ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE
DECREE N 1
21 February, 2015

On Awarding Institutional Accreditation to
YEREVAN STATE UNIVERSITY
STATE NON-COMMERCIAL ORGANIZATION

General Information on the Institution

Full name of the Institution:	**Yerevan State University**
Acronym:	**YSU**
Legal form:	**State Non-Commercial Organization**
Official address:	**1 Alek Manukyan str., Yerevan, 0025, RA**
Decree and date of previous accreditation:	**Not available**

Guided by the regulation on "State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs" approved by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N978 decree; by N959-Ն (30 June, 2011) decree on approving 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 21 February, 2015 the Accreditation Committee of "National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance" foundation (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) discussed the issue of accreditation of Yerevan State University's (YSU) institutional capacities, with the presence of the MoES representatives, Chair of the expert panel, ANQA coordinator of the accreditation procedure and YSU representatives.

Having examined the self-analysis presented by YSU; expert panel report; YSUs 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 time-frame:

Submission of the Application	**29 February, 2012**
Submission of the Self- assessment report	**02 April, 2013**
Site-visit	**16-19 June, 2013**
Submission of the Expert panel report	**22 October, 2013**
Submission of the Follow-up plan	**17 February, 2014**

The expertise was carried out by an expert panel formed according to the requirements of the regulation on "The Formation of expert panel at "National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance" Foundation". The evaluation was carried out based on the 10 criteria of institutional accreditation approved by RA Government decree N 959–Ն as of June 30, 2011.

YSU aims at becoming student-centered learning environment which prepares its graduates to active social life, to the role of a manager and to professional development and lifelong learning in line with the needs of modern labor market and globalized society. YSU has always had leading positions among the higher education institutions in Armenia and South Caucasus. During more than 90 years of its existence YSU has had more than one hundred thousand graduates, has established new faculties and research centres.

During its operation the University has not undergone accreditation process thus the current self-evaluation procedure based on 10 criteria of institutional capacities was the first attempt of the University.

The University is authorized to provide 60 BA, 130 MA and 70 PhD programs. There are 11 degree awarding Professional Councils in YSU. All the faculties of YSU provide programs which have clearly defined and well coordinated curricula. Intended learning outcomes are defined for all the programs. Effective mechanisms of feedback from students and alumni have been introduced to bring the academic programs in compliance with the needs and requirements of labour market and the society. Most of the academic programs have been reviewed for a few times during the recent years.

The University has adopted student-centered learning approach however the transition to it is not fully completed yet. It should be mentioned that students' assessment is objective and the assessment criteria are transparent however the objectiveness of assessment can be improved.

YSU also provides professional trainings, continuous education courses and life-long learning possibilities to various groups of the society through its extension programs and courses.

The University strives to fulfill the demand of having up-to-date programs through interconnecting research activities with education process. However, there is not yet any structural base to carry out these activities. The involvement of alumni and researchers (PhD students) in research activities is possible based on their own motivation and scientific interest, however the University seems to have no comprehensive policy which will involve research and scientific thinking within the framework of academic programs. Moreover, the coordinated evaluation of the impact of those approaches is missing and it's not clear what impact they have in the study process.

YSU currently has more than 200 cooperation agreements with international partner – universities and research centres all over the world. Besides bilateral interuniversity cooperation, more than 50 international research grants are implemented at YSU annually. Involvement in activities within

TEMPUS projects helps the University to carry out benchmarking of its academic programs and to develop new programs.

The University mainly ensures sufficient resources according to the requirements of academic programs. In average the University campus (lecture rooms, laboratories) are in good conditions in terms of furnishing and technical equipment. Within its limited budget the university was able to build adequate library and IT facilities. In addition, a considerable sum of money is yearly allocated from the University budget to reconstruct and completely repair the buildings, practical-training complexes and other constructions. Yet the laboratory equipment and electronic teaching environment need to be upgraded. The number of classrooms intended for interactive teaching is low.

There are mechanisms in place, for the assessment of the resources however the provided information is not enough to understand whether the resources are fully enough for organizing the education process and gaining professional qualifications.

To manage and control the financial flows of YSU, an annual estimate of budget incomes and expenditures is formed and at the end of the financial year the annual budget performance is presented based on the analysis of authentic data. However, the analysis does not show how the mission and strategic goals are linked to budget. The planning of the necessary resources for the realization of the education process at YSU is carried out by the administrative staff of the separate subdivisions on the basis of defining their own needs.

Apart from the special medical training courses for students with special needs no other services are provided by the University and the quality of their provision is not analysed. The same relates to teaching and learning of the students with special needs.

Experienced and professional teaching staff is working now at the University and this promotes the achievement of the main goals of the academic programs. However, along with the successful experience in teaching staff selection, appointment by categories and progress evaluation, there are no particular requirements for the professional teaching qualifications in relations to the academic programs concerned.

YSU employs about 3000 staff out of which 1300 are the permanent teaching staff members (166 professors, 461 associate professors, 639 assistant professors and lecturers). 23 academicians and 26 correspondence members of the National Academy of Sciences are involved in teaching and research activities of the University. The student/teacher ratio is 12.5/1. Continuous development of its teaching staff is among YSU priorities, which is a crucial factor for providing high-quality education. Recently YSU has introduced a new credit-based program for the enhancement of qualifications of teaching staff. It provides special training courses aimed at developing teachers' skills in applying new teaching, learning and assessment methods.

YSU's system of governance is an accepted system of governance within academic environment. The executive power seems to be well distributed and allocated well balanced with a collegial "control" of governance. However, the governance structure is rather complicated, and at present monitoring of effectiveness and implementation of reforms are temporary processes. In the current phase of transition, the effectiveness of the organisational structure is an important concern of the panel, requiring critical monitoring as a part of the quality assurance system. The process of decision-making should be more transparent- more because budget allocation does not seem to correspond to the Strategic Plan.

Education quality and quality assurance are given much importance to in all levels of the University though currently it is mostly conditioned by external requirements. In order to provide high quality education YSU currently is introducing internal quality assurance system in line with the requirements European standards and guidelines. Human, material and financial resources have been allocated for the organization of the processes. Though some processes are being carried out, it is not clear whether these approaches of internal quality assurance are sufficient and effective for the whole University. It is obvious that quality culture is not fully developed yet and that PDCA (plan, do, check, act) cycle is not closed yet.

The University is advised within the framework of its strategic plan to follow the below mentioned recommendations which are aimed at solving the problems revealed by the expert panel during the accreditation procedure and further improvement of the activities of the University.

Mission and Goals
1. To reformulate the mission statement and make it more specific at the level of aimed outcome.
2. To include the indicators for evaluation of the achievements of the strategic goals in strategic plan; which will make the strategic plan more specific and follow up of the realisation of the goals is possible.
3. To make a clear distinction between the programs of majors and minors in terms of learning outcomes.
4. To improve the involvement of stakeholders (especially external).
5. To analyse the effectiveness of the stakeholders' involvement, with specific emphasis on the involvement of alumni and labour market representatives.

Governance and Administration
6. To simplify the University structure. The University might want to opt for a lean organisational structure still based on the collegial academic culture.
7. To adjust budget allocation to the Strategic Plan.
8. To adjust the governance structure in order to enlarge the input of the teaching staff in the development, application and revision of educational policies.
9. To use the indication of risks and chances as a regular planning instrument

10. To translate the Strategic Plan (where possible) into quantifiable targets and adjust data collection to underpin this strategy in an organized way.
11. To close the PDCA cycle on every level of governance, in order to efficiently achieve the goals of the Strategic Plan.
12. To mandatory include external peer review in the QA system.

Academic Programs

13. To develop a more explicit policy on the alignment of learning outcomes and teaching and learning methods, based on a stepwise approach with proper educational information, dissemination of good (international) practices and deep involvement of teachers and students.
14. To adjust the survey system in order to allow for critical assessment of the new educational approach.
15. To stimulate the development of interdisciplinary programmes.

Students

16. To encourage and formalize the active involvement of students with special needs and disabilities in University governing bodies.
17. To evaluate the effectiveness of the mechanisms revealing the students' needs.
18. To evaluate the extent to which the supplementary courses and internships contribute to the formation of intended qualifications.
19. To develop a clear formal procedure and a schedule for students at YSU to be able to turn to the administrative staff for their issues.
20. To link students and teaching staff research activities and evaluate the effectiveness of the research activities.
21. To study the effectiveness of the student right protection mechanisms and analyse their impact.

Teaching and Support staff

22. To determine particular requirements for the professional qualities of the teaching staff according to the demands of the academic programmes.
23. To establish a mentoring system for young lecturers.
24. To use the results of the students surveys for the purpose of guiding and individualizing the quality improvement programmes of the teaching staff.
25. To improve the teachers' proficiency in English.
26. To link the courses of professional development with the qualifications of the academic programs.
27. To develop professional standards and improvement mechanisms for the attestation of the administrative and supporting staff.

Research and Development

28. To revise and specify the research strategy of the University.

29. To extend the research activities by focusing its efforts primarily on a limited number of carefully chosen centres of excellence including input of other universities or Education centres in Armenia or abroad. These centres can promote innovation and generate new knowledge. They can also be conductive for the further development of a strong teaching and learning method. This approach is possible to introduce through multidisciplinary programs, and it is encouraged to adopt this more modern concept of program design ensuring more horizontal integration;
30. To embark on a strategy which is aimed to increase the income for research from external sources.
31. To increase the number and quality of publications in international peer reviewed journals to assure the University's visibility.
32. To develop tools that check the research strategy's timely implementation and quality.
33. To develop a policy that ascertains that research becomes an essential learning method in academic education. Training of all students in terms of research and scientific thinking at the appropriate academic level needs to be structurally included in all academic programmes.

Infrastructure and Resources
34. To invest in an integrated electronic documentation system, in line with a policy and procedures for information management;
35. To analyse the extent to which the resources available provide for the necessary environment to implement academic activities arising from goals in the Strategic Plan;
36. To create the necessary conditions for staff and students with special needs.

Social Responsibility
37. To assess the effectiveness of the reporting system;
38. To develop a policy on provision of transparency;
39. To analyse the effectiveness of the mechanisms available to collect feedback from the broader levels of the society.

External Relations and Internationalization
40. To develop an integrated strategy of internationalisation;
41. To further develop the prospective activities, action plans, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of the International relations' office and invest in a professional working force in line with the mission of International relations' office.
42. To study the effectiveness of the activities contributing to the implementation of the mission of YSU and its strategic goals;
43. To analyse the impact of the international projects on the implementation of University's mission and goals;
44. To enhance the proficiency of English language among students, teachers and administrative staff;
45. To develop programme modules in English for bachelor and master programmes;
46. To increase the mobility of staff and students;

47. To carry out international benchmarking at an institutional level. A good use can be made of the expertise of the Educational-Methodological Department.

Internal Quality Assurance System
48. To involve Ijevan branch more explicitly in the University's internal quality assurance system making full use of the outcomes of the internal quality assurance system of the branch.
49. To develop a comprehensive quality assurance handbook.
50. To close the PDCA cycle at all governmental levels of YSU.
51. To include opportunities and threats in the SWOT analysis and show how threats can become opportunities (and vice versa).

Having examined the presented package of documents, having heard the opinions of the head of the expert panel and the representatives of the University, the Accreditation Committee finds that Yerevan State University accomplishes the primary goals set before the institution. The provided academic programs, teaching staff, infrastructure and resources and quality assurance concept form sufficient learning environment for getting professional education in line with NQF.

In the field of **"Research and development"** the University ensures student's sufficient involvement in research activities, provides necessary material and human resources. However being one of the significant research centers in the Republic and having considerable contribution in preparing scientific staff, YSU has still a lot to do in order to become a research university.

Admitting the above mentioned shortcomings and the recommendations the implementation of which is a matter of time, the University has developed an Action Plan for the elimination of the shortcomings mentioned in the expert panel report. The plan is realistic and is aimed at the further development of the University.

Taking into consideration that methodically using its internal QA mechanisms the University will manage to eliminate the shortcomings mentioned in the expert panel report as well as implement the recommendations, as a result of voting the Committee

DECIDED

1. To award Yerevan State University an **Institutional Accreditation for a 6 /six/ year period.**
2. Within two months after the publication of the Decree on Awarding Institutional Accreditation to submit a reviewed action plan and corresponding time-schedule to ANQA taking into account:
   a. the necessity of finding solutions primarily to the problems existing in the field of "Research and Development";
   b. the results and recommendations of the peer-review according to international standards.
3. In order to improve the activities of the University in line with current demands it is necessary to pay special attention to the strengthening of quality assurance system, modernization of

appropriate technical resource base required for the implementation of the academic programs, the mobility of teaching staff and students, strengthening of the link between teaching and research as well as training of the teaching staff.

4. According to the requirements of clause 12 of the Regulation on "State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs" every two year to submit a written report to ANQA on the results of the carried out activities

5. Based on RA Government N1408 decree as of 27 November, 2014 give the Accreditation Certificate to Yerevan State University» foundation which is a legal successor of Yervan State University state non-profit organization.

Chairman of the Accreditation Committee   **V. Urutyan**

February 27, 2015

Yerevan