"NATIONAL CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE"
FOUNDATION

EXPERT PANEL REPORT
ON INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
"GORIS STATE UNIVERSITY" STATE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

Yerevan 2017

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of "Goris State University" state non-profit organization (hereinafter GSU) is carried out based on the initiative and application presented by the University. The process of the institutional accreditation is organized and coordinated by the "National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance" Foundation (ANQA).

ANQA is guided by the Regulation on "State Accreditation of RA Education Institutions and their Academic Programs" set by the RA Government Decree N 978 (30 June 2011) as well as by the Decree N 959-Ն on "Approval of RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation" (30 June 2011).

The expertise has been carried out by the independent expert panel formed in accordance with the demands set by the ANQA Regulation on "Formation of the Expert Panel". The expert panel consisted of 4 local experts and 1 international expert.

The institutional accreditation is aimed not only at the external evaluation of quality assurance but also the continuous improvement of quality of the University's governance and academic programs. Hence, two issues were put forward to the European and local experts:

1) to carry out an expertise of institutional capacities in accordance with the RA standards for State Accreditation;
2) to carry out an evaluation from the perspective of the University's ambitions to integrate into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

This report reflects on the expertise of GSU's institutional capacities in accordance with the RA state accreditation criteria and standards and the peer-review from the perspective of the University's ambitions to integrate into EHEA.

Contents

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO ACREDITATION CRITERIA

The expertise of GSU's institutional capacities is carried out by the independent expert panel[1] which was compiled according to the demands set by the ANQA Regulation on "Formation of the Expert Panel". The evaluation was carried out according to the 10 criteria for state accreditation, approved by the RA Government Decree N 959–Ն (30 June 2011).

While carrying out the expertise the expert panel took into consideration that Goris State University is among leading higher education institutions in Syunik region of the Republic of Armenia (RA) which aims to prepare specialists with BA and MA degrees in the spheres of education, economy, industry and information technologies for the region who are highly professional, competitive and responsive to current challenges, as well as to create student-centered environment which promotes flexible professional academic programs (PAPs), academic courses and relatively modern teaching and learning methods in line with educational and technological needs of the society and economy.

In the GSU Concept of Strategic Development plan for 2011-2016 (hereinafter: Concept 2011-2016) the mission and goals of the University are defined. GSU's activity is mainly in consistence with the defined mission. However, the anticipated results and evaluation indicators are not measurable and they do not reflect the implementation of strategic goals and achievements, hence they need further clarification. The absence of strategic approach and clear and reliable mechanisms evaluating and increasing the efficiency of implementation of strategic goals puts at risk the processes directed to the overcoming of the GSU's shortcomings. It also handicaps the process of monitoring of the GSU's achievements as well as further proper and efficient planning of its activities.

The mechanisms of stakeholders involvement are not sufficient for ensuring their proactive participation in GSU's activities. The absence of regularly organized discussions hinders GSU to identify the needs of internal and external stakeholders and to involve them in the improvement-directed processes. The inefficiency of mechanisms identifying the needs of GSU's external stakeholders, their passive involvement in the development of strategic plan as well as the absence of market research put at risk the full implementation of the goals set by GSU's mission taking into consideration the University's commitment to prepare specialists in line with the regional needs and market demands.

GSU is currently undergoing considerable changes in terms of its legal status which basically hinders the regular processes of strategic management. According to the top management of the University, the new status should enlarge GSU's activity fields and have a positive impact on the University's financial capacity and diversification of its entrepreneurial activity. This transitional period is viewed as the main obstacle impeding the development of the new strategy.

The expert panel finds that GSU's organizational structure needs to be more clarified taking into account the importance of implementation of its prioritized directions and strategic goals. The absence of defined ethical norms, mechanisms ensuring the transparency and efficiency of decision-making processes as well as qualitative and quantitative data on efficiency evaluation puts at risk the efficiency of GSU's management system and targeted implementation of strategic goals. The expert panel finds that the whole administration of management system is not based on the principle of quality management. Although there are planning and implementation processes at different levels, the processes of evaluation and improvement are missing.

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[1] APPENDIX 1. CVs OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

The expert panel embraces the fact that GSU involves its students and teaching staff in almost all governing bodies and gives them an opportunity to freely express their viewpoints and participate in making decisions regarding their activities.

Currently the main mechanism of identifying factors having an impact on GSU's general and educational activities is considered to be surveys, however, the targeted direction, regularity and methodology of their implementation as well as the frame of respondents' representativeness do not enable surveys to be viewed as an efficient way of identifying internal and external stakeholders' opinions.

GSU implements 20 BA and 11 MA PAPs in full-time and part-time studies. GSU PAPs are in line with its mission and state educational standards, and the University makes some attempts to also ensure their consistency with market demands. There are anticipated learning outcomes defined in PAPs and they are mostly compatible with the RA NQF. However, they are often generally articulated and from the perspective of professional peculiarities their improvement will facilitate the evaluation of achieved outcomes. The applied teaching and learning methods are mostly teacher-centered, however, some attempts have been made in recent years to make a transition to student-centered approach. GSU has an assessment policy and criteria for evaluation of final papers and master thesis, however, they need to be improved; assessment methods used in the University are not always in line with the anticipated results which does not allow to measure the factually achieved results. Although the University has taken some steps to maintain academic honesty, the activities taken in the direction of ensuring academic honesty and preventing plagiarism are not coordinated. GSU has carried out benchmarking of its PAPs with those of Armenian and foreign higher education institutions, however, GSU doesn't have any clearly developed policy and methodology of benchmarking which hinders the coordination of the process, its continuity and mobility increase. The expert panel finds it positive that the University has developed a regulation on development, approval, evaluation and monitoring of GSU's PAPs and curricula but it hasn't been fully put into process.

The process of selection and admission of GSU students is carried out by clearly set mechanisms which has a positive impact on efficient, transparent and objective implementation of the process. The University gives importance to students' participation in decision-making processes. There are a number of mechanisms for identifying students' needs, however, further processes directed to the satisfaction of their needs are not regulated.

The majority of GSU students are involved in part-time education. At the same time the mechanisms of identification of students' needs and protection of their rights are predominantly being applied in full-time education system which may have an impact on the quality of part-time education, its continuous improvement and preparation of competitive specialists.

GSU gives importance to the necessity to ensure teaching staff with high professional qualities. For this purpose GSU has developed a temporary regulation on selection of teaching staff which promotes the regular selection of teachers, however, from the perspective of efficiency, the selection mechanisms haven't been evaluated. The procedure on competition-based selection of support staff is missing which may negatively impact the objectiveness and targeted implementation of processes relating the selection of support staff. The heads of faculties and those of some chairs are employed as acting heads in GSU for many years which definitely has a negative impact on the efficiency of management.

GSU has defined mechanisms for carrying out regular evaluation of teaching staff but the analysis of developed mechanisms is missing which does not allow to make any judgments about their efficiency. Besides, the University mostly doesn't take steps to eliminate the identified shortcomings which hinders the improvement of teaching quality. The low level of efficiency of foreign language courses and the absence of activities taken towards enhancement of professional qualities impedes the continuous development of teaching staff and processes directed to the mobility and internationalization of PAPs. The activities taken for freshman teachers are not coordinated at the University, and the mentoring

institute is missing which may complicate the development of freshman teachers and influence teaching quality.

GSU has registered the increase of quality of GSU teachers' activity in recent 5 years; such indicators are encouraging and they definitely lead to the enhancement of teaching quality. Nevertheless, the recruitment with teaching staff is not fully ensured. It is a positive point that for the implementation of PAPs some employers having an experience in industry are also invited to teach at GSU on double-jobbing basis as far as they contribute to the investment of practical component into PAPs. The practice of conducting several courses by one and the same teacher is worrisome as far as it may have an influence on the quality of teaching and hinder the regular academic process.

Although the administrative-managerial system of the University has undergone significant reformative changes in recent years, the University doesn't provide sufficient human resources for efficient achievement of strategic goals.

In the GSU Concept 2011-2016 there are general provisions reflecting the University's ambitions in the field of research. However, the ambitions are superfluous and the research directions are redundant especially taking into account the fact that there isn't any structural unit which would coordinate the scientific-research activities of the University. This causes risks in terms of proper fulfillment of the mentioned provisions. The absence of defined specific priorities in the field of research doesn't create a favorable environment for GSU from the angle of the University's special role in the region.

GSU doesn't carry out financial planning in scientific-research field, neither it allocates sufficient financial means from its budget for the development of scientific-research activities. Research activities aren't viewed as a source of income by the University. Research activities are mainly carried out based on personal initiative of GSU staff members in accordance with their preferences which are not linked with GSU's strategy which in its turn may have a negative impact on coordination of research activities, control of their organization, evaluation of efficiency, quality of teaching as well as interlink between the content of provided courses and educational process.

The absence of analyses carried out in the fields of research and development by the University doesn't allow to judge about the efficiency. GSU gives importance to the internationalization of research activities, however, the steps directed to the involvement of students and teachers in international research initiatives are not tangible yet.

It is positive that an Educational-Scientific Center has been established in GSU and a number of national and international conferences are being held at GSU. Research activities carried out in the University, which are actually rare cases, are published without taking into account the impact factor and mostly in local journals which hinders the internationalization of research outcomes. The link between scientific-research activity and learning is ensured by teachers' initiative without any defined mechanisms which may have a negative impact on the coordination of processes interlinking research and learning.

GSU makes efforts to allocate respective resources for the implementation of its mission and strategic goals. Although the University tries to allocate financial means and enhance fundraising for equipment, improvement, modernization and enlargement of classrooms, laboratories, library fund and other infrastructures, GSU financial means are limited and the enrichment of resource base is mainly being made within the framework of international grants.

GSU budget is formed by students' tuition fees which from the perspective of sustainability may cause problems. The analyses on efficiency of distribution and use of financial means are missing which doesn't allow to evaluate and analyze the indicators of financial sustainability and development opportunities of the University.

GSU resource base is mainly sufficient for the implementation of PAPs. It is positive that there is a procedure for management of information and documentation processes which GSU plans to improve. GSU has taken its first step to create necessary conditions for people with limited abilities. Another positive point is that the University regularly conducts surveys on satisfaction with GSU resources and

provided services, however, GSU doesn't take steps towards elimination of identified shortcomings based on evaluation results.

The expert panel finds it positive that there is a clear accountability system in GSU which is regularly being operated and is summed up in rector's annual reports which are being published. However, the content of reports needs to be improved as far as they mainly comprise facts and statistic data about the University's activities; the direct link with the strategy/Concept, the analytical approach and suggestions on improvement activities based on identified shortcomings are missing.

The expert panel also positively evaluates the steps the University takes in the direction of making its processes available and transparent to the society. However, GSU official site which is one of the most important tools in terms of ensuring accountability, urgently needs to be improved as far as it can have a crucial role for shaping a positive image of the University. It's praiseworthy that some feedback domains promoting the establishment of links with the society have been formed, but there are a number of problems in terms of ensuring sustainability and efficiency of feedback.

GSU takes some steps towards internationalization and external cooperation at national level. In this regard, GSU has defined strategic goals which, however, are too ambitious and respective human and financial resources haven't been provided for their proper fulfillment. The policies and procedures regulating the mentioned field are missing either which puts at risk the implementation of the coordinated activities. Another crucial point is that the level of GSU internal stakeholders' participation in activities directed to the development of foreign language proficiency is at low level, and no steps are taken to improve this process. Although the University carries out some activities towards internationalization, it doesn't have an environment fostering practice exchange, development and internationalization yet.

The expert panel positively evaluates the existence of QA Division in the University and the developed manual on "GSU Quality Assurance System". However, the steps GSU takes towards investment of internal QA system are not coordinated yet. The absence of analyses on efficiency of mechanisms and toolset regulating different processes doesn't allow GSU to evaluate the impact of QA processes on improvement of its PAPs and overall activity. There aren't clearly set requirements for QA Division staff regarding their professional qualities, neither professional trainings are being organized for them which consequently puts at risk the efficient organization and implementation of QA processes.

Non-regular implementation of QA processes based on PDCA cycle as well as passive participation of external stakeholders in the mentioned processes may hinder the continuous improvement of GSU activity.

Although GSU allocated financial and human resources for management of internal QA processes, the obligations and functions of staff members responsible for QA need to be specified. This is worrisome as far as it may cause serious obstacles for management of QA processes and their further development. In addition to the mentioned, GSU needs to regularly evaluate the efficiency of internal QA system. The absence of coordinated process of controlling GSU's QA system is conditioned by the fact that GSU internal QA system is in the development phase.

STRENGTHS OF THE INSTITUTION:
1) The University has an important role in the educational eco-system of the region.
2) The University is attractive to applicants of the region.
3) The PAPs are in compliance with the University's mission and state educational standards.
4) There is a favorable academic environment for the implementation of PAPs.
5) There are available mechanisms of identification of full-time students' educational needs and consultancy provision.
6) The University ensures teaching staff with respective qualifications in compliance with PAPs.

7) There are sufficient services directed to the assurance of the University's environment and maintenance of health and security.
8) There is a formulated system of internal and external accountability.
9) The University's staff members participate in a number of international projects directed to capacity building.

WEAKNESSES OF THE INSTITUTION:
1) The current strategy of the University is missing.
2) The system of interconnected short-term, mid-term and long-term planning of actions is missing.
3) The external stakeholders' participation in the processes of the University is at low level.
4) The components of evaluation and improvement of PDCA cycle in management and in QA processes are missing.
5) The involvement of part-time students in processes of identification of their needs and decision-making processes (which relate to them) is not ensured.
6) The participation of teaching staff members in professional trainings is at low level.
7) The University's human resources are not sufficiently allocated for the efficient achievement of strategic goals.
8) The priorities of the research field are not clear.
9) The financial inflow is dependent on one main source – students' tuition fees.
10) The coordinated policy on establishing a favorable environment of the University's internationalization and practice exchange is missing.
11) The proficiency in foreign languages among students and staff are at low level.
12) The steps taken towards establishment of internal QA system are not coordinated.

Main Recommendations

Mission and Goals
1. To review and clarify GSU mission and strategic goals by defining more realistic, measurable ambitions which will be approved by and apprehensible for the University's stakeholders, strongly emphasizing GSU's important role in the region.
2. To use the current transitional period for the implementation of analyses and in-depth discussions with stakeholders about GSU's strategic position which will form a comprehensive base for the elaboration of the University's future strategy.
3. To develop a strategy by making the strategic directions and priorities targeted and to define a clear time-schedule for its implementation.
4. To enlarge the frame of stakeholders' (especially external ones) involvement in the development, implementation and evaluation of the University's strategy by using and regularly analyzing the efficiency of mechanisms of stakeholders involvement.
5. To develop short-term and mid-term action plans and mechanisms of their implementation, monitoring and evaluation directed to the fulfillment of goals defined in the University' strategy.
6. To establish a council or a committee on strategic issues which will fulfill the functions to monitor the overall progress in strategy, to inform about obstacles and to identify ways of improvement as well as to make suggestions on review of raised problems.
7. To make the internal policies of the University in line with the implementation of GSU's strategy (e.g. in the fields of HRM, QA, etc.) which should also be linked with the resources necessary for their practical implementation.

Governance and Administration

8. To organize trainings for the administrative staff which will be directed to the development of their skills and will promote both the development of policies and procedures necessary for efficient management and their use and continuous improvement.
9. To review the University's management structure by ensuring the compliance of strategic goals with management system.
10. To specify and coordinate the distribution of functions of all structural units and to ensure their efficient cooperation (at horizontal level).
11. To invest mechanisms which will allow to evaluate the efficiency of administrative units and their activities as well as to identify and disseminate best practices of chairs and faculties.
12. To review the administration of the University's policies and procedures at all management levels by investing mechanisms and regulations based on the principle of quality management – PDCA cycle.
13. To regularly scan and analyze the external factors, including statistic and other data which influence the University' activity and to apply measurable tools.
14. To improve the mechanisms of involving internal and external stakeholders in the University's decision-making processes.
15. To improve the system and mechanisms/procedures of accumulation, analysis and application of information.
16. To specify the policy on distribution of financial resources in accordance with strategic priorities.
17. To develop a regulation on ethics which will be in line with the University's mission.
18. To establish a risk management system.

Academic Programs

19. To develop and re-develop PAPs taking into account the requirements of labor market by ensuring the vast involvement of GSU external stakeholders in the mentioned processes.
20. To clearly formulate anticipated learning outcomes of GSU PAPs in line with respective levels of the RA NQF descriptors by ensuring their measurability and to choose the evaluation methods based on them.
21. To develop a clear policy on selection of teaching and learning methods, to regularly modernize teaching, learning and assessment methods and to make them in line with the anticipated learning outcomes by ensuring the enrooting of student-centered approach.
22. To make evaluation of efficiency of current mechanisms ensuring academic honesty and to take steps in the direction of their improvement, development of norms and raising the awareness among students.
23. To re-develop the policy and system of credit calculation, distribution and accumulation by linking them with anticipated learning outcomes and by keeping all internal stakeholders informed about them.
24. To add hours for practical components in PAPs by making them not less than hours allocated to the provision of lectures in the framework of the given subject.
25. To diversify the ways of internship by developing respective procedures and provisions of control and evaluation.
26. To refresh and modernize the lists of literature of syllabi preferably involving English literature as well.
27. To develop a general methodology for the implementation of benchmarking and mechanisms of using the attained results.
28. To make the curricula more flexible.
29. To develop mechanisms fostering mobility of students and teachers.

30. To apply mechanisms of regular monitoring and evaluation of efficiency of PAPs based on PDCA cycle by ensuring direct participation of internal and external stakeholders.

Students

31. To develop mechanisms evaluating the efficiency of student recruitment, consultancies provided to them and other services.
32. To develop clear time-schedules for addressing administrative staff by ensuring their availability to students.
33. To provide guidance and support to students regarding selective courses.
34. To improve the procedures and mechanisms of identifying and evaluating full-time and part-time students' educational needs and to ensure their regularity.
35. To develop mechanisms for increasing the involvement of part-time students in research activities and in bodies responsible for protection of their rights.
36. To provide efficient services to students promoting their career development and to make studies on the needs of labor market of the region and employability of alumni, to reinforce the link among the University and employers as well as that between research and learning.
37. To create an environment necessary for students with special needs and to provide respective support and consultancy.
38. To regulate the organization of facultative courses, to implement bridging courses based on the identification of students' needs and diagnostic evaluation by forming clear time-schedules and by ensuring their availability to internal stakeholders.

Teaching and support staffs

39. To make the procedure on selection of teaching staff more available to potential participants of the competition and to more actively apply the regulation on competition.
40. To define clearly set requirements on professional qualifications of teaching staff for each PAP taking into account the peculiarities of given PAPs.
41. To invest an efficient system of identification of teaching staff's needs, to review the questionnaires which are conducted with the aim to increase the quality and efficiency of teachers' activities as well as to provide with necessary explanations to respondents.
42. To take activities directed to the capacity building of teachers based on identified needs. To regularly implement both methodical and professional trainings for teaching staff. To improve the quality and efficiency of current training courses.
43. To operate clearly set and regulated mechanisms of promotion and progression of teaching and support staffs, to set diversified salaries.
44. To develop a clear policy on preparation of specialists in the scientific-pedagogical field aimed at ensuring regular generation change of teaching staff as well as to provide support to freshman teachers.
45. To develop a policy on selection of support staff by regulating their functions in accordance with job descriptions.
46. To make HR planning and to develop HRM policy.

Research and Development

47. To develop and define clearly set ambitions and priorities in the research field by emphasizing the regional needs and giving importance to the possible commercialization of research outputs.
48. To develop and use tools of evaluation of efficiency and modernity of scientific-research activities as well as mechanisms measuring the progress and respective indicators.

49. To make financial planning in the scientific-research field and to allocate sufficient means for carrying out scientific activities by establishing favorable conditions.
50. To develop short-term and mid-term plans for the field of research by ensuring their interlink with scientific-research priorities defined by the strategy.
51. To develop mechanisms of promotion of interdisciplinary research activities.
52. To invest clear mechanisms of commercialization of research outputs and to take steps to make the given research as an income source for the University.
53. To develop clear mechanisms for promoting students and teachers to be involved in research processes thus activating the cooperation among students and teachers both inside GSU and with other education institutions.
54. To establish sustainable collaboration in the field of research at both national and international levels.
55. To develop a clear policy on internationalization of research activity by promoting the implementation of joint research projects and publications with other institutions.
56. To foster and promote the increase of number of publications in international peer-reviewed and highly ranked journals.
57. To make final papers and master theses more modern and research oriented and to choose the topics based on regional needs. To link the final papers with internships.
58. To invest efficient mechanisms of linking the University's research activity and educational process by ensuring the investment of research outputs in educational process.

Infrastructure and Resources

59. To improve the infrastructures of the University by providing necessary means for the renovation of building facilities, equipment of laboratories, acquisition of modern equipment and necessary materials.
60. To make needs analysis for the implementation of each PAP and the assurance of continuity directed to the efficient distribution of financial resources.
61. To monitor and evaluate the efficiency of usage of financial resources in accordance with strategic goals.
62. To equip library fund with respective professional literature. To ensure membership with other library networks.
63. To diversify the financial inflows and to ensure their sustainability.
64. To improve the infrastructures of the University by ensuring necessary educational conditions for students and staff members with disabilities.
65. To take improvement steps based on the results of evaluation of applicability, availability and efficiency of resources provided to stakeholders.

Social Responsibility

66. To improve mechanisms assuring accountability, to make them more analytical and to regularly evaluate the efficiency of the process.
67. To improve the information about all fields of GSU's activity available on the University's official website, to expand the information about GSU in foreign languages, to operate the mechanism allowing visitors to make comments.
68. To reinforce public relations and to develop the cooperation with stakeholders by investing clear mechanisms of evaluation of feedback efficiency.
69. To direct media and advertisement means to the maintenance and reinforcement of the University's positive image and to the increase of public rating and visibility.

70. To expand the ways of services on paid basis for the organization of trainings and facultative courses and to enlarge the balance on budget revenue, to promote and develop the initiatives and self-dependence of all subdivisions of the University regarding the formation and distribution of their own means.

External Relations and Internationalization

71. To develop new realistic strategic goals and objectives for GSU's internationalization and external relations, as well as to allocate respective resources for their attainment.
72. To establish collaborative networks which will be more linked with the strategic objectives of the University.
73. To cooperate with higher education institutions which are alike in terms of size/volume of their activities and have similar priorities and regional peculiarities in order to make the cooperation mutually beneficial.
74. To evaluate the established cooperation in this field from the perspective of predictions and current facts which will allow to fix on quality and compliance of partnership relations and will consequently increase the efficiency of current very limited resources.
75. To ensure more efficient and long-term opportunities for improving foreign language proficiency of GSU internal stakeholders (especially teachers and students) and by means of this to foster the internationalization processes of the University.
76. To make identification of needs and analyses to evaluate the efficiency of activities directed to the development of internationalization of GSU and external relations as well as to increase the level of awareness.
77. To make analysis of impact of the University' international cooperation on the implementation of GSU strategic goals.
78. To clarify the functions of GSU Department of International Cooperation and Projects.
79. To develop and invest mechanisms of planning financial means directed to internationalization.

Internal Quality Assurance System

80. To review the internal QA policy and goals by making the University's activity in compliance with them.
81. To regularly identify professional needs of staff members of QA Division and faculties as well as to evaluate and to expand the opportunities of their professional development based on results.
82. To evaluate the sufficiency and efficiency of human, material and financial resources provided by the University for the implementation of internal QA processes.
83. To regularly evaluate the efficiency of provided services and PAPs.
84. To ensure the application of PDCA cycle in all processes and at all management levels of the University as a result of which GSU will improve its QA mechanisms and will be able to evaluate and to continuously review its internal QA system.
85. To enlarge stakeholders' (especially external ones) involvement in QA processes and to evaluate the efficiency of their involvement.
86. To regularly provide feedback to stakeholders on results of issues relating them and on respective accumulated information.
87. To regulate the data management processes and to clarify the mechanisms of information management and dissemination among different units of the University.

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

The international expert hopes that this section of the report will constructively foster the development of GSU.

GSU has an important role in the regional and local eco-system as far as it is the only higher education system available to the local community. GSU has a significant tradition of implementing education the spheres of Pedagogy and Electroenergetics. It provides quite comprehensive opportunities for students in both full-time and part-time studies. However, conditioned by the regional character and demographical tendencies, GSU has some financial difficulties which hinder the flexible development. The University should definitely carry out some activities which will be based on best practices of higher education institutions involved in EHEA.

1. Strategic Management

GSU top management should seriously take the initiative to organize meetings at all internal levels in order to discuss the University's priorities for the upcoming years. The current transitional period of legal-organizational change of the University's status gives an exceptional chance to organize such widespread discussions. Taking into consideration the fact that in the present circumstances it is not possible to take any realistic actions, this period should be used for gathering the academic community over general goals. As compared with the previous strategy, the new one should be very realistic but at the same time it should promote the progress of the University's activity. The goals should be elaborated in cooperation with different groups of internal stakeholders in order to reinforce the sense of ownership of the whole academic community towards the new strategy. Consequently, the overall process should lead to more promotion and more investment of efforts, thus fostering the University's development in this difficult period.

The dialogue should also promote the participation of external stakeholders for them to be able to participate in the processes of strategic planning and strategy implementation. Hence, it should build a local and regional community which will be fixed on the provision of support to the regional higher education institution with the aim to solve the emerged problems which are significant to local community and economy.

At the same time, GSU top management should have a well-developed planning system to achieve strategic goals by going up from the level of chairs to other structural units as well as by directly and clearly linking the annual operational plans to long-term objectives. In this case the academic community will clearly visualize GSU top managers' serious commitment to general strategic objectives of the University. The accountability system should also clearly reflect the current progress of solution of strategic objectives, and the strategy should be regularly monitored and refreshed upon need.

The whole process should ensure the full compatibility of GSU mission and strategy with regional expectations and potential. In this case GSU's activity will be more compliant with the goals it has set.

2. Structure and Management

GSU top management should re-evaluate the efficiency of current organizational structure and available resources. Particularly, the distribution of limited resources of the University should be directed to the strategic priorities. Consequently, it may necessitate the limitation of resources defined for particular field for the sake of improvement of other field having greater strategic importance. In the overall process, it is important for top managers to elaborate a comprehensive list of clearly set key performance indicators (KPIs) in accordance with each strategic and operational objective in order to ensure the clear measurability of efficiency of allocated resources.

3. Education

The education GSU offers should be tightly linked with local economy. Subsequently, GSU should use student-centered approach more. Within the frames of PAPs GSU should use modern teaching and learning methods more, particularly those which have been successfully adopted by EHEA higher education institutions, e.g. work-based, problem-solving and project-based learning or dual study programs. GSU should encourage students and its external stakeholders to prepare master theses which will be based on problems and practices of state organizations and NGOs acting in the region.

In addition, GSU has very little experience in the implementation of education based on learning outcomes. The University needs to carry out comprehensive trainings and internal audits which should relate to efficient formulation of program goals and learning outcomes, compatibility of teaching, learning and student assessment methods as well as assurance of compliance with European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). This should be clear to every teacher of the University which requires professional support and guidance by well-trained administrative staff.

4. External Relations and Internationalization

Taking into consideration the emerged challenges set to GSU, the latter should give importance to the necessity to reinforce cooperation with RA and foreign higher education institutions. It is of utmost importance to develop and implement internal policies and procedures which will foster the mobility of staff and students in line with principles (recognition of achievements, use of external funds for mobility, etc.) adopted in EHEA countries. In this regard, GSU should select respective partners to ensure the efficiency of cooperation at as many levels as possible. Consequently, the University should limit the number of partnership for increasing quality. The cooperation links between GSU and external partners should be directed to efficient collaboration. In order to ensure this, it is necessary for GSU to cooperate with partner institutions which in terms of the size/volume of their activity are similar and have the same strategic direction. GSU should also pay attention to the problems regarding collaboration management in order to efficiently use current limited resources.

Nevertheless, in order to make the efforts directed to the internationalization beneficial and to expand the opportunities, GSU administrative staff should first of all emphasize the issue of foreign language proficiency among administrative/management and teaching staffs of the University. This problem is possible to solve by using long-term and available internal learning opportunities.

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Robert Khachatryan
Signature of Chair of Expert Panel

16.01.2018

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW
COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The external evaluation of institutional capacities of Goris State University was carried out by the following expert panel:

- **Robert Khachatryan –** PhD, Associate Professor, Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences, Head of Center for Quality Assurance, Head of Chair on Education Management and Planning, RA, Chair of expert panel
- **Maciej Markowski –** PhD in Education Management, Quality Assurance Expert of Polish Accreditation Committee, Poland, expert panel member
- **Varujan Atabekyan –** Doctor in Physics and Mathematics, Faculty of Mathematics and Mechanics of Yerevan State University, Head of Chair of Algebra and Geometry, RA, expert panel member
- **Karen Mirzabekyan –** PhD in Technical Sciences, Faculty of Cybernetics of National Polytechnic University of Armenia, Associate Professor of Chair of Electronic Measurement Systems and Metrology, RA, expert panel member
- **Anahit Hovakimyan –** Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan, Faculty of Preschool Education, Elementary Pedagogy and Methodology, MA 1st year student, RA, expert panel member

The works of the expert panel were coordinated by Lilit Pipoyan, Specialist at the Institutional and Program Accreditation Division of ANQA.

The translation was provided by Ani Shahinyan, Coordinator at Center for Quality Assurance of Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences.

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

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

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

Application for State Accreditation

GSU applied to ANQA for institutional accreditation in 31.03.2017 by submitting the application form, the copies of the license and respective appendices.

The ANQA Secretariat examined the data presented in the application form, the attached documents and the ANQA electronic questionnaire completed by the University.

The decision on acceptance of application request was made in 10.04.2017 after which a bilateral agreement between ANQA and the University was signed. The time-schedule of activities was prepared and approved.

In accordance with the format set by ANQA, the University presented the Armenian and English versions of its self-evaluation report in 18.07.2017 and the package of attached documents.

The self-evaluation was carried out by the team formed by the order of GSU rector.

Preparatory Phase

The ANQA coordinator observed the report with the aim to check its correspondence with the technical requirements set by ANQA. The Armenian and English versions of GSU self-evaluation report and the package of attached documents were accepted by ANQA in 31.07.2017, after receiving the positive opinion of the coordinator of accreditation process.

The self-evaluation report was provided to the expert panel for preliminary evaluation. The composition of the expert panel was agreed upon with the University in advance and was approved by the order of ANQA Director.

In order to prepare the expert panel for the upcoming activities and to ensure the efficiency of processes, the ANQA specialists (L. Zakaryan, A. Makaryan) conducted trainings in the following topics:

1. main functions of expert panel members,
2. preliminary evaluation as a preparatory phase for the expert panel report, main requirements set for the report,
3. methodology of review of documents and examination of resources,
4. ethics and techniques of conducting meetings and setting questions.

Having observed the self-evaluation and the attached documents of the University, the expert panel made a preliminary evaluation from 22.09.2017 to 30.10.2017. The lists of additional documents for further observation as well as questions and issues for further clarification by mentioning respective structural units and target groups were formed according to the form. According to the form, the list of additional documents for further observation as well as questions and issues to be discussed with different structural units and target groups was prepared.

Within the scheduled time the expert panel summarized the results of the preliminary evaluation and formed a time-schedule of the site-visit[2]. In accordance with the ANQA manual on expertise, the time-schedule comprised the planned meetings with all the groups, close and open meetings, review of documents, visits to structural units of the University, etc.

Preliminary Visit

Because of the geographical position of Goris State University the preliminary visit scheduled for 23.10.2017 was carried out in online format. The coordinator and the Head of Institutional and Program Accreditation Division on behalf of ANQA, GSU Rector, a number of GSU self-evaluation team members and the contact person on behalf of the University took part in the mentioned meeting. The time-schedule of the site-visit was finalized during the meeting. Both sides had an arrangement regarding the room for the expert panel and the hall for the meetings, and the issues relating the furnishing and equipment with necessary technical equipments of the mentioned rooms were clarified.

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[2] Appendix 2. Agenda of expert panel site-visit for GSU institutional accreditation

The expert panel discussed a number of organizational, technical and informational issues relating them and those concerning the behavior and ethical norms of participants of meetings, and respective decisions were made.

After the online meeting the list of documents for further observation was presented to the University.

Site-visit

All the expert panel members (including international expert) and the coordinator had a meeting in Goris on the previous day of the visit set by the time-schedule. During the meeting the expert panel came to an agreement on the frame of expertise, the evaluation scale of criteria which, according to ANQA procedures, has two levels: 1) **meets/corresponds** with the requirements of the criterion, 2) **does not meet/does not correspond** with the requirements of the criterion. The issues for further study during the site-visit, the University's strong and weak points according to criteria, the procedure of focus group meetings, and the ethics of conducting meetings were finalized, and further steps were clarified.

The site-visit took place from 1 to 3 November 2017. The site-visit started and was closed with the meetings with the rector. In order to clarify some issues, the representatives of the teaching staff, students, deans, heads of chairs, employers and alumni who participated in organized focus group meetings were selected randomly from the list provided beforehand by the University. All the meetings set by the time-schedule were organized.

The hour arranged for the meeting with MA students set by the time-schedule in 03.11.2017 was transferred based on the agreement reached beforehand by the contact person of the University. The transfer was conditioned by the wish of the expert panel to have class observations. During this period the expert panel carried out an observation of documents and resources and had focus group meetings in different structural units of the University. The expert panel highly appreciates the open discussions with the participants of meetings.

The information obtained during different meetings as well as the main results of documentation review and observations were summed up at the end of each day and during the final meeting which was organized at the end of the site-visit. The expert panel discussed all the main results and came to an agreement firstly on the correspondence of requirements of separate accreditation standards and afterwards – requirements set for criteria. The final conclusions on compliance with the requirements of the criteria were made by all members of the expert panel through open discussion based on consensus.

Expert Panel Report

After the site-visit and as a result of regularly organized discussions, the expert panel prepared the draft of the accreditation report which was based on the preliminary evaluation of GSU's self-evaluation and observations made during the site-visit. Each member of the expert panel had his/her own investment in the preparation of the report and gave feedback on the full version of the report. The expert panel prepared the conclusion and a separate document on the opinion of peer-review. The mentioned documents were translated and handed to the expert panel. The international expert's approaches were summed up in the report, and the peer-review was fully involved in the content of the report.

The preliminary report was submitted to the University on December 12, 2017. The feedback on the preliminary report by the GSU was sent to the ANQA on 28.12.2017. Studying the preliminary report the HEI did not submit any observation and comment based on which the expert panel composed the final report which was approved by the panel on 16.01.2018.

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Lilit Pipoyan
Signature of the Coordinator
16.01.2018

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

HISTORY. The higher education institution was established in Goris by the decree of SSRA Government, 1 October 1967. The university started its activities as Goris branch of Armenian State Pedagogical Institute (currently University) after Kh. Abovyan, later - as Goris branch of State Polytechnic Institute of Armenia (currently SEUA). Originally the university was established to prevent the youth emigration from the region, to consolidate the links with Artsakh and to promote the socio-political consciousness of the local population. By the RA Government decree N 2400-Ն (6 October 2005) based on the Goris branch the "Goris State University" state non-profit organization was established as an independent higher education institution holding the status of University (the Charter was approved on 22.02.2006 and was re-approved with respective changes on 08.11.2012).

EDUCATION. Currently there are three faculties at GSU:
1. Faculty of Natural Sciences
2. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
3. Faculty of Economics and Engineering

The higher education, both in full-time and part-time modes, is implemented in 14 specialties.

Conditioned by current demographic, technological, socio-economic and cultural factors, the University has reviewed the list of its specialties, and new specialties in MA and MA academic programs have been introduced, namely: Fine Arts, Management (in accordance with the sphere), English Language and Literature, Tourism Management, Economics of Enterprises and Special Pedagogy.

RESEARCH: The development of scientific innovative activities, the increase of efficiency of research and the establishment of efficient education systems are among strategic goals of GSU. The comprehensive development of research projects and the formation of new generation of scientists are among main directions of GSU mission.

INTERNATIONALIZATION. In the sphere of external relations and internationalization GSU aims to internationalize the University's science and technological works, to foster participation of subdivisions in international projects, to organize international conferences, seminars and joint projects by applying new technologies, to develop interaction between the University and economic environment, to diversify and decentralize external relations, to develop the active impact of economy on the University's academic programs and research projects and to ensure feedback between professional qualities of specialists and the market demand.

QUALITY ASSURANCE. The provision on "investment and operation of internal quality assurance system" is one of the priorities of GSU strategy. The mission of the University's QA system is to establish and foster student-centered education system by creating a reliable environment for learning, research and other services, as well as to promote the creation of internal QA culture.

While making an evaluation the expert panel was led by the principle of "compliance with goals" and observed the above mentioned information as main ambitions and goals of the University.

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

FINDINGS

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

The University started its strategic planning in 2006 by developing a strategy which was re-developed in 2011 and was renamed "GSU Concept of Strategic Development Plan 2011-2016" (Concept 2011-2016). The University plans to develop a new strategy for 2017-2021 or 2018-2022, however in the site-visit such document which was put into practice was not available and the time period for the strategic plan was not defined.

According to the Charter of "Goris State University" state non-profit organization, approved by the RA Government Decree N1395-Ն, 8 November 2012, the University implements academic programs in different directions of Natural Sciences, Engineering, Socioeconomics and Social Sciences, however, currently the main prioritized directions of the University as well as their interconnection with regional needs are not clearly defined in GSU strategic plan and goals.

GSU Concept 2011-2016 comprises the formulated mission of the University in compliance with NQF, goal of GSU activity, main principles and steps directed to the main spheres the fundamental provisions of which have been involved in annual plans of subdivisions. Strategic goals as such are not clearly formulated in the Concept. The University mainly meets the regional needs but the mechanisms for identifying those needs are not developed.

The main strategic directions and/or priorities for the given period are defined in the Concept. The current situation, challenges, objectives, main strategic directions and anticipated results are described for each strategic goal of the Concept but KPIs are not clearly defined, and some of the indicators are not measurable.

In line with the Concept, faculty strategies and short-term (annual) action plans have been developed. However, either in the Concept or in the annual plans it is not mentioned what resources and means are needed and currently allocated for the implementation of each strategic goal.

During the site-visit GSU mentioned that the University is in the important transitional period. In its current legal status GSU goes on following its mission defined in GSU Charter. In the latter, the frame of more generic role functions of the University is presented. Those roles are fixed on the provision of higher education directed to the development of students' professional skills, conduction of research activities and promotion of economic development through knowledge dissemination.

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

In the development of the University's strategy the opinions of internal stakeholders were taken into consideration. GSU internal stakeholders participated in the development of the strategy by making suggestions. In the mentioned process GSU subdivisions took part by presenting their annual reports the results of which were summed up and published in each annual report of the rector. At the same time the grounds and analyses on evaluation of efficiency of mechanisms for involving internal stakeholders are missing.

The University makes attempts to involve external stakeholders, however, their involvement is at low level due to the lack of respective mechanisms. No analysis on market demand as such is carried out to involve external stakeholders, including employers. Although GSU gives importance to the satisfaction of

external and internal stakeholders' needs, the targeted and coordinated activities of cooperation are missing.

GSU takes a number of steps which are directed to the promotion of the regional labor market, particularly in the spheres of Pedagogy and Electroenergetics. However, the regional needs are mostly indirectly met and they are not being evaluated directly or in a coordinated way. During the site-visit, in particular, in the meeting with external stakeholders, the latter stated about cooperation of GSU with a number of other local organizations but the collaborative activities were more situational and short-term.

At the same time the Student Carrier Support Center was established at GSU which, as an internal unit, functioned for promoting the establishment of cooperation links among GSU and external stakeholders (mostly with local and regional labor markets). According to the Center's regulations, it is responsible for the collection and analysis of data on needs of local and international labor markets and development tendencies. This corresponds to the results of the meetings which were held with all the groups of GSU internal stakeholders. According to them, it is supposed that Student Career Support Center should accumulate, operate and provide respective information on GSU external stakeholders' expectations from the provided PAPs. Neither deans nor heads of chairs carry out evaluations and surveys having external directions as far as the information provided by the mentioned Center serves as a basis for them.

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

The evaluation of strategic goals and mission of the University is carried out through the annual reports of the rector. As the main mechanism evaluating the activity of the University, annual plans do not directly reflect the University's strategic goals and they are not grouped according to specific spheres and priorities mentioned in the strategy.

There isn't any mechanism or procedure on monitoring of actions in line with the strategy. Neither principles of monitoring the implementation of the strategy and data collection and analysis nor mechanisms of risk management are defined.

The KPIs defined for the evaluation of results of achieved goals and the mission of the University are generic and they do not involve clearly set qualitative and quantitative indicators of evaluating efficiency, hence they are not used by the University.

At the end of each year the heads of subdivisions prepare a comprehensive report on actions which have been taken during the given year and respective results. The reports are approved by respective faculty committees and are finally presented to the rector. Upon completion of the reporting process the reports of subdivisions are gathered and published as an annual report of the rector. The reports are informative and they hold information about different fields of the University's activity. However, the reports are not linked with the evaluation of implementation of strategic goals.

CONSIDERATIONS

GSU is currently undergoing the process of making significant changes in legal status which considerably hinders the regular processes of strategic management. According to the top management of the University, GSU's new status should enlarge the activity fields of the University and have a positive impact on GSU's financial capacities. This is the most important challenge the University is currently facing. This temporary transitional period is viewed as the main obstacle for the development of a new strategy. The expert panel considers that this explanation is partially justified.

As the only higher education institution of the region, GSU plays a role in the local community and economy. However, this is very weakly reflected in the mission and strategy of the University, and subsequently, the link between the domains of the University's activity and regional needs is poor. Moreover, the expert panel has turned out that both internal and external stakeholders have big expectations and ideas regarding the future development of GSU and its role in the region. At the same,

internal and external discussions which can foster the implementation of GSU's future strategy are very few. Irrespective of the result of the change in GSU's legal status, the core of the University's field directions (education, links with external stakeholders) won't undergo any significant changes; it will merely be expanded. For this reason the expert panel thinks that before the formal completion of the change in legal status the University doesn't face any significant obstacles hindering the launch of the process of developing a strategy at the earliest possible time. The expert panel finds it worrisome that the University doesn't have a new strategic plan yet. For this period it is not clearly visualized which objectives for the implementation of the goal of GSU's activity should be solved, and to what extent they are directed to the fulfillment of the mission. The strategy should clearly reflect the development opportunities and ways for the upcoming year. The expert panel also agrees with GSU top management about the point that the strategy shouldn't be finally approved before the completion of the process of change in legal status.

The GSU mission and goals are formulated in the Concept 2011-2016 and they mainly reflect the activity of the University. Although the current situation for each goal, as well as challenges, expected results and KPIs are described, KPIs are not measurable and they do not reflect the implementation of strategic goals and achievements, hence they need further clarification. The University hasn't made an evaluation and analysis on efficiency of the Concept 2011-2016 (strategic plan) which would allow to reflect the main achievements, current problems and shortcomings, thus viewing it as a main document facilitating the development of the University..

The University mainly acts in line with its mission. It must be mentioned that GSU strategic plan is ambitious and it is not linked with current financial resources. The expert panel finds it positive that the mission is formulated in GSU's strategic plan but the mission is generic and it doesn't reflect the regional peculiarities, and from the perspective of educational levels and professional fields it needs to be clarified. The expert panel finds that the needs of regional development should also be reflected in the mission as far as GSU is one of the essential institutions capable to solve regional problems and it has the function to prepare specialists in line with labor market demands.

The absence of general approach to evaluation and improvement of the mission and set goals, as well as the lack of clear and reliable mechanisms put at risk the transparency of GSU's activity and the processes directed to the identification of achievements and shortcomings and further accurate and efficient planning. The expert panel finds it positive that the University has taken the initiative to develop some KPIs for evaluating the progress and it mentions about the necessity to make them specific and measurable as much as possible. In other words, the fulfillment of goals defined by the strategic plan will be more specific and efficient, and the steps directed to the implementation of the goals – realistic and visible to the academic community.

The lack of the strategy's time-schedule according to years doesn't allow the University to evaluate and analyze the current efficiency of implementation of actions and set goals. The expert panel finds it necessary to set deadlines for the implementation of each goal, to develop a methodology for measuring the implementation of each strategic goal and expected results as well as to make financial planning. The expert panel is positive about the fact the University gives importance to the involvement of internal and external stakeholders, however, it needs to take targeted activities in this direction. It is encouraging that a Student Career Support Center has been established at GSU which aims to promote the establishment of collaborative links among GSU and its external stakeholders. However, such a complex task emerges a heavy burden as far as it is committed to only one structural unit with very limited resources. Consequently, the expert panel finds that generally taken, the comprehensive information about the external stakeholders' expectations is missing.

The expert panel also positively evaluates the involvement of internal stakeholders in decision-making processes and strategic planning. It is obvious that the remarks and suggestions of internal stakeholders have been given importance to and they have been reflected in the new strategy of the University.

However, incompleteness of mechanisms of identifying internal and external stakeholders' needs, passive participation of external stakeholders in the development of strategic plan as well as lack of labor market research put at risk the full achievement of the goals set by the mission.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration the fact that GSU has a clearly formulated mission, strategic goals and objectives, there are sufficient grounds stating the involvement of internal stakeholders, and the key performance indicators are in the development process, the expert panel concludes that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 1.

CONCLUSION. The expert panel evaluates the consistence of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of the Criterion 1 as ***satisfactory.***

CRITERION 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 governance and decision-making processes of the University are carried out in accordance with the RA Legislation and GSU Charter based on combination of principles of unilateral and collegial management. Although GSU has undergone some structural changes in recent times, in particular, new faculties and subdivisions have been established, their functional frameworks are not clearly defined. The functions of chair-sector units are not defined and clearly distributed, neither the workload of the mentioned units is clear.

The administration and management of scientific-research, financial and administrative works of the University are carried out by faculties and other subdivisions. As the site-visit has shown, the management system is mainly ensured with human and material resources necessary for the fulfillment of the University's activity defined by the Charter and respective functions.

There is a defined organizational structure (the organigram) but the documentary basis regulating the activities of the bodies involved in the structure is poorly developed. As the meetings and examination of introduced regulations of subdivisions, job contracts and functions of the staff have shown, the responsibilities and functions of the staff members of subdivisions are not clearly differentiated and defined.

According to the organizational structure, GSU has a Vice-rector on Educational-scientific Affairs but there isn't any Vice-rector or unit coordinating the scientific activity of the University. During the period of the site-visit the functions of the staff member responsible for international cooperation were just differentiated, in particular, before that the documentation of the mentioned processes was carried out by the staff member of QA Division and no targeted coordination of the project was ensured. The levels of hierarchy, autonomy and responsibilities presented in the organizational structure are not clearly differentiated, and the horizontal lines among different subdivisions are not defined either. The governance system of the University mainly ensures a regulated decision-making process, however, the meetings organized during the site-visit have shown that the main stakeholders are partially involved in decision-making processes. No ethical norms for the organization of regulated decision-making processes are developed. The data on analyses and evaluation of efficiency and transparency of the governance system are missing.

In order to organize and implement its educational process, GSU provides human and material resources. Human resources are planned based on the workload of the teaching staff formed by the chairs, financial

resources are planned on the basis of the budget, and the allocation of material resources is mainly made on contractual basis. GSU doesn't make analyses on satisfaction with human, material and financial resources directed to the implementation of the University's goals.

According to the presented annual budget, financial planning isn't clearly made in accordance with the strategic priorities and strategic goals; financial resources are first of all allocated to the salary fund, afterwards some part of them are allocated to other articles. There are no provisions of policy on financial resource management which would define financial management methods.

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 governance system, current Charter and regulations formally give an opportunity to teaching staff and students to be involved in different governing bodies and to directly or indirectly participate in management and decision-making processes. However, GSU hasn't made any analysis on involvement of the mentioned target groups.

The Student Council is the self-governing student body which is responsible for protecting students' rights and it ensures students' participation in the University governance by raising student-related issues in meetings with respective governing bodies. But as the meetings with students have shown, their initiatives and interest towards processes of making decisions by governing bodies is weak. Besides, students take little initiative in making changes in GSU. It should be noted that almost the same students are involved in different governing bodies.

The decisions made by governing bodies are not available to stakeholders either on the University's website or through other mechanisms (e.g. no sufficient grounds have been provided to state about the efficiency of discussions which are organized at chairs or to prove that decisions made by governing bodies have been reflected). The teachers' and students' satisfaction with their involvement in processes of making decisions regarding them is not studied.

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.

There are two levels of planning at GSU – long-term and short-term (annual work plans of chairs and faculties). The University doesn't make mid-term planning. The cyclic change of the University's long-term planning (according to the strategy 2006-2010 – 5 years, and according to the strategy 2011-2016 – 6 years) is neither substantiated nor analyzed.

Currently GSU doesn't have a developed and approved strategic plan, hence the short-term action plans are being developed without being linked with strategic priorities. GSU rector's annual reports are viewed as a mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the action plan of the strategy, however, the reports are not formed in accordance with strategic goals and priorities.

The University doesn't currently make an evaluation to understand to what extent the planning process fosters the efficient fulfillment of the mission. The results of the implementation of the strategy are not evaluated, and the information about those results is not analyzed. Although it is mentioned in the self-evaluation report that the strategy and its monitoring are carried out in accordance with the KPIs, the site-visit has shown that KPIs haven't been used. The mechanisms and toolset of implementation and monitoring of short-term and long-term goals aren't clearly defined either.

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

Surveys which are conducted among stakeholders are currently considered to be the main mechanism for identifying the factors which have impact on general and educational activity of GSU. However, the

reliability of conducted surveys is not always studied. The analyses of data on labor market, employers' and regional needs as well as demographic tendencies are lacking. During the site-visit the expert panel couldn't register any process directed to the identification and examination of factors influencing the University's activity. In order to find out the number of potential applicants and to ensure their involvement, GSU regularly organizes visits to secondary schools, however, the efficiency of the visits is not analyzed.

The process of data collection is not linked with the development of strategic plans and review processes. The efficiency of data collection process is not evaluated either.

The process of scanning external factors and information collection has a situational character and it is not regulated by preliminarily developed procedure or any clear methodology.

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

The guiding document of GSU's quality management system is the manual on "GSU Quality Assurance System". The administration of policies and procedures is partially carried out on the basis of the principle of quality management, i.e. PDCA cycle. The main processes of the University are in the phase of planning and implementation, and the evaluation and improvement stages aren't carried out yet. Planning processes aren't based on the processes led by clear methodology and directed to the preliminary identification of learners' needs and regional needs, and the efficiency of planning processes is not evaluated. The improvements of plans and processes of the University mostly do not derive from the evaluation results. Hence, GSU doesn't fully operate the PDCA cycle yet.

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.

GSU gathers information on internal stakeholders' satisfaction with the efficiency of PAPs and other services through surveys. However, the methodology of conducting surveys and analyzing data is not clear, the representativeness of participants isn't always ensured, and the efficiency of the mechanism and toolset is not evaluated either. The analytical data on reliability of data collection process are missing. The analyses on decisions made on the basis of gathered data are missing either. GSU hasn't yet developed an electronic management system of collection, analysis and dissemination of information and internal documentation circulation.

There are no efficient mechanisms for evaluating the efficiency of PAPs, ensuring feedback with external stakeholders, identifying and meeting their needs.

The annual reports presented by heads of chairs are also considered to be a mechanism of information collection, and the results of the reports are discussed in chair and faculty sessions. Class observations are another means of collecting information which are not mostly planned beforehand at institutional level. As studies have shown, the results of class observations aren't analyzed and they are not purposefully applied.

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

The publicity of GSU's activity is mainly ensured by the University's official website which contains materials about the University, its educational and scientific activities, some documents and international cooperation, as well as by the provision of information which for applicants. The qualitative and quantitative data and information on PAPs and other educational processes are lacking. The mechanisms evaluating the availability and objectiveness of published information are missing either. GSU doesn't regulate the provision of information for publication or prohibited information and information for internal use.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel finds it positive that there is a documentary base regulating the activities of GSU's structural units but the responsibilities and functions of staff members of respective units are not clearly differentiated and defined which would allow the University to evaluate the efficiency of their activities and staff performance. The clearly set functions of each staff member will give an opportunity to exclude functional overlaps as well as to increase the efficiency of GSU's overall activity and provided services. This is especially of great importance taking into account the limited resources of GSU.

The expert panel positively evaluates the existence of hierarchy of governing bodies. At the same time the organizational structure of the University is not flexible. The standard hierarchical links are obvious while the horizontal links are fragmented.

Currently surveys are considered to be the main mechanism for identifying the factors influencing the overall and educational activities of the University. But the transparency, purposeful direction, regularity and methodology of conducting surveys as well as the frame of respondents' representativeness do not allow surveys to consider an efficient mechanism of raising the opinions of internal and external stakeholders. In general, the incompleteness of monitoring mechanisms and evaluations of different processes puts at risk the efficiency of governance system. The University hasn't carried out self-analysis of efficiency of internal processes before, therefore the culture of making analyses hasn't been formed yet. This is stated by the self-evaluation report of the University which is more discretional rather than analytical.

The overall activity of GSU is partially carried out on the basis of PDCA cycle. In particular, the processes are mainly in the phases of planning and implementation, the evaluations are made partially without any analyses, and the improvements are fragmental. The absence of regular and coordinated feedback mechanisms and regular evaluations are among weak points of the University.

The lack of defined ethical norms, mechanisms ensuring the transparency and efficiency of decision-making processes as well as absence of qualitative and quantitative data on efficiency evaluation put at risk the efficiency of governance system and targeted implementation of strategic goals.

The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that teachers and students have an opportunity to participate in decision making but the absence of evaluation of efficiency of mechanisms enabling stakeholders' involvement may lead to the involvement of staff members who do not have relevant competences, thus endangering the trust towards decisions. The involvement of same students in governing bodies limits student representativeness and endangers the assurance of respective interests. Besides, the limited involvement of external stakeholders may bring to the decrease of level of awareness on external requirements and development tendencies.

The expert panel finds that the organizational structure needs to be more clarified taking into consideration the importance of implementation of strategic goals and strategic priorities. In the absence of analyses on efficiency and satisfaction with human, material and financial resources, the efficiency of governance system is not possible to evaluate. Hence, the further clarification of the University's governance system as well as the development of mechanisms and procedures on evaluation of efficiency of the activity of administrative staff, scanning factors which influence the processes as well as data collection will enable the University to ensure decision making based on reliable data.

Currently GSU doesn't have any developed and in-use strategic plan or concept. The Concept 2011-2016 is viewed as a long-term plan but its division into mid-term and short-term action plans hasn't been made at institutional level. The mentioned action plans would give the University an opportunity to more efficiently organize all the processes, to ensure their monitoring and to efficiently manage resources, thus obtaining clear and measurable indicators for each phase. Hence, the division of mid-term and short-term actions plans and their consistent implementation as well as the development of clearly set mechanisms and toolset of monitoring will give GSU an opportunity to reinforce the link between the mission and

strategic goals, to weaken the influence of external factors which put at risk the activities of the University as well as to specify the expectations of stakeholders.

The absence of mechanisms evaluating the publication of up-to-date, objective and impartial quantitative and qualitative information on PAPs and awarded qualifications states about the imperfection of quality assurance and/or quality control process as far as the University doesn't set a problem to evaluate their efficiency.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration the fact that the mechanisms evaluating the efficiency of GSU governance system are missing, and the administration of policies and procedures is partially carried out in line with PDCA cycle, the mechanisms evaluating the efficiency of decision-making processes do not function, the system of interconnected short-term, mid-term and long-term planning is missing, the applied mechanisms directed to the identification of factors influencing the educational processes of the University and ethical norms of governance are lacking or their use is not targeted, the expert panel concludes that GSU doesn't meet the requirements of the Criterion 2.

CONCLUSION. The expert panel evaluates the consistence of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of the Criterion 2 as ***unsatisfactory.***

CRITERION III. ADACEMIC PROGRAMS

CRITERION: The programs 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.

GSU implements both full-time and part-time higher education in 20 BA and 11 MA academic programs in 3 faculties in the spheres of Humanities, Pedagogy, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Economics and Engineering. In recent years new specialties in both BA and MA academic programs have been invested, namely: Fine Arts, Management (in accordance with the sphere), English Language and Literature, Tourism Management, Economics of Enterprises and Special Pedagogy.

GSU PAPs are mainly in alignment with state educational standards. In the examined course guides the goals in line with the University's mission are mentioned, and the learning outcomes which are mainly in compliance with the RA NQF are described.

With the aim to develop PAPs, GSU put into process the "Guide for Development of GSU Professional Academic Programs" in 2013. GSU mentioned that prior to the development and review of some PAPs the University had made benchmarking of PAPs of many other Armenian and some foreign higher education institutions. For this reason, GSU PAPs in Pedagogical Sciences are almost identical with those developed by Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan, and the development was also possible due to the fact that GSU was a member of Consortium of Pedagogical Universities. However, it should be mentioned that the expert panel wasn't provided with any documentary bases on carried out benchmarking.

According to GSU mission, it is important to create student-centered environment and the implement flexible PAPs which isn't currently perfectly ensured (this was also mentioned in the GSU self-evaluation report). There are some problems concerning the distribution of class hours and credits defined in curricula and syllabi which are conditioned by the non-purposeful distribution of credits and calculation of workload.

The University obviously needs to improve its BA and MA PAPs in part-time education particularly regarding the duration, efficiency and control of internships.

As much as the expert panel could observe, there aren't mainly repetitions in terms of content of BA and MA PAPs, and the logical sequence of contents of subject courses is ensured. There isn't any unified form for developing syllabi which is put into practice at GSU though suchlike document was developed and approved by the University. The literature mentioned in the syllabi is mostly out-of-date. There are selective courses in curricula, however, the site-visit has shown that only courses which are selected by the majority of students (among selective courses) are being organized.

Theoretical courses involved in curricula usually predominate over practical ones; the necessity to add hours for practical courses and internships was also raised by students.

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-centered learning.

For each course respective course guides have been developed. Course guides include the aim of the course, outcomes, teaching, learning and assessment methods. However, a clear policy defined for the selection of teaching methods is missing. It must be noted that the compliance between teaching and learning methods and anticipated learning outcomes is not ensured.

As the site-visit has shown, MA PAPs are implemented exclusively by means of providing lectures. In case of BA PAPs activities in some specialties are taken to invest modern teaching methods.

In order to evaluate the efficiency and selection of teaching and learning methods directed to the formation of knowledge, skills and competences, analyses of academic progress are being made at chairs, faculties and the Scientific Council after exams, and surveys are being conducted among students. However, the efficiency of all the mentioned processes is not comprehensively studied and respectively no steps are taken to eliminate the identified shortcomings.

Except for some rare cases, regular modernization of teaching and learning methods (in accordance with outcomes) is not ensured.

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

The policy on student assessment is regulated by the document on "Rating System of Control and Assessment of Students' Knowledge" which aims to inform GSU teaching staff and students about assessment methodology. Another important document regulating the mentioned field is the "Guideline for the Credit System Based Learning" the aim of which is to provide stakeholders information about the organization of education system.

According to the current GSU regulation, the assessment is carried out based on the following components: students' attendance to classes, practical activeness, mid-term exams defined by the given subject course twice per semester, and summative exams. By combining the assessment components, the summative grade is being extracted in accordance with the allocated percentages. The testing system of assessment (current/mid-term exams) is not used.

During the site-visit the stakeholders expressed their viewpoints about the addition of the component of oral checking in the assessment procedure conditioned by peculiarities of some specialties and shortcomings existing in the testing system.

In order to ensure academic honesty, Committee on Academic Honesty was formed in 2013 at GSU but as the meetings organized in the site-visit have shown, the activities of the mentioned Committee are absolutely inefficient and the applied mechanisms are weak. The University doesn't take steps to increase the awareness on academic honesty among students. GSU has developed an appeal system but the latter doesn't function on the base of defined procedures and it merely functions due to discussions held among heads of subdivisions. No feedback on appeal is provided. There aren't efficient mechanisms of detecting plagiarism at GSU yet.

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

The University doesn't have a clearly developed policy and a methodology of reliable toolset but GSU cooperated with Armenian State Pedagogical University (ASPU) and other universities implementing higher education in Pedagogy in Armenia within the framework of inter-university consortium and respectively made comparisons and compliance of its PAPs with those of the mentioned universities. The last revision of PAPs was implemented with ASPU and Oulu university of Finland in 2012-2013. As a result of the cooperation a number of PAPs (Armenian Language and Literature, Law, History, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Elementary School Pedagogy and Methodology) have been developed. The University has made changes in content of newly integrated PAPs, namely, the practical courses and internships have been more emphasized.

GSU takes efforts to made content-related and structural changes in PAPs as well as to ensure compliance of credit distribution of its PAPs with similar academic programs of Armenian and foreign universities, e.g. the content of PAP in "Electronic Techniques" was compared with other similar PAPs of RA and foreign universities.

The University has taken a number of joint activities with employers aimed at ensuring compliance of its programs with labor market requirements. In particular, in the development of the BA PAP in "Electroenergetics" and course descriptions the suggestions made by engineers of "Vorotan HPPS" were taken into consideration and some changes were made in the professional course block. Another good example is the participation of leading specialists of "GORIS GAMMA" and "INSTIGATE" companies in the development of the PAP in "Electronic Techniques". There are no mechanisms for promoting mobility, and the mobility indicators are at low level. The curricula have a "hard" structure.

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

The University has developed a regulation on "Development, Approval, Monitoring and Evaluation of GSU Professional Academic Programs and Curricula" which, however, doesn't function at institutional level.

The final attestation results, the reports of chairmen of examination commissions and surveys conducted among employers serve as bases for measuring the efficiency of PAPs.

The syllabi are developed and reviewed in respective professional chairs and are afterwards discussed and approved by faculty councils. The Division on Educational Affairs coordinates the mentioned process. The QA Division participates in the processes of development and approval of GSU PAPs. The Educational-Methodical Committee of the University reviews the content of syllabi. The Division on Educational Affairs provides methodical support, and unified formats for PAPs and syllabi are being developed.

The results of surveys conducted among internal and external stakeholders state about the necessity to make changes in PAPs. In particular, the employers state that students usually demonstrate a high level of theoretical knowledge while the level of practical skills is low.

The University has data on employability of its alumni but the analyses of those data are missing. The expert panel also states that there aren't mechanisms and any developed procedure for evaluating the risks of PAPs.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that the PAPs of the University are line with the defined mission and state educational standards, and the University makes attempts to ensure their compliance with the requirements of labor market. In particular, some new PAPs have been invested in recent times which are directed to the assurance of compatibility of PAPs with current regional needs.

The anticipated learning outcomes are defined in PAPs and they are mainly in line with the RA NQF, however, they usually have a generic formulation. From the perspective of professional peculiarities the improvement of PAPs will facilitate the evaluation of factually obtained outcomes.

The currently applied teaching and learning methods are mostly teacher-centered which hinders the fulfillment of the University's mission. In recent years GSU has made attempts to transfer to student-centered education. As the meeting with employers has shown, they are generally content with GSU alumni's knowledge. Hence, it may be concluded that teaching and learning methods used at GSU partially ensure the acquisition of anticipated outcomes, still practical components of PAPs need to be added.

It is positive that GSU has an assessment policy and standards set for assessment of final papers and master theses, however, they need to be improved; assessment methods used in the University are not always compatible with the anticipated outcomes which doesn't allow to measure the reached outcomes. Although the University has taken some steps to ensure academic honesty, the steps directed to the full assurance of academic honesty and prevention of plagiarism are not coordinated which emerges some risks in terms of ensuring objectiveness and transparency of assessment. Faculties and chairs of the University give importance to the assurance of academic honesty but GSU still needs to ensure the application of mechanisms at all levels of PAPs.

It is positive that the University has carried out benchmarking with Armenian and foreign universities, however, there isn't clearly developed policy and methodology of benchmarking at GSU which may hinder the coordination and sustainability of the processes. The fact that GSU PAPs are not always compatible as well as the "hard" structure of curricula hinder students' mobility. In general, GSU doesn't have mechanisms fostering mobility. GSU's efforts will foster the mobility of students and teaching staff if the University makes changes in content and structure of its PAPs, ensures their compatibility with similar PAPs of RA and foreign leading universities as well as compliance with their credit allocation.

It is also positive that the University has developed a regulation on development, approval, monitoring and evaluation of PAPs and curricula although the regulation hasn't yet fully been put into practice. Although GSU gives importance to the preparation of specialists with relevant competences required by the labor market, respective analyses on identification of labor market needs and those of internal and external stakeholders are missing. Such analyses would promote the improvement of processes of evaluation, monitoring and review of PAPs as well as would ensure feedback with stakeholders.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration the fact that GSU PAPs are in compliance with the defined mission and in line with the state educational standards and they are described in details according to the anticipated learning outcomes of awarded qualifications, the University has a policy on student assessment and appeal procedure, gives importance to the compliance of content of its PAPs with other academic programs, has a procedure of development, approval, evaluation and monitoring of PAPs and curricula and it takes some steps to foster mobility, the expert panel concludes that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 3.

CONCLUSION. The expert panel evaluates the consistence of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of the Criterion 3 as ***satisfactory.***

CRITERION 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.

The selection and admission of students for BA full-time education are carried out by the Regulation on Admission approved by RA Government (N597-Ն), for BA part-time education – by Regulations of RA

Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) (N 743-Ն), and for MA education – by RA MoES Regulation on Selection and Admission of Students for MA Education (N 1193-Ն).

There are many mechanisms of student recruitment used at GSU. In periods of September-November and March-May GSU representatives organize advertisement campaign during which GSU representatives introduce the University, its advantages and opportunities for applicants. Another mechanism of recruitment is the presentation of the University on advertisement posters in Goris city. GSU has a number of contracts with vocational education institutions of the region and throughout Armenia due to which learners of those institutions can continue their education in GSU. With the aim to recruit students, GSU prepares and disseminates brochures. Besides, the "Applicant" webpage is available on the official website of the University. However, the website is still in the process of updating and the information available to applicants is not sufficient. In order to ensure the inflow of applicants, there has been no significant increase of tuition fees for GSU learners in recent years except for the specialty of Law (in 2015 the tuition fee for part-time education formed 260.000 AMD which was increased up to 380.000 AMD). In order to plan the recruitment of students, the University also plans to establish a college which will function attached to GSU.

In spite of the fact that the University takes some activities the number of applicants for BA full-time education in some specialties (Law, Biology, Fine Arts, etc.) is very low as a result of which the section implementing full-time education in specialty of "Law" wasn't open, and only 3 students were admitted to the sections of "Biology" and "English Language and Literature".

The majority of GSU students study in part-time education which is conditioned by the regional peculiarities, affordability of tuition fees and the opportunity to simultaneously work. However, the registered indicators relating BA part-time education for the period 2011-2017 state that the number of applicants has been decreased in the recent 5 years which, according to GSU self-evaluation, is conditioned by the high level of unemployment, social vulnerability, emigration, decrease of interest to higher education, etc.

Generally taken, there are clear mechanisms of student recruitment, selection and admission at GSU but the recruitment mechanisms developed and applied at the University are not coordinated, and GSU doesn't make any evaluation of efficiency of the mentioned mechanisms.

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

In recent years GSU has developed and put into practice a number of mechanisms for studying students' academic needs. Surveys are regularly conducted among full-time students at GSU, and each year GSU conducts a survey on 'Teachers in the Eyes of Students". GSU Student Council also has its specific role in the processes of identifying students' needs. Full-time students are involved in GSU governing bodies (25%) but there are students who are at the same time involved in several governing bodies.

There is a Students' Consultancy Institute (formerly: Curators Board). There is a student consultant attached to each academic group who is also responsible for identifying students' academic needs. At the beginning of academic year faculties form up a clear time-schedule of student consultants and the time-schedule is disseminated among students and student consultants. Although the Students' Consultancy Institute was established in the previous academic year and now it factually functions, both consultants and administrative staff members as well as students state that the Institute hasn't yet developed.

Students can speak out about their needs by addressing them to GSU administration but the time-schedule for meeting the administrative staff is not always clear. The meetings with deans are often organized which also promotes them to raise their academic needs.

With the aim to put forward the needs of part-time students, surveys are conducted among part-time students who are not involved in governing bodies. The level of part-time students' participation in activities of Student Scientific Union and Student Council is very low.

Although some mechanisms for raising students' needs have been invested at GSU, their needs are not always met. For example, the conditions of labs and library fund are not satisfactory; the problem was raised but the University hasn't been able to solve the raised problem yet.

Generally, there are many mechanisms of student recruitment at GSU but their efficiency hasn't been studied by the University.

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

With the aim to provide consultancy to students after the investment of credit system, GSU has established a Curator's Board. Curators have been attached to academic groups and they have actively cooperated with students. Last academic year the Curators' institute was transformed and Students' Consultancy Institute was formed. The functions of the latter also include the provision of individual and group consultancy services to students. There are working schedules for student consultants in faculties (one day per week in one academic group) but the policy and procedures on control of their activities are missing.

Extracurricular/out-of-class activities are organized for students upon request, and both students and teachers mention that there were many suchlike cases in their practice. As students state, teachers are ready to support them and to provide consultancy. Conducted and ongoing courses are non-formal and there is a need to coordinate the mentioned process.

The clear schedule on provision of consultancies organized at chairs is missing but the meetings with students have shown that if needed, students can address to the given chair and to get necessary information.

The bridging courses and facultative courses for students with low level of academic progression are lacking. Although the vast majority of students have a problem concerning the proficiency in foreign languages, no facultative courses for developing their foreign language skills are organized at GSU. The level of participation of part-time students in facultative courses and in organization of consultancy services is low. The mechanisms for identifying the reasons of their poor participation and for increasing their activeness are missing.

According to GSU self-evaluation report, only 38% of students are satisfied with consultancy services, but an in-depth analysis of the conducted survey is missing, and it's not clear what reasons lie behind the inefficient evaluation of the activity.

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

There isn't any document on provision of support and guidance to students by GSU administrative staff which, according to GSU self-evaluation, is in the phase of development.

There isn't any clear time-schedule on provision of support and guidance to students, but as the meetings with students and administrative staff members have stated, the student-administrative staff link is open. Students can address their problems to dean's office, chairs and be provided with necessary support and guidance within a short period of time. GSU rector shows willingness to admit students and to support them in order to find respective solutions to the raised problems. According to GSU planning, student consultants should also deal with the mentioned issues, i.e. to reach students' problems to administrative staff. This is also stipulated in the functional framework of student consultants but this doesn't relate to part-time students. Students can indirectly address to GSU administrative staff through the Student Council and monitors of academic groups.

The mechanisms of addressing GSU administrative staff are comparatively weak; the e-mails of administrative staff members and the contact phone numbers of subdivisions are not available on the official website of the University, and the section for "Feedback" doesn't function. GSU has a webpage

where students can address their questions but their activeness in this domain (in terms of addressing questions) is at low level, and answers to the questions are not always quickly provided.

4.5. The Institution has student career support services.

On the 1st of September in 2011 the Student Career Support Center (SCSC) was established at GSU which was further united to the Department of International Cooperation and QA Division. This year it has been separated by the Department of International Cooperation and currently it functions together with QA Division. The activities of the SCSC are regulated by the regulation approved in 2012 and they aim to promote the increase of GSU competitiveness of students and graduates in labor market, to establish permanent link between the University and its alumni, to develop their cooperation as well as to solve problems which the University faces.

There is one position in the SCS Center. The staff member of the Center has taken significant activities in the direction of gathering information about GSU alumni and employers in recent years and establishing database. However, since February no meetings with employers and students have been organized by the Center so far.

The information about vacancies is provided by employers though in rare cases after which the provided information is published on Facebook webpage of GSU. The weak mechanisms of feedback with GSU alumni are considered to be the main reason that the Center doesn't have necessary information about the number of GSU graduates who were employed due to the Center in the previous year.

In the last years the SCSC hasn't carried out any studies on employability of GSU alumni, efficiency of the University-employer link, labor market and alumni's satisfaction which is also conditioned by the lack of human resources.

Chairs also provide services to support students in their career. In order to reinforce students' competitiveness in labor market, some chairs organize meetings with employers but the meetings are not periodically organized.

4.6. The Institution promotes student involvement in research activities.

With the aim to develop students' scientific and creative activities, to express and protect their professional interests and well as to establish links with scientific-educational organizations of Armenia and other countries, the Student Scientific Union (SSU) was established at GSU in 2017 which now actively takes activities in the University by organizing different conferences, discussions, meetings, seminars, sessions and by involving students in them. Students present their reports in faculties and in scientific sessions organized in other universities after which their works are mostly being published. GSU supports to the activities of the SSC by providing resources for the implementation of the planned activities.

The implementation of the research component of learning is ensured by the organization of internships with 6-month duration according to which students have opportunities to make lab experiments in their learning activity. Some teachers of the University involve students in their research activities and for being co-authors of scientific articles which are published, however, such cases are rare. MA students are more involved in scientific-research activities of the University as far as the implementation of scientific research is viewed as a compulsory component for MA education in GSU. By studying both final papers and master theses of GSU students, the expert panel came to the conclusion that the modernity of the topics chosen for research are mostly not paid attention to.

Attached to GSU there is a Syunik Research Center of Armenian Studies in the activities of which GSU students also take part.

The cases on students' participation in international conferences, internationalization of final papers, master theses with joint supervision and other research works can hardly be found. The regulation fostering students' scientific-research activities is missing.

There are some problems concerning the involvement of GSU part-time students in scientific-research activities which is conditioned by the passive role of students involved in SSU activities, by the difficulties existent in control processes of internship, by the short-term period of active learning in GSU, etc.

Studying the quantitative data on scientific works fulfilled by students in the last years presented in the self-evaluation report of GSU, it is obvious that the number of published works of GSU students is very limited, and the frame of students' involvement in research activities is narrow.

In general, GSU doesn't implement extensive scientific-research activities, therefore students cannot be actively involved in scientific research. Nevertheless, GSU tries hard to support students by giving them opportunities and allocating resources for the implementation and publication of scientific-research works.

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

The rights and responsibilities of GSU students are stipulated by the GSU Charter (Article 86) and internal disciplinary rules defined by GSU.

The body responsible for the protection of GSU students' rights is the Student Council (SC) which is a self-governing, selective representative body. It unites learners and protects their rights. According to the GSU self-evaluation report, about 12% of students are involved in SC, the latter being composed by a number of committees: cultural, regional, media and information, etc. In September SC representatives organize a meeting for freshman students, introduce their rights and responsibilities. In the last years the "Student Manual" has been developed which is mainly provided to students in September. The Manual includes information about students' rights and responsibilities which are also involved in contracts signed between students and the University. GSU provides financial support to the SC which is directed to the organization of public events. SC doesn't organize meetings for part-time students and they aren't absolutely involved in SC activities.

The Students' Consultancy Board is responsible for the introduction and protection of GSU students' rights and responsibilities. Although the mentioned Board is not developed yet, students state that in case some problems emerge, they mostly address to the consultants.

As far as the meetings with deans of faculties are periodically organized, this is another way for students to raise their complaints.

There is a grade appeal procedure in GSU but cases of appeal are rare. As the meetings with students have shown, students don't have any idea about the existence of appeal procedures and they have never been involved in appeal committees and the questions and conflicts which arise in examination periods are mainly solved through teachers, professional chairs and deans.

According to GSU self-evaluation report, with the aim to protect students' rights and interests, GSU also plans to establish a Committee on Protection of Students' Rights which will deal with the admission of students' appeals.

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

With the aim to enhance the quality of educational services provided to students, GSU conducts surveys. As the study of surveys has shown, the questions involved in the surveys do not relate to all spheres of services. Besides, the meetings with internal stakeholders have stated that students have an incredulous approach to surveys. GSU doesn't absolutely make any evaluation and analysis of provided support and other services.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel finds that there are a number of mechanisms of student recruitment at GSU but they are implemented spontaneously and there is a need to coordinate them and to evaluate their efficiency which

will foster the inflow of applicants. Taking into consideration the tendency of decreasing number of applicants in some specialties which results in cancellation of opening respective sections, it is obvious that mechanisms of recruiting students in the direction of those specialties are weak, inefficient, hence it is necessary to evaluate the situation and accordingly to make improvements by using more efficient mechanisms.

It is praiseworthy that the mechanisms of selection and admission are clear and regulated which leads to the assurance of objectiveness and transparency of the process.

The number of GSU mechanisms enable to identify the needs of full-time students but their needs are not always met which hinders the enhancement of quality of provided education. The activities taken in the direction of identifying the needs of students with any level of academic progression are weak and non-coordinated.

The expert panel finds that the identification of part-time students' needs is among weak points of GSU as far as the latter doesn't carry out such an activity which can essentially influence the quality of provided education, the improvement of its continuation and preparation of competitive specialists for the labor market.

In general, there is a necessity to coordinate the mechanisms of identifying students' needs, to identify the efficiency of the mentioned mechanisms and to enrich them with modern ways which will foster the formation of efficient educational environment and assurance of student-centered education.

The site-visit has shown that GSU isn't absolutely adjusted to students with special needs. Taking into consideration the regional peculiarities, the implementation of general inclusive education in Syunik region, the interests of students with special needs living in the mentioned region as well as the decrease of the number of GSU students, it is necessary to take serious steps to overcome the current problems which may stimpulate the increase of the number of applicants.

With the aim to ensure efficient learning for GSU students, consultancy services are provided to students by chairs and consultants on educational issues. However, this institute is in the phase of development which results in the low level of efficiency of their activities. There isn't any policy on organization of facultative courses; the latter aren't periodically organized and are mainly initiated by students to which teachers express their willingness to provide feedback, and GSU respectively provides necessary resources. However, taking into account the fact that the mentioned process is not coordinated, the efficiency of organized activities is not at high level.

The expert panel finds that in order to upgrade the level of foreign language proficiency, to identify the needs of students with low level of academic progression as well as to improve the situation it is necessary to apply a systemic approach by making studies on identification of reasons and by providing necessary consultancy and facultative courses for students as a result of which the level of students' foreign language proficiency will be upgraded, students' mobility will be activated and the preparation of specialists required by labor market will be ensured.

There isn't any clear time-schedule for addressing the administrative staff but it is praiseworthy that students may freely address their problems and questions to deans, heads of chairs and administrative staff members. The expert panel finds that the process needs to be regulated, clarified and enriched with mechanisms which will be available to students and will enhance the link between students and administrative staff as well as will foster the identification of students' needs and efficient planning of educational process.

By establishing a Student Career Support Center, GSU has taken a step forward to implement a number of important strategic objectives. The expert panel thinks that the level of efficiency of the Center's activity is rather low which is conditioned by the scarcity of resources, by being united with the Division of International Cooperation and QA Division, by the failure to evaluate, control and study the efficiency of the Center's activity. Nonetheless, the positive changes made in recent years can be observed.

GSU students aren't actively involved in scientific-research activities but the establishment of Student Scientific Union states that the University has paid attention to the problem and by using the capacities of the mentioned structural unit it plans to improve the situation. This will lead to the activation of students to be involved in research activities and will form a row of professional competences.

It is praiseworthy that GSU plans to form a committee which will deal with the protection of students' rights. Currently these functions are fulfilled by the Student Council and educational consultants which work with full-time students only, and part-time students are not involved in the mentioned bodies. In general, there are structural units which deal with the protection of GSU students' rights but there is a necessity to plan, coordinate their activities as well as to improve the quality and enlarge the involvement of part-time students. This will lead to the increase of awareness on students' rights and will promote the identification and restoration of violated rights.

The expert panel finds that GSU doesn't pay enough attention to the evaluation and quality assurance of students' educational, consultancy and other services. In spite of the fact that surveys are regularly conducted among students, the efficiency of survey conduction is at low level, the methodology is poor, and the evaluation and improvement followed by conducted surveys are not sufficient. The University doesn't make study on efficiency of mechanisms of evaluating provided services either which brings to the non-coordinated study of current situation in terms of services, incomplete identification of existing problems and their inefficient solution.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration the fact that there are clear mechanisms of student recruitment and admission and involvement of students in decision-making processes, some mechanisms of involving students in scientific-research activities and those of protecting students' rights as well as the developed student manual, the expert panel concludes that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 4.

CONCLUSION. The expert panel evaluates the consistence of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of the Criterion 4 as ***satisfactory.***

CRITERION V. TEACHING AND SUPPORT STAFFS

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 supporting staff for the provision of academic programs.

In GSU strategy the University gives importance to teaching and support staffs with necessary qualities for the implementation of goals of PAPs.

The formation of teaching and support staffs is ensured according to the RA Law on Education, RA Law on Higher and Postgraduate Vocational Education, provisions of RA Labor Code and is stipulated in the "GSU internal Working Rules" and "Temporary Regulation on Formation of Teaching Staff".

The "Temporary Regulation on Formation of Teaching Staff" approved by GSU Scientific Council in 2007 defines the rules and conditions for competitive selection and positioning of teaching staff as well as principles on appointment of positions and re-signing of contracts. The recruitment of vacancies of chairs is carried out in accordance with the criteria which are published beforehand, in particular, professional education, qualification, specialization and their compliance with the subject field, work experience, existence of pedagogical talent, scientific degree and title. However, according to the data registered in 2016, 67 teaching staff members among 112 do not have scientific degree, and 78 of them do not hold scientific title. It should be stated that teachers who have scientific degree are not equally distributed in accordance with some PAPs.

The efficiency of recruitment mechanisms hasn't been evaluated by GSU yet. The labor relations with teaching staff are regulated on contractual basis which defines the rights and obligations of the parties.

The following types of labor contracts function in GSU for hiring teaching staff: teaching staff employed on contractual basis, double jobbing and hourly rate. The competition-based selection for staff members employed on external double-jobbing basis is not carried out.

There isn't any procedure on competition-based selection of support staff. The formation of positions is made by the introduction of the head of respective subdivision. Support staff members are mainly recruited from the University's graduates who have shown high level of academic progression during their learning and have respective qualification.

As the site-visit has shown, all the deans and some of the heads of chairs of GSU keep on functioning as acting heads about a year in their positions.

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

GSU has set criteria for positioning of teaching staff. For the selection of teaching staff for each academic program the basic education, working experience (in teaching), work experience in industry (the given sphere), competition and qualification results. However, the requirements set for professional qualities of teaching staff according to PAPs are not defined which was stated by the study of separate PAPs. The job descriptions are lacking.

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

A number of procedures for the regular evaluation of teaching staff have been defined, namely, class observations, anonymous surveys conducted among students, annual reports.

In some chairs class observations are carried out according to the time-schedule which is formed beforehand, and in some other cases they are implemented spontaneously. Class observations are mainly carried out by heads of chairs. The University doesn't have the practice of reciprocal class observations. Respective records on the results of class observations are made by the heads of chairs and they are summed up during chair sessions in presence of all attendees. However, during the site-visit it turned out that no practical steps are taken towards improvement of identified shortcomings. The documents stating the provided consultancies and respective records made by chairs are missing. Nonetheless, the meetings with teachers have shown that this process informally helps them to understand their shortcomings.

The regular evaluation of teaching staff by students is carried out by a separate questionnaire after the completion of each exam session. This process partially ensures the regularity and coordination of evaluation of teachers' professional qualities and their performance. But the results of survey analyses aren't being discussed and no steps are taken towards elimination of identified shortcomings.

At the beginning of an academic year the teacher presents his/her annual work plan on which a report is given at the end of the year. However, there isn't any procedure on evaluation of results of the plans, and the reports are fictive.

In general, the University hasn't made coordinated analysis of efficiency of mechanisms set for the evaluation of GSU teaching staff.

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

GSU gives importance to the training process of teachers. With this aim, a regulation on "Qualification Enhancement and Training of Teaching and Support Staffs" has been developed. According to the mentioned regulation, some trainings (foreign language teaching, computer skills, use of IT in educational process) have been organized in GSU. Conditioned by the mobility rate of GSU teaching staff, the University highly gives importance to the increase of foreign language proficiency. However, the majority of GSU teaching staff doesn't have sufficient level of knowledge of English which is important for ensuring

mobility and internationalization, and French which is required in the region. This is conditioned by the fact that the organized trainings were short-term and non-regular which didn't bring desirable results. The analysis of training results is not carried out, the needs aren't identified either, hence, no steps necessary for the improvement of trainings are taken by the University.

The mechanisms for improving teachers' professional qualities in accordance with their professional needs are still missing; in this context, the activities mentioned by the teachers were rare and they were mainly organized upon their personal initiative. The University realizes the problems currently existent in this sphere.

Although the trainings which are organized within the framework of TEMPUS, ERASMUS+ projects also promote qualification enhancement of GSU teaching staff but very few of them are involved in the mentioned projects.

With the aim to enhance the professional activities of teaching staff, conferences are held at GSU but the majority of them weren't involved in the mentioned conference. However, it can be stated that conditioned by the small size of the University, practice exchange is somehow ensured among chairs which contains informal components of training.

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

There are staff members functioning on double-jobbing basis in all chairs of GSU, and in some chairs their number exceeds the number of the main staff. The expert panel faced some cases which showed that some of the teachers taught ten subjects at the same time. There are teachers working at GSU who have been invited by other universities. For the implementation of PAPs the University also invites specialists on external double-jobbing basis who have work experience in industry; the involvement of employer-teachers has a positive impact as far as they stand closer to the labor market and are well aware of the requirements set by labor market and they promote the investment of practical component in PAPs.

The University gives importance to the involvement of young staff and has developed a regulation on organization of promotion to young teachers which is still in the drafting stage. However, the average age of GSU teaching staff is rather high (43%) which states about the fact that the activities directed to the recruitment of young teachers and ensuring their promotion have been insufficient.

To ensure the sustainability of teaching staff, there are mechanisms of teachers' promotion stipulated in internal working rules of GSU. However, the mentioned mechanisms aren't applied in a coordinated way. As the meetings with teaching staff have shown, none of the teachers was promoted for his/her scientific or pedagogical activity. Still there are other informal procedures, in particular, the salary is maintained during business trips, transportation is ensured, and teachers participate in projects organized by other organizations without any obstacles. The top management of the University states that a new mechanism of salary differentiation is being elaborated.

There isn't any analysis on activities carried out in research, teaching and administrative spheres and on workload of teaching staff.

The analyses of internal and external flows of teachers are missing.

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

There is a temporary regulation on formation of GSU teaching staff functioning at GSU where the qualitative (professor, associate professor, assistant, teacher) and quantitative descriptors of categories and criteria are stipulated.

There are some mechanisms of promotion for high level of performance, investment of innovation, active participation in scientific-research and social activities. However, as it has already mentioned above, these mechanisms aren't applied in a coordinated way.

The mechanisms fostering the mobility of teaching staff are missing.

The activities taken for freshman teachers aren't coordinated, the mentoring institute is lacking.

There are some mechanisms of promoting PhD students' progression (respective conditions are created for young teachers to be able to implement their post-graduate education in other higher education institutions as well without being digressed from their main activity).

In general, the University doesn't put any obstacles against the development of teachers' professional qualities but the provided resources are not sufficient.

5.7 The Institution has necessary administrative and support staffs to achieve the strategic goals.
The formation of position list of administrative and support staffs and the definition of working responsibilities are regulated by GSU Charter and by regulations of respective structural units. The number of administrative staff member is 21 (2015-2016) which forms the 11% of the staff, and the number of support staff members is 32 – 16% of the staff. The functions of support staff are defined by the rector's order (1 September 2010). The support staff consists of staff members responsible for laboratories, coordinators, staff members responsible for classroom-cabinets, office workers, computer operators. The support staff functions in faculty units and is accountable to the faculty management. The University states that it plans to develop a regulation on attestation of support staff and job descriptions of administrative and support staffs.

The administrative-management system has undergone significant structural reforms in recent years. The faculties have been re-organized, and new sections have been established in the administrative structure. However, from the perspective of staff changes the University didn't give any concrete answer about why acting heads as such function in some positions for such a long time. No evaluations of efficiency of administrative and support staff's activities are made.

In general, the University hasn't allocated sufficient human resources for the efficient implementation of some of its strategic goals (research, internationalization, quality assurance, etc.) yet.

CONSIDERATIONS
The expert panel finds it positive that there is a regulation (though a temporary one) on selection of teaching staff which fosters the coordinated selection of teachers but from the perspective of ensuring efficiency the mentioned mechanisms haven't been evaluated. In some cases the recruitment of teaching staff functioning on non-competitive basis can influence the quality of educational services provided to students as well as the objectiveness of the process. There are no requirements set for teachers' professional qualities for each academic program which would promote the efficient implementation of PAPs.

There isn't any procedure for competitive selection of support staff in GSU which can negatively influence the objectiveness and purposeful fulfillment of processes of support staff selection.

During the site-visit it turned out that the heads of faculties and chairs function as acting heads for a long time which has a negative impact on increase of motivation and sustainability.

It is positive that there are defined mechanisms for regular evaluation of teaching staff, however, the absence of analyses of invested mechanisms doesn't allow to judge about their efficiency, and the University doesn't mainly take respective activities to eliminate the identified shortcomings which actually hinder the quality enhancement of teaching.

Another positive point is that GSU has taken some steps towards improvement of teaching staff's activities but the low level of efficiency of courses directed to the development of foreign language skills and the lack of activities directed to the enhancement of teachers' professional qualities hinder the continuous development of teachers and the processes of mobility and internationalization of PAPs.

The activities taken for freshman teachers are not coordinated at GSU, the mentoring institute is missing which can hinder the development of freshman teachers and can have an impact on the quality and development of teaching.

In the last 5 years an increase of qualitative indicators relating the teaching staff (doctor, candidate of sciences, professor, associate professor) has been registered; such indicators are praiseworthy and they definitely lead to the enhancement of teaching quality. However, the recruitment with teaching staff is not ensured as far as the low indicators of admission (the formation of small academic groups of students brings to the reduction of workload of teachers working on full-time basis) bring to the salary decrease which in its turn influences staff flow. As a consequence, the number of teachers working on external double-jobbing basis is significant in some chairs. Although this is positive, employer-teachers having work experience in the field of industry are also invited to teach on external double-jobbing basis as far as they foster the investment of the practical component in PAPs. It is worrisome that several subjects are taught by one and the same teacher as far as this may influence the quality of teaching and may hinder the regular educational process.

Although the University doesn't create any obstacles against professional development of teachers, no practical steps are taken towards that which is mainly conditioned by the scarcity of financial resources. The absence of clear policy on planning and retention of human resources may also put at risk the implementation of PAPs.

It is significant that the University plans to develop a regulation on organization of promotion for young teachers and it has promotion mechanisms but their incomplete application may bring to the decrease of teachers' motivation. In this context it is positive that GSU has taken the initiative to develop a new mechanism for salary diversification based on carried out activities.

Although the administrative-management system has undergone significant structural changes in recent years, the University doesn't yet allocate sufficient human resources for the efficient implementation of its strategic goals. The normative set for the formation of positions are missing. The University doesn't make evaluation of efficiency of activities of administrative and support staff which may bring to the incomplete implementation of educational services.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration the fact that there are procedures on selection and evaluation of teaching staff, the University takes some steps to support teaching staff and improve their activity, it has teaching staff with respective qualifications in line with GSU PAPs, the expert panel finds that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 5.

CONCLUSION. The expert panel evaluates the consistence of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of the Criterion 5 as *satisfactory.*

CRITERION VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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

FINDINGS

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

GSU has generally stipulated its ambitions in research field in the GSU Concept 2011-2016 according to which the research field is one of the priorities of the University.

The goals and objectives defined in the field of research by the University are too ambitious and too generic, they don't reflect the specific research interests and priorities of the University and the link with the regional needs. It should be noted that as a regional higher education institution, the coordinated research activities on current regional problems are few.

There isn't any specific document which would point out the ways of reaching the goals in the field of research and which would reflect concrete actions and required resources in accordance with which the chairs would develop and fulfill their research activities.

There isn't any analysis on distribution of resources allocated for the mentioned activities and on the quality and efficiency of scientific-research activities in accordance with the University's research directions and chairs.

There isn't any special article in the University's budget referring to the financing of scientific-research activities directed to the achievement of set goals and solution to the emerged problems. On the one hand, according to the provided documents, GSU allocated financial means for organizing conferences, for obtaining equipment and materials for laboratories and for enriching library with professional literature. Although it was defined to direct at least 10% of expenditures of the University to the field of research and development since 2012, as it was mentioned in the Concept 2011-2016, the expenditures allocated to research and development overall formed only 4,19% of annual expenditures in 2016. Besides, in spite of the fact that some scientific projects have been implemented at GSU due to the state budget and interstate financing in recent years, GSU doesn't take practical steps in the direction of allocation of financial resources for fostering scientific-research activities.

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

As it was mentioned above, the University hasn't developed any document which would define a row of long-term actions in such a sequence which would bring to the solution of the objectives mentioned in the Concept.

At the same time some short-term actions are carried out in the following way: at the beginning of the year every teacher presents a working plan on the basis of which he/she should fulfill some activities in the given academic year, including research activities. The results of scientific-research activities carried out by all chairs of GSU which are presented in annual reports of faculties (the reports are discussed in sessions of GSU Scientific Council) only include statistics; the results are not analyzed from the perspective of efficiency and their impact, and the monitoring of the research process and results isn't carried out.

The University organizes conferences both inside GSU and at international level and publication of scientific articles and educational-methodical works.

During the site-visit it was clear that some teachers together with students had reports in national conferences and respectively scientific materials were prepared.

Only some of the teaching staff առե actively involved in research processes, and in recent 3 years the decrease of the number of teachers' scientific-research works can be observed which GSU links with the decrease of level of teaching staff's scientific interest. However, there isn't any study on the mentioned issue. The teaching staff mainly carries out individual research according to their own interests, and the overall number of scientific-research works in line with directions of chairs is not high. The system of organizing scientific seminars at level of chairs is missing.

Although there are some quantitative data on research projects carried out at GSU in the self-evaluation report, no analysis of project results has been provided.

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

There aren't any clear documented policy and procedures on GSU research and development. There aren't any coordinated steps taken for the implementation of goals mentioned in the Concept 2011-2016. There isn't any structural unit coordinating the scientific-research activity of GSU or any subdivision fulfilling similar functions. There is a draft regulation on organization of promotion of GSU young teachers which aims to promote young teachers to make research activities. However, as the meetings organized in the University have shown, none of them have been promoted for making research.

For the current period there aren't mechanisms which have been factually used to foster research development and innovation. The research outcomes aren't commercialized.

There is a Student Scientific Union at GSU but the link between students' research activities and interests and GSU scientific-research directions is weak. There isn't any policy on promotion and development of students' research activity.

The materials on ensuring academic honesty and preventing plagiarism in research works and which are prepared for publication are discussed in respective chairs, and the monographs, educational manuals and educational-methodical works are discussed at faculty councils after which they are presented for publication by approval of the Scientific Council. In order to promote academic honesty and to prevent plagiarism, GSU has put into practice the Concept on Academic Honesty since 2012. The Concept defines the behavior manifestations of academic dishonesty and the procedure on solution of cases of academic dishonesty. According to the mentioned Concept, at the end of each year the Commission on Academic Honesty should publish a summative report (Point 6.2) but it is not available on the website or in the rector's annual report. It should be noted that all the meetings stated that the Concept on Academic Honesty doesn't function.

6.4 The Institution emphasizes internationalization of its research.

As mentioned in the Concept/strategy of GSU, the University gives importance to the necessity to internationalize its research activities but there isn't any regulated policy or mechanisms of involving students and teachers in international research activities. The clear planning and implementation of activities directed to the internationalization of research are missing.

The regular organization of international conferences at GSU is among steps directed to the internationalization of research activities. In 2010 and 2011 two international conferences were held in the University and respective reports were published in scientific journals. The 8th international conference devoted to "Issues of Dynamics of the Interaction of Deformative Environments" was held in 2014. Another international scientific conference devoted to "Education, Science and Economy at Higher Education Institutions and Schools" was held at GSU. However, a very limited number of participants from foreign countries took part in the mentioned conferences.

Some teachers who are more active in taking research activities periodically participate in both national and international conferences held at GSU and other HEIs of Armenia. However, the level of teaching staff's foreign language proficiency (particularly English) is low.

The number of publications in both RA and international (CIS and other countries) peer-reviewed professional journals is very limited. In 2016 only one scientific work was published in international peer-reviewed professional journal. According to the presenting data for 2012-2016, in rare cases the research works are published in journals (having no impact factor) and, as a rule, they are published at national level, particularly in journals within the interstate scientific-research area. The University realizes the necessity to take improvement steps in this direction.

Currently there isn't any fact stating about the University's involvement in international research grants or about cooperation with international scientific-research centers or institutions.

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

As GSU self-evaluation report states, the University gives importance to the interconnection of educational processes and research activity and it plans to stipulate it as a strategic objective in the new strategic concept.

Master theses are considered to be the main mechanisms of interlinking research and educational process at GSU. The topics of master theses are suggested mainly taking into consideration the direction of teachers' scientific-research activities of the given chair as well as students' potential and their scientific interest.

As the study of master theses carried out by the expert panel has shown, the research component is not well developed; the goals, methodology, methods and research disciplinary frames are mainly not defined. The direction of applicability is mostly not emphasized in master theses. It should also be noted that there isn't any unified database of master theses which would allow to control and to prevent plagiarism.

The mechanisms promoting inter-chair and interdisciplinary research activities or any study on their efficiency or impact are missing.

It can be stated that results of research carried out by teachers are informally invested in educational process and are being fragmentally reflected in course descriptions. However, the University doesn't make evaluation of impact of teachers' individual research outcomes on improvement of courses or the efficiency of research activities from the perspective of their impact on educational process.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel is positive about the fact that there are provisions in the GSU Concept which reflect the University's interests in the field of research. However, they are too ambitious, and there are too many research directions especially taking into account the absence of a subdivision which could coordinate the scientific-research activity of the University. Hence, this puts at risk the implementation of the mentioned provisions.

It is worrisome that the University hasn't developed any concrete indicators of evaluation of set objectives in the field of research, otherwise it would be possible to make the outcomes measurable.

GSU doesn't make financial planning in the scientific-research field and doesn't allocate sufficient financial resources from the budget for the development of GSU scientific-research activity. The research isn't considered to be a source of income for the University. The research outcomes aren't commercialized even at the level of planning. GSU tries to be involved in scientific-research grant projects, the latter viewing as a source of additional financial inflows directed to the scientific-research activity. However, the results of taken steps are not that much tangible. The investment GSU has made is not enough for obtaining modern basic laboratories and equipment directed to the solution of problems which are currently existent in GSU's scientific-research field. This endangers the achievement of goals set by the University's strategy/Concept.

There isn't any specific document or a policy on implementation of strategic goals defined in GSU's research field, otherwise it would be possible to regulate the research activities and make the strategic priorities targeted. Research activities are mainly carried out based on personal initiative of teaching staff in accordance with personal preferences which aren't interlinked with the University's strategy and may thus negatively influence the coordination of research activities, control of their organization, evaluation of efficiency, quality of teaching, interconnection between the content of provided courses and educational process.

The absence of concretely set priorities in research field doesn't create a favorable environment for GSU from the perspective of GSU's specific role in the region.

The interdisciplinary research activities are missing at GSU which would lead to the accumulation of scientific-research potential, the cooperation among different chairs and dissemination of best practices.

The GSU regulation on organization of promotion of teaching staff is in the phase of drafting, hence GSU's research priorities and the selection and development of young staff necessary for the achievement of the set priorities aren't carried out by clear mechanisms and methodology. GSU doesn't operate any policy directed o the promotion of international research among young scientists.

The absence of analysis of activities in the field of research and development doesn't allow to judge about the efficiency which may hinder the further development of GSU's research activities and the implementation of actions of improvement.

GSU gives importance to the necessity of internationalization of research works but the steps directed to the involvement of learners and teachers in international research initiatives aren't tangible yet.

It is positive that a Student Scientific Union has been established at GSU and a number of national and international conferences have been held. However, carried out research activities are published (in rare cases) in journals without impact factor and they are mainly published in local journals which actually hinders the internationalization of research outcomes.

The requirements set for scientific-research activities, mechanisms of knowledge management and qualitative and quantitative indicators of evaluation are not clear. The reports are not analytical. The University doesn't have a policy regulating the involvement of students and teachers in research initiatives which decreases teachers' and students' motivation to carry out research and endangers the formation of research skills and competences of students.

There aren't any analyses and studies on efficiency of interlink between research and educational process. The link of research with learning is ensured based on teachers' initiative without any set mechanisms which may have a negative impact on coordination of processes linking the research activity and educational process. Within the framework of PAPs students' involvement in research activities is ensured by preparing final papers, master theses and very little part of students participate in research activities jointly with teachers.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration the fact that the University's research priorities and main directions aren't clearly defined and coordinated, the policies coordinating the scientific-research activities are missing, the scientific-research activities are mainly carried out based on personal initiative, the carried out research activities aren't targeted and planned, policies and mechanisms coordinating the involvement of students and teachers in international research initiatives are missing, clear mechanisms for investing research outcomes in educational process and published works in journals with impact factor can hardly be found, the expert panel concludes that GSU doesn't meet the requirements of the Criterion 6.

CONCLUSION. The expert panel evaluates the consistence of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of the Criterion 6 as ***unsatisfactory.***

CRITERION VII.INFRASTRUCTURE AND RECOURSES

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

FINDINGS

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

In the strategy/Concept the University has set an objective to consistently take purposeful activities directed to the assurance and improvement of material-technical resources necessary for the implementation of PAPs.

For the implementation of educational services GSU has 6 buildings with 2,28 hectares of land. The total surface of buildings is 7672,5 square/meters. The educational process is ensured in 3 buildings.

As the observation of resource base by the expert panel has shown, there is respective number classrooms for ensuring two-shift education. There are 4 computer rooms in the University, and the majority of the rest of classrooms need to be re-equipped and renovated.

GSU library (it is situated in a separate building) has 5 book-storages with 68956 units of the library fund. The library operates guided by the RA Law on Library Work and Information and GSU Charter. The site-visit showed that the University doesn't have enough modern professional literature in different spheres. During the meetings with students and teachers the majority of them also mentioned about the necessity to enrich professional literature of the library. The library archives are not in a favorable condition

because of the lack of financial means. Although some reconstruction activities were planned to take in the educational building N2 and library, as it was mentioned in the Concept, the results are not visible yet. GSU isn't subscribed to any professional journal and isn't a member of international library networks either. Some part of the library fund has been donated. The library participates in Erasmus+LNSS project (Library network support services: modernizing libraries in Armenia, Moldova and Belarus through library staff development and reforming libraries). It should be mentioned that the impact of the mentioned project hasn't been clearly targeted by GSU. As a result of co-financing of the project the University has one furnished reading hall. The latter and the rest of the buildings ensure availability of internet, including two WiFi zones.

The University has a conference hall for organizing meetings and discussions.

There are labs of Chemistry and Biology which need to be modernized. Two classrooms for teaching Fine Arts which have been equipped with some educational materials have also been open.

Due to the Contour Global Hydro-Cascade and GSU cooperation, the laboratory of Electronics attached to the chair of Electronics and Energetics has been renovated and re-equipped in the 6th building of the University.

There is one building for student canteen but currently it doesn't function. GSU has a dormitory but most of its rooms are privatized. The sanitary hygienic conditions of the other rooms are not ensured.

The University has a sports hall and some sport facilities but the sports hall and attached dressing rooms also need to be renovated.

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

The University ensures financing in 2 ways: on budgetary and extra-budgetary bases. The extra-budgeting is formed by tuition fees and grants. In order to manage and control financial flows of the University, an annual estimate of financial inflows and outflows is formed. The budget performance is presented after the completion of financial year based on factual data.

The major part of financial means are formed due to tuition fees. GSU doesn't have other sustainable financial inflows except for the inflows which are ensured by main educational activity.

The major part of the University's expenditures is directed to the salary fund. It should be mentioned that because of financial difficulties GSU has been facing in the recent 4 years the salary allocated to GSU staff hasn't been increased.

From the perspective of means which are directed to maintenance of infrastructure, the University has managed to ensure planned indicators at the expense of grant projects ("ASPIERE", "MAHATMA", "ARARAT" projects of TEMPUS, other allocations provided by "Center for Education Projects PIU", etc.).

GSU financial flows haven't been audited so far, and the analysis of cost-effectiveness from the perspective of implementation of strategic goals mentioned in the Concept is missing. In the meeting with the rector the expert panel was informed that the University plans regular audits in the near future.

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

There isn't any unified policy on formation, distribution and management of financial resources directed to the implementation of the University's PAPs. The distribution of financial resources is made on annual basis. The annual budget of GSU is approved by the Board of the University.

In expenditure planning the University takes into account the petitions/applications based on needs of GSU structural units. At the end of each academic year faculties present their annual academic workload for the next year on the base of which the formation of vacancies for teaching staff and respective remuneration are ensured.

Another mechanism of resource distribution is the purchase of goods, works and services based on the claims of subdivisions organized by GSU Department on Purchasing and Supply.

Every year the University gives a report on expenditures and performance regarding financial inflows and outflows both to the Scientific Council and GSU Board.

In order to evaluate the purposeful use of financial means, the University plans to apply for an independent audit company service and to have audit conclusion at the end of each financial year.

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

The planning for acquisition of necessary resources directed to the improvement of GSU material-technical base and assurance of educational process as well as the policy on distribution of resources are ensured by separate responsible administrative staff members or respective subdivisions.

GSU plans to obtain necessary resources for the upcoming financial year according to the requirement set by the RA law on Procurements. The purchase plan is formed based on the requirements set by all structural units of the University.

As a rule, the acquisition of resources is ensured in a centralized way and their distribution is made according to separate subdivisions and upon resource needs. There isn't any coordinated and regularly made analysis in order to identify if the existing resource base ensures the efficient implementation of PAPs.

The 3 PAPs which have been studied by the expert panel are mainly ensured by respective resource base. The current or previously implemented grant projects have given the University an opportunity to some extent enrich material resources. However, the professional literature available in GSU library and educational-methodical manuals are few.

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

The GSU documentary circulation is regulated by the Regulation on GSU Administration. The control over documentary circulation/correspondence and the application of the unified regulation is ensured by the Department of Staff Management. The internal documentary circulation is mainly being operated on paper basis and through emails. The University plans to establish an electronic system of internal documentary circulation in the near future. Besides, the "Mulberry" electronic management system has been invested at GSU which enables the University to manage the flow of documents. The electronic versions of newly formed documents are available at GSU which facilitates the transfer of internal information among subdivisions and their publication (some part of the developed documents weren't digitized before).

There is a Division of PR and Media which is responsible for disseminating information. The official website of GSU, the Facebook webpage and GSU official newspaper promote the dissemination of information. However, the policy on publishing external information is missing. Although GSU has an official website, it needs to finalize and refresh the existing information.

The archiving of documents reflecting the activities of different subdivisions of GSU is ensured by the staff member responsible for archive. However, there is still a problem concerning the preservation of information and documents available in some subdivisions, e.g. in case a staff member is dismissed, some problems may emerge in regard to preservation and archiving of documents of the given subdivision.

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

The activities of health and safety services are coordinated by the GSU senior engineer. The health and safety maintenance process is implemented according to the GSU procedure on maintenance of GSU staff and students' health and safety.

There is a medical spot at GSU which provides first aid and limited medical services as well as necessary first aid drugs in limited numbers. The medical spot has a register. GSU also cooperates with Goris Polyclinics which provides annual medical check services for the GSU internal stakeholders.

GSU students with special needs are annually provided insignificant amount of money for using the dormitory rooms which belong to the University. However, the sanitary hygienic conditions of the dormitory are not ensured.

In emergency situations the civil protection of students and staff of the University is ensured by GSU Civil Protection Headquarter. Antifire protection systems, fire extinguishers and other necessary equipment are available in buildings of the University. However, the buildings are not equipped with automatic alarm system for fire. There is a shelter in basement floors of two buildings for force majeure circumstances. Permanent evacuation commissions and schemes are available in all GSU campuses.

There are less than two dozens of students with special needs studying at GSU and they mainly study in part-time education but the University isn't adjusted to their needs at all. Within the framework of TEMPUS "ASPIRE" project ("Access to Society for People with Individual Requirements") a classroom for ensuring inclusive education has been established but it doesn't function yet.

The infrastructure conditions for students and teachers with disabilities are limited with one ramp which is situated in the building N1. However, it is not built for people with disabilities from the perspective of its functionality. The absence of necessary conditions is explained by the scarcity of the University's financial resources.

The sanitary cleaning activities are carried out by the subdivision responsible for logistics. The university doesn't allocate means to ensure individual rest of students and staff and to organize health restoration activities.

GSU doesn't have a service of food provision as far as the canteen doesn't function.

There is a sports hall for the organization of students' physical training. The nearby open-air area can be used for the same purpose which, however, doesn't have necessary conditions, and the sports hall and the dressing rooms need to be renovated.

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

The evaluation of applicability, availability and efficiency of resources which are provided to GSU students and teachers is made by means of regularly conducted surveys on satisfaction with resources and services. Although surveys are conducted, they do not reflect all kinds of resources and services, and there isn't any elaborated plan of improvement based on the results of evaluation results, and facts indicating their implementation aren't existent either.

During the site-visit different stakeholders mentioned that the University's resource base needs to be replenished and modernized.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel positively evaluates GSU's efforts directed to the allocation of respective resources for the implementation of its mission and strategic goals.

Although the University tries to allocate and to find financial means for re-equipment, improvement, modernization and enlargement of classrooms, lab conditions, library fund and other infrastructures, GSU's financial resources are limited, and the enrichment of resource base is mainly ensured within the framework of international grant projects. The major part of the University's buildings need to be renovated, and classrooms are mainly not technically equipped which may hinder the organization of

student-centered learning. GSU needs to obtain new equipment and facilities which will improve the educational process and will foster the implementation of research activities by students and teachers. The library management infrastructure is poor. GSU library needs to be refreshed with new professional literature and to obtain digitized literature. The furnished reading hall creates favorable conditions for the improvement of educational process. The membership to different library networks will lead to the increase of awareness on recent developments of different spheres and will foster the development of educational processes. The unfavorable condition of the sports hall also hinders the efficient organization of educational process at GSU. The improper conditions of the dormitory may bring to the decrease of attraction towards GSU among invited teachers and may hinder the involvement of applicants.

GSU doesn't have any clear policy on distribution and management of financial resources in accordance with strategic priorities which may hinder the implementation of strategic goals. Although the scarcity of financial resources enables to solve urgent problems only, GSU tries to efficiently manage its resources and to economize them.

GSU budget is mainly formed by students' tuition fees which may cause some problems from the perspective of sustainability. In this term GSU doesn't have a policy on diversification of financial flows. Besides, the absence of analysis of efficiency of distribution and use of financial resources doesn't enable to evaluate and analyze the indicators of financial sustainability and development opportunities.

As the site-visit has shown, the GSU resource base is mainly sufficient for the implementation of PAPs but the fulfillment of improvements in the mentioned areas would foster the improvement of educational processes and assurance of sustainability.

It is positive that there is a procedure on management of information and documentation/ correspondence. However, it should be mentioned that in some subdivisions there is a need for improvement of documentation processes. The University has planned to develop an electronic system of internal documentation circulation which will make the collection of information easier and coordinated, thus increasing the efficiency of management.

GSU has created a safe environment due to services directed to the maintenance of health and safety. The University takes first steps only in the direction of creating necessary conditions for people with disabilities which should be continuous. The creation of favorable conditions for people with special needs gives an opportunity to involve new students which in its turn will have a positive impact on assurance of social equity and will increase the number of applicants and financial inflows.

It is positive that the University periodically conducts surveys on satisfaction with resources and services which enables the University to identify shortcomings. However, GSU doesn't take steps directed to the solution of identified problems based on evaluation results which is mainly conditioned by the scarcity of financial resources.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration the fact that the University has created necessary educational environment for the implementation of vocational education with limited financial resources, GSU resource base gives an opportunity to fulfill the set goals and the defined mission, there is a management system of information and documentation, the services directed to the maintenance of safe and healthy environment of the University are sufficient, GSU pays attention to internal stakeholders' satisfaction with resources, the expert panel concludes that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 7.

CONCLUSION. The expert panel evaluates the consistence of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of the Criterion 7 as ***satisfactory***.

CRITERION VIII. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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

FINDINGS

8.1. The Institution has clear policy on accountability.

The accountability process at GSU is regulated by RA laws on "Higher and Post-Graduate Vocational Education", "Education", "State Non-Profit Organizations", a number of RA Government decrees as well as GSU Charter.

GSU is accountable to the society and to its founder –the Republic of Armenia on behalf of RA Government, and it has a clear functioning mechanism of accountability.

Every year reports presented by GSU subdivisions, faculties and chairs are summed up in the rector's annual report which is presented to the GSU Board. Rector's annual reports for 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 have been posted on the University's official website. The reports reflect different fields of activities of the University but the reports aren't linked with GSU strategy, and the problems raised in the previous reports aren't reflected in them either.

GSU accountability system is hierarchical and mostly has a vertical direction. It should be noted that the reports of the University's subdivisions presented in recent years are more practical and comprehensive. One of the mechanisms of accountability to the society is the presentation of reports to the RA MoES, State Committee of Science, State Revenue Committee, National Statistical Service and other state agencies in accordance with the law.

The University doesn't make analyses on efficiency of functioning accountability mechanisms. However, GSU realizes the importance of activities directed to the improvement of procedures ensuring the accountability to the society and respectively takes steps towards improvement.

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

The mechanisms of transparency and availability of GSU procedures, educational processes and information system are stipulated in the GSU Concept/strategy, in the GS regulation on PR and in other documents.

The expert panel finds it positive that GSU established a Division of PR and Media in 2013.

In order to ensure transparency of activity and its availability to the society, GSU uses different tools such as "Goris State University" monthly newspaper, regional Mass Media, republic periodicals, GSU official website, social medias, GSU teachers' visit to regional schools, etc. The activities directed to the refreshment of GSU official website launched in 2013 but the refreshment of informational and content-related resources is being decelerated conditioned by the scarcity of human resources, lack of information and respective translations and other reasons. GSU publishes booklets to involve applicants.

It should be noted that GSU doesn't many analysis on efficiency of process of information dissemination yet.

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

In the GSU Concept the University gives importance to the development of public relations and its active involvement in social programs. However, the criteria evaluating the efficiency and progress of the University's activities directed to the mentioned goal are missing.

GSU emphasizes the imperative to enlarge its partnership with industrial and public organizations as well as large scope of society. However, there are still problems in this sphere regarding the involvement of external stakeholders. As the site-visit has shown, the link with external stakeholders is still weak which, according to GSU, is conditioned by the fact that they are not motivated in terms of ensuring feedback.

In order to establish feedback, GSU has also developed questionnaires which are conducted among both internal and external stakeholders. This way the University tries to involve external stakeholders in different educational processes, but the raised problems haven't been processed and the clear mechanisms evaluating the efficiency of conducted questionnaires are missing.

The University considers the official webpage of Facebook another flexible feedback mechanism which not only provides information about the activity of the University but also provides floor to everyone to share their viewpoints and respectively to get feedback. However, the same cannot be said about the University's official website where the feedback mechanism set for visitors to give comments doesn't function in respective speed. It must also be mentioned that in this context GSU doesn't make qualitative analyses.

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

One of the strategic objectives of GSU is the knowledge sharing among society and the increase of their educational and scientific-cultural level. But the formal mechanisms directed to the dissemination of knowledge among society are missing. Nonetheless, there are some informal mechanisms which serve for the fulfillment of the mentioned goal (meetings, different events, consultancy services, courses provided to society and high schools of community villages, participation in scientific programs aimed at preservation of national identity, etc.).

However, the University hasn't made any study on public needs relating the transfer of knowledge and values to the society, neither any comprehensive analysis on efficiency of existing mechanisms has been made.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel evaluates it positive that there is a clear system of accountability at GSU which is regular, summed up in the rector's annual reports and is published which fosters the assurance of regularity and transparency of GSU accountability system as well as the identification of existing problems.

However, the reports in terms of their content need to be improved as far as they mostly comprise facts and statistical data on the activity of the University. Reports aren't directly linked with the strategy, the analytical approach and suggestions made for the elimination of raised shortcomings are lacking which may hinder the coordinated implementation of processes for further improvement and development.

The adoption of horizontal approach of accountability in line with the vertical one will increase the efficiency and purposeful assurance of accountability.

It is positive that the recent reports of GSU subdivisions are more practical and comprehensive in terms of content which enables to compare the results of chairs and faculties and respectively to make comparative analyses.

The expert panel positively evaluates the steps directed to assurance of availability and transparency of GSU processes to the society. However, one of the most important tools of accountability, namely GSU official website urgently needs to be improved as far as it can have a crucial role for reinforcing the positive image of the University. The absence of the opportunity for the society to make comments on the official website of the University decreases the opportunities of studying public needs.

It is praiseworthy that feedback domains fostering the establishment of public relations have been formed at GSU but there are some problems in this sphere in terms of feedback sustainability and assurance of efficiency. The comprehensive analysis of efficiency of feedback mechanisms would enable the University to raise current potential problems and reasons by making the potential ways of improvement targeted.

In order to ensure feedback with employers and alumni, GSU needs to activate the activity of the Student Career Support Center. Taking into account the regional peculiarities, it would be more efficient to have a face-to-face communication system with stakeholders of the region instead of conducting many surveys.

There are informal mechanisms of transferring knowledge to the society. However, different facultative and training courses organized on permanent basis would reinforce public trust and would ensure financial inflow.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration the fact that the University has a formulated system of internal and external accountability which ensures the transparency of its education and activity to the society and

stakeholders and it takes steps to ensure sustainable feedback with the society, the expert panel concludes that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 8.

CONCLUSION. The expert panel evaluates the consistence of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of the Criterion 8 as ***satisfactory.***

CRITERION 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 and internationalization.

In the GSU Concept 2011-2016 the following main provisions in the international sphere are defined; to internationalize the science and technological elaborations of the University, to foster the participation of subdivision in international projects, to organize international conferences, seminars and joint projects in the direction of new technologies and their application, to develop GSU's interaction with economic environment, to diversify and decentralize its external relations, to develop the active impact of economic environment on the University's educational and research programs under conditions of newly formulated market economy as well as to ensure the compatibility of quality of specialists and set demands.

GSU has partnership of strategic significance particularly with Armenian National Polytechnic University and Armenian State Pedagogical University. The top management of the University also mentioned about the broader scope of cooperation, namely "inter-university consortium" but it hasn't functioned in recent times.

According to the self-evaluation report and the results of meetings organized for the site-visit, the University currently doesn't cooperate with any higher education institution in a coordinated way. This refers to the cooperation which is ensured within the framework of Erasmus+ mobility project. At the same time GSU is actively involved in international projects which are more directed to the institutional development and capacity building of human resources.

In the self-evaluation report GSU also mentions that benchmarking has been carried out within the framework of some PAPs. However, the expert panel didn't find any factual ground which would show the details of the carried out process and the real impact of benchmarking on changes or quality of curricula and applied teaching methods.

GSU doesn't have a clearly developed policy and procedures for regulating the promotion of such activities directed to internationalization as mobility of students and staff, recognition of students' achievements, invited teachers, etc. The evaluation of QA mechanisms directed to internationalization isn't involved in internal QA system either.

The goals in the sphere of internationalization defined in the GSU Concept are too broad and too ambitious. They involve the enlargement of international cooperation framework, increase of student mobility and number of research works published in leading international journals, etc. However, these goals haven't been realized in practice which is conditioned by the fact that GSU doesn't allocate sufficient financial and human resources.

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

The coordinated processes of establishment, fulfillment and maintenance of external relations of GSU are in the initial stage. For the current period there is a Department of International Cooperation and Projects where only one staff member is employed and who also teaches at GSU. The mentioned structural unit

has only recently been separated from the previous Department of International Cooperation and Education Quality Assurance, the goals of its activities are not clearly defined yet, and respective procedures aren't developed either. There aren't functioning links among different levels and a staff member responsible for international cooperation, and the coordination of international cooperation is mostly based on informal links.

As the meetings with internal stakeholders have shown, there isn't any clear, general and comprehensive vision in terms of cooperation of GSU with HEIs at both national and international levels. There isn't any clear ground pointing out the internal evaluation of efficiency of GSU's cooperation with other HEIs.

A number of webpages of GSU's official website are not available in foreign languages, and as a result of the meeting with the staff member of Department of International Cooperation it was clear that the translation of GSU's webpage is among priorities of the mentioned Division.

9.3 The Institution effectively collaborates with local and international counterparts.

The expert panel has observed a number of positive examples of GSU's cooperation with other HEIs but they mostly aren't regularly ensured. Heads of chairs pointed out some activities such as participation in international conferences, provision of lectures by invited teachers, literature exchange and peer-review of master theses. Another positive example is the implementation of PAPs in Biology and Chemistry with the framework of which students have an opportunity to visit Yerevan State University which has better equipments and to efficiently make experiments.

GSU is also active in terms of being involved in international projects directed to the capacity building of human resources. The ongoing LNSS Erasmus+ international project (Library network support services: modernizing libraries in Armenia, Moldova and Belarus through library staff development and reforming libraries) is a vivid example of the mentioned. Within the framework of LNSS GSU staff have an opportunity to participate in international professional trainings conducted by field experts.

A number of business trips have been made by GSU staff to other external partner universities due to international projects funded by the European Union. However, all the business trips were mostly short-term and were carried out within the framework of projects. GSU doesn't provide long-term mobility opportunities to students and teachers. The very limited resources and the low level of foreign language proficiency of GSU teaching staff are the main reasons of the mentioned. At the same time, as students mentioned in the meeting during the site-visit, the enlargement of mobility and exchange projects are among future priorities of GSU.

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

In the GSU self-evaluation report the University mentions about the general low level of foreign language proficiency among students and teachers. This was mentioned as one of the main weak points and among obstacles of internationalization of GSU in the meetings organized within the frame of the site-visit. However, GSU doesn't take respective steps to solve the mentioned problem.

GSU doesn't provide coordinated and long-term opportunities for teaching staff to participate in courses of foreign languages. Teachers who participated in the meetings of the site-visit mentioned about some initiatives which are directed to the development of their language skills, e.g. the training course on "English for Special Purposes" organized in the framework of LNSS. They were only short-term trainings. Teachers also mentioned that longer-term training courses will be more efficient for their activity.

There aren't mechanisms promoting the publication of research works in foreign languages either (e.g. provision of support to improve translation and reading skills, financial promotion, etc.). Besides, GSU doesn't ensure availability to databases of international journals; the availability to literature in respective field of research interests of GSU teachers and the accessibility to modern databases in foreign languages for students are limited. However, during the meetings students brought an example; some

attempts are being made to involve thematic articles in foreign language courses organized within the framework of the given PAP.

The hours suggested for foreign language learning are limited and they aren't enough to ensure sufficient level of foreign language proficiency. According to students, the courses are developed in advance and the differences of levels of students' background knowledge aren't taken into consideration. But MA students mentioned that there are some examples of good practices, in particular, the courses for developing English and German skills which met their educational needs.

CONSIDERATIONS

GSU takes some steps in the direction of internationalization and external cooperation at national level. This is mainly manifested by the participation in some international projects directed to capacity building. There are some good examples of GSU cooperation with external stakeholders, mainly with other RA higher education institutions at chair and faculty levels. However, the mentioned activities involve the narrow framework of the given specialty, they are short-term, and their impact and sustainability are not significant.

GSU has set too ambitious strategic goals in the spheres of internationalization and external relations in the Concept 2011-2016. No human and financial resources have been provided for the implementation of the mentioned goals. There aren't respective policies and procedures regulating the field which endangers the implementation of coordinated activities. Operational links and internal feedback mechanisms are very weak and they don't foster the practice exchange among GSU subdivisions. As a result, the strategic goals haven't been attained. It's quite clear that there isn't any realistic vision of development of sustainable external relations at national and international levels. On the other hand, GSU has managed to allocate very limited resources for regulating the sphere. The current internal structures aren't sufficient for reaching the ambitious goals of GSU's external relations and internationalization.

One of the crucial problems existent in this field is the low level of GSU internal stakeholders' participation in activities directed to the development of foreign language skills. The University doesn't take steps to foster this process in spite of the fact that GSU internal stakeholders have mentioned that it is the main obstacle hindering the internationalization of GSU. It is necessary to ensure the organization of continuous and long-term courses of foreign languages and the availability of literature in foreign languages as well as to support teachers who actively and efficiently take these opportunities, thus promoting the increase of level of GSU staff's foreign language proficiency.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration the fact that the activities which GSU takes in the spheres of external relations and internationalization are very few and they do not derive from the strategic goals and objectives, the scarcity of resources and the absence of respective policies and procedures do not enable the University to attain its strategic goals, the level of English language proficiency among students and teachers is low, and the information in foreign languages posted on GSU official website is little, the expert panel concludes that GSU doesn't meet the requirements of the Criterion 9.

CONCLUSION. The expert panel evaluates the consistence of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of the Criterion 9 as ***unsatisfactory.***

CRITERION X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

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

FINDINGS

10.1 The Institution has quality assurance policies and procedures.

A number of conceptual documents (QA policy, procedures, etc.) have been developed by the University to regulate QA processes. The manual of "GSU Quality Assurance System" which was approved in 2014 makes a general reflection on QA issues, GSU mission, principles, goals, procedures, distribution of roles and responsibilities in QA system.

The availability of all official documents on QA system is limited even to chairs. GSU plans to post the QA manual and other regulating documents on GSU official website and to widely disseminate them among stakeholders. The analysis of efficiency of QA policy and procedures hasn't been made by Student Career Support Center and Education Quality Assurance (QA Division) yet, neither their impact has been evaluated.

GSU internal stakeholders, teachers, heads of respective subdivisions and other staff representatives are mostly unaware of GSU QA manual and provisions included in it. It should be noted that the expert panel didn't gather enough facts on internal stakeholders' participation in the development of QA manual.

Currently survey conduction at GSU is viewed as the main QA mechanism. Surveys are conducted among teachers, students and partially among external stakeholders. However, surveys aren't conducted regularly and in a coordinated way, and their efficiency isn't evaluated. The widespread awareness about the mentioned surveys is missing in the University. Moreover, the provided samples of surveys didn't give an overall depiction about the current problems and achievements of the University.

GSU finds it important and necessary to invest internal QA system and to regularly implement institutional self-evaluation in accordance with the requirements of European standards. For this reason a form for faculty reports (self-analysis and self-evaluation) has been developed but it is still in the phase of discussion.

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

The University provides necessary human, material and some financial resources for the management of internal QA processes. According to the Provision 1.8 of regulation of QA Division, the activities of QA Division are carried out based on means from extra-budget.

During the site-visit the observations of conditions and assurance with staff of QA Division carried out by the expert panel stated that currently QA Division is equipped with necessary office facilities, furniture and material resources. Three staff members are employed at QA Division and it is approved by the orders regarding their positions but the distribution of their functions isn't operated. The professional skills and competences in respective field aren't involved in the requirements regarding professional qualities set for the recruitment of QA Division staff. It must be mentioned that evaluation of performance and identification of needs of QA Division staff aren't carried out and subsequently no special trainings derived from respective processes are being organized. Taking into consideration the number of students and teachers, scarcity of resources as well as the commitment to ensure internal QA operations in different processes, QA division is understaffed in professional staff members.

In the manual of "GSU Quality Assurance System" which was refined in 2014 the Committee on QA issues attached to GSU Scientific Council is defined to establish the activity and functions of which are stipulated in the same manual. The mentioned committee as well as the functions of a number of responsible staff members aren't stipulated in the organizational structure of the University. According to the manual of "GSU Quality Assurance System", the other role players who are defined in the structure of QA system have set functions but GSU faculties, chairs and other subdivisions aren't aware of them.

In the GSU self-evaluation report it is mentioned that faculty working groups have been established with the aim to organize and regulate QA processes at levels of faculties and subdivisions. But the site-visit showed that there aren't such working groups in GSU yet, and the internal QA system doesn't function at levels of faculties and chairs.

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

The University gives importance to the involvement of students and other stakeholders in QA processes. The involvement of internal stakeholders in QA processes is stipulated in QA manual. Surveys are considered to be the main mechanism of involving internal stakeholders in internal QA processes and ensuring feedback which, however, aren't organized on a cyclic base. It should also be mentioned that there are no analyses of evaluation of efficiency of conducted surveys. The processes of organization and conduction of surveys, data collection and elaboration and evaluation of efficiency aren't based on clear methodology.

There are representatives of students in the Governing Board, Scientific Council, Faculty Councils as well as self-evaluation working group.

The involvement of external stakeholders in QA processes isn't coordinated. In this context the University conducts surveys on employers' satisfaction with alumni's professional qualities.

In general, mechanisms of involving internal and external stakeholders in internal QA processes do not clearly function. QA Division doesn't make analyses to identify the extent and efficiency of involvement of stakeholders in QA processes.

10.4 The internal quality assurance system is periodically reviewed.

GSU QA system is still in the phase of development. No monitoring and evaluation of QA system have been carried out yet. With the aim to develop QA policy and respective procedures, GSU has made non-targeted benchmarking which is not full. QA Division gives importance to the continuous improvement of quality as the most crucial principle of its policy but it doesn't have either policy and procedures of review of internal QA system or mechanisms and tools of regular review of the mentioned system. QA Division accepts this fact.

GSU QA system isn't fully developed and the University hasn't yet made any evaluation of efficiency of its activity. PDCA cycle isn't fully functioning yet.

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

The processes of data collection, analysis, dissemination and management of results aren't carried out in a coordinated way. There isn't any general institutional approach in GSU. In internal activities of some subdivisions the process is regulated but the mechanisms of dissemination and management of information among different subdivisions aren't clear.

The self-analysis of institutional capacities presented for external expertise is descriptive; the analytical approach is missing.

The first attempt of collecting information at institutional level for external expertise was made in the framework of the mentioned self-analysis. The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that GSU tries to meet the external QA requirements which comprise RA institutional accreditation criteria and standards and to reflect them in GSU strategic directions, goals and objectives. However, GSU hasn't yet elaborated the full set of internal information which will be sufficient to carry out internal and external evaluations.

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

The University mentions the rector's annual report as the mechanism of provision of information to internal and external stakeholders. Rector's annual reports comprise the main results of activities of educational, scientific-research and administrative subdivisions as well as reports of faculties, chairs and other subdivisions. The analyses and data on internal and external stakeholders' satisfaction with education quality are not provided to chairs.

GSU doesn't give importance to the existence of information system for ensuring the transparency of the University's activity to its internal and external stakeholders. GSU official website doesn't contain information about the current specialties, PAPs, made decisions, etc.

The reports on PAPs and QA processes of GSU aren't available to stakeholders yet.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel positively evaluates the existence of QA Division and the development of manual of "GSU Quality Assurance System". However, the steps GSU takes in the direction of investment of internal QA system aren't coordinated yet, and the unified system of internal QA and quality culture haven't been formulated yet.

The non-regular character of implementing QA processes based on PDCA cycle, the non-targeted and non-coordinated participation of external stakeholders in the mentioned processes and the incompleteness of information management system (including the processes of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis of PAPs) hinder the continuous improvement of GSU university.

Although the distribution of roles and responsibilities of different administration levels and subdivisions in GSU QA system are described in the manual of "GSU Quality Assurance System", the role players aren't fully informed about their responsibilities. The limited availability of QA related documents to stakeholders is one of the reasons. There aren't grounds at GSU which would give an opportunity to judge about the full implementation of GSU policy and procedures.

The role of internal and external stakeholders in QA processes is not coordinated. Stakeholders currently participate in different surveys, they are presented in the composition of the University's councils, etc. However, the mechanisms of involving stakeholders in different governance processes aren't developed or they do not efficiently function. Only the conduction of surveys forms a part of planning and implementation of PDCA cycle. The planning of the same surveys, analyses of results and the mechanisms of improvement of PAPs based on the mentioned results aren't developed. The same also refers to the participation of external stakeholders in monitoring and review processes of QA of PAPs. It is necessary for GSU to evaluate the level of internal and external stakeholders' participation and the efficiency of involvement mechanisms.

The QA Committee isn't reflected in the GSU organizational structure, neither a number of other role players (staff members responsible for faculty quality management, QA representatives of chairs) whose functions are stipulated in the manual but faculties and chairs aren't aware of their activities.

It is necessary to state that there aren't clear requirements on professional qualities set for the recruitment of QA Division staff. Besides, no professional trainings are organized after selection as a result of which the efficient organization and implementation of processes directed to QA are put at risk.

The absence of indicators evaluating the fulfillment of strategic goals and objectives as well as the lack of complete set of internal information don't enable to make objective evaluations. Currently QA Division neither manages nor can provide sufficient information about the efficiency of services provided to GSU governing bodies and PAPs.

In absence of analyses and evaluations of QA system the official website of the University doesn't provide sufficient information about the quality of its educational and other processes. Besides, the website doesn't contain up-to-date information in other languages either.

The absence of analyses of efficiency of mechanisms and toolset regulating different processes of the University doesn't allow to evaluate the impact of QA processes on the improvement of PAPs and the overall activity of GSU.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration the fact that the steps which the University takes in the direction of establishing internal QA system are neither coordinated nor targeted, quality culture isn't fully formed at institutional and unit levels yet, PDCA cycle of quality management isn't operated in different processes, the management system of qualitative and quantitative information needs to be improved,

internal and external stakeholders' participation in QA processes is neither diversified nor targeted, and no trainings for staff involved in QA system are carried out, the expert panel concludes that GSU doesn't meet the requirements of the Criterion 10.

CONCLUSION. The expert panel evaluates the consistence of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of the Criterion 10 as ***unsatisfactory.***

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERION	CONCLUSION
I. Mission and Goals	Satisfactory
II. Governance and Administration	Unsatisfactory
III. Academic Programs	Satisfactory
IV. Students	Satisfactory
V. Teaching and Support Staffs	Satisfactory
VI. Research and Development	Unsatisfactory
VII. Infrastructure and Resources	Satisfactory
VIII. Social Responsibility	Satisfactory
IX. External Relations and Internationalization	Unsatisfactory
X. Internal Quality Assurance System	Unsatisfactory

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Robert Khachatryan
Signature of the Chair of Expert Panel

16.01.2018

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1.CVs OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

Robert Khachatryan - studied at Kennesaw State University in the USA in 2003-2004. In 2005 he graduated from Yerevan State Linguistic University after V. Brusov (YSLU) and was awarded the qualification of specialist in "English and Area Studies". In 2005-2008 he studied for his PhD in the specialization on Germanic Languages. In 2010 R. Khachatryan graduated from University of Kansas with Master's degree in Public Administration. Since 2011 he has been employed as the Head of Chair on Education Management and Planning at Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences (previously: YSLU), and since 2012 he has been also employed as the Head of Center for Quality Assurance at the same University. R. Khachatryan is a Candidate of Philological Sciences and Associate Professor. He has participated in many international conferences and seminars and is a member of a number of professional organizations. He has been awarded many scholarships and fellowships (Global Undergraduate Exchange Program in Eurasia and Central Asia (Global UGRAD) Scholarship, Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program, Returning Scholars Fellowship Program, Carnegie Research Fellowship Program, Tavitian fellowship), awards and honors. R. Khachatryan was has also been a coordinator of grant projects (British Horizons: British Professional Exchange Program, IREX University Administration Support Program, World Bank Projects, TEMPUS Projects - ALIGN, GOVERN, ARMENQA, SSRULLI). R. Khachatryan has authored more than 45 articles and 3 educational manuals.

Maciej Markowski - graduated from Gdańsk University of Technology and was awarded the diploma of specialist in "Management and Marketing" in 2008. In 2012 he was awarded PhD in Management. Since 2007 M. Markowski is Quality Assurance Expert of Polish Accreditation Committee. Since 2013 he is a member of the governing bodies of the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (Hague). Since 2015 Maciej Markowski is a trainer in the same structure. In 2016 he became a member of Accreditation Council for Entrepreneurial Universities (Amsterdam). As a QA expert, M. Markowski has participated in many processes of external expertise of educational institutions. He is a member of a number of international organizations and networks. M. Karkowski has been awarded many times. He has authored articles in the spheres of Education Management and Quality Assurance.

Varujan Atabekyan - graduated from Faculty of Mathematics and Mechanics of Yerevan State University (YSU) in 1983. In 1983-1986 V. Atabekyan was a PhD student of Faculty of Mechanics and Mathematics of Lomonosov Moscow State University. In 2011 he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Science in Physics and Mathematics in Steklov Mathematical Institute of Russian Academy of Sciences. In 2012 V. Atabekyan was awarded the title of Professor. Since 2013 he is the head of Chair of Algebra and Geometry in YSU. Varujan Atabekyan has many awards and prizes. He has participated in different international conferences. V. Atabekyan has authored 31 scientific articles and 4 books.

Karen Mirzabekyan - graduated from Faculty of Cybernetics of Yerevan Polytechnic Institute after K. Marx in 1981. In 2007 he became Candidate of Technical Sciences. Since 2014 K. Mirzabekyan is the Vice-dean on Scientific Affairs of Faculty of Cybernetics of the "National Polytechnic University of Armenia" foundation. He is also Associate Professor of Chair of Electronic Measurement Systems and Metrology of the same foundation. Since 2009 Karen Mirzabekyan is an honorary member of Presidency of National Academy of Armenian Consumers. He has published 44 scientific-research works including 4 patents, 1 textbook, 22 scientific works and 17 educational-methodical works.

Anahit Hovakimyan – MA 1st year student of Department of Elementary Pedagogy and Methodology of Faculty of Preschool Education in Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan (ASPU). Since 19 October 2017 she is a specialist in Dean's Office of Faculty of Elementary Education of ASPU, and since January of the same year - President of Student Scientific Union of the same faculty. Since 2014 A. Hovakimyan is a volunteer of German Red Cross of Armenian Branch, and since 2015 - volunteer of ASPU Department of International Cooperation. She has participated in "ESPAQ", "ARMENQA", "MAHATMA" TEMPUS projects and in a number of trainings organized for expert students by ANQA and other organizations. A. Hovakimyan has authored dozens of publications. In 2015 and 2016 Anahit Hovakimyan was awarded the prize of "Best Reader" by ASPU.

APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT

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01.11.2017 - 03.11.2017

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	01.11.2017	*Start*	*End*	*Duration*
1.	Meeting with Rector of university	09:00	09:30	30 minutes
2.	Meeting with Vice-rector on Educational Programs & Educational-Methodical Affairs	09:40	10:20	40 minutes
3.	Meeting with members of self-evaluation working group (8-12 members)	10:30	11:30	60 minutes
4.	Meeting with Deans of faculties	11:40	12:20	40 minutes
5.	Break, session of expert panel	12:30	13:30	60 minutes
6.	Meeting with representatives of alumni (8-12 representatives)	13:40	14:30	50 minutes
7.	Meeting with representatives of employers (8-12 representatives)	14:40	15:30	50 minutes
8.	Meeting with Scientific Secretary, staff members of Department of Education, Specialist in Student Registration	15:40	16:40	60 minutes
9.	Closed session of expert panel	16:50	18:10	80 minutes
	02.11.2017	*Start*	*End*	*Duration*
1.	Meeting with heads of chairs	09:00	10:00	60 minutes
2.	Meeting with teaching staff members (including teachers responsible for the 3 academic programs presented in self-evaluation) (8-12 teachers)	10:10	11:10	60 minutes
3.	Visit to Deans' offices and review of documents	11:20	12:20	60 minutes
4.	Break, session of expert panel	12:30	13:30	60 minutes
5.	Visit to chairs and review of documents	13:40	14:40	60 minutes
6.	Visit to QA Center and Student Career Support Center, Department of International Cooperation and Projects	14:50	15:50	60 minutes
7.	Review of documents	16:00	17:00	60 minutes
8.	Closed session of expert panel	17:10	18:10	60 minutes
	03.11.2017	*Start*	*End*	*Duration*
1.	Meeting with representatives of Student Council and Student Scientific Union (8-12 students)	09:00	10:00	60 minutes
2.	Meeting with representatives of BA students (8-12 full-time and part-time students)	10:10	11:10	60 minutes
3.	Meeting with MA students (8-12 full-time and part-time students)	11:20	12:20	60 minutes
4.	Break, session of expert panel	12:30	13:30	60 minutes
5.	Open meeting with expert panel	13:40	14:10	30 minutes
6.	Meetings in structural units (Department of Personnel Management, Staff Register, Accounting Department, Department of PR and Media, Specialist responsible for Archive, Department of Documentation and Maintenance of Graduation Papers)	14:20	15:50	90 minutes
7.	Observation of resources (classrooms, sports halls, laboratories, cabinets, library, medical spot, canteen)	16:00	17:00	60 minutes
8.	Meeting with staff members chosen by expert panel	17:10	17:40	30 minutes
9.	Closed sessions of expert panel	17:40	18:40	60 minutes
10.	Meeting with GSU rector	18:40	19:00	20 minutes

APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

| N	NAME OF THE DOCUMENT	CRITERION
1.	Protocols of meetings on development activities of Concept 2011-2016	1
2.	Draft of 2017-2021/2022 Strategic Plan	1
3.	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	1
4.	Results of Strategic Plan's monitoring(s), improvement plan(s) and respective bases	1
5.	Order on Governing Board composition /Protocols of Governing Board session/	1
6.	Analyses and results of surveys identifying the needs of internal and external stakeholders	1
7.	Management effectiveness indicators	2
8.	Analysis of organizational structure efficiency	2
9.	Mid-term action plans and bases verifying their implementation	2
10.	Studies and analyses of internal and external factors having an impact on GSU's activity	2
11.	Work plans and annual reports of chairs and other structural units	2
12.	Packages of "Management and Economics of Enterprises", "Education Management" and "Informatics and Calculating Machines" academic programs	3
13.	Packages of 3 academic programs for MA qualification submitted to ANQA	3
14.	Package of "Law" academic program (for part-time education)	3
15.	Orders relating recruitment of part-time students	3
16.	Sample of diploma supplement (for BA and MA qualifications)	3
17.	Reports of GSU Committee for Educational-methodological Affairs for the last 3 years	3
18.	Internship contracts /plan, diary, report/	3
19.	Statements/mark sheets of 3 academic programs for the last 3 years (for full-time and part-time education) submitted to ANQA	3
20.	Bases verifying the review of assessment policy	3
21.	Regulation on selection of members of final attestation commissions, protocols of commissions for the last 3 years	3
22.	Students' individual works: essays, course papers (2 papers for each profession evaluated as excellent and 2- as unsatisfactory)	3
23.	Requirements and evaluation criteria set for master theses, defense procedure	3
24.	Students' final papers - course papers, master theses (2 papers for each profession evaluated as excellent and 2- as unsatisfactory), peer-reviews of master theses, master theses of international students	3
25.	Benchmarking policy of academic programs, respective procedures and bases verifying their implementation	3
26.	Bases of mobility of students and teaching staff for the last 3 years	3
27.	Surveys on evaluation of efficiency of academic programs conducted among internal and external stakeholders, respective analyses and carried out changes for the last 4 years	3
28.	Students' transfers from part-time to full-time education and vice versa for the last 4 years	3
29.	Self-analyses based on SWOT strategic tool carried out by chairs servicing academic programs for the last 3 years	3
30.	Data on employability of alumni	3
31.	Protocols of working group responsible for establishment of college	4

32.	Regulation on selection of students granted full compensation of tuition fees, respective indicators	4
33.	Bases on identification of students' academic needs, respective solutions for the last 3 years	4
34.	Goals and time-schedule of facultative consultancy courses	4
35.	Sample of contract signed with students	4
36.	Student manual	4
37.	List of students who participated in international conferences	4
38.	Internal legal acts regulating curators' activities	4
39.	List of final papers and master theses in accordance with academic programs for the last 3 years	4
40.	List of teaching staff members being awarded promotion and bonuses, respective bases for the last 3 years	5
41.	Sample of contract signed with teaching and support staff members	5
42.	Job descriptions of support staff	5
43.	Internal legal acts on competition commission attached to Scientific Council, protocols of sessions	5
44.	Policy on dismissal of teaching staff members	5
45.	List of teaching staff members who participated in workshops and trainings organized in different universities of Armenia at GSU expense	5
46.	Composition of working group responsible for the development of regulation of support staff attestation, protocols of meetings	5
47.	Internal legal act on financial compensation set for categories of teaching staff /e.g. rector's order/	5
48.	Survey on evaluation of teaching staff by students /filled-in samples, analyses and results/ for the last 3 years	5
49.	Internal legal acts defining the procedure of organizing class observations, respective time-schedule	5
50.	Indicators of teaching staff flow for the last 3 years	5
51.	Mid-term and short-term plans	6
52.	Methodology of research and requirements set for publications	6
53.	Budget allocated to research and development for the last 3 years	6
54.	Policy and procedures promoting research activity of young staff members	6
55.	Reports of Commission on Academic Honesty for the last 3 years	6
56.	Distribution of scientific-research activities carried out at GSU for the last 3 years	6
57.	List of participants of national and international conferences for the last 3 years /mentioning the venue of the held conference and the given chair/	6
58.	Analyses of GSU budget performance for the last 3 years	7
59.	Reports on purposefulness of use of financial means	7
60.	Analyses on equipment with resources, activities for improvement	7
61.	Time-schedule of trainings and meetings for assurance of awareness on evacuation activities in emergency situations /implemented and planned/	7
62.	Filled-in surveys, analyses and evaluation results identifying the applicability, availability and efficiency of resources provided to students	7
63.	Protocols of meetings and results of analyses carried out within the framework of the program on "Complex Activities for Struggling against Corruption"	8
64.	Rector's reports for the last 3 years	8
65.	Results of studies on efficiency of data collection mechanisms	8
66.	Results of evaluation of PR mechanisms and reports of respective structural units	8
67.	Questionnaires conducted among GSU students, media and NGOs	8

68.	Number of visits to GSU official website according to countries (signed and stamped)	8
69.	Strategy of external relations and internationalization, annual action plans for the last 3 years	9
70.	Charter of the given structural unit	9
71.	All agreements regarding external relations and internationalization /36 agreements/	9
72.	Allocation of expenses spent for business trips from GSU budget in 2015-2017 and respective business trip reports	9
73.	List of students who participated in international exchange programs /mentioning the venue and time period/	9
74.	List of trainings on development of foreign language skills for the last 3 years /training venue, agenda, sign-up sheet/	9
75.	Reports on implementation of work plans of Division on International Cooperation and Education Quality Assurance for the last 3 years	10
76.	Job requirements (job descriptions) set for the staff of Division on International Cooperation and Education Quality Assurance	10
77.	Excerpt on establishment of GSU faculty QA commission, list of commission members	10
78.	Distribution of financial resources ensuring QA processes for the last 5 years	10
79.	Grounds verifying the involvement of students and other stakeholders in QA processes	10
80.	List of events organized for teaching and support staff members and students in the last 3 years /mentioning the goals, number of participants and agenda/	10
81.	Policy on review of QA system and respective procedures	10

APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED

1. Classrooms
2. Deans' Offices
3. Chairs
4. Subdivisions (QA Center, Student Career Support Center, Division on International Cooperation and Projects, Staff Management Department, Accounting Department, Division of PR and Media)
5. Laboratories
6. Cabinets
7. Sports hall
8. Medical spot
9. Library
10. Reading hall
11. Shelter
12. Dormitory

APPENDIX 5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION
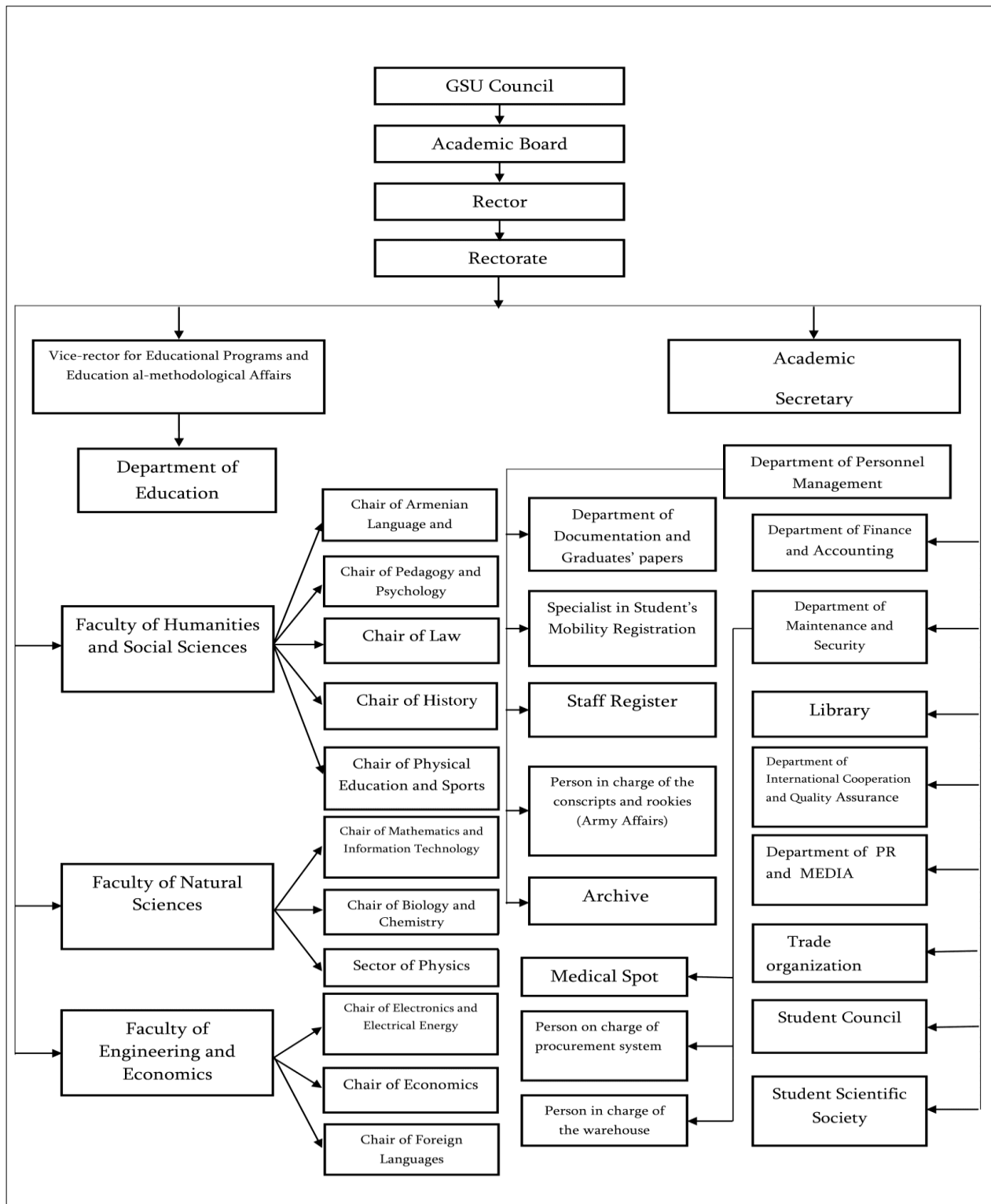
APPENDIX 6. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. **KPIs -** key performance indicators
2. **GSU -** Goris State University
3. **EHEA -** European Higher Education Area
4. **HEI -** higher education institution
5. **ECTS -** European Credit Transfer System
6. **MoES -** Ministry of Education and Science
7. **RA -** Republic of Armenia
8. **ASPU -** Armenian State Pedagogical University
9. **PAP -** professional academic program
10. **QA -** quality assurance
11. **ANQA -** National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation
12. **NQF -** National Qualifications Framework
13. **PDCA -** plan-do-check-act
14. **IT -** information technologies