

CODE OF ETHICS AND RULES OF CONDUCT OF “NATIONAL CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE” FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION

Taking into account the role of “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” Foundation (ANQA) in quality assurance of RA tertiary and vocational education as well as development tendencies of education quality there is a necessity to establish culture of ethics in quality assurance processes. Thus, it became an imperative for ANQA to have Code of Ethics and Rules of Conduct (hereinafter: Rules). Code of Ethics is an activity guide which defines ethical rules of the participants in quality assurance processes.

1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1.1. Aim of the Rules

The aim of the current Rules is the definition of rules of ethics and conduct, which will foster the establishment of culture of ethics in quality assurance processes and labor relations.

1.2. Scope of Application of the Rules

The Rules are applied among ANQA staff, members of the Board of Trustees, members of the Accreditation Committee as well as experts (hereinafter: participants) during quality assurance processes and labor relations.

1.3. Terms

- 1) **“Conflict of Interests”** Incompatibility of individual interests of the participants (tangible and non-tangible) with ANQA interests.
- 2) **“ANQA interests”** ANQA’s responsibilities and rights set by laws, ANQA Charter and other internal documents.
- 3) **“Business ethics”**. Guideline for the implementation of responsibilities of the participants.
- 4) **«Professional ethics»**. Ethics standards of professional behavior adopted in accordance with RA Legislation and universally accepted moral norms.

- 5) “**Harassment and violence**”. *Harassment* is a behavior expressed verbally, through gestures and body language or other that creates bullying, offensive or hostile work environment. *Violence*- physical or psychological aggression, intimidation, insult, threat.
- 6) “**Third party**”. Third party is the person who cannot possess relevant information by law or on a contractual basis.
- 7) “**Confidentiality**”. The participants are obliged not to publish or transfer the information disclosed during the implementation of service of professional responsibilities to third parties except for the cases envisaged by law.

1.4. Sources

The current Rules are in accordance with RA Legislation, laws, regulations, ANQA Charter and ANQA Accreditation Manual.

1.5. Duties and Responsibilities of Participants

While carrying out their responsibilities and professional activities the participants are obliged to follow and respect the provisions of the current Rules and operate in accordance to them. Violation of these Rules is a ground for disciplinary liability.

2. CODE OF ETHICS AND RULES OF CONDUCT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ANQA ACTIVITIES

2.1. Values and Principles

While carrying out their activities in quality assurance processes and labor relations the participants are led by the following values and principles adopted by ANQA:

- 1) **Legality**: RA Legislation, laws, legal acts regulating the sphere of quality assurance as well as by ANQA internal rules, leads ANQA and the above-mentioned participants of quality assurance processes while carrying out their responsibilities.
- 2) **Independence**: the principle of independence implies that ANQA and the participants are operating independently avoiding any kind of political, economical, religious and other pressures and relying solely on the demands of legal acts.
- 3) **Public Trust**: ANQA and participants ensure public trust towards professional education quality being led by the principles of legality, independence, transparency and objectiveness in their activities.
- 4) **Transparency**. ANQA ensures the illustration of its activities through Mass Media, ANQA website, besides any concerned person can submit a written application to get information about the issues that interest him/her within the frames of law.
- 5) **Equality**. ANQA ensures equal opportunities and availability for the stakeholders of professional education sphere and the participants are impartial and follow the principle of equality while carrying out their activities and making decisions.

- 6) **Objectiveness and impartiality.** Objectiveness and impartiality assume that while carrying out their activities, responsibilities and making decisions ANQA and the participants are solely based on objective facts and evidences, they make judgments and conclusions based on valid information avoiding any kind of subjective approaches and pressure (financial, commercial, psychological, etc.)
- 7) **Accountability.** ANQA and the participants are accountable to the public for their activities.

2.2. Rules of Conduct

Based on the values and principles set by the current Rules, the participants and ANQA should take into account the following rules of conduct while carrying out their activities:

- 1) **To avoid conflict of interests.** While carrying out their responsibilities during quality assurance processes, the participants must avoid inactivity or any activities causing conflict of interest. Conflict of interests exists in case:
 - ✓ the participants have family, financial, commercial or other similar connections with the stakeholders concerning whom decisions should be made while participating in quality assurance processes;
 - ✓ the participants are in labor or other similar relations with the stakeholders concerning whom decisions should be made.

Conflict of interests arises not only by carrying out active actions but also by inactivity. Inactivity is to know about conflict of interest and not to inform about it.

In order to avoid conflict of interests, the participants shall disqualify and do not participate in processes and decision making.

- 2) **Maintenance of confidentiality.** The participants are obliged to maintain confidentiality of the information disclosed while carrying out their responsibilities and professional activities. Confidential information involves:
 - ✓ personal data of the participants; personal data can be used only for professional needs.
 - ✓ data related to the education institution received during the process of expertise which is kept confidential until being published.
 - ✓ any information related to the ANQA or processes carried out by the ANQA if it is not published through mass media or ANQA website.
- 3) **Prohibition of harassment and violence.** In and outside ANQA it is prohibited to imply any kind of harassment and violence by the participants while carrying out their job functions within the framework of quality assurance. It is forbidden to keep, transfer or use weapons in the workplace except for the bodies and workers who have the right of carrying weapons envisaged by law.

- 4) **Cooperation.** ANQA promotes close cooperation and reciprocal professional support among the participants (including stakeholders) as well as continuous networking with the society.
- 5) **Trust and respect.** ANQA ensures working environment where everyone is treated with honor, respect and fairness where the person has the opportunity to develop his/her personal and collective qualities.
- 6) **Dress code and appearance.** ANQA staff is obliged to come to work dressed properly, classically or practically. It is forbidden to come to work with festive jewelry, make-up, the dresses should not be transparent, short, with wide and improper slits, or sporty.

3. PECULIARITIES OF CODE OF ETHICS AND RULES OF CONDUCT OF ANQA BOARD OF TRUSTEES, ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE, MANAGEMENT AND EXPERTS

3.1. Board of Trustees

While carrying out their responsibilities, the members of the Board of Trustees are led by RA legislation, ANQA Charter and current Rules.

Members of the Board of Trustees are obliged to carry out their responsibilities in time and fairly fulfilling ANQA's statutory goals.

They should respect the opinions of the colleagues, their rights and interests, freely express their opinion on any issue, carry out their activities and make decisions without contradicting to ANQA's interests.

While fulfilling professional activities, the members of the Board of Trustees are led by the principles of independence, impartiality, fairness, legality and objectiveness. They ensure the maintenance of work-related confidential information.

They are obliged to align the implementation of their responsibilities with laws, regulations, ANQA internal regulations and policies and to foster the development of cooperation with state bodies and education institutions.

The members should not be absent from the sessions without excuse and should not fulfil their professional functions for personal needs.

While fulfilling professional functions, they should avoid any kind of pressure and force.

They should avoid activities causing conflict of interests.

3.2. Accreditation Committee

While carrying out their activities the members of the Accreditation Committee are led by RA legislation, ANQA procedure on the formation and functioning of Accreditation Committee, ANQA Accreditation Manual and the current Rules.

The members of the Accreditation Committee express their neutral and independent opinion about the accreditation processes and while making decisions are based on the principles of independence, impartiality, legality and objectiveness.

They keep business and work-related confidentiality and they do not violate their position to promote the interests of third parties.

In case there is a conflict of interests with the education institution undergoing accreditation process the member of the Committee is obliged to inform the Committee about it and to declare disqualification.

3.3. ANQA Management (Director, head of departments)

While fulfilling their responsibilities ANQA management is lead by RA legislation, ANQA internal regulations and rules, current Rules and operates in favor of ANQA interests.

The management functions fairly and impartially, treats all the staff members equally and carries out its activities based on the principles of objectiveness and impartiality.

The management ensures psychologically sound formal environment, fosters the professional development and progression of the staff and creates collaborative culture inside the working environment.

The management ensures mutually beneficial and friendly relations with the stakeholders and actively disseminates ANQA values.

3.4. Expert

Within the scope of professional activities on quality assurance, the expert is led by RA legislation, ANQA Accreditation Manual, current Rules based on the principles of independence, objectiveness, impartiality and legality as well treats the representatives of education institutions, colleagues and ANQA with respect.

The expert is responsible for the decisions he/she makes, for the opinion he/she expresses and for the conclusions he/she makes which are based on objective facts and information.

The expert is obliged to fairly fulfill his/her tasks, to avoid any kind of activities causing conflict of interests, in case of conflict of interest to inform about it, shall disqualify, to avoid any kind of force, not to give any promises within the scope of his professional activities, not to violate his/her position to promote the interests of third parties.

While collaborating with education institutions the expert is obliged to display restraint, patience, respect towards others' opinions and made decisions as well as to prevent the premature publication of the results of the expertise.

The expert is obliged to keep confidentiality during his whole activity and not to inform any information about the expertise to the third parties except for the cases envisaged by law.

While dealing with colleagues the expert should treat them with respect and should avoid conflict situations. The expert must not judge his colleagues' opinions improperly, he should be sociable and be able to work individually and in team.

4. DISCIPLINARY LIABILITY

The following kinds of disciplinary sanctions are applied to the participants in case of the violation of current Rules.

1. Warning
2. Reprimand
3. Strict reprimand

In case of violation an Ethics Committee on particular case is formed by the Board of Trustees. The Committee is authorized to examine the case and make a decision. The regulation on the activities of Ethics Committee can be found in the Regulation on the formation and operation of Ethics Committee.

5. CONCLUDING PROVISIONS

- 5.1. ANQA Code of Ethics and Rules of Conduct, its amendments and additions are approved by ANQA Board of Trustees by the suggestion of ANQA Director.
- 5.2. Appendices are indivisible part of the current Rules.
- 5.3. Violation of the Rules are basis for disciplinary sanctions.
- 5.4. The Rules come into force after signing.