific Publishing Activity of the University's Faculty, the introduction of incentives for the publication of articles in local and international journals" is supposed to have "Development of students' research capacity, greater involvement of students in the university's research activities." (Increase in the number of participants) Recording an increase in the number of articles published by university authors in high-professional journals (maximum 10%), with the action of "Promoting Institutional Research Grant Programs" it is intended to "Development of Institutional Priority Research Capacities", (Holding at least 2 internal grant competitions), "Increase the students' ability to do independent research work - increase the independence component of the final work and master thesis”, Research capacity building (change in the weight of the component of independent work in the Academic Programs in favor of the practice) Final works and Master's theses with research component provided (relatively high index of evaluation points) " and a consistent contribution to the Salzburg Principles in tertiary education. "Third-level education under the Salzburg Principles - creation of a supportive environment promoting the research activities of young scientists, gaining the status of researchers as chair staff, promotion of joint activities among young scientists. (Prerequisites for the promotion of tertiary education, increase in the number of applicants/graduate students).

As a result of the previous institutional accreditation, the expert panel provided advice "in the process of defining the research priorities of the Institution, first of all, taking into account the areas of professional educational programs implemented in the Institution, as well as involving external stakeholders in that process." However, the site visit revealed that the external stakeholders were not involved in the process of setting research priorities, in addition, they do not consider all the areas of the implemented

academic programs. The institution has no medium-term programs in the field of research. The short-term programs are the plans of the center of Scientific Researches, Innovative Programs and Postgraduate Academic Programs of 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 academic years. According to the self-evaluation, the plans for the academic year are based on the prospective program (2016-2021). The study of the plans shows that they have almost the same problems.

There are no analyzes on the issues mentioned by the institution in terms of quality assessment and improvement, they do not give an idea about the research activities, the connection between the research activities, the Academic Programs, the involvement of students in that process, the connection between the research results and the study results. There are the first semester of 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 Academic Years reports of the center of Scientific Researches, Innovative Programs and Postgraduate Academic Programs, with the latter in a new format.

According to the self-evaluation, in order to make the results of the research work carried out at the university measurable and to receive an objective assessment, Northern University "Researcher's annual rating scale" is used in the chairs. It turned out from the site visit that no examples of the applicability and impact of that document were visible.
It became clear from the site visit there is a connection-cooperation between the Alaverdi branch and Alaverdi enlarged community employers in terms of carrying out joint research and planning to propose research topics of commercial importance.

According to the self-evaluation, within the framework of the budget envisaged for 2020, the University announced a "Best Research Project" grant competition, as a result of which two of the three submitted programs were recognized as winners, who shared a grant of 1 million AMD. It is mentioned that the involvement of students in the programs was strengthened, and after winning the period of implementation of the programs was reviewed. It turned out from the site visit that the matter concerned the financing of the printing of monographs, and the involvement of students in research works is not visible.

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

There is a regulation to regulate the activities of the center of Scientific Researches, Innovative Programs and Postgraduate Academic Programs. The employees of the center are the head of the center, the coordinator of the center's work, the assistant. The

regulation introduces the responsibilities of the head of the center. There is a position passport for the center's work coordinator. The functions of the assistant are not clear.
It turned out from the site visit that the head of the center and the coordinator are overburdened with the responsibilities of the head of the chair and the assistant. At the same time, the research processes are supervised by Vice-Rector for Education, Research and Internationalization.

The regulation on preparation and submission of articles for publication in the digest of "Hyusispayl" scientific journal and the documents of the rules of the journal's ethics were approved at the session of the Academic Council held at the 16th of February, 2021.

The regulation on the organization of postgraduate professional education at Northern University was approved in 2016. Postgraduate education at the University is organized in 3 specialities of the list of scientific degrees of Armenia: "Finance, Accounting", "Armenian Classical Literature",and "Judicial Law". The institution has the right to approve the topic of the dissertation in speciality "Finance-Accounting", and also to take the minimum candidate examinations in that speciality became clear from the site visit and the examination of the documents that there are no documents regulating the process of holding the "Best Research Project" competition, no criteria have been set.The university organizes conferences, round tables.

The indicators of the works published by the Academic Staff of the University are the following: in RA reviewed magazines: 2017 - 15, 2018 - 25, 2019 - 18, 2020 - 14, 2021 - 14, in the reviewed magazines of the CIS countries: 2017- 3, 2018-6, 2019-5, 2020-0, 2021-1, in international peer-reviewed magazines: 2017-0, 2018-1, 2019-1, 2020-3, 2021-0.
There are no other achievements in terms of the planned results of a number of issues envisaged by the Strategic Plan of the University for 2016-2020 and 2020-2025. Expenditures on science range from 0.22% to 0.36%.

It became clear from the site visit and the examination of the documents that there are no reports in the Scientific-Research sphere due to the Strategic Plan. Analysis of the results of the research and quality assessment weren't carried out and the steps of improvement conditioned by it weren't outlined, which was referred to as a result of the previous accreditation. At the same time, it was decided that the university would take steps to nationalize the results of its research activities, as well as to make research as a source of income for the Institution. However, there are no results in these directions.

6.4 The Institution emphasizes the internationalization of its research.

The activities "Enhance Cooperation and Exchange of Experience with Local and Foreign Research Institutions, Enterprises and Higher Education Institutions" envisaged by the Strategic Plan of 2016-2020 and "Promotion of international scientific publishing activity of the students and Academic Staff of the University, introduction of mechanisms to encourage the publication of articles in local and international journals" envisaged by the Strategic Plan of 2020-2025 are aimed at the internationalization of research activities. The university highlighted the importance of the organization of international conferences. There are some works published by the Academic Staff of the University in CIS and several international peer-reviewed journals, there are no published works in impact journals.

The previous Strategic Plan envisaged "Establishment of partnership relations with foreign universities, implementation of joint research programs", but the university did not register an achievement.

During the expert panel meetings the small number of articles published abroad was mainly reasoned due to the lecturers' lack of knowledge of a foreign language. International conference entitled "Problems of Competitive Education and Science in a Changing World" dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the University, after summarizing results of the conference, the participants received certificates.

Although the Strategic Development Plan of the Institution is intended to expand international cooperation in the field of research, but joint international research programs have not been implemented with other universities. The site visit revealed that there are still no mechanisms to encourage the publication of articles in local and international journals.
The Academic Staff of the institution is not presented on Researchgate.net, Google Scholar, Academia.edu, Orcid.org or other international research rating platforms.
The university does not yet have a policy aimed at internationalizing research.

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

As a result of the previous institutional accreditation of Northern University, the expert panel highlighted that the university should develop effective mechanisms for interconnecting research activities and the educational process at the Institution by giving

priority to the creation of educational, teaching-methodological, scientific publications on the subjects taught at the University, aiming to make them accessible to students.

At the meeting of the Academic Council of the University held on the 23th of December, 2012, the procedure for organizing and evaluating the research paper was approved, according to which the research paper is aimed at revealing students' analytical skills and developing their creative skills. At the session of the Academic Council held on the 18th of April, 2019, the procedures for the preparation, defence and evaluation of master's theses were approved. According to these categories, "The bachelor's thesis is an independent, theoretical or applied work, which reflects the application of the knowledge acquired by the student within the given speciality and proposes solutions in the given field", "Master's thesis is an independent research, analyticaland/or applied work that reflects the student's ability to apply the knowledge acquired in the field, to conduct independent research, as well as to raise scientific issues and propose new solutions."

The study of the graduation papers and master's theses showed that such results are not always provided. It should be noted that during the review of resources by the expert panel, the materials of the conference organized at the Institution were available in the library.

The study of about 40 professional subject programs of the speciality "Law" revealed that the publications of the Institution's Academic Staff are not included in their literature lists. As for the considered graduation works and master theses, they did not contain references to the joint research results of the student-lecturer.

According to the surveys, only 40% of the students are satisfied with the results of the interconnection of research activities with the educational process, and the weak connection between research activities and the educational process by the institution is mentioned in the self-evaluation as a weak point.

SSS organizes some events, highlighting the involvement of students in them. However, the site visit revealed that the activities of SSS are not planned, besides, the involvement of students in those processes is weak. Unfortunately, distance learning students are not involved in these processes.

As a result of the "Best Research Project" competition announced by the university, two monographs were published, and the university was able to contribute them to the educational process. There was an initiative by the Quality Assurance Department for the students to read them and address the questions according to the questionnaire.

Considerations:

The expert panel considers it positive that Northern University had goals, tasks and actions aimed at the development of research processes in the Strategic Plan (2016-2020). However, the intended results aren't generally measurable; there are no tangible results for the stated ambitious goals. The university did not evaluate the results of those actions envisaged by the Strategic Plan and there are no underperformance analyzes and reasons. The implementation of such assessments and analyzes could be used to ensure a more effective planning process for research processes in the new Strategic Plan (2020-2025) outlining the achievable results in that direction in accordance with human, material and financial resources. From this point of view, no preconditions have been created yet, which will guarantee the availability of the ambitious results envisaged by the Strategic Plan (2020-2025).

According to the perspective program of scientific-research and scientific-methodological works (2016-2020) the defined directions are ambitious for the university, while that program only refers to the priorities of scientific-research and scientific-methodological works and main topics, as well as the organization of lecture-student conferences. In this case, the way to reach the ambitious outlines is not clearly defined. Although research priorities have been identified in this document (22), there are no guarantees for research development in these areas, especially in the case of the existing five chairs, Center of Scientific Researches, Innovative Programs and Postgraduate Academic Programs and financial resources.

The site visit revealed that the human-financial resources of the center are not enough to implement the rather comprehensive goals and objectives, to involve internal and external stakeholders in that process.

There is no link between the Strategic Plan of the short-term and long-term plans and some existing reports are only for short-term plans.

This jeopardizes the availability of the results envisaged by the Strategic Plan. In accordance with the modern development tendencies of science, steps are taken to develop the process of naturalization of science, which was also mentioned in the previous accreditation, but there are no preconditions in this direction. The expert panel considers positive the fact that, based on the expert advice of the previous accreditation process, the institution has replenished the staff of the Center of Scientific Researches, Innovative Programs and Postgraduate Academic Programs but, according to the expert panel, this staff, as well as the amount of science expenditures envisaged in the 2020 budget (0-29%)- are not enough to realize the ambitious, comprehensive goals and objectives of the

center.The expert panel notes that the weak involvement of external stakeholders in the process of setting the university's research priorities may lead to unrealistic results. From this point of view, the expert panel emphasizes the involvement of stakeholders in the process of setting priorities. It is also a matter of concern for the expert panel that the Academic Staff of the University is not involved in state or international research projects, while there was a such kind of intention in the Strategic Plan.

The expert panel also considers the decrease of the already low index of the works published by the Academic Staff to be worrying. From this point of view, it is important to introduce incentive and supportive mechanisms by the university based on the needs of the stakeholders and strategic goals. From this point of view, the expert panel considers positive that the university took care of the printing costs of some works of the Academic Staff as a result of the "Best Research Project" inter-institutional grant competition.

The university does not have a policy in the direction of scientific internationalization, it has not clarified its actions in this direction, it does not have tangible results in this direction.

Although the expert panel notes the steps taken by the university to involve international conferences and international partners, they have not yet led to the implementation of joint research work, which was envisaged by the Strategic Plan. At the same time, the indexes of the works published by the Academic Staff in the internationally rated periodicals are worrying. The expert panel considers positive the number of internal legal documents introduced by the university, aimed at the interconnection of the educational process with the research activity. The organization of conferences and the attempts to involve students in them are also positive. However, the study of the master's theses from the expert visit showed that some of the studied works were not in line with the presented requirements. They did not present the relevance of the topic, substantiation, modern literature in foreign languages, had no research component.

Although there is a research component in the Academic Programs, the site visit revealed that students need to develop their capacity for research. The Institution did not analyze the effectiveness of research activities in terms of interrelationships with the educational process.

Summary:

Taking into account that in the field of research the institution doesn’t provide clear, feasible policy-procedures, the strategy of expressing its interests and aspirations is unrealistic due to limited human and financial resources, has no medium-term plans, the

indicators of research and publications in impact journals are low and there is no tangible results due to cooperation, the link is weak between research and study, there is a lack of commercialization and internationalization policy, the expected results of previous institutional accreditation and consultations were not provided, the expert panel finds that Northern University doesn't meet the requirements of Criterion 6.

Conclusion:

The expert panel assesses the correspondence of Northern University institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 6 unsatisfactory.

VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

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

Findings

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

The main building of the university has an area of 3511 square meters. The institution owns it and uses it on a lease basis. According to the accreditation and observations of the expert panel, different faculties of the university have equipped classrooms, laboratories for criminology, computer, linguistics, distance learning, postgraduate education. The university has five computer classrooms-laboratories with about 60 computers. In some classrooms there are fixed projectors for organizing exhibitions, a large event hall, a library-reading hall. The legal clinic has a separate service room. The library-reading hall of the university has computers with an access to the electronic materials, a library fund, which is regularly replenished with literature presented by the departments in accordance with the subject programs. The electronic library database of National Library of Armenia, Avetik Isahakyan Central Library, Digital Library Association of Armenia is also available to the students. During the last 3 years, the library fund of the institution has been replenished with about 680 fiction and professional books and magazines, making about 4200 units. The university is provided with internet connection.

According to the results of the surveys conducted at the institution, 60% of the students and 70% of the teachers are satisfied with the provision of resources. However, during the review of the expert panel meetings, the issues of lack of modern professional literature in foreign languages, magazines, non-digitization of the library, non-use of international library networks were revealed.

It was substantiated by the study of students' graduation works and master's theses, in which the references to the latest professional literature were simply absent, and the study of financial documents revealed that the library expenses for the last 3 years amounted to 0.22%, 0.01%, 0.02%. The students were not informed about the famous electronic library platforms - LexisNexis Digital Library, HeinOnline, Koob.ru etc. The students of the Faculty of Law mentioned that they use the Legal Information System of Armenia (arlis.am).

The study of the documents revealed that the deans of the faculties submit a proposal-report on the technical material and teaching aids necessary for the chairs, with a petition of provision a computer and a printer, in the best case, the renovation of the room to the rector. There were no statistics on the users of the library, reading room, databases.

It should be stated that due to the consultation of the expert panel during the previous accreditation the issues concerning the academic programs supposed by the Strategic Plan, the task of replenishing the institution's library with a sufficient number of professional literatures which raised the needs of students and lecturers have not been realized.

During the review of resources, the expert panel noticed a lack of new generation IT resources, which was raised by the stakeholders during the meetings of the expert panel.

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

According to the self-evaluation, the main source of income for the institution is tuition fees, which has increased for some professions by 10-15% in the 2021-2022 academic year and the amount allocated for tuition discounts has increased by approximately 6.0% -13.6%.

From the study of the documents, the expert panel found out that the financial planning is carried out for one year in a centralized manner. Alaverdi branch and other subdivisions do not have an independent budget. 97.8% of the revenue part of the 2020-2021 budget was made from the tuition fees, 0.11% was made from the grant programs and 2% was

made from the other incomes. The largest expenses are wage expenses - 43.84% (of which 23% is directed towards paying the Academic Staff, 16.89% is directed towards paying the administrative staff, 2.31% is directed towards paying the teaching and support staff, 1.62% is directed towards paying for the economic issues), rent fees - 26.09%, tuition discounts – 13.6%. The distribution of financial resources according to the needs of the academic programs is mainly done in terms of the wages of the teaching staff, the main current organizational expenses. There is no policy of allocating financial resources to ensure the implementation and continuity of the mission and goals of the institution.

The institution did not conduct analysis of budget expenditure effectiveness and its mission.

Expenses for the educational process in the annual budget of 2020-2021 expressed by the percent are as follows:

- Expenses for acquisition of educational equipment and property – 1.45%,
- Science expenses – 0.29%,
- Library expenses: 0.02%,
- Professional development costs of lecturers: 0.04%,
- Internship costs: 0.12%,
- Publishing costs: 0.14%.

According to the consultation of the expert pane previous accreditation the steps for ensuring the financial independence of the institution, the measures for providing a stable flow of alternative financial income besides tuition fees have not been implemented.

7.3 The Institution has sound financial distribution policy and capacity to sustain and ensure the integrity and continuity of the academic programs offered at the institution.

The financial resources planning of the institution starts with the elaboration of the budget in accordance with the financial resources management policy adopted in 2016. Before the start of the academic year, the chief accountant's budget estimate for the new academic year based on the analysis of the previous years' financial indicators is submitted to the Rector of the University, taking into account the observations submitted by the Vice-Rectors of the University. If there are no objections from the latter, the document is submitted to the meeting of the university participants for discussion and approval.

According to the study of the documents reflecting the management and distribution of financial resources, the main article of the budget revenue is tuition fees,

the calculation of which is implemented by the number of the institution's acting students and applicants (also considering the dynamics of applicants of the last few years).
There has been no sharp fluctuation in the number of students during the last 5 years, but the number of students with full-time education has decreased and there are no applicants for a number of specialties at all.

The calculation of the first three major expenditure items of the budget is based on the training load of the academic staff presented by the chairs and the amount of the salary is determined according to the rates, academic degree, title.

In case of administrative, teaching - support and technical staff, the staff list is taken as a basis, which is reviewed at the beginning of each academic year. The presence of approved staff list allows the institution to plan the means of financing the salary. At the end of each year, the report is presented on the use of the financial means and its effectiveness.
From the expert analysis of the reports, other types of financial documents and meetings, it became clear that there is no policy of allocating financial resources to ensure the implementation and continuity of the goals of the academic programs. There are also no financial risk management mechanisms.

7.4 The Institution's resource base supports the implementation of institution's academic programs and strategic plan, which promotes for sustainability and continuous quality enhancement.

The institution considers that the existing resource base of the university enables the effective organization of the academic programs of the specialties and the implementation of the strategic plan through the replenishment of resources, the monitoring of the resource base and through surveys. According to the survey conducted in the 2020-2021 academic year, the vast majority of 204 students rated the availability and saturation of the institution's facilities as positive - 5 points (on a 5-point scale). During the year, the structural subdivisions are provided with material and technical resources based on reports and the requirements for the implementation of academic programs and the organization of current activities. As for the continuous replenishment of resources, it does not appear from the presented financial expenses. 0.04% of the budget is envisaged for the professional development of lecturers in 2020-2021, and there is no financing for the internationalization and research activities.

From the site visit, it became clear that there were cases when the lecturers invited the students to their other workplace in order to be able to use the resources there for ensuring the results provided by the academic program. The technical capabilities of the existing computers do not allow to provide the most preferred software means required by the relevant academic program.

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

The legal basis for the implementation of information and documentation processes at the institution is the "Northern University Activities" and "Northern University Archive Activities" procedures. There is a vertical accountability mechanism in the institution.
The university's official website, Facebook page, "Northern University" magazine, brochures, official and personal e-mail addresses of employees as well as Electronic document circulation system-E-buh.am, which allows to automate the internal document circulation of the university has contributed to the dissemination of information of the University as well as raise of awareness of stakeholders and publicity of the institution's activities. The internal legal acts of the institution - charters, regulations, programs, protocols-other documents are posted in the "Documents" subsection of the official website, in the online folders of the University QA department, providing access for the beneficiaries.

7.6 The Institution creates safe and secure environment through health and safety mechanisms that also consider special needs of students.

Procedures for health and safety services are set out in the University Civil Protection Plan. Civil protection of students and staff in emergency situations is carried out by the head of the Civil Defense Headquarters. Emergency evacuation plans and fire extinguishers are posted in all the buildings of the university. The buildings have the necessary number of entrances to effectively organize the evacuation of students. The buildings have the necessary number of entrances to effectively organize the evacuation of students. Cameras are installed on all floors of the institution. There is an aid station in the institution with the necessary medicine for first aid and medical equipment.

In order to raise students' awareness and develop the ability to orientate quickly in emergency situations, the courses "Civil Protection" and "First Aid for the Population in Emergency Situations" are taught in all faculties of the university.

As a result of the expert visit of the self-analysis study, it became clear that the infrastructure of the building is not adapted for people with special needs, the university considers it one of its weaknesses.

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

According to the self-evaluation, the mechanisms for evaluating the usefulness, accessibility and effectiveness of the resources provided to students are the surveys and discussions conducted among the graduates, teachers, students, which are carried out by the QA department. Based on the analysis of needs-satisfaction surveys, suggestions are made, which are implemented by the Rectorate or relevant departments. During the meeting with the students, it turned out that they had submitted a proposal to provide water tanks in the corridors, which was immediately resolved. Surveys conducted among the students show that the vast majority of students are satisfied with the resources available to them, but the meetings of the expert panel showed that the institution needs to be replenished with the latest resources. According to the self-evaluation, a positive solution was found to the problem raised during the COVID-19 epidemic, when the academic staff was given the opportunity to use computer resources, students were provided with laptops.

Considerations:

The expert panel positively assesses that the improvement and development of the infrastructure and resources necessary for the implementation of academic programs of specialties is considered a strategic priority by the institution, but the budget distribution is not clearly related to the implementation of strategic tasks and academic programs. The expert panel positively assesses that the improvement and development of the infrastructure and resources necessary for the implementation of educational programs of specialties is considered a strategic priority by the institution, but the budget distribution is not clearly related to the implementation of strategic programs and academic programs. During the meeting with the expert panel, the founders of the institution mentioned that they are trying to provide the necessary educational environment in accordance with the goals of the Strategic Plan for 2020-2025, but the lack of revenue sources and the fact that the major percentage of the budget is allocated to the rent of the main building endanger

the long-term financial stability of the university[5]: 97.8% of the revenue part of the budget for 2020-2021 were tuition fees, of which salary expenses were 43.84%, rent payments were 26.09%, and tuition discounts were 13.6%.

The expert panel welcomes the institution's flexible policy of tuition discounts. At present, insufficient financial resources are allocated for the realization of ambitious goals in the fields of research, internationalization and education, which hinders the achievement of the goals set by the university and the dynamic development of the above-mentioned fields.

According to the self-evaluation of the expert panel, the university has classrooms, laboratories, projectors, five computer classrooms with about 60 computers, internet, hall, library-reading hall, law clinic.

Despite high rates of resource satisfaction of internal stakeholders - 60-70%, according to the observation of the expert panel, the lack of up-to-date professional literature in terms of the implementation of educational outcomes and non-access to online library networks jeopardizes access to foreign language literature.

The expert panel welcomes the fact that the QA department regularly conducts inquiries to verify satisfaction with the resource base, but there are few examples of problem-solving issues identified, such as mechanisms for informing stakeholders about the results of inquiries.

From the expert analysis of the reports and other types of financial documents, it became clear that in order to fulfil its mission and goals, the institution spent only 1.45% of the budget for the purchase of educational equipment and property with an annual budget of 2020-2021. However, the methodology of raising the expenditure part of the budget of the institution is unclear. Thus in 2018-2019 the expenditures amounted to 119.74% of the budget, in 2019 2020 - 106.87%, and in 2020-2021 - 88.99%. Thus, we can state that in the first two years more was spent than it had been planned in the budget.

So the question arises from what sources was the amount exceeding the expenditure part of the budget financed? Already in the third year, the institution was able to finance the expenses envisaged by its budget exclusively at the expense of budget funds, moreover, about 11.01% of the budget remained unused. The above is the basis for the assumption that either the budget (2020-2021) envisaged less expenditures than the budget, or the budget revenues exceeded the expenditures. This is evidence of the lack of a policy of allocating financial resources to ensure the implementation and continuity of the mission and goals of the institution, and the lack of financial risk management

[5] The idea was paraphrased based on the institution's observations.

mechanisms. The analysis related to the institution's mission and effectiveness of its budget expenses has not carried out, and the distribution of financial resources according to the needs of the academic programs was mainly done in terms of salaries and current organizational expenses of the academic staff.

However, according to the expert panel, the positive impact of resources on the curricula is not yet visible, and the resources provided by the strategic plan are not yet available.

As the expert panel stated, the information and document circulation processes in the institution need to be regulated. The information management system is being restarted. On the positive side, the institution is trying to introduce the MOODLE e-learning tool.

Although the institution creates a safe environment through health and safety services, the building's infrastructure is not adapted for people with special needs, and the staff do not undergo medical examinations.

Summary:

Considering that the institution's resource base is limited to create an educational environment for the effective mission and goals, it has lack of modern literature and a new generation of IT resources, there is no policy of allocating financial resources to ensure the implementation and continuity of the goals of academic programs, there are no financial risk management mechanisms, no information, no clear document management policy, no infrastructure for people with special needs, no strategic resources for the implementation of the Vocational Education Curriculum and Strategic Plan, the expert panel finds that the correspondence of the Northern University institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 7 is unsatisfactory.

Conclusion:

The expert panel assesses the correspondence of the Northern University's institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 7 unsatisfactory:

VIII. SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY

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

Findings

8.1 The Institution has clear policy on institutional accountability.

The issue of accountability to the public is regulated by the University Charter, "Strategic Development Plan for 2020-2025", the charter of "Practice Center for Information and Public Relations", "Policy for Ensuring Accountability for Stakeholders". The mentioned documents through the accountability function provide comprehensive information related to the institution, the public, external and internal stakeholders.

According to the self-evaluation, the rector of the university submits an annual report to the meeting of the participants, the scientific council for each academic year. The rector's report is based on the annual reports of the subdivisions, from the bottom up, which are formed in accordance with the standard set by the institution and posted on the university website.

The rector also makes a public report on the activities of the university or its separate aspects through the media. The annual report of the rector is published on the official website of the university northern.am, the key provisions are published in the official newspaper "Northern University" and on the official Facebook page. Accountability to the external and internal stakeholders is also provided by Media and Public Relations Department. The self-evaluation states that it has mainly managed to overcome the schematic, information-protocol style of reporting, which has given way to analytical reports. This was facilitated by the new report paper developed by the QA Department, in which a great deal of attention is paid to the analytical component. This was facilitated by the new report paper developed by the QA development, in which a great deal of attention is paid to the analytical component. The reports of the rector and subdivisions of the last 5 years are not complete on the university's website. There is a lack of the basis of accountability to the state and the mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of accountability in self-evaluation and the documents attached to it.

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

The functions of the institution's procedures, process transparency and ensuring public access are enshrined in the charter of the "Media and Public Relations Department". According to which, one of the main and most effective means of ensuring the transparency and dissemination of information about the institution to the public are the official website (northern.am), the official pages of the institution and Alaverdi branch on social networks, the social pages of the departments, the official magazine, reports through the mass-media, booklets, brochures, thematic banners, posters.

The technically equipped website of 2018 presents all the departments with information related to them, publications and news reflecting the current activities. According to the self-evaluation, the materials posted on the website give a complete picture of the processes going on in the institution. The website also publishes the charters of the institution, subdivisions, procedural documents, academic programs, surveys, analyses, announcements, including information about vacancies.

The database of translated materials of the site has been enriched, which is of continuous nature. According to the self-evaluation, the institution envisages to design a multilingual website which will include not only English translation but also Russian translation, which according to the institution, will increase the interest of foreign stakeholders in the university, raise awareness and increase the number of foreign students. The database of translated materials of the site has been enriched, which is of continuous nature.

In order to check the effectiveness of the site as a means of disseminating information, surveys are regularly conducted among external and internal target audiences, according to which the number of visitors to the official website has increased and the analysis of the surveys revealed that the circle of viewers as a means of obtaining information about the university has expanded.

Therefore, according to the suggestion of the Media and Public Relations Training Center, in the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years, the university has revised its policy of information dissemination and the choice of reporting mechanisms, giving preference mainly to the university website and social networks, publishing expanded (paid) advertising materials in them, as well as publishing information reflecting the current processes.

During the site visit, the signboards covering the activities of the institution were displayed on the walls in the corridors of the university, which testify to the publicity of the university's activities.

During the expert meetings, the students and the academic staff were satisfied with the access to the information provided by the institution.

There is a public discussion platform on the website, where no material has been posted. The institution plans to redesign and modernize the website.

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

According to the charter of the "Media and Public Relations Center" adopted in 2020, the institution, taking into account the modern trends in the labor market, aims to expand the mechanisms of public relations through social networks, using up-to-date information dissemination and public relations building tools. The most active, accessible and effective feedback with external and internal target groups is through the official Facebook social page, which provides an opportunity to respond quickly to beneficiaries' questions, to provide necessary information about the university's processes, to clarify their level of satisfaction with the university's information policy and other processes, to raise current issues, to help overcome the barriers of communication between the beneficiaries and other departments of the university. During the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years, this channel provided a variety of information about the institution to nearly 480 beneficiaries, mostly applicants, and according to surveys conducted among first-year students, the institution's official Facebook page served as the primary means of obtaining feedback. Communication with external stakeholders has improved, with an increase in emails and messages. In this way, the university connects with employers and graduates.

The university's self-evaluation states that the website is an insufficient feedback mechanism, which is considered by stakeholders mainly as a means of obtaining information, it doesn't technically provide sufficient opportunities to build and strengthen feedback. The new official website, which is in the process of being redesigned, will address this issue, making it not only a primary means of disseminating information but also a stable mechanism for strengthening feedback.

One of the mechanisms for strengthening feedback is the university-school-college connection, which is manifested by visiting schools, secondary vocational education institutions, organizing open classes, Olympiads and competitions. In the second half of the 2020-2021 academic year, there were visits for 25 regional schools and colleges for professional orientation. It should be noted that such initiatives have not always been regular in the past, thus recording insufficient effectiveness. Analyzing the results of the surveys, discussions held in schools, the institution plans to make the cooperation with schools and colleges systematic. Taking into account the observation recorded during the previous accreditation that "the connection between the institution and the employer is still weak", steps were taken to fill that gap, mainly by conducting surveys, organizing discussions, signing contracts and memoranda.

And during the meetings of the expert panel, it turned out that there is a strong connection between the institution and the employer in the case of the Alaverdi branch and the enlarged community of Alaverdi due to the competitiveness of the graduates of the institution in the local labor market, professional knowledge and the responsibility shown to

the work. In addition, the branch conducts research of local importance, identifies the needs of the community, and proposes solutions that interest employers. In addition, the branch conducts research of local importance, identifies the needs of the community, and proposes solutions that interest employers. Through its actions, the branch carries out responsibility before the community. Satisfaction with the professional knowledge and skills of the graduates of the institution was confirmed during the meeting with the employers.

The site visit confirmed another circumstance - that the rector, the heads of the subdivisions carry out the reception of citizens according to the schedule.

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

According to the University Charter and 2020-2025 Development Strategic Plan, it is defined to support the progress of upbringing and strengthening the intellectual, educational, socio-economic, scientific, cultural, national-patriotic spirit of the society through the transfer of knowledge.

The self-evaluation states that in accordance with the "Regulation on additional educational services provided to the public (internal-external target audience) by the Northern University" as amended in 2021, adopted in 2018, the direction of additional academic programs is determined by identifying educational needs among the external and internal stakeholders, which are regularly surveyed at the beginning of each academic year. As a result of the surveys, training courses on "Foreign Languages", "Communication Culture", "Skills for writing a good CV", and "Fundamentals of Word and Excel" were organized for students and staff of both university and other institutions. During the meetings it turned out that they planned to hold trainings in French and other languages. During the visit, the expert panel was informed about the continuity of trainings with the employees of the RA Prosecutor General's Office, National Polytechnic University of Armenia and Shushi Technological University.

In accordance with its mission, the institution works with students of public schools and colleges, providing professional orientation services, organizing Tumanyan readings, conferences, book discussions, meetings with famous people, military-patriotic education aimed at strengthening the university-army ties, numerous events aimed at preserving and disseminating traditions. The policy on the free tuition and discount tuition system is being implemented for the socially vulnerable students, the participants of the war and other categories of the students.

The Legal Clinic provides free legal advice to internal and external stakeholders, the socially vulnerable class. The students of the Faculty of Law are involved in this process, who

carry out practical activities under the supervision of a lawyer, strengthening their theoretical knowledge, at the same time acquiring practical skills. The trainings organized by the law clinic are regular, with the involvement of university teachers and invited specialists. The trainings organized by the law clinic are regular, with the involvement of university teachers and invited specialists. Cognitive visits of students of the Faculty of Law, student-counselors of the clinic to state and non-state bodies of the Republic of Armenia have become frequent, which contribute to the expansion and strengthening of university-employer relations.

Discussions were organized with the students and the academic staff on the draft law of the Republic of Armenia "On Higher Education and Science" with the aim of expanding their knowledge on legislative changes in the field of education, as well as transferring additional knowledge to the public. The institution considers that the effectiveness of the additional educational services provided to the public has not been verified by any toolkit, and plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the program through the report policy accepted by the academic program management cycle.

Considerations:

The expert panel positively assesses the acceptance of the consultations carried out as a result of the previous accreditation, the review of the mechanisms for ensuring feedback and transfer of knowledge to the public, the accountability of the in-law legal acts, the transparency and accessibility of the institution's procedures and processes to the public, the feedback and the mechanisms of transferring knowledge to the public. However, it should be noted that accountability from top to bottom is not transparent. The rector's report posted on the website does not give a complete picture of the goals, processes or improvement of the institution's goals in the field of public responsibility through the academic program management cycle.

Even though the Quality Assurance Department has developed a new paper on accountability, it should be noted that as a result of the study of the reports, the expert panel expressed the opinion that they are not analytical, superficial, do not give a full picture of the institution or a specific department's activities, they do not identify the existing problems and offer the ways to overcome them. Nevertheless, the existing level of accountability during the expert meetings was assessed as satisfactory by all stakeholders. In the self-evaluation, the grounds for accountability to the state in the attached documents were absent, but as a result of expert panel meetings and the study of the documents it turned out that there is a cooperation with the state authorities and the documents proving the accountability.

According to these documents the students of the institution make the cognitive visits to RA National Assembly, RA Prosecutor's Office, RA Police, RA Investigative Committee, RA Ministry of Defense. The faculty of Law has close ties with RA Chamber of Advocates, the service for the Compulsory Enforcement of Judicial Acts, private law firms, Moreover, the employees of state bodies and licensed lawyers became the part of the Faculty. One of the mechanisms of accountability to the state is the provision of information to various state bodies, the fulfillment of tax obligations in good faith. During the meetings with students, deans and employers, it turned out that accountability to the community is a new mechanism, especially in the enlarged community of Alaverdi.

The expert panel highly appreciates the contribution of the institution in terms of transferring knowledge (values) to the society. After getting acquainted with the activities of the law clinic, the expert panel finds that the resource is not fully used by the institution. The clinic can become a leading center in the field of legal advice, as well as a structure providing additional financial income, if it cooperates with foreign stakeholders of similar clinics of the Republic of Armenia and other countries. Thus, it can increase the recognition and trust of the university among the public.

The actions of the institution which are aimed at instilling respect for universal values, patriotism, and educating a knowledgeable professional and honest citizen are positive.

Summary:

Considering that the institution has developed an "accountability policy" for internal and external stakeholders, ensures the transparency of its procedures, processes, access to the public, uses feedback mechanisms to ensure the access to educational processes and procedures, provides knowledge (values) to the public, tries to improve their transfer mechanisms, the expert panel finds that the Northern University meets the requirements of Criterion 8.

Conclusion:

The expert panel assesses the correspondence of the Northern University's institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 8 as **satisfactory**.

IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

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

Findings

9.1 The Institution promotes its external relations through sound policies and procedures aimed at creating an environment conducive to experience exchange and enhancement as well as internationalization.

The University's 2016-2020 and 2020-2025 Strategic Plans, Northern University Internationalization Concept and Policy Plan, with its mission, vision, goals, and objectives aim to encourage the institution's internationalization in two important directions: ensuring international quality standards for all university processes-internationalization of internal processes, expansion of the University's external relations and mobility programs. The specific areas of development have been presented in the document and self-evaluation report.

- To ensure the quality of the university's academic programs for the harmonization of educational programs implemented in the European Higher Education Area in accordance with international standards, the provisions of the Bologna Process, the basic requirements for integration into the European Higher Education Area,
- Increase international academic mobility,
- Involve foreign students in the academic programs of the institution,
- Expand cooperation with foreign scientists, as well as with Armenian scientists living in the Diaspora,
- Improve the academic reputation of the university through active organization of international scientific events, participation, publication of articles in prestigious foreign scientific journals,
- Modernize the activities of the foreign relations department according to the goals and priorities of the concept.

The institution covers information on the activities of external relations and internationalization processes both through its official website and Facebook page. The "International Cooperation" section of the official website of the institution contains brief information about the university's international grant programs, mobility programs, participants, and international cooperation. However, the study of other regulatory documents of the institution and site visit showed that the possibility of fulfilling the above-mentioned points and the financial resources to achieve the set goals are limited.

It should be noted that in the near future two representatives of the academic staff and one representative of the administrative staff will participate in the international exchange project. During the reporting period, the volume of English-language materials available on the university's official website increased significantly, however, a number of sections that may be important for the external stakeholders in terms of information are not yet English-language, in particular the sections “Specialties”, “Fees” and “Online Application”.

9.2 The institution’s external relations infrastructure ensures regulated process.

The institution has a Vice-rector for Education, Research and Internalization who is controlling the activities of the Foreign Relations Department. After the previous institutional accreditation, the institution has made a number of changes - introduced the position of Vice-Rector for Education, Research and Internalization. The activities of the Foreign Relations Department are coordinated by the Head of the Department. Among the functions of the department are:

- Organize the negotiation process of signing agreements with foreign educational institutions, scientific centers, agreements,
- Organize events aimed at the development of the university's foreign relations: international round tables, conferences, seminars and discussions;
- Support the process of organizing the staff members’ participation in business trips with the purpose of participating in the conferences within the framework of international scientific-educational programs, as well as exchange programs and other events,
- Provide analysis of foreign relations activities, as well as information on grant programs in the university’s periodical, on the university's website (Facebook page),
- Inform the departments of the university and students about international scientific-academic programs, grants, applications for scientific-academic programs offered by foreign universities,
- Prepare the documents for the university to participate in new international grant programs and coordinate the ongoing work on the implementation of the already won grant programs
- Ensure the exchange of official documents with the scientific centers, universities, which are parties to international scientific-educational agreements, with the guarantee of the heads of the relevant departments of the University.

During the site visit it became clear that only the position of a specialist was occupied in this department. There was a vacancy for the head of the department.

During the site visit, it became clear that distance learning students are not involved in mobility programs.

Coordination of the institution's integration into world scientific-educational processes and programs, formation of international cooperation with foreign scientific-educational institutions, foundations, international organizations in the field of international cooperation are defined as the goals of the Foreign Relations Department of the institution.

The department carries out its activities in accordance with the RA legislation, on the basis of the charter of the institution and the charter of the Foreign Relations department. The functions performed by the Foreign Relations Department are defined by the department's charter. The scope of activities of the Foreign Relations Department includes signing the agreements with foreign education institutions, scientific centers, ensuring the participation of the university in international conferences, round tables, seminars, ensuring the involvement of foreign students and lecturers in the scientific-educational processes of the university, support the printing process the academic staff in internationally reputable scientific journals, etc.

In this context, in the period of 2017-2021, a number of events were implemented by the Foreign Relations Department of the institution in cooperation with and/or the department. The institution has an internationalization concept and policy program, but the External Relations Department as such does not have a developed action plan.

In this context, during the period 2017-2021, a number of events were carried out by the Foreign Relations Department of the institution or with the cooperation the department. The institution has an internationalization concept and policy program, but the Foreign Relations Department as such does not have a developed action plan.

As for other arrangements, at the request of the university, the participants of the mobility programs after their return (both students and academic staff) prepare a report, where they share their experience with their colleagues. This process is evaluated by the QA department.

However, the site visit revealed that the involvement of both the academic staff and students in the international projects is low. According to the university, during the period of 2017-2021, one student went to Poland within the framework of the academic mobility program. The low number of participants in the mobility programs is explained by the fact of epidemic.

During the visit of the expert panel, it became clear that there are no evaluation and selection criteria of the mobility participants by the university committee and this process is not regulated. [6]

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

The institution has agreements with a number of foreign-local organizations. However, the most notable are the cooperation with Varna University of Management in Bulgaria in the scope of Master's degree "Management" (double degree programs) and the Russian State University for Humanities in the scope of Bachelor's Degree Program "Russian and Literature, Teaching elementary education informatics (double degree programs).

The institution has signed agreements and memoranda of understanding with local or international higher education institutions in order to support the publication of articles by the academic staff and assist in the implementation of various international activities. However, so far the agreements have not been of a practical nature and have not led to tangible results.

In 22 of the 27 agreements signed by the institution, the nature of cooperation is not clear. Agreements are more general and do not contain specific rights and obligations. In addition, two of them are still under development. Most of the above-mentioned agreements have already expired.

So, it should be stated that at this stage the institution has three valid and well-defined agreements. Within these agreements only small number of the academic staff and students can participate in the international programs. It became clear from the site visit that the process of finding the partners and signing the agreements with them isn't coordinated and depends on the connections and capabilities of individual entities. The cooperative relations of the institution are quite comprehensive: local-international institutions, public administration bodies, non-governmental organizations, banks, schools, private enterprises, self-government bodies (local-regional), military units.

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

[6] The idea was paraphrased based on the observations of the institution.

The institution promotes the knowledge of a foreign language among its internal stakeholders and in order to improve it, regularly addresses the issues of their English language skills by organizing trainings for different target groups. In particular, in March-April 2019, 9 employees participated in the training program, in October-February 2019-2020, about 10 employees of the university participated in the same program. In 2018 2020, more than 15 employees of the university participated in the English language courses of the "House of Languages" Center for Intensive Methods of Foreign Language Teaching, using the discount system provided by the center for the university staff and students. However, as with previous institutional accreditation, the level of foreign language proficiency of internal stakeholders is very low. During the site visit, it became clear that foreign language communication skills are weak; most importantly, foreign language teaching methods do not provide students with a sufficient level of foreign language proficiency to participate in the mobility program. According to 2020 data, English is spoken by 47% of the administrative staff and 58% of the teachers. As for the level of English language skills of students, it is 60-69%.

Considerations:

The expert panel considers it positive that the university has taken steps to regulate the process of establishing external relations after the previous accreditation, however, their results are not yet visible, as well as the mechanisms to ensure continuity need to be improved.

On the positive side, the institution has a vice-rector, who is directly responsible for internationalization and the appropriate capacity to find experienced and competitive international partners. However, the panel notes that the university is not ready to take on challenges and become an attractive international partner for other universities. This is due to a number of factors. The institution does not have specific documents to ensure effective cooperation with different partners, the monitoring and implementation mechanisms of the planned activities are not properly described. At the same time, the financial resources allocated for these activities are not sufficient and do not contribute to the achievement of the set goals. Students' academic readiness to participate in international exchange programs is low.

The expert panel finds that the number of participants in exchange programs is not enough to develop the process in this direction. It is uncertain what result the mobility will have and what impact it will have on the university.

Awareness and motivation of the academic and administrative staff is low due to lack of knowledge of foreign languages. The problem is also noticeable among students.

The amount of English-language material available on the institution's official website is insufficient to provide an additional incentive to increase the institution's visibility among external stakeholders, to raise awareness of the processes taking place at the university.
Despite the comprehensive nature of the institution's partnership, the expert panel believes that they are not sufficient to provide quality education and achieve the outcomes of the academic programs, in particular, the experts note that the number of organizations is not large enough to effectively organize student internships.

Summary:

Taking into consideration that the institution does not have a clear financial plan for the implementation of internationalization goals, there are few cases of internal and external mobility of students and lecturers, there are no joint international research programs, the level of foreign language skills of lecturers and students is low, based on the cooperation framework, the information in foreign languages on the website is rather scarce, the expert panel concludes that the institution does not meet the requirements of Criterion 9.

Conclusion:

The expert panel assesses the correspondence of the institution's institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 9 as **unsatisfactory**.

X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

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

Findings

10.1 The Institution has internal quality assurance policies and procedures.

The QA manual approved in 2014 is still in force at the university. The first chapter of the manual refers to the Strategic Plan of 2015-2020 and the issues raised by it. Chapter 2 introduces the concept of quality assurance. The mechanism for the implementation of the quality assurance concept is the development and contribution of clear indicators and

tools for the implementation of the priorities of the strategic program of the Northern University, and as priority areas - the professional academic program, the research potential of the university, foreign relations and internationalization. Then, according to those areas, the processes, procedures, quality assessment tools are presented.

According to the reforms in the management system, the improved structure, the Quality Assurance Department is directly supervised by the Rector. According to the self-evaluation, the main document regulating the internal quality assurance system is the charter of the QA department amended in 2019, which defines the goal and tasks of the department. The charter has been revised due to the transformation of the quality assurance department commissions. The charter defines the functions of the teaching-methodological and student committee.

The University also has a regulation to improve and provide quality higher education for the evaluation of lecturers by students which was approved in 2011. According to this regulation, surveys are conducted with questionnaires, which are subject to archiving and storage for at least 5 years.

In terms of the effectiveness of quality assurance processes, the University gives the great importance to the document “Policy for Enhancing the Efficiency of Work at the University and Ensuring Accountability for the stakeholders" introduced in 2021, which has been used on a pilot basis.

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

The Quality Assurance Department operates at the Northern University in accordance with its charter. There are three positions in the department: head of the department, senior specialist, leading specialist, for which there are passports of the positions approved in 2019. The positions of the employees of the department are held by the students of the university. The senior specialist is a bachelor's student, and the position of chief specialist is occupied by the master’s degree student studying law.

The quality assurance functions in Alaverdi branch are performed by the director of the branch. Two employees of the University have an experience in involvement of the institutional accreditation process of universities and colleges by ANQA.

There are two committees at the university: teaching-methodological and student. The teaching-methodological committee is headed by the head of the department or the relevant employee of the department upon his / her proposal. The student committee is

headed by the chief specialist of the department. Some of the functions previously assigned to the now-defunct technical committee have been included in staff passports. The members of the committee work on voluntary basis.

The department has a separate office with appropriate technical and property equipment, which is also appropriate for the consultations and discussions.
Due to the self-evaluation, the financial allocations of the department according to the annual work plan serve for the implementation of incentive programs, increase the motivation of committees, involvement of experts in the processes, activities to improve quality, including workshops, business trips, meetings, staff training and other activities.

Examination of the documents of finance estimate and expenses shows that there are no separate financial allocations for quality assurance processes. At the same time, it turned out from the site visit that they do not have a clear calculation of what financial allocation is required for the academic year for the solution of the problems envisaged by the normal activity and strategic plan. At the same time, there are no work plans and reports of the department.
The surveys have been conducted online. The site visit revealed that sometimes the surveys which are supposed to be conducted twice during the academic year are conducted once in order to ensure a certain involvement of the students.

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

Northern University considers the importance of involvement of faculty, administrative staff and students in the teaching-methodological and student committees as a possible mechanism for involving stakeholders in quality assurance processes. However, the study of the documents and the site visit revealed that the meetings of the committees are few, the scope of the issues under discussion and the scope of stakeholder involvement is quite narrow.

The QA Department conducts surveys among faculty students, thus involving them in quality assurance processes. The Department noted the weak involvement of students in these processes, so “A series of complex measures implemented to raise the awareness of students and spread a quality culture." were implemented in January 2021. After that, the department registered a certain increase in the case of student involvement, which, however, is not enough. At the same time, it should be noted that according to the self-evaluation, the involvement of students in surveys on the quality and effectiveness of

teaching by students increased from 380 participants in the 2018-2019 academic year to 580 participants in the 2019-2020 academic year, which was before the event. The involvement of students in the surveys which aimed at revealing their educational needs has increased from about 100 participants in the 2019-2020 academic year to about 200 participants in the 2020-2021 academic year. It turned out from the site visit that the results of the surveys still don't have an effective impact on the changes in the professional academic programs, the research potential of the university, external relations and internationalization. The issues raised in connection with resource, technical, sanitary and other issues are still relevant.

According to the self-evaluation, the university studied different institutions' experiences of involving the external stakeholders in quality assurance processes in 2019. It is noted that according to the key sample of external stakeholders, cooperation has been developed, implemented in various dimensions: meetings, discussions, surveys, for different purposes, according to the target group, contributing the results to the improvement process. However, the site visit revealed that the involvement of stakeholders in these processes is weak, employers and graduates are not very aware of such processes. At the same time, studies have shown that the effects of these processes are not yet noticeable.

Employers are involved in final attestation committees and can express opinions during internships. However, the influence of these mechanisms on the general processes is not visible yet.

Administrative staff, teachers and students have been involved in the activities of the committee by carrying out the self-evaluation of the university's institutional accreditation. However, during the site visit, it turned out that the involvement of teachers and students was weak. Employers and graduates are not involved in the committee.

10.4 The internal quality assurance system is periodically reviewed.

In the QA manual approved in 2014, 3 stages are separated for the establishment of the quality assurance system: transition period, quality culture formation period, complete quality management. Moreover, it is mentioned that during that period the university already entered the stage of quality culture formation (2014).

Self-evaluation does not refer to the current stage of the quality assurance system. It turned out from the site visit that this issue is not clearly specified for the university. Although the self-evaluation refers to the implementation of comparative analysis with the quality assurance systems of different universities, but the site visit and the study of

the documents revealed that there are no mechanisms, analyses and conclusions for the comparative analysis of the quality assurance system. There are no policies or mechanisms for monitoring the internal quality assurance system.

In 2021, the Northern University, in partnership with the French University in Armenia Foundation (UFAR), the National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia (NUACA) and the Eurasia International University (EIU), participated "Quality Capacity Development of Armenian Universities" program presented to UNESCO by ANQA, which aimed to support the quality assurance system of universities. The site visit revealed that the university highlights the involvement of such events.

It became clear from the site visit that the QA Department emphasizes the involvement of different departments in quality assurance processes and takes various measures for that. However, the study of the documents and the site visit shows that the role of different circles in the quality assurance system of the university is not clearly expressed, the processes are of a certain situational nature. In particular, the reports of the subdivisions are evaluated by the QA department.

The university already has three times experience of institutional accreditation. It is noticeable that it has a great influence on the processes of the university, before that a lot of documents have been developed, certain data have been collected, analyzes have been carried out. However, these analyzes are not comprehensive enough and do not allow to draw clear conclusions. Examination of the documents and site visit revealed that the processes are mainly in the planning-implementation stages.

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

The documentation of the internal quality assurance system has been developed since 2014 and corresponds to the terminology used in the manuals published by the "National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation".

This is the third attempt by the university to conduct a self-evaluation of the criteria according to the institutional accreditation criteria. During the site visit, it became clear that the self-analysis group included both members who performed self-analysis and those without such experience. However, there was no general approach to improving the self-evaluation process based on previous experience and process evaluation.

In the self-evaluation there is an incomplete presentation of the data according to the criteria. There is also the very different nature of the work according to the criteria, the

overall teamwork is weak. At the same time, weak stakeholder involvement, weak analytical approach, interconnectedness and validity of SWOT analysis are noticeable.

The reports of the Rector and the subdivisions do not contain sufficient data for conducting self-evaluation, so when conducting self-evaluation they collect relevant data by years, but they were not complete according to the criteria for conducting a comprehensive analysis.

10.6 The internal quality assurance system ensures the transparency of the processes unfolding in the Institution through providing information on the quality of the processes to the internal and external stakeholders.

According to the self-evaluation, in order to increase the transparency of the university's activities, the charter, concepts, procedures, some reports and survey analyzes are published on the official website of the Institute. However, the reports are poorly informative and descriptive. At the same time, the relevant Facebook page has been operating since 2019, through which there are publications on various processes.

It became clear from the site visit that the stakeholders are mainly not aware of the analysis of the surveys. The teachers are aware of the results of the surveys of the evaluation of their activities done by the students, which are provided to the chairs.

From the result of the survey and the observation of the statistics the institution found that social platforms are more applicable, so it also plans to create relevant pages on other social platforms.

Considerations:

The expert panel considers it positive that a quality assurance manual has been introduced at the university since 2014, in which a rather comprehensive reference is made to various processes; its full application could develop the quality assurance and management processes in the adopted priority areas. However, the study of the documents and the site visit showed that most of these tools were not invested and purposefully used, while the full investment would contribute to the full development of these processes. The expert panel maintains the coherence of the documents and processes, while they are broken, this can hinder both the implementation of well-planned targeted processes and the efficient use of resources, as well as the evaluation of the effectiveness of the documents.

It is obvious for the expert panel that the university emphasizes the role of the QA department in the quality assurance processes of the university and in the issue of spreading the quality culture, tries to take steps to ensure the independence of the department. From this point of view, the steps taken by the university to regulate the accountability process of the subdivisions, as well as the introduction of the charter of the subdivision and the introduction of the employment passports for the employees are important.

However, the expert panel considers that there is a need to clarify the role of the QA department in the quality assurance system of the university, at the same time to ensure clear planning of its activities (based on the functions of the university's departments) and accountability (also in the collegial body). This will contribute to the regulation of the department's processes, according to the expansion of its functions and increase of efficiency. It will in its turn contribute to plan the necessary human, financial and material resources, assess the needs, including the requirements for the competencies of the department staff.

The expert panel also considers positive the functional distribution of the teaching-methodological and student committees and their activities and highlights the regulated activity of the committees and states that the latter will contribute to the increase of the efficiency of the quality assurance processes.

The expert panel notes that the survey mechanisms have been reviewed and that online survey tools are being used. At the same time, they believe that there is a need to diversify research methods, using data collection, comparison, analysis, as well as other focus group methods. This will contribute to the implementation of comprehensive, reasonable research and analysis.

The expert panel considers it positive that the university emphasizes the involvement of internal and external stakeholders in quality assurance processes, and therefore evaluates the university's steps aimed at expanding their involvement and diversifying mechanisms.

At the same time, the university follows the enrollment rates and seeks to increase them. However, the expert panel states that the university has not yet been able to ensure a fairly large number of involvement of internal and external stakeholders, in particular, the involvement of external stakeholders (graduates, employers) is weaker.

At the same time, the expert panel focuses on the qualitative side of the involvement, to which the QA department does not pay much attention. The outlined issues are not of systemic, educational or strategic significance, they are mostly of technical

nature. The Northern University has not been able to fully implement and apply the outlined quality management mechanisms according to its priority areas.

The expert panel considers positive the experience of the university in the introduction of the quality assurance system, in the implementation of its initial cycle. The experience of participation in the institutional accreditation processes of the university is appreciated, besides, the certain impact of those processes on the quality assurance system and different processes is noticeable.

However, the university has not been able to apply all this more effectively which is aimed at the development of the quality assurance system, the transition to the next stage is slowing down. From this point of view, the process of evaluating the effectiveness of the quality assurance system will be possible, which will ensure the simultaneous development of that system, clarification of the roles of different circles in the internal quality assurance system, as well as clear application of management mechanisms and development and implementation of such mechanisms.

For the improvement of the quality assurance system, as well as for the simultaneous development of the various processes of the university, it is possible to implement the basic principle of quality management in a complete cycle, while its full application would contribute to the effective development of the processes.

The expert group considers the presence of expert staff at the university positive, but also finds that there is a necessity to assess the needs of the staff of the QA department and take steps for meeting them.

It is important that the terminology of the internal quality assurance system corresponds to the general terminology required by ANQA and that the university has three institutional accreditation practices. However, the latter has not yet led to the improvement of current data collection mechanisms and the analysis of reports. Meanwhile, the expert panel considers that the improvement of the data and analytical component in the current reports, as well as the completeness of the data underlying the self-evaluation will contribute to the effectiveness of the self-evaluation and ensure external evaluation processes. The conducted self-evaluation has not yet provided sufficient grounds for forming an objective picture of the institution's strong and weak sides and its activities.

The expert panel welcomes the fact that the university has been able to publish the analysis and reports of some of the surveys on the official website, but it is crucial that this process will be of a procedural nature. It is positive that the university evaluates which platforms are more preferable for its stakeholders. However, the reports do not yet provide

sufficient information to stakeholders on the quality of procedures and processes, and survey analyzes do not clearly outline them. At the same time, this information is not available on platforms preferred by stakeholders. This information is also not available in English, while the university claims to attract international students.

Summary:

Considering that the Northern University has a quality assurance policy and some procedures, implements quality assurance processes, allocates certain resources for their management, takes steps to ensure stakeholder involvement in quality assurance processes, the impact of institutional accreditation processes on quality assurance system transformation, some steps to ensure transparency of the institution's activities, the expert finds that Northern University meets the requirements of Criterion 10. At the same time, the expert panel notes that the university needs to pay more attention to the problems in the internal quality assurance system.

Conclusion:

The expert panel assesses the correspondence of the Northern University's institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 10 **satisfactory.**

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERION	*CONCLUSION*
I. MISSION AND PURPOSE	Satisfactory
II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION	Unsatisfactory
III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES	Satisfactory
IV. STUDENTS	Satisfactory
V. FACULTY AND STAFF	Satisfactory
VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT	Unsatisfactory
VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES	Unsatisfactory
VIII. SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY	Satisfactory
IX.EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION	Unsatisfactory
X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE	Satisfactory

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Armenuhi Sargsyan
Chair of Panel

11 July, 2022

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1.CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

Armenuhi Sargsyan graduated from Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute with a mejor in "Mathematics". In 2011 she was awarded the degree of Candidate of Physical and Mathematical Sciences. In 2007-2011 she was a lecturer in the chair of "Mathematical Analysis and Differential Equations" in Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute, from 2011 to 2014 she was a Assistant Professor of the same Chair, she was a Associate Professor of the Chair of "Higher Mathematics-Mathematics Teaching Methods" from 2014 to 2017. Armenuhi Sargsyan has been working as a Associate Professor in the Chair of "Mathematics, Physics and IT" since 2017. She was the head of Postgraduate and Life-long Learning Center of Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute from 2012 to 2016. She was the head of Quality Assurance and Management Center within 2017-2018 period, and since 2018 she has been working as a head of "Scientific Policy, Quality Assurance and Management" Center. She has been a senior researcher, lead researcher or supervisor in a number of scientific projects. In 2017 and 2019, she delivered a lecture at the University of Kiel, England, within the framework of the Erasmus + Mobility Program. Since 2018, she has been the Deputy Chairman of the Editorial Board of the Scientific Bulletin of the Shirak State University, before that (since its establishment) she has been the Executive Secretary. She is the author of 1 teaching method manual and about 70 scientific articles.

Gaga Gvenetadze graduated from Tbilisi State University in 2015 with a bachelor's degree in Psychology and Educational Sciences. He studied for a master's degree at Ilia State University, with a major in "Higher Education Administration" within 2015-2020 period, and with a major of Global Governance, Inter-cultural Relations" in University of Siena, Italy within 2017-2018 period. He is a PhD Researcher in Tbilisi State University since 2021. He has been working Georgian National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Center since 2019, and now he is a member of the Authorization Council of Higher Education Institutions in that center. He is the head of Quality Assurance Department in British University of Georgia as well as an invited lecturer of the same university. He is an international expert in the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency.

Hovhannes Yeritsyan graduated from French University in Armenia in 2008 and studied for the Bachelo's Degree in University of Jean-Moulin Lyon 3. In 2010 he graduated from the same universities with a Master's degree in Marketing. He was awarded the degree of Candidate of Economics in 2016. Since 2014 he has been a lecturer at the Chair of Management at the European University of Armenia and since 2019 he has been as an Associate Professor of the same chair. He taught in the chairs of "Management" and "Marketing" at the French University in Armenia within 2017-2019 period.

Since 2011 he has been working in a number of international organizations. Within 2006, July-2020, May period he worked as a brand manager in the “Marketing” Department of Pernod Ricard Armenia. 2020թ.
From August, 2020 to April 2021, he was the Head of the Chair of "Tourism and Service" at the European University of Armenia and the Scientific Secretary of the University. He has been the Executive Director of the International Business School since May, 2006. He has participated in a number of local and international conferences, has made reports. He is the author of 1 teaching manual and more than 20 scientific articles.

Geghetsik Grigoryan graduated from the faculty of Law of Yerevan State University in 1979. She is a Candidate of law, Associate Professor. She has been participated in numerous trainings in programs on human rights, gender issues, improving the quality of education (Hungary, Russia, Kazakhstan, USA- Berkeley and Hastings University) since 1998. On the above-mentioned issues she has been a program coordinator of a number of structures, lawyer-expert, analyst in RA NA, Institute of National Studies, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, Association of Women with University Education, etc., and international organizations such as /UNDP, OSCE, ILO, UNHCR, UNIFEM, UNICEF. She has been participated in republican and international seminars and conferences. She is the author and co-author of about 70 textbooks, teaching manuals, methodological works, scientific articles. She worked at YSU Faculty of Law, at the Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Law of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, at the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia and now she is working in the Department of Social Sciences of the Armenian State University of Economics. She has been a member, lawyer of the RA Chamber of Advocates since 2006.

Shushan Daveyan is a second year student of the department of Public Administration of Yerevan State University. In 2021 she participated in the training of student experts of ANQA "Student Voice" project.

APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF THE SITE VISIT

11.04.2022 - 14.04.2022

	11.04.2022	***Start***	***Finish***	***Duration***
1	Meeting the Rector of the University	09:30	10:20	50 minutes
2	Meeting Vice-Rectors	10:35	11:35	60 minutes
3	Meeting the self-evaluation working-group	11:45	12:30	45 minutes
4	Meeting with alumni	12:40	13:40	60 minutes
5	Break, discussions of the expert panel	13:50	14:50	60 minutes
6	Meeting with the deans and the director of Alaverdi Branch	15:00	15:50	50 minutes
7	Meeting with the employers	16:10	17:10	60 minutes
8	Document review, Closed panel meeting	17:20	18:20	60 minutes

	12.04.2022	***Start***	***Finish***	***Duration***
1	Meeting with the members of the Meeting of Participants	09:30	10:10	40 minutes

2	Meeting with the heads of chairs and responsible of the academic programs	10:20	11:30	60 minutes
3	Observation of resources and infrastructure of the University	11:50	12:50	70 minutes
4	Break, discussions of the expert panel	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
5	Meeting with the teaching staff members (8-10 representatives)	14:10	15:10	60 minutes
6	Meeting with students (8-10 representatives)	15:20	16:20	60 minutes
7	Meeting with the Heads of structural units (Education Department, Department of External Relations, Center for Scientific Research and Innovative Programs, Civil Defense Headquarters, Law Clinic, HR, Secretary, Library, Department of Distance Learning and Technological Management, Practical Center for Public Relations and Information, Medical Unit).	16:30	17:50	80 minutes
8	Observation of documents, close meeting of the panel	17:50	19:00	70 minutes

	13.04.2022			***Start***	***Finish***	***Duration***
1	Meeting with the responsible of the “Management” academic program	Meeting with the responsible of the “Jurisprudence” academic program	Meeting with the responsible of "Software Engineering” academic	09:30	10:30	60 minutes
2	Meeting with the lecturers of the “Management” academic program	Meeting with the lecturers of the “Jurisprudence” academic program	Meeting with the lecturers of the “Software Engineering” academic program	10:45	11:45	60 minutes
3	Meeting with the students of the “Management” academic program	Meeting with the students of the “Jurisprudence” academic program	Meeting with the students of the “Software Engineering” academic program	12:00	13:00	60 minutes
4	Break, discussions of the expert panel			13:10	14:10	60 minutes
5	Meeting with the representatives of Students’ Council and Students’ Scientific Union			14:20	15:10	50 minutes

6	Open meetings	15:20	16:20	60 minutes
7	Observation of documents, close meeting of the panel	16:30	18:30	120 minutes

	14.04.2022	***Start***	***Finish***	***Duration***
1	Meeting with the staff of QA Department	09:30	10:30	60 minutes
2	Document review, panel meeting	11:00	13:00	120 minutes
3	Break, panel discusiones	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
4	Meeting with the members selected by the expert panel	14:10	16:10	120 minutes
5	Close meeting of the panel	16:20	17:20	60 minutes
6	Meeting with the University management	17:30	18:00	30 minutes

APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

	Name of the Documents	Criterion
1	Analysis of Strategic Program Implementation (2016-2020)	1
2	Documents proving written-oral surveys among external stakeholders	1
3	Academic Council	1
4	Indicators of qualitative and quantitative measurement and evaluation of the results of the implementation of strategic goals within 2016-2020 period	1
5	Decisions of the Academic Council, protocols related to the monitoring, review and evaluation of the mission, goals and objectives	1
6	Policy to increase the efficiency of the work carried out at the university and stakeholder accountability policy	1
7	Indicators of qualitative and quantitative measurement and evaluation of the results of the implementation of strategic goals within 2016-2020 period	1
8	Short-term, medium-term, long-term plans and reports of departments and chairs	2
9	Protocols of the session of Chairs / for the last three years	2
10	Protocols of the sessions of the Academic Council	2
11	Position Passports	2
12	Protocols of the student and educational-methodological sessions	2

13	Protocols of the Academic Council, where lecturers and students made suggestions and decisions were made based on them	2
14	Staff of the council of faculties	2
15	Grounds for changing curricula	2
16	RA Curriculum Development and Review Manual	2
17	Personnel flow indication	2
18	Example of an upgraded Academic Programs	2
19	Observations on possible omissions revealed as a result of surveys and suggestions on their elimination	2
20	Annual financial plans, budget	2
21	Journals, Internship journals/ one from each course courses	3
22	Graduation works / two for each academic program for the last three years	3
23	Books for class observation / one from each chairs	3
24	Completed internship diaries / 4 selected for 3 academic programs	3
25	Student Council list	3

26	Description of the qualifications and expected learning outcomes of the academic programs	3
27	In the reporting period of revising the academic programs, the issues and suggestions revealed by the expert committee with the participation of the heads of the chairs, the representatives of the academic staff of the university,	3
28	The Academic programs in English, curricula, subject programs	3
29	The Academic Programs of Master's degree	3
30	Protocols of the examples of the class observations	3
31	Internship programs and the list of the venues for the Internship	3
32	Analyzes of effectiveness of the evaluation system	3
33	Procedures related to knowledge assessment and appeal processes	3
34	Examples of the final exam questionnaire	3
35	Analyzes carried out for the implementation of double-diploma Academic Programs with foreign universities	3
36	Academic Programs monitoring and review packages	3
37	Procedure for regular review and monitoring of vocational education programs	3

38	Admission results of the last 3 years	4
39	Academic Assistance Schedules for providing support to the students	4
40	Examples of Student Satisfaction Assessment on the additional classes and counseling by the Quality Assurance Department	4
41	Schedule of meetings for professional counseling of students, indicators of participation	4
42	Regulation "Organization of free education for students, reduction of tuition fees, appointment of other nominal and other scholarships"	4
43	A program of activities of the SC and SSS aimed at improving activities and activating students	4
44	Budget for incentives/ List of employees who have been encouraged in the last 4 years for reasons of encouragement	5
45	Protocols of Academic Council	5
46	Passports developed for each category of the academic staff	5
47	Class observation schedule, protocols	5
48	Basics of incentives	5
49	Practical English course materials, schedule, grounds for participation, prepared by the Foreign Relations Department in 2019	5
50	Training package	5

51	The basis of previous rates Degree and/ or list of lecturers with the title of the last 4 academic years	5
52	A system of differentiated surcharges for the academic staff developed by the institution	5
53	Data on participation in international conferences	6
54	Research and scientific-methodological work plan	6
55	Northern University Researcher Annual Rating Scale, The budget allocated for research activities in the last 5 years, also in percent	6
56	The budget allocated for research activities in the last 5 years, also in percent	6
57	Plagiarism data for articles, graduation works, master theses	6
58	The winning projects, staffs, budget of the "Best Research Project" inter institutional grant competition announced by the University within the framework of the 2020 budget	6
59	A list of events dedicated to current issues of socio-economic development of Armenia, urgent problems of higher education, other issues of concern to students	6
60	On the initiative of the students, the foundations of the events dedicated to the current problems of the socio-economic development of Armenia, the urgent problems of higher education, and other issues of concern to the students are being held.	6

61	List of material and moral incentives and various awards of the annual "Best Chair", "Best Lecturer", "Best Researcher", "Best Postgraduate" competitions held at the University	6
62	Digest of published materials	6
63	Reports of online inter-institutional student conference held in February, 2021	6
64	Estimates and Financial statements for the last 4 years	7
65	Claims submitted by the chairs	7
66	Annual Reports on the use of financial resources and effectiveness	7
67	Documents confirming the connection with state bodies	8
68	Basics of Web Design and Upgrading	8
69	Grounds for the reception of citizens, solving issues raised by them	8
70	Analysis of accountability mechanisms and tools for internal and external stakeholders	8
71	Analysis of the satisfaction of university beneficiaries with the means of obtaining information	8
72	Message statistics	8
73	Consultation schedule, application rates	8

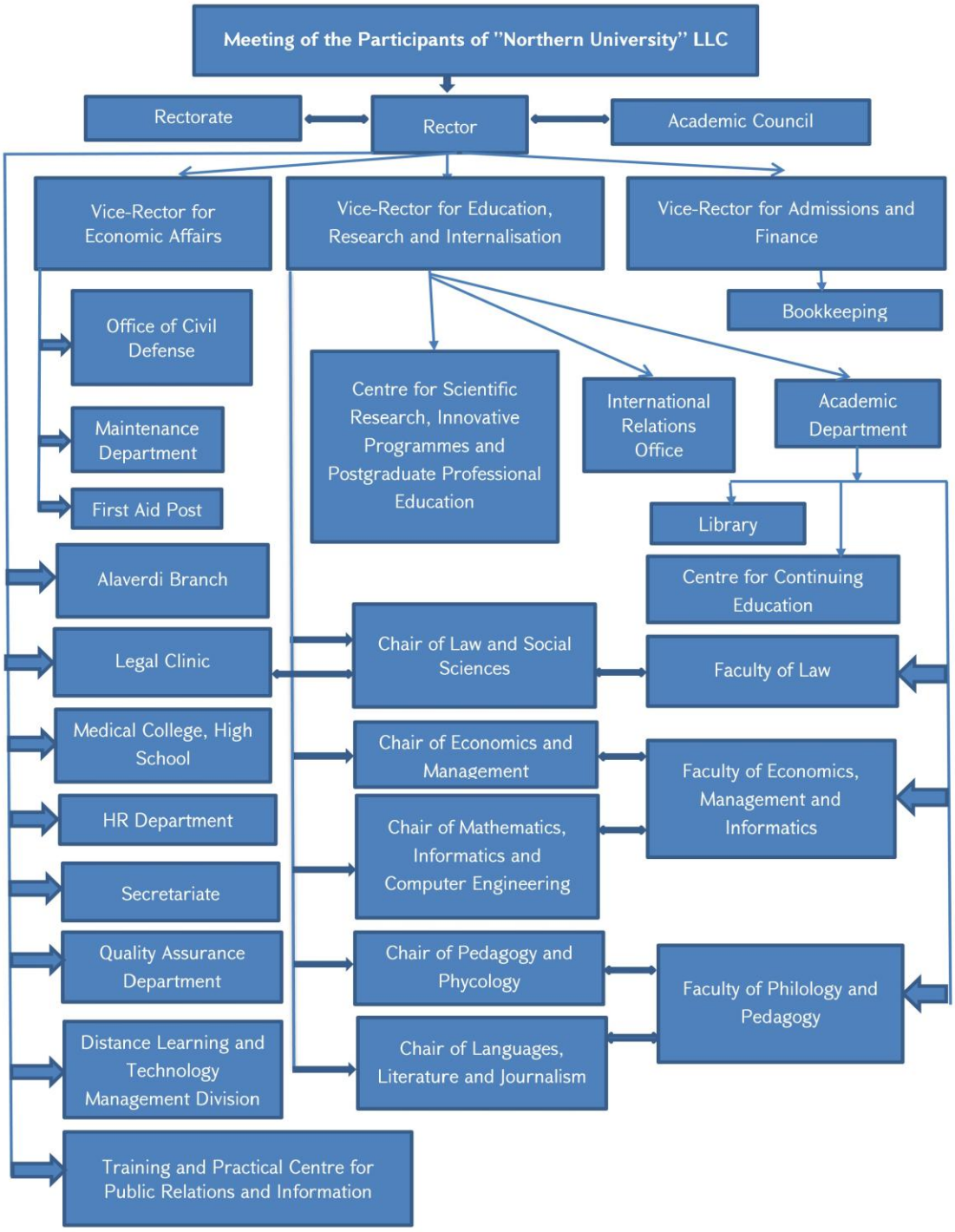
74	Data for applying the Cycle of Planning, Implementation, Evaluation, Improvement adopted by the accountability policy	8
75	List of events, participation for the last 4 years	8
76	Evaluation and analysis of the internationalization and external relations of the Strategic Plan within 2016-2020 period	9
77	Schedule, topics of distance lectures by professors of prestigious internationally recognized universities within the framework of the international cooperation	9
78	Evaluation and analysis of exchange programs by the QA Department	9
79	List and schedule of foreign language courses for staff	9
80	Data for evaluating the effectiveness of the work done in accordance with the Cycle of Planning, Implementation, Evaluation, Improvement	10
81	Protocols of the committees of the last 3 years	10
82	QA department reports	10
83	Data for events to raise the awareness of students and promote quality culture	10
84	Evaluation of the effectiveness of the series of events "Challenges of Time for the Teacher" in the Cycle of Planning, Implementation, Evaluation, Improvement	10

APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED[7]

1. Classrooms
2. Computer classrooms
3. Laboratories
4. Linguistic rooms
5. Law clinic
6. Subdivisions
7. Library
8. Archive
9. Hall
10. Medical center

[7] The resources of the main building of the Northern University were observed during the site visit, and the resources of the Alaverdi department were viewed through videos provided by the institution.

APPENDIX 5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION



APPENDIX 6. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KPI- Key Performance Indicator
AP-Academic Program
HEI-Higher Education Institution
QA- Quality Assurance
ANQA-National Center For Professional Education Quality Assurance
NQF- National Qualifications Framework
AS-Academic Staff
SP-Strategic Plan
SSS-Student Scientific Society
SC-Student Council
TSS-Teaching Support Staff