



**DECISION
DECREE N 25
23 March 2018**

**On Awarding Institutional Accreditation to
NORTHERN UNIVERSITY**

General Information about the Institution

Full name of the Institution:	Yerevan Northern University
Acronym:	Not available
Official address:	15a Alek Manukyan Str., Yerevan, 0025, RA
Previous accreditation decree and date:	2015, Conditional Institutional Accreditation with a 2 year period.

Guided by the regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs” approved by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N 978-Ն decree; by RA Government decree N 959-Ն (30 June, 2011) on “Approval of RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation”; by the Procedure on the Formation and Functioning of Accreditation Committee of “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation (ANQA) as well as by ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel, in the open session held on 23 March 2018, the Accreditation Committee of “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) discussed the issue of state institutional accreditation of Yerevan Northern University (YNU) with the presence of the representatives of the RA Ministry of Education and Science, Chair of the Expert Panel, ANQA coordinator of the accreditation procedure as well as YNU representatives.

Having examined the self-analysis presented by YNU, the Expert Panel report, YNU action plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report as well as ANQA conclusion, the Committee stated the following: The main phases of the accreditation process were carried out following the below-given timeframe:

Submission of application	02 December 2016
Submission of self-evaluation report	02 May 2017
expert panel site-visit	18-21 September 2017

Submission of expert panel report	14 December 2017
Submission of action plan on elimination of shortcomings	25 December 2017

The expertise was carried out by an Expert Panel formed in compliance with the requirements set forth by the ANQA regulation on the composition of the expert panel. The assessment was carried out based in line with 10 criteria of institutional accreditation established by N959-Ն (30 June, 2011) decree on approving RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation.

While carrying out the expertise the expert panel took into consideration the fact “Northern University considers its mission to provide availability and transparency in education along with international advanced experience and best national traditions, implementation of education ensuring accessibility, availability, organization transparency and humanitarian values combining the best national traditions and international advanced experience-aimed at training specialists able to apply obtained knowledge for the following fields-enterprise economics and management, law, informatics, journalism, philology, psychology, education.”

Back in 2015 the NU underwent accreditation according to 10 criteria set by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N 959-Ն decree. As an outcome the NU was granted conditional accreditation of 2 years. The TLI has appealed the said decision and in 2016 an additional expertise was carried out by an independent expert panel as far as non-satisfactory criteria were concerned (APs, Research and Development, External Relations and Internationalization). The committee in charge of carrying out additional expertise left preliminary assessment unaltered.

The NU taking into account the recommendations provided has undertaken an array of improvement changes in various spheres.

Based on the outcomes of the previous accreditation procedure, the NU has changed its SP. With the ratification of the new SP the TLI has made the main directions of its operations more precise, referring to all aspects of TLI operations in the formulations of the SP; from material resources to societal responsibility. Praiseworthy is the fact that the TLI cooperates with its internal and external stakeholders to carry out its strategic aims. Internal stakeholders have participated in the elaboration of the SP, and in the procedure of revealing the needs. However, the involvement of external stakeholders in the aforesaid procedures and the feedback with the latter is still loose. The expert panel states that the policy and the operations of the TLI mostly correspond to the mission adopted by the TLI.

The expert panel considers that even though the fact that started from 2016 certain steps aimed at reforms of its government system have been undertaken based on the

recommendations provided throughout the previous accreditation procedure; a new Statute has been ratified, the SP has been reviewed, structural changes have occurred, the system of governance still needs further improvement and precision of functions of structural infrastructures. The model of ad hoc governance is still at use and there is no resource planning for the realization of strategic goals. Financial planning of the TLI is not yet carried out based on strategic priorities (the importance is highlighted in the QA criteria of QA Manual). The TLI also faces an issue of financial transparency. The issues in the sphere of governance have not enhanced the complete improvement of research and development.

The TLI carries out undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate APs in both part- and full-time modes of study. The TLI carries out 14 full-time undergraduate, 12 part-time, 10 graduate and 3 PhD APs throughout 11 specializations in 3 faculties. The institution has mainly taken into account the advice provided in the previous accreditation and improved the PAPs.

The choice of professional APs is in line with the TLI's mission from the perspective of preparing highly demanded professionals in the labor market, and are in line with state academic criteria.

Based on the outcomes of the previous accreditation procedure, started from 2015 the TLI has carried out certain operations aimed at modernizing its APs and improving the weaknesses revealed in the APs. In particular, there is an outcome-oriented approach to the APs. The intended learning outcomes of three APs presented are mainly in line with the undergraduate and graduate levels of NQF. National and international benchmarking and external evaluation have been carried out for undergraduate APs. The outcomes of the benchmarking and the external review witness that the APs are mainly in line with other similar APs and can enhance student and teacher mobility.

The policy of assessing student knowledge undergoes constant improvement, a procedure of graduate theses defense has been elaborated. The meeting with students have highlighted that the TLI undertakes certain steps aimed at implementing student-centered teaching, which is more actively undertaken by young teachers. The manual on AP elaboration and regulations developed by the TLI are important preconditions for regular quality improvement of APs.

It is positive the fact that the TLI has elaborated and implemented a policy and procedures on teaching staff selection and assessment, the requirements to professional qualities of the teaching staff, job descriptions of certain teachers and administrative staff has been elaborated. The TLI has corresponding teaching staff with appropriate qualifications to carry out its APs, which allows to jump to the conclusion that the TLI takes into account professional qualities and spheres of professional functioning of the teaching staff, which will enhance the preparation of high-quality specialists. To ensure the stability of teaching staff, the TLI has a set system of promotion/encouragement, and throughout the site-visit it became evident that the said mechanisms are widely used in practice, and the teachers are contented

with the existing procedure. The NU infrastructures and human resources are currently sufficient to carry out its academic process, its mission and strategic goals. The TLI has also undertaken certain steps aimed at implementing the recommendations provided throughout the previous accreditation procedure and has carried out surveys among its internal stakeholders as far as their satisfaction with resources is concerned, has undertaken certain steps aimed at saturating the resources (computers, projects and etc.). However, the library of the NU is still needs enrichment with professional literature.

To expand the process of student recruitment the cooperation between the NU and secondary institutions, VET of the Republic still continues. The operations aimed at activating the dissemination of information on the TLI have been activated. An array of contracts with colleges and VETs have been signed which are aimed at student recruitment. Visits to schools and colleges have been carried out by certain employees of the TLI. The fact evaluates positively that the TLI has mechanisms aimed at revealing the needs of the students and satisfying the latter, yet the exert panel considers that in certain cases the improvement of tools and methodology of conducting the said surveys, the implementation of an analytical approach to survey outcome in accountability reports will enhance a targeted revelation of needs, planning of operations aimed at improvement, achievement of trustworthy outcomes. It is positive the fact that the TLI has a policy and mechanisms aimed at revealing social-economical needs of students and satisfying the former, which will increase the attractiveness of the TLI for the applicants. The TLI has certain functioning bodies which assist students and enhance the process of revealing their needs and fining solutions to the latter. Students have the right to participate in additional lessons and get consultations.

The TLI has elaborated 2013-2016 and 2016-2021 scientific-research and scientific-methodical plans reflecting its research interests. In 2013-2016 plan 29 scientific-research directions were singled out. In 2016-2021 plan there are 22 prime directions and 47 topics. Based on the outcomes of previous accreditation, the NU has undertaken certain steps aimed at developing the research field: activating the organization of conferences, setting a regulation on promoting those undertaking research works, enlarging the list of scientific-research works. Alongside the TLI has been granted permission to ratify PhD topics and carry out PhD exams C.00.03 from the Supreme Certifying Committee. However, the TLI still has many steps to undertake to satisfy the requirements of the criterion, and to improve the drawbacks and core requirements; implementation of financial planning aimed at the development of scientific research field, improvement of the policy and procedures aimed at linking research operations and academic process, activation of teacher and student involvement in research operations, implementation of joint projects and research at an international arena. Current publications are mainly preconditioned by individual preferences of teachers rather than the plans of the TLI. Even though the fact that the TLI has created a corresponding center aimed at implementing prior research directions, ambitions, objectives and aims reflected in the

statute of the center, the absence of other positions except the one of the Centre Head, diverse and myriad research directions and topics highlighted in the plan can be risky from the perspective of their thorough implementation. The TLI does not carry out a precise policy on research operations promotion of learners, though students have participated in conferences on their initiative.

Throughout the recent years the TLI has undertaken some works directed at internationalization and reinforcement of external relations, taking into account the recommendations provided throughout the previous accreditation. However, during the site visit inclinations and steps aimed at internationalization were still in the initial stage of development. It is worth mentioning, that there is no financial planning directed at implementing the aims as highlighted in the SP, incoming and outgoing mobility of students is low and is not preconditioned by TLI encouragement and opportunities created. The level of English language acquisition among the students and the teaching staff is low, the same applies to the ability of teachers to teach in English. The website contains scarce information in English.

Throughout the recent years the implementation and development of QA system of the TLI has created favorable conditions for the formulation of quality culture, internal and external evaluations. The internal stakeholders are involved in the operations of the field, QA operations are periodically reviewed, and the PDCA cycle is at different levels for different operations. The TLI has a functioning system of IQA, which, however, is still in the process of being formed by continuously enhancing the ongoing development of TLI operations, the formation of quality culture and strives to ensure transparency of TLI operations. It is praiseworthy the fact that the QA staff is very motivated and is well-aware of TLI issues.

Taking into consideration that:

- a. The YNU, taking into account the recommendations provided by the expert panel, within deadlines of conditional accreditation was able to:
 1. Solve those problems that need urgent improvement and high-risk issues for graduates in the area of “Education programs”.
 2. Fully accomplish the main objective by providing affordable educational services and creating a conducive environment for the implementation of the educational process.
 3. Based on the results of previous accreditation, the NU modified the strategic plan, specifying the main directions of its activity.
 4. Activated the research field by organizing conferences and encouraging scientific research.
 5. The NU has provided the infrastructure and human resources that currently meet the requirements for the provision of vocational education, the mission and the implementation of strategic objectives.

6. The NU has developed a university quality assurance system, with motivated and knowledgeable staff, which is in the development phase.
 - b. “Unsatisfactory” rated areas the omissions of the university activities do not have a direct impact on the efficiency of the organization of the educational process and the credibility of the graduates awarded.
 - c. Areas of the institution's strengths, capabilities and areas of need for improvement, the program of elimination of the shortcomings mentioned in the expert report based on the analysis of the problems is realistic and aims to improve the situation.

DECIDED

1. To award Northern University an **Institutional Accreditation with a 4 /four/ year period.**
2. Within two months after the publication of the Decree on Awarding Institutional Accreditation to submit an action plan on elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report and corresponding time-schedule to ANQA taking into account:
 - a) the necessity of finding solutions primarily to the problems existing in the fields of **“Governance and Administration”, “Research and Development” and “External Relations and Internationalization”**;
 - b) The requirement of having KPIs to assess the effectiveness of the processes implemented by the university.
 - c) Results and consultations of an international expert's partner assessment of the Center's aspirations to integrate into the European Higher Education Area.
3. Following today's requirements, pay special attention to the strengthening of the link between learning and research, improvement of the management system, modernization of the necessary material-technical base, training of professors, mobility of professors and students, internal quality assurance, for improving the performance of the institution.
4. According to the requirements of clause 12 of the Regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Education Institutions providing professional academic programs and their Professions” every 2 /two/ years to submit a written report to ANQA on the results of the carried out activities.
5. Instruct ANQA to monitor the effectiveness of the University's performance according to key performance indicators.

Chair of Accreditation Committee
26 March 2018
Yerevan

S. Avetisyan