

## ***ANQA Strategic Plan 2010-2015***

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***Transitional Period***

**5/6/2010**



This plan is the collective vision of the RA Government and the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance, Foundation. It seeks to establish a learning culture that values quality in professional education provisions.



***LIST OF ACRONYMS***

<b><i>ANQA</i></b>	<b><i>National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance, Foundation</i></b>
<b><i>CIS</i></b>	<b><i>Currently Independent States</i></b>
<b><i>ECA</i></b>	<b><i>European Consortium for Accreditation</i></b>
<b><i>EQA</i></b>	<b><i>External Quality Assurance</i></b>
<b><i>EQAR</i></b>	<b><i>European Quality Assurance Register</i></b>
<b><i>EHEA</i></b>	<b><i>European Higher Education Area</i></b>
<b><i>ENQA</i></b>	<b><i>European Network for Quality Assurance</i></b>
<b><i>ESG</i></b>	<b><i>European Standards and Guidelines</i></b>
<b><i>MoES</i></b>	<b><i>RA Ministry of Education and Science</i></b>



## **FOREWORD**

This plan is the collective vision of the RA Government and the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance, Foundation. It seeks to transform the Armenian tertiary education into a dynamically and effectively developing sphere fulfilling its core mission of knowledge generation and dissemination and contribution to Armenia's development. It will do so through establishment of a quality culture that promotes effective and efficient educational services. The plan is the result of an initiative taken by the ANQA Governing Board, with active involvement and support of the stakeholders. The plan was reviewed and endorsed by the ANQA Governing Board in 2010.

It is our hope that the active involvement of so many of our stakeholders will translate into support for its implementation. On behalf of the RA Government, I wish to thank all the stakeholders for making the preparation of this first ANQA Strategic Plan document possible. I would like to thank the staff of the ANQA and all those who contributed in diverse ways to the preparation of the Plan.

I wish to make a special appeal to our Government, stakeholders, donors, and well-wishers, to provide the moral and material support that we need to realize the vision and goals articulated in the Plan.

Tigran Sargsyan,

ANQA President



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## INTRODUCTION

### *The State of Tertiary Education in Armenia*

The Armenian Tertiary Education and its institutions are at crossroads after two decades of economic austerity and steady decline in quality. Recent attempts at the national level to re-energize and empower the Republic coincide with the international developments in the form of integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), making this an opportune time for reflecting on new directions for policy and practice in the Armenian tertiary education.

Armenia's tertiary education system has seen significant changes throughout the past 20 years. The adoption of numerous laws, procedures, and other regulatory documents has changed the administration of the education system. Substantive change is still underway. One may conclude that a vast amount of change is taking place in the system. However, there is a concern that, in many cases, the change has not significantly improved the situation, is formal, non-systemic and has not entrenched new practices and mindsets.

Confronting new challenges on the basis of the old practices and mindset will not only hinder progress, but also make some segments psychologically opposed to change. As a result of non systemic-strategic approach to the change process and non-continuity and feasibility of the undertakings the system has turned to be extremely non-homogeneous, with a mixture of approaches to reforms, quality assurance approaches, which most of the time lack adequate alignment, thus, hindering student mobility and qualification recognition.

According to the Ministry of Education and Science ([www.edu.am](http://www.edu.am)) the Armenian tertiary level education is currently comprised of

- 18 public universities and 13 branches
- 3 intergovernmental universities
- 48 private universities
- 37 private accredited universities
- 5 branches of international and non-state universities
- 3 branches of international public universities
- 83 public colleges
- 34 vocational institutions
- 12 private accredited colleges
- 11 private licensed colleges

Nine of the private universities were closed as a result of the MoES inspection in 2009, and another seven institutions and seven academic programmes in 2010 mainly because of their failure to meet the licensing requirements. There are differences with regards to approaches in reform implementation at each institution as well as organizational culture and orientation stemming from their location in the country as well as strategic importance.

Despite this diversity, and with notable exceptions, tertiary education in Armenia has been characterized by:

- High expectations and demand from key stakeholders, not matched by commensurate resource support;
- A great number of universities for a country with a population of approximately 3 million;
- High enrolment ratios at all levels, that has stretched demand for more institutional facilities and capacities to breaking point;
- A great number of private universities functioning in secular niches;



- Poor infrastructure, especially in relation to information and communication technologies, and consequent weak links among the Armenian tertiary level institutions on one hand, and with the global knowledge system, on the other;
- Frequent change of the Minister of Education and Science;
- Ageing faculty, lack of incentives to attract younger staff and continued brain drain;
- Weak private sector support and undeveloped culture of private contributions to universities;
- Inadequate financial and logistical support from governments;
- Weak linkage between academia and the social and productive sectors of the economy;
- Outdated standards and criteria;
- Rigid teaching and learning methods.

Coupled with the local conditions, change in paradigm and fast pace of international development made the gap between the Armenian tertiary level and that of the developed countries even larger. Emphasis on the role of higher education in the knowledge-based economy development resulted in dire need to make appropriate changes in:

- Leadership approaches;
- Teaching and learning approaches based on the achievements of the contemporary pedagogy;
- Academic programmes;
- Teaching staff qualifications requirements;
- LO based student assessment;
- Institutional management;
- Accountability mechanisms;
- Means of integration and internationalization brought about by the global developments;
- Expert approaches to quality assurance provisions at teaching and learning and TLI administrative levels;
- The role of main consumers – the students; and main stakeholders – teachers and employers;
- University – market relationships;
- Publicity and transparency provisions.

Thus, the dire need for changes makes setting the pace for accountability, quality assurance provisions, and, therefore, establishment of a quality culture a priority if changes at TLIs are to be a success.

### ***External Quality Assurance***

Currently, the RA external quality assurance (EQA) system is in search for the most appropriate model of quality assurance for the tertiary education. While the 1999 “Law on Education” established, somewhat in a hurry, the legal basis for a rapidly privatizing tertiary education sector, already in 2005 the government introduced a new decree for EQA. From the naming of the decree “Development of State Academic Standards for Higher and Post-graduate Professional Education”, the system that was introduced resembled much the former Russian system consisting of licensing, attestation and accreditation. Because of the inadequacy of the previous system, in 2008, the process was non-officially



stopped and the ANQA was established. ANQA is now in the process of working out a new quality assurance framework.

Further, given the small size of the country, where financial and human resources for setting up and running a new quality assurance system are more limited than in bigger countries, a comprehensive scope of quality assurance (both public and private institutions, and university and vocational institutions) should be foreseen as a means to increase the cost-effectiveness of the support structure. Notwithstanding considerations of cost-effectiveness, the task of licensing public and private tertiary education institutions has remained with the Agency for Licensing whereas external quality assurance with accreditation as one of its main tools is delegated to ANQA, an independent agency.

Indeed, licensing/accreditation are regulatory functions aiming at quality control while quality assurance to be organized on a voluntary basis aims at quality improvement. This dichotomy between control and improvement purposes is however increasingly disappearing in the countries with more advanced QA systems, given the fact that compulsory accreditation is becoming the most common EQA mechanism these days. Therefore, necessary steps should be undertaken to avoid similar consequences in the Armenian tertiary education if it is to become comparable at international level. Next, the most important challenge is to establish a quality culture in TLIs through charging ANQA with a capacity building function for the tertiary education sector. Within the frames, ANQA should promote establishment of internal quality assurance mechanisms (IQAM) to push the quality culture agenda.

## **CHALLENGES**

### ***Global Trends***

Global trends are altering conditions and expectations of tertiary education systems throughout the world. These trends include the rise of the “knowledge society”, the increase in the volume and pace of cross-border transactions, the explosion of new information and communication technologies, and the rapid growth and mobility of populations, especially skilled human resources. The central role of knowledge as a critical determinant of development and international competitiveness demands that the Armenian tertiary education institutions play an even more direct role in development than before. Partly in consequence, the quality of teaching and research and the effectiveness of their contribution to policy, production, management and social construction, as well as their cost effectiveness, are matters of increasing public concern.

At the same time, there is persistent pressure for tertiary education institutions to change from the elite systems of earlier times and open up to wider sections of society. Globalization is increasing the gap between the rich and the poor, between internet-connected and isolated social groups within countries and across continents. Thus, while opening the door to a highly mobile, highly skilled international elite, globalization, at the same time, shuts out the less skilled and educated that remain locked up in poverty. The most visible symbols and facilitators of globalization have been the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICT) and the creation of planetary networks of knowledge generation and dissemination. Knowledge creation and management have become easier with computers, electronic mail and the Internet. Globalization, thus, presents ample opportunities for Armenia as well as a warning that unless appropriate steps are taken the country risks to lose the human potential it has been honored and known for.

### ***Political Challenges***

While the globalization puts forth its new standards and criteria for labor market development, the soviet legacy in handling political issues still acts as an impediment to the Armenian tertiary education

development in line with the global trends and therefore integration at international level. In spite of the enormous efforts to reform tertiary education throughout the last decade, the development of the latter was inadequate with regards to the reforms in general and quality assurance in particular.

One detrimental political factor in the Armenian reality is the low stability of political powers in force. As the experience of the last 15 years demonstrates Ministers of Education and Science have been in force with a frequent change and at most a period of two years at an average: 1995-1995; 1995-1996; 1996-1998; 1998-1999; 1999-2001; 2001-2003; 2003-2007; 2007-2008; 2008-2009. As they have represented different political parties leading in Armenia, regular/frequent reappointment of this position has its direct consequence on the stable reform development and implementation and its continuity in the country. Although the leading parties in the political arena do not differ much in terms of their strategies, goals and objectives, the experience so far has been bringing about different approaches and priorities to the field. Considering the issue from the indirect point of view, political party system in Armenia faces a number of problems which have impacted the educational sphere of policy implementation.

As a result, the Bologna declaration signed in 2005 has had very little impact on the tertiary education. Moreover, strategic developments in general and that of quality assurance in particular have been delayed. Thus, the policy diffusion and transfer has found an unfavorable environment for elaboration and fruition and the changes resulted in imitation and conceptual rather than practical adaptation. To address the issues the RA Government established the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance, Foundation, as an institution directly affiliated to the RA Government to facilitate the quality assurance process.

### ***Economic Challenges***

While the Armenian Government is expected to match their renewed interest in higher education with higher levels of funding, the economic situation in Armenia does not provide much hope for the foreseeable future. One of the issues still impeding the development of the RA tertiary education is the blurred link between the labor market and professional education. Having failed to put forth the requisite competences, the local market manifests its lack of capacity to act as an economic leader and an active stakeholder of the education process. In its turn, the RA tertiary education, still keeping to its traditional approaches to teaching and learning, finds it difficult to face the challenge of moving onto student-centered teaching and learning, so necessary for knowledge-based society development. To do so it has to reconsider its academic programmes in general and teaching and learning approaches in particular. As a result, expression of the academic programmes in terms of learning outcomes, so crucial for meeting the competence requirements put forth by the market still remains pending. Coupled with the latter, both economic and societal isolation prevalent in the Republic make the orientation of the tertiary education towards the market quite complicated and create extra obstacles for workforce mobility.

Within these conditions, the first signs of change should be initiated from inside the tertiary education, thus, gearing towards student-centered teaching and learning and academic programmes expressed in terms of learning outcomes. First, it will have its positive impact on and speed up local market formation thus promoting exact characterization of the latter. Second, it will emphasize and strengthen the social responsibility factor of the tertiary education. Considering the current conditions, transition to outcome-based education model can become possible only through broad and intensive collaboration with the global education system. The latter is operationalized through a natural process of responding to social and economic challenges and takes place within the change context conditioned by them. Such an approach will enable first-hand exposure to the challenges posed by the global market



while promoting the development and formation of the local market. Moreover, innovative means of meeting the financial challenges are required. With this regards maintaining and enhancing the existing as well as establishing new niches for the Armenian graduates in the local and global markets is crucial. Therefore, the RA Government transition period will promote research, information gathering and dissemination among tertiary education institutions in these new areas, and in training academic leadership to manage change and innovation.

### ***Legal Challenges***

Although international contracts are the indispensable part of the RA legal system and are subject to direct implementation (article 6 in the RA Constitution, article 5 in the RA Law on International Contracts of the Republic of Armenia) there are some regulatory obstacles, which somehow prevent smooth integration of international practices. One limitation of the legal system is the stipulation (RA Constitution, article 39) that the norms of HE establishment and functioning are set exclusively by the law. On the other hand, article 5 in the Law on Education states that the principles of state policy in the field of education are to be as follows:

- Accessibility, continuity, sequence and relevance for the learner development level, individuality and level of preparedness should be aligned with the state minimal standards
- Provisions for the principles of democracy in the sphere of education
- Integration into the international education community
- Common sense in the independent governance of an institution.

Actually, the controversies extant in current legal system prevent successful policy diffusion and transfer in spite of the openness of the RA Government to change and promote establishment of a knowledge-based society.

Another obstacle is the stipulation by the law to organize the education process exclusively according to the Law on Education, which is regulation through curricula, syllabi, academic calendar and timetables. Moreover, the latter are to be developed and approved by the HE establishment after which they are submitted to the MoES for approval. Further, according to the Law, the MoES is obliged to oversee the correspondence of the curricula and syllabi to the state standards, which are approved by the Minister (Law on Education, art 14). On top of that, the RA Government also has a leading role in the student recruitment process (art15). Thus, the leading role in the reform implementation and integration of new concepts belongs to the RA Government, which actually deprives the educational establishments the independence they are entitled to by the article 5, Law on Education.

Yet another challenge is promotion of amendments in the law, the rigid procedure of which, actually, creates extra complexities if any amendments are to take place. These amendments can be made exclusively by the RA President if the issues regard external policies, defense and national security, RA Prime-minister, and RA Ministers.

Last but not least, a pressing issue is the necessity to develop and implement a strategic mission of education in Armenia, where the strategic goals and objectives of tertiary education development are formulated to guide TEIs in designing and implementing sound academic programmes.

Within these frames, the RA legal system, with its controversies, makes the gaps between implementation of international contracts and their practical implementation even wider. Thus, a serious reconsideration of the RA legal framework should be undertaken if the policies diffused and transferred from Europe are to be implemented successfully, leading Armenia to practical integration into the EU community.

### ***Social Challenges***

Social integration is a precondition for educational changes: to achieve social integration, the new concept of education in general and that of quality assurance in particular must take into account those changed realities that have a significant influence on the education process. It needs to be emphasized that such change poses some objective risks to education.

The most serious risk factor is that of fragile social integration, reflected in the form of anomia (fragmentation of social ties and a degradation of norms), typical for societies in transition. Armenia's last 20 years of transition can be characterized as an anomia chain and it has been primarily manifested in the education system. Fragmentation has brought about circumvention of laws and rules in social life. The notion of abiding by the laws, however problematic and hindering they are, is prevailing and is being misused. Such an environment has negatively affected the education system and as a result instead of using laws to regulate the situation, a characteristic of a democratic society, the laws are misused to preserve the practices leading to fortification of private good as opposed to public good, therefore, further fragmentation. Further, social inequality has reached the critical point at which the sense of social cohesion and values of equity deteriorate. The mobility process (in some cases, people without the appropriate skills and competencies found themselves in new social positions) has been accompanied by a severe individualization of society, paying little attention to common civic values and constitutionalism. This served as a negative example for the majority of society, especially its most sensitive part—the youth. Consequently, the motivation to learn declined, and poverty has been exacerbated.

Therefore, one of the main tasks of education is socialization (i.e. development of respect for norms, values, and principles of a democratic society) on the basis of which social mobilization should take place. The role of the quality assurance with this regards, is to raise awareness of the society regarding their rights to quality education as those of a citizen of a democratic society. In particular, a robust quality assurance system will safeguard the society from under quality education by making educational provisions at tertiary level transparent for the society. Moreover, it will do so by underpinning provisions and standards of awards at tertiary level in accordance with the national qualifications framework to maintain and systematically enhance the quality. Thus, the current strategic plan envisions setting up a firm background for social mobilization through a range of activities aimed at raising awareness of the society with regards to their rights for quality education in particular and that of a democratic citizenship in general.

### ***Technological Challenges***

Tertiary education institutions that should be at the forefront of Armenia's ICT provisions have been lagging with regards to knowledge generation and dissemination and in most instances are ill-prepared to play such a leadership role because of the inadequate development of their own information infrastructure. Armenia's universities are thus poorly positioned - when compared with their counterparts in Europe, North America and other developed and even some developing regions - to take advantage of the global information economy and knowledge systems, and pioneer its expansion in Armenia. The development and application of ICT in the Armenian tertiary education therefore becomes crucial and urgent if the country is to reduce the knowledge, technological, and economic gaps between itself and the rest of the world. Of a particular importance is the emphasis on the e-government at institutional level, which is a prerequisite for quality assurance at all the levels.

On a positive note, global trends in the application of ICT offer opportunities for transforming the several interconnected functions of universities in Armenia. As noted above, tertiary education institutions in Armenia are at different levels of ICT development and require different ICT development establishing appropriate ICT strategies across the country. For this purpose it is necessary to bring some



focus to the critical steps that individual tertiary education institutions need to take in order to meet the ICT challenge and to harness synergies among themselves. The RA Government, through its transitional period, can play a catalytic role in facilitating the adoption of ICT policies and helping to secure common services and networks among its tertiary education institutions in particular and stakeholders in general.

In recognition of this complexity, the RA Government is seeking deeper collaboration with stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education and Science, ANQA, tertiary education institutions, Employers' Union, Professional Associations and other relevant bodies at both national and international levels to pursue its goal of knowledge-society development through the strategies of the *Transitional Period* outlined hereby.

## **ANQA MISSION**

ANQA is a quality assurance agency independent of the RA Government and Tertiary Level Institutions.

ANQA strives to promote public trust, social cohesion, equity, responsibility and competitiveness through systematic enhancement of tertiary level education provisions.

It will do so by

- being receptive to the needs of the national stakeholders through its mandatory institutional audits and voluntary programme accreditation
- complying with international standards for quality assurance
- ensuring visibility at international level thus contributing to a stronger positioning of the Armenian tertiary education within Europe
- valuing close cooperation with stakeholders in the process of developing a quality assurance system.

The following are ANQA strategic objectives:

- to determine and ensure compliance with appropriate standards of tertiary education;
- to promote and support continuous improvement in the quality and standards of provision of tertiary education provisions, working in partnership and consultation with tertiary education stakeholders;
- to promote TLI's ownership of quality assurance;
- to ensure that clear and accurate information is made publicly available about the quality and standards of TLIs; and
- to apply international best practice in evaluation and reviews of TLIs' provisions.

The ANQA is conscious of the obligations and responsibilities, which TLIs have, to implement and maintain rigorous quality assurance procedures. It is also aware that there is no 'correct model' for quality assurance. It therefore intends that each TLI would develop its own plan within the strategies outlined in this document.



## ANQA Transitional Period Main Goals

**GOAL 1: ANQA Capacity Building:** Enhance the national professional education quality assurance system.

**GOAL 2: Quality Area Establishment:** Establish an external quality assurance system for tertiary education level while aligning the quality assurance policies and procedures with the international standards.

**GOAL 3: Quality Culture:** Promote quality culture establishment.

**GOAL 4: QA Experts:** Establish an expert pool to avoid blind import of quality, rely on the experienced and seasoned teaching staff to make them the apostles of quality culture.

**GOAL 5: Internationalization:** Create preconditions for ANQA international recognition.

### SWOT Analysis

In preparation for the *Transitional Period* the new challenges posed by global trends and developments in tertiary education in Armenia, a critical diagnosis of the mandate, functions and performance of the governance and management structures of the MoES, ANQA, and TLIs should be undertaken as part of the general tertiary education strategic planning process. Within the frames ANQA has undertaken the SWOT analysis of its functioning to ensure it considers different angles in its strategic planning.

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#### Strengths

RA Government motivation to regulate the tertiary education by bringing in QA components

Adequate agencies and bodies motivated to regulate the tertiary education sphere and establish quality area and therefore culture

Motivation on the part of the TLIs to go through the preparation leading to eventual accreditation to ensure recognition of the degrees offered

Dire need to make radical changes to avoid total destruction of the tertiary system

Support of international organizations in the process

#### Weaknesses

Lack of adequate human resources to manage the process and implement the plan

Lack of a common glossary of terms understandable for all the stakeholders bring about misunderstanding

Lack of local quality assurance experts

Lack of a firm background in standards and therefore learning outcome development

Lack of experience in managing and conducting QA processes

Non-homogeneous tertiary education may create additional challenges for the newly forming QA staff

Only students as stakeholders are motivated in the change process

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Opportunities	Threats
<p>At international level it will demonstrate Armenia’s determination to make radical changes for promoting democracy and establishment of a democratic society</p>	<p>The flaws in the legal framework may impede the smooth flow of the process</p>
<p>Creates more channels for international cooperation</p>	<p>Conflict of interests with the institution top-management may cause resistance on their part. In their turn they may force the staff to sabotage the process</p>
<p>Brings in the good practice as well as the expertise of European counterparts</p>	<p>Radical changes in the political and economic sphere may force the organizers quit the process</p>
<p>Creates favorable background for integration into the EHEA</p>	<p>Distortions in the process and deviations from the standards and criteria underpinned by EU may endanger recognition of the processes and therefore rejection of ANQF self-certification, ANQA recognition and therefore recognition of the qualifications offered by the Armenian institutions.</p>
<p>Develops new channels for integrating ICT into the management of TLI, thus promoting cooperation and transparency, as well as ensuring effective organization</p>	<p>Lack of buy in on the part of stakeholders will deem the process to failure</p>
<p>Creates an environment for all stakeholders for taking responsibility and contributing to TLI developments</p>	
<p>Provides for adjustments to the local peculiarities and practical adaptation of the policies and procedures transferred from the EU</p>	
<p>Creates a dialogue among the stakeholders through creating learning outcomes for each subject area</p>	
<p>Creates a favourable background for establishing a learning culture that values quality in education provisions</p>	
<p>Supports TLIs in reconsideration of their core functions of effective teaching, learning, research and community engagement</p>	
<p>Facilitates critical reflection on, and consensus-building around issues affecting tertiary education and knowledge-based economy formation</p>	
<p>Promotes establishment of external reference points</p>	
<p>Creates favorable background for internationalization</p>	



## **ANQA Quality Assurance Guiding Principles**

ANQA is committed to safeguarding the public from below-standard education provisions and to ensure public recognition and credibility through the maintenance of standards. ANQA quality assurance provisions are based upon the following principles:

- the ANQA evaluation and quality assurance provisions should be understandable to stakeholders, effectively administered, publicly accountable and cost effective to operate.
- the ANQA quality assurance criteria, which define the performance required of the applicants for them to achieve the ANQA standards, should be appropriate to purpose, explicit and in the public domain.
- ANQA quality assurance provisions should be valid, reliable and practicable, and decision-making should be in line with the set criteria.
- ANQA's responsibility for quality assurance mainly includes but is not limited to provisions of services aimed at continuous improvement and enhancement of quality education provisions. The latter is devolved to institutions where quality assurance is consistent with the maintenance of national and international standards.
- the ANQA quality assurance provisions should be accessible to all tertiary level institutions that are required to do so by law.
- ANQA quality assurance provisions are intended to protect students from below-standard educational provisions and the outcomes should, by no means, negatively impact students.

### **Implementation Strategy**

The objectives and subsequent activities under the ANQA Strategic Plan will be developed and implemented in a series of rolling plans. The implementation of each plan will be monitored based on the relevant schedules, and adjusted as necessary by the ANQA. Every other year the stakeholders will receive and consider a report on the plan implementation.

### **Logical Framework Matrix**

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
<b>GOAL 1: ANQA Capacity Building:</b> Enhancement of the national professional education quality assurance system.	<b>Objective 1.1:</b> To finalize and legitimize the external quality assurance system.	1.1.1 Finalize and submit for approval the organizational issues of ANQA	<b>2010</b>
		1.1.2 Develop shared vision about relations between internal and external QA, licensing and QA	<b>2011</b>
		1.1.3 Revision of the law to provide for new regulations for external QA in Armenia	<b>2010</b>
		1.1.4 Clarification of roles and responsibilities of ANQA, MoES, RA Government, the TLIs,	<b>2011</b>
	<b>Objective 1.2:</b> To establish ANQA internal quality assurance system.	1.2.1 Establish ANQA internal quality assurance system that covers all the activities of ANQA and complies with the ESG standards	<b>2010</b>
		1.2.2 Develop and implement internal and external feedback mechanisms	<b>2010-2011</b>
		1.2.3 Develop and put in use the ANQA internal quality assurance handbook	<b>2010</b>
		<b>GOAL 2: Quality Area Establishment:</b> Establish an external quality assurance system for tertiary education level while aligning the quality assurance policies and procedures with the international standards.	<b>Objective 2.1:</b> To establish a National register for accredited programmes
2.1.2 Define the scope of responsibilities	<b>2010</b>		
2.1.3 Identify a national body to run the register	<b>2011</b>		
<b>Objective 2.2:</b> To launch a cyclical quality assurance process	2.2.1 Development of the ANQA guidelines, criteria and standards for quality assurance		<b>2010</b>
	2.2.2 Try-out of ANQA criteria and standards		<b>2010</b>
	2.2.3 Redevelopment of ANQA criteria and standards		<b>2011</b>
	2.2.4 Pilot the internal quality assurance mechanisms at 22	<b>2011-2012</b>	



		institutions	
		2.2.5 Finalize and formalize ANQA QA criteria and standards	2011
		2.2.6 Development of programme assessment tools	2011
		2.2.7 Try-out of programme assessment tools	2011
		2.2.8 Redevelopment of programme assessment tools	2011-2012
		2.2.9 Launch programme assessment process	2012
		2.2.10 Try-out of institutional audit tools	2010
		2.2.11 Redevelopment of institutional audit tools	2011
		2.2.12 Launch institutional audit process	2011
		2.2.13 Redevelop programme accreditation criteria and standards	2010
		2.2.14 Conduct institutional audits at 77 institutions	2012-2015
		2.2.15 Conduct programme accreditations on voluntary basis	2013-2015
<b>GOAL 3: Quality Culture:</b> Integrate the external quality assurance at tertiary education system bringing in quality culture.	<b>Objective 3.1:</b> Development and integration of Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms (IQAM)	3.1.1 Support the set up of TLI internal quality assurance infrastructure	2010-2015
		3.1.2 Support the development of policies and procedures for the QA structure functioning	2010-2015
		3.1.3 Support development of tools and mechanisms for quality assurance processes	2011-2015
		3.1.4 Start a cyclical quality assurance process	2011
	<b>Objective 3.2:</b> Awareness raising: an aggressive promotion campaign and trainings for a broad range of stakeholders	3.2.1 Needs analyses	2010
		3.2.2 Development of training materials	2010-2011
		3.2.3 Workshops for top management, and QA officer	2010-2012
		3.2.4 Workshops for the teaching staff	2011-2014
		3.2.5 Meetings with students and other stakeholders	2011-2015
	<b>Objective 3.3:</b> Formalize quality assurance standards and criteria developed by ANQA	3.3.1 Circulate ANQA QA criteria and standards among the stakeholders for feedback	2010
		3.3.2 Redevelopment of the criteria and standards	2011
		3.3.3 Validation of the criteria and standards by international experts	2011
		3.3.4 Formalization and integration of the ANQA criteria and standards	2011
	<b>Objective 3.4:</b> Commission	3.4.1 Invite ENQA experts for ANQA peer-review and	2014





	an international peer review of the ANQA, taking the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) of ENQA (and the code of good practice of ECA) as a framework for the evaluation	3.4.2	recognition Set up ANQA committee for peer-review and recognition facilitation	2013
		3.4.3	Conduct ANQA self-assessment	2013
		3.4.4	Final report, recommendation development and final decision	2014
<b>GOAL 4: QA Experts: to establish an expert pool to avoid blind import of quality</b>	<b>Objective 4.1:</b> Establish a strong expert pool in major directions	4.1.1	Identify major subject areas to go through the scrutiny of quality assurance	2011
		4.1.2	Recruit and train experts through providing a first-hand exposure to the international developments in the field	2010-2015
	<b>Objective 4.2:</b> Establish a Quality Assurance Network	4.2.1	Develop the mission, goals and objectives targeting at promoting a dialogue between the different stakeholders	2011
		4.2.2	Bring in the necessary body of knowledge and diversity of experiences (employers, students, teachers, professionals	2011-2015
<b>GOAL 5: Internationalization: Create preconditions for ANQA recognition.</b>	<b>Objective 5.1:</b> Undertake ANQA recognition at international level.	4.2.3	Commence the first Conference	2012
		5.1.1	Organize an external review of ANQA to test it against fulfillment of the ESG	2014
	5.1.2	Apply for the full membership at ENQA	2014	
	<b>Objective 5.2:</b> Promote ANQA internationalization through proactive involvement in international projects.	5.2.1	Participate in ENQA, ECA, ENQAHEE, EAU activities	2010-2015
		5.2.2	Apply for international grants	2010-2015
5.2.3		Launch an aggressive promotion campaign	2010-2015	

### **Transitional Arrangements**

Overall, a smooth and gradual transition to robust quality assurance processes is envisioned, therefore, the whole process will be broken into three phases and each phase envisions a pilot followed by the actual process.

Given the number of the academic programmes offered by TLIs (both private and public universities and colleges) comes to 240 at higher education level and 163 at colleges and considering the overlap in programmes at both levels we envision to have approximately 300 programmes to be accredited. To handle the Transitional Period, given the expert potential ANQA can provide for, 12 academic programme committees and 2 committees handling institutional audits will be functioning throughout a year (overall, there are 267 public and private institutions including the branches, out of which 127 universities and 140 colleges). Each committee will manage 3 to 4 expert panels in 6 months. A cluster approach to programme accreditation will be undertaken, so each expert panel will handle three academic programmes at different institutions at a time. Overall, the distribution of activities is as follows:

**Table 1: Transitional Period Schedule**

<b>Years</b>	<b>Institutional Audit</b>	<b>Accreditation (potentially, on voluntary basis)</b>	<b>Total site visits per year</b>
<b>2011-2012</b>			
<b>2012-2013</b>	22		22
<b>2013-2014</b>	25	40	65
<b>2014-2015</b>	30	80	110
<b>Grand total</b>	77	120	197

The **second phase** (January 2012 – December 2013) will see the implementation of a full set of programs and activities developed in accordance with the ANQA Strategic Plan objectives and to be approved by the General Conference by the end of 2011. This phase will be marked by the launch of the Programme Assessment phase done by the TLIs, during which the academic programmes will undergo a scrutinized process of student learning outcomes assessment. The TLIs will bear a sole responsibility of the programme assessment process. The results of the process are to be reflected in both institutional and programme self-assessments and quality assured by ANQA during site visits for institutional audit and programme accreditation. With regards to the subject areas, priority subject areas, Information Technology, Law, Economy and Pedagogy will be included in the first round of assessment. Medicine, agriculture, engineering and architecture will enter the process during the second phase (2012-2013), the rest will enter the process during the following phases of 2013 up to 2015.

The **third phase** (January 2012 – December 2015) will consider launch and scrupulous audits of institutional capacity aiming at development and enhancement of the target institutions. The Strategic Plan will come to its logical end in 2015, which will culminate in a number of audited institutions and accredited programmes and launch of a cyclical process of quality assurance. By the end of the transitional period we envision to have had the target programmes assessed by the TLIs and 77 institutions audited. Considering the voluntary nature of programme accreditation, the number of accredited programmes by the end of the transitional period depends on the number of applications registered within the same time-span. ANQA envisions 20% of deviation from the envisioned plans in case of technical problems and insufficiency of resources beyond ANQA's control.



To ensure for publicity and transparency the outcomes of the activities as well as reports on institutional audits and programme accreditations will be made publicly available through ANQA website as well as General Stakeholder Conferences (GSC) by the end of 2011, 2013 and 2015. The GSCs will mainly capitalize on the outcomes of the activities and the best practice demonstrated by TLI.

### Summary of activities

#### ANQA Three-Year Action Plan

Activity	Deadline
<i>Responsibilities ANQA</i>	
Develop mission statement	December 2010
Develop shared vision about relations between internal and external QA and between licensing and external QA	December 2011
Revision of law to provide for new regulations for external QA in Armenian HE	December 2010
Clarification of roles and responsibilities ANQA, the government and HEIs within the national QA-system; shared vision by all stakeholders	December 2011
Develop national network for QA, encompassing HEIs and other HE stakeholder groups	December 2011
ANQA meets conditions to enter the relevant European networks in QA	December 2012
<i>Organizational issues</i>	
Installment of Advisory Board	September 1, 2010
The Board defines roles and responsibilities for the organs of the ANQA organization	December 2010
Involve stakeholders in a transparent and intensive way in all ANQA's major policy-development processes	2010, 2011, 2012
Develop instruments and procedures for communication with the separate stakeholder groups. Draw up a report on stakeholder-relations	June 2011
Develop competencies within ANQA for interactive policy development in a training and development program	December 2011
Define and describe the elements of the ANQA planning and control	November 2010
Define and install a system of yearly performance appraisal for each employee	November 2010



<b>Develop plans for learning and development of ANQA-employees; draw up report on learning and development for ANQA employees</b>	November 2011
<b>Organize yearly two one-day meetings for all ANQA-personnel to discuss the state of the art of the ANQA organizational development</b>	2010,2011,2012
<i>Job descriptions</i>	
<b>Finalize job descriptions after discussions with ANQA personnel</b>	November 2010
<b>Develop a transparent remuneration system for ANQA personnel</b>	July 2011
<b>Develop procedures for recruitment and selection of staff, including systems for job exchange with (international) HEIs</b>	November 2011
<b>Develop a learning and development program for junior staff</b>	July 2011
<b>Evaluate job descriptions on a two-yearly basis</b>	November 2012, 2014, etc.
<i>Internal Quality Assurance System</i>	
<b>Establish an internal quality assurance system that covers all activities of ANQA and that complies with the preconditions of ESG</b>	December 2010
<b>Develop and implement internal and external feedback mechanisms</b>	December 2010
<b>Establish a quality handbook for the standardization of processes and procedures</b>	December 2010
<b>Develop Microsoft Sharepoint as an ANQA information system</b>	December 2011
<b>Organize an external review and test ANQA against its mission and the fulfillment of ESG</b>	December 2012
<b>Apply on the basis of the outcome of the external review for full membership in the European networks in Quality assurance</b>	2013
<i>External Quality Assurance system</i>	
<b>Start the first cycle of external QA with a combination strategy (mandatory institutional audits and voluntary programme accreditation)</b>	2011 - 2014

## ANNEX 1: STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT REQUIRED FOR SUCCESS

It is ANQA's belief that no change can happen in isolation. Therefore, ANQA envisions a broad involvement of its stakeholders in the quality assurance, which in turn will promote reform implementation in general, thus bringing to holistic, strategic-system changes so crucial for revitalization of the Armenian tertiary education. For that reason, ANQA has developed a series of activities necessary to be undertaken by its stakeholders (in consultation with ANQA if requested to do so) to promote the changes leading to success. Below is the action plan for the activities crucial for successful establishment of quality culture in particular and reform promotion in general.

Goal	Objectives	Activities	Responsible body	Deadline
<b>GOAL 1:</b> Quality Area: Alignment and necessary conditions for cyclical QA	<b>Objective 1.1:</b> To develop a new or revise the existing national tertiary education development plan	1.1.1 Set up a working group	MoES, ANQA	2011
		1.1.2 Develop a plan	MoES, ANQA	2011
		1.1.3 Circulate the draft for first discussion	MoES, ANQA	2011
		1.1.4 Redevelopment phase	MoES, ANQA	2011
		1.1.5 Submission, approval and launch	MoES, ANQA	2011
	<b>Objective 1.2:</b> To establish a National register for accredited programmes	1.2.1. Approve National register for accredited programmes	RA Government	2010
	<b>Objective 1.3:</b> To establish a common framework for tertiary education external reference points	1.3.1 Finalize the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (ANQF)	MoES	2010
		1.3.2 Launch the NQF implementation		
		1.3.3 Delegate ANQA ANQF self-certification	MoES	



	1.3.4 Set up a committee with the involvement of international experts to conduct ANQF self-certification	<b>ANQA with International Experts</b>	<b>2015</b>
	1.3.5 Set up committees for each subject area to develop learning outcomes		
	1.3.6 Benchmark each subject area (qualitative and quantitative analyses)		
	1.3.7 Develop learning outcomes (LOs) for each major subject area	<b>MoES</b>	<b>2015</b>
	1.3.8 Integrate into the educational process		
	1.3.9 Benchmark student assessment methods (quantitative and qualitative analyses)		
	1.3.10 Establish national student assessment framework	<b>MoES</b>	<b>2011</b>
	1.3.11 Align the student assessment systems at institutional level		
	1.3.12 Benchmark credit transfer and accumulation methods (quantitative and qualitative analyses)	<b>MoES</b>	<b>2010</b>
	1.3.13 Establish national credit transfer and accumulation system		
	1.3.14 Align the credit transfer and accumulation systems at institutional level		
<b>Objective 1.4:</b> To launch a cyclical quality assurance process	1.4.1 Establish and exploit the internal quality assurance system	<b>TLIs</b>	<b>2010</b>
	1.4.2 Participate in the ANQA pilot projects regarding		



		institutional audits and programme accreditation		<b>2010-2011</b>
		1.4.3 Conduct student intended learning outcome assessment		<b>2011-2015</b>
	<b>Objective 1.5:</b> Reconsider the legal framework to better assume the responsibilities transferred from Europe	1.5.1 Benchmark the appropriate changes to be made in the law	<b>RA Government</b>	<b>2011</b>
		1.5.2 Revise the legal framework while considering integration into the EHEA and development of knowledge-based economy	<b>RA Government</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>GOAL 2: Quality Culture:</b> Stakeholder involvement.	<b>Objective 2.1:</b> Change the role of the student as a main consumer moving from a detached and passive role to a proactive promoter of the quality	2.3.1 Establish a National Student Council	<b>TLIs</b>	<b>2011</b>
		2.3.2 Define the role of students in the quality assurance processes	<b>TLIs</b>	<b>2011</b>
		2.3.3 Conduct a series of workshops promoting their involvement in the process	<b>TLIs</b>	<b>2011-2012</b>
	<b>Objective 2.4:</b> Instilling ownership of the quality assurance movement in the teachers turning them into the proactive decisions-makers and promoters of quality	2.4.1 Establish a Teacher-Employer Association to activate the dialogue between the stakeholders	<b>TLIs</b>	<b>2011</b>
		2.4.2 Reconsider the role of teachers in the reform and QA processes	<b>TLIs</b>	<b>2010-2011</b>
		2.4.3 Conduct a series of workshops for making teachers active promoters of quality	<b>TLIs</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>GOAL 3:</b> New teaching and learning technologies: emphasis and integration	<b>Objective 3.1:</b> Adopt and formalize innovative teaching and learning technologies	3.1.1 Establish Sectoral/Institutional Qualifications Framework for quality assurance purposes	<b>TLIs</b>	<b>2011</b>
		3.1.2 Generic and specific LO-based standards tied to teaching/learning and assessment methods	<b>TLIs</b>	<b>2011-2015</b>
		3.1.3 Facilitate the process of describing academic	<b>TLIs</b>	<b>2015</b>



		programmes in terms of learning outcomes (LOs)		
		3.1.4 Undertake self-certification of the learning outcomes	<b>ANQA</b>	<b>2015</b>
	<b>Objective 3.2:</b> Promote diversity of approaches to teaching and learning	3.2.1 Reconsider the diversity of approaches to teaching and learning	<b>TLIs</b>	<b>2011</b>
		3.2.2 Provide for professional development courses	<b>TLIs</b>	<b>2015</b>
		3.2.3 Tie teaching and learning approaches to each learning outcomes	<b>TLIs</b>	<b>2015</b>
	<b>Objective 3.3:</b> Promote diversity of approaches to student and teacher assessment	3.3.1 Reconsider student and teacher assessment methods	<b>MoES</b>	<b>2011</b>
		3.3.2 Provide for relevant teacher professional development	<b>MoES, TLIs</b>	<b>2011-2015</b>
		3.3.3 Tie assessment methods to appropriate learning outcomes	<b>MoES</b>	<b>2012</b>
		3.3.4 Develop teacher accreditation/licensure procedures, based on the teacher professional qualifications	<b>MoES</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>GOAL 4: Market niche:</b> create preconditions for establishing a niche in the global market	<b>Objective 4.1:</b> Explore and target the subject areas in which Armenia can become a leader	4.1.1 Assess the market locally and globally	<b>MoES, TLIs</b>	<b>2011</b>
		4.1.2 Benchmark the regulating subject areas for Armenia	<b>MoES, TLIs</b>	<b>2011</b>
		4.1.3 Benchmark priority subject areas for internationalization	<b>MoES, TLIs</b>	<b>2011</b>
		4.1.4 Invest in the subject areas in question by designing and implementing strong academic programmes as well as research	<b>MoES, TLIs</b>	<b>2013</b>





<b>Objective 4.2:</b> Establishing preconditions for promoting the target programmes	4.2.1 Design and develop marketing strategies	<b>MoES</b>	<b>2011</b>
	4.2.3 Involve the assets in the form of the Armenians promoted at international level for their inputs in the particular sphere and enriching body of knowledge	<b>MoES, TLIs</b>	<b>2015</b>