ANQA Internal Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures

YEREVAN, 2021

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1. IQA POLICY STATEMENT

National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance, Foundation (hereinafter ANQA) Internal Quality Assurance Policy Statement

> *ANQA strives to become an effectively and efficiently managed organization to enable delivery of external quality assurance services to the tertiary level institutions in Armenia that are at the highest level of professionalism and soundness, are objective and credible and allow for gradual improvement and enhancement of the system.*
>
> *Guided by its principle of transparency, ANQA endeavors to make its internal quality assurance processes visible to the Armenian society and those at international level to ensure accountability.*

2. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

ANQA, was established in November 2008 and started its functioning in March 2009 after the official election of the Director by the ANQA Board of Trustees. An intensive process of external quality assurance development drawing on ESGs, and its installation has marked since 2012.

Since its establishment ANQA has been working intensively on adopting a model of its internal quality assurance that would drive its effective management. Many strategies have been adopted, put into practice to promote its effective and efficient functioning. Thus, starting 2011 a bottom-up approach to ANQA internal quality assurance has been opted for enabling establishment of a system that works and yields positive outcomes. The IQA policy ahs been revised in 2016 and in 2021 considering the strategic directions and developments of the agency.

AQNA IQA is responsible for providing the executive management with information about the adequacy and effectiveness of the quality of ANQA's operations when compared with established standards. It also provides mechanisms and tools for problem solving and effective decision-making as well as communicates opportunities for improvement, when identified, to the appropriate level of management.

ANQA's internal quality assurance system is aimed at:
- providing appropriate policy and procedures regarding the ANQA internal quality assurance process, and having these processes be visible and accountable to the Armenian society and those on the international level.
- allowing frequent evaluation of the results and structured plan for improvement (by following the PDCA cycle)
- making the results of the evaluation of ANQA's internal and external activities visible and transparent and have a process of evaluation to determine whether these results meet the organization's goals and contribute to the overall quality of the organization.
- developing improvement measures and proposals based on the results of the evaluation.
- ensuring involvement of all stakeholders by means of an open dialogue with these stakeholders,
- preparing ANQA processes and results for the external evaluation.

3. BASIS

ANQA internal quality assurance policy stated in this document is based on the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education* (ESGs), Parts 2 and 3 and is congruent with the external quality assurance framework adopted by the RA Government on 30th June, 2011.

The ANQA IQA system is guided by ANQA's 2021-2025 strategic plan as well as internal rules and regulations of the foundation. ANQA IQA maintains a correlation between the strategic plan and the main and supplementary activities of the organization. This will allow the ANQA to detect whether or not the work is done in conformity with its mission.

4. SCOPE AND PROCEDURES

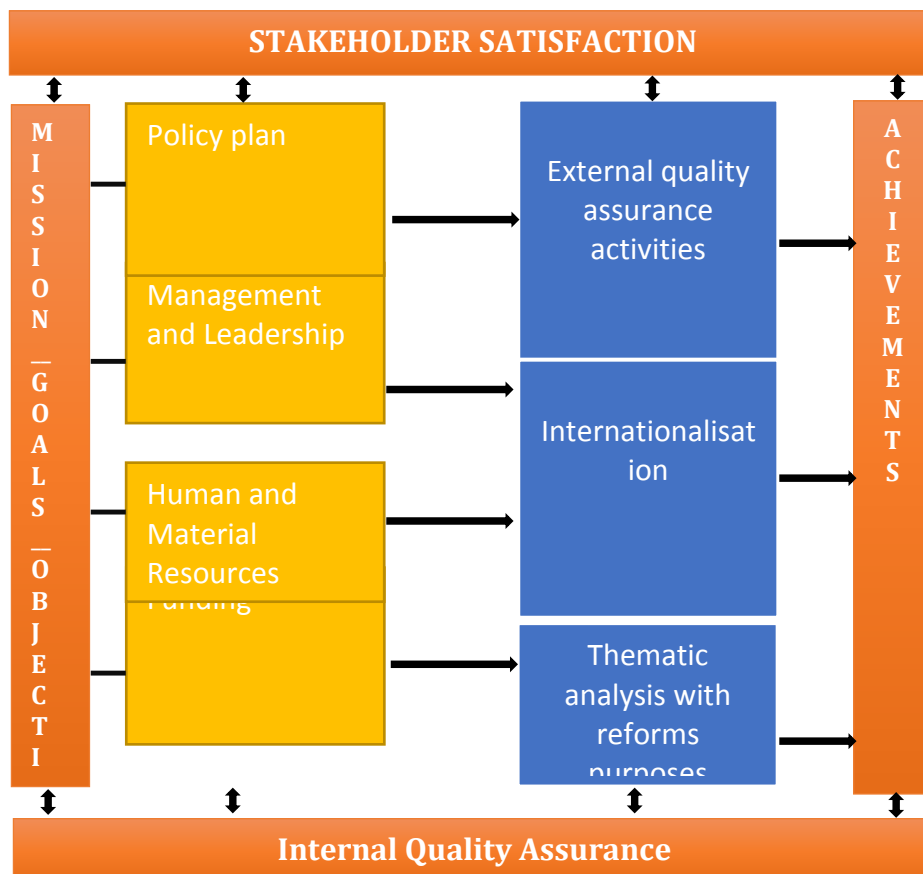4.1 ANQA internal quality assurance is its major accountability tool.

4.2 The primary responsibility for all the processes lies with the Director of ANQA.

4.3 ANQA adopts a process-inpute-output-outcome-based approach to its quality management and quality assurance.

4.4 The scope of work of AQNA IQA is to determine whether ANQA's management and control processes are adequate and are functioning in a manner to ensure that

- risks are appropriately identified and managed;
- significant financial, managerial, and operating information is accurate, reliable, and timely;
- employees' actions are in compliance with policies, standards, procedures, job descriptions and applicable laws and regulations;
- resources are acquired economically, used efficiently, and adequately protected and accounted for;
- programs, plans, goals and objectives are achieved.

4.5 ANQA quality model is described bellow

Quality is defined as achieving the formulated mission and goals, if these reflect the requirements of the stakeholders (Column 1). The second column shows how the agency is planning to achieve the goals:

- translation of the goals into a policy document and policy strategy (ANQA has a clear policy and strategic plan formulated in line with its mission statement);

- the management structure and management style of the agency (ANQA has a clear management structure in which the decision-making process, competencies and responsibilities have been clearly fixed);

- human resource management: input of staff to achieve the goals (ANQA has high-quality staff members by clearly defining their responsibilities and by evaluating their performance on a regular basis and necessary facilities and working environment to operate productively);

- facilities (the university has adequate funding to achieve its goals and aims);

The third column shows the core activities of the agency:

- External quality assurance activities;
- Internationalization and recognition of the outcomes;
- Thematic analysis with reforms

All these activities are analyzed with more specific models based on 9 quality areas.

1. Leadership, Management, Strategy and Human Resources
2. Institutional and Programme Accreditations
3. Monitoring of TLIs
4. Legal affairs
5. Secretariat and Accreditation Committee
6. International affairs
7. Internal quality assurance
8. Communication and PR
9. ICT and Resources

1. To manage the processes, a protocol elaborating on the targets, indicators, activity plans and quality assurance tools is to be operationalized.
2. Each protocol is developed for operations for the period of the current strategic planning and is a subject to cyclical review.
3. For each process, data are collected on annual basis and the coordinator for each process takes care of the in-depth analysis of the data to feed into the annual report.
4. Each Protocol responsible draws up an annual quality report concerning its own process, drafts preliminary conclusions on the effectiveness of the given process as well as sets the area for further improvement.
5. Each responsible collects data on its performance systematically and makes amendments afterwards.
6. The evaluation of the content and organization of the internal quality assurance proceeds through periodic staff meetings.
7. The outcomes and outputs of all the quality assurance processes feed into the annual report prepared by ANQA and submitted to the ANQA Board of Trustees.

All these activities have to be analyzed with more specific models for the core activities.
The last column relates to the achievements:

- What has ANQA achieved?
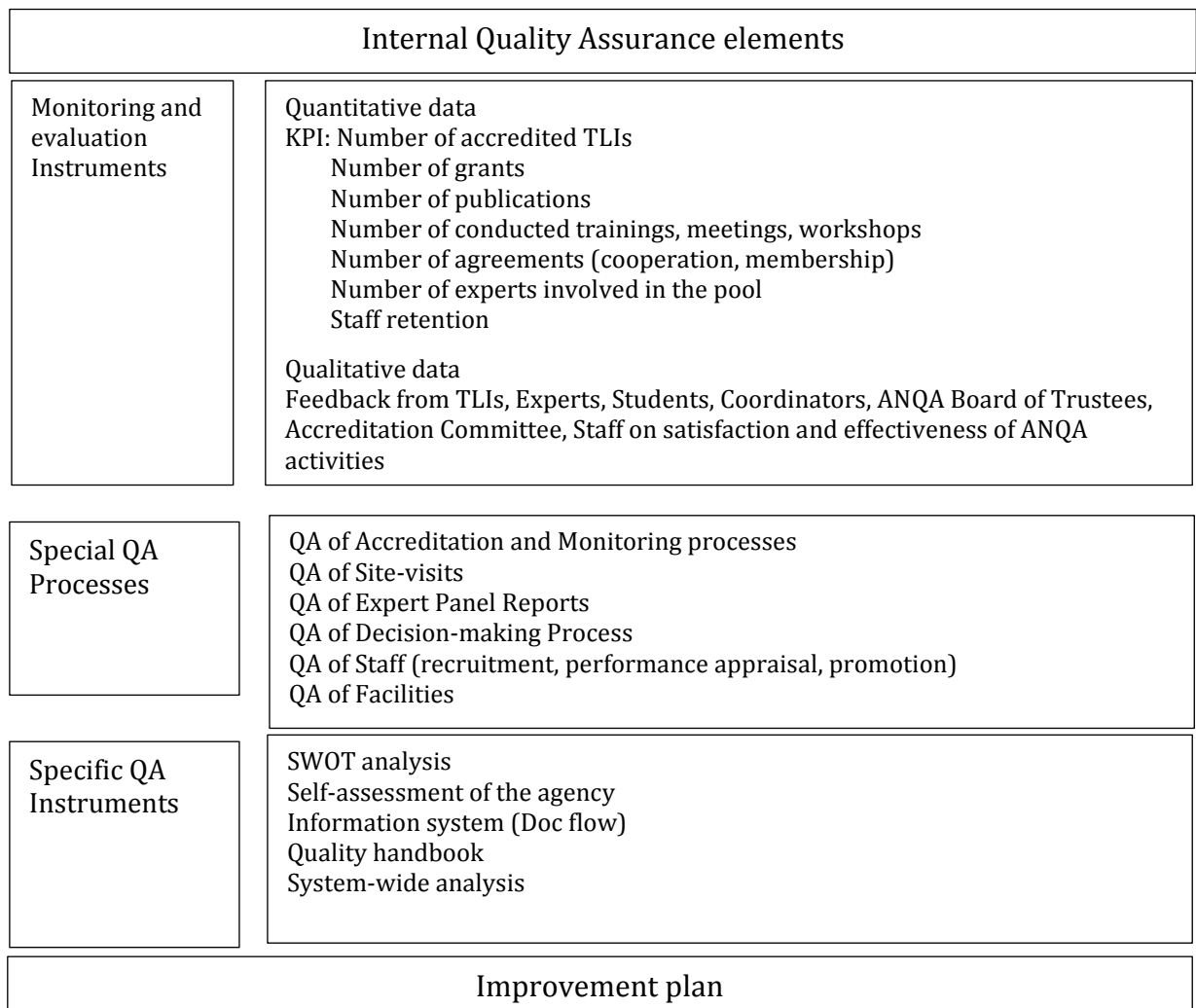- Are the achievements in line with the formulated mission and goals?

- Does ANQA have means and opportunities to check the achievements are in line with the expected outcomes?

The top-cell of the model considers stakeholders satisfaction and is related to all columns. ANQA has structured methods for obtaining feedback from the stakeholders.

The bottom-cell considers how the agency assure the quality of the various aspects (PCDA approach for all aspects).

In the model below the elements of the Internal Quality Assurance System are described:
- The monitoring and evaluation instruments;
- The QA-processes for specific activities
- Specific QA-instruments.

Internal Quality Assurance elements

Monitoring and evaluation Instruments	Quantitative data
	KPI: Number of accredited TLIs
	    Number of grants
	    Number of publications
	    Number of conducted trainings, meetings, workshops
	    Number of agreements (cooperation, membership)
	    Number of experts involved in the pool
	    Staff retention
	
	Qualitative data
	Feedback from TLIs, Experts, Students, Coordinators, ANQA Board of Trustees, Accreditation Committee, Staff on satisfaction and effectiveness of ANQA activities

Special QA Processes	QA of Accreditation and Monitoring processes QA of Site-visits QA of Expert Panel Reports QA of Decision-making Process QA of Staff (recruitment, performance appraisal, promotion) QA of Facilities
Specific QA Instruments	SWOT analysis Self-assessment of the agency Information system (Doc flow) Quality handbook System-wide analysis

Improvement plan

Guiding Principles

ANQA internal quality assurance policy and procedures adhere to the following principles:
- **Accountability:** IQA evaluates the organization and its ongoing activities, facilitates the evaluation of results and clearly plans the follow-up and improvement process (according to the PDCA cycle),
- **Openness and Transparency:** IQA ensures transparency through the application of different tools,
- **Compliance with international standards:** IQA provides the basis for the external evaluation efficiency by the adoption of international standards in the development of the internal quality assurance system,

- **Collaboration and coordination:** stimulates involvement of all staff members, as well as guarantees the involvement of all stakeholders.

5. MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT

ANQA internal quality assurance is recognized as being the responsibility of ANQA employees and the contractors.

- The ANQA considers this policy as one of the tools that drives implementation of ANQA strategic plans and oversees implementation of this policy.
- The ANQA Director is ultimately responsible for the application of this policy and procedures. The ANQA Director will initiate internal quality assurance activities on yearly basis, with independent input, as appropriate.
- The ANQA Director approves the Annual Quality Assurance Plan, monitors its implementation and signs-off the completion of planned QA steps.
- The responsible for the IQA coordinates all the quality assurance processes and is responsible for drafting the annual report.
- The coordinators of quality assurance working groups are responsible for preparing QA protocols on yearly/biannual basis or for the period of current strategic plan and ensuring that all the activities outlined in the protocol are accomplished.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

The current IQA policy is implemented through Quality Assurance procedures that are fully integrated into the ANQA annual operational planning and implementation. These procedures are elaborated upon in the ANQA Quality Assurance Protocols for each process.

These operational procedures are supported by publications, guidelines, review procedures, and other operational standards and guidelines as required.

7. EXTERNAL REVIEWS OF ANQA

Each five years ANQA undergoes external evaluation by international experts for recognition at international level.