



National Center For Professional
Education Quality Assurance
Foundation

ANQA ACCREDITATION MANUAL 2022

*Gateway
to Quality*

National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation

MANUAL FOR THE EXTERNAL REVIEW OF RA'S TERTIARY LEVEL
INSTITUTIONS

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This Manual gives a comprehensive description of the quality assurance framework for Armenian tertiary education, external review processes, procedures initiated for the purposes of state accreditation of tertiary level institutions and academic programmes. It also describes the main duties of the staff responsible for the quality assurance, observations of the stakeholders, the scope of activities of the TLIs and experts. The manual is a methodical guide for tertiary level institutions, experts and other stakeholders.

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Foreword

This manual is a constituent part of the Statute on State Accreditation of Tertiary Level Institutions and their Academic Programmes in the Republic of Armenia (hereafter Accreditation Statute), approved by the RA Government Decree N 978-N of June 30, 2011.

This manual was revised by the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance foundation (hereafter “ANQA”) in 2015 and 2021.

It gives a comprehensive description of the quality assurance framework (QAF) of Armenian tertiary education, the procedures and duration of external review processes of tertiary level institutions (hereafter the “TLIs”) and academic programmes (hereafter the “Aps”), the main duties of the staff responsible for the quality assurance, observations of the stakeholders, the scope of activities of the TLIs and experts.

Throughout the revision process of the manual, ANQA has taken as a basis the following factors:

- need assessment and situational analysis of the Armenian tertiary education, as well as its current developments
- electronic questionnaires on the basis of which ANQA’s database on tertiary level institution’s performance is established
- experience and results accumulated from accreditation processes carried out within the framework of national quality assurance system formation during 2009-2021
- results of institutional and programme accreditations implemented in higher education institutions within the scope of the second loan project of the World Bank “Education Quality and Relevance”, as well as the project “Armenia Quality Assurance Technical Assistance” (ARQATA), in close collaboration with the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO).
- the Procedure on the Formation and Operation of the Accreditation Committee of the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance foundation, approved by the ANQA’s Board of Trustees, Decree N 1-L of May 8, 2020.
- priorities and developments of the Bologna process.
- recommendations and observations provided by local and international experts.

ANQA undertook the revision of this manual after implementing its quality assurance processes, receiving feedback from local and international experts, the accredited education institutions’ groups responsible for the preparation of self-evaluation, and other stakeholders. Another external impulse was the revision of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (hereafter “ESGs”), which sheds new light on quality assurance.

Based on the experience gained in previous years, ANQA firmly believes that only through an active and direct involvement of its stakeholders the effective application of this manual will be safeguarded. That will contribute to the accomplishment of ANQA’s mission, the quality assurance of the Armenian tertiary education and the further recognition of the qualifications offered by the education institutions at national and international levels.

ANQA expresses its gratitude to all the stakeholders involved in the education system who strive to make the system recognizable and competitive at the national and the international levels.

ANQA would also like to express its acknowledgement to everyone involved in the revision of the Manual for their helpful insights.



ANQA extends special thanks to international quality assurance agencies and experts for their active participation in surveys and discussions, providing valuable observations on the manual's provisions.

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Higher education reforms aim at implementing the values and principles of the Bologna Process and the Communiqués based on it. Signing the Bergen Communiqué of education ministers representing the Bologna signatory countries in 2005 and officially joining the Bologna Process, Armenia assumed responsibility for implementing the main principles of the Bologna Process based on the directions of action lines and becoming part of the European Higher Education Area (hereafter “EHEA”). The integration into EHEA presupposes RA higher education system's fundamental and continuous changes directed towards the provision of a knowledge-based and innovative education.

Since 2005, Armenian higher education system has undergone radical changes, which are more specifically the introduction of a comparable three-cycle degree system (bachelor, master, PhD) and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

Meanwhile, reforms are underway in academic programmes with a view to facilitating the student-centered learning and promoting mobility among students and staff.

“The National Qualifications Framework of RA” (hereafter “NQF”) was first approved on April 8, 2011. The latter was rewritten with new edition and approved by the RA Government Decree No 714- N of 2016.

Tertiary level institutions are now carrying out their activities based on new approaches to quality assurance. Among all ongoing reforms, the increase in student role and influence, the interconnection between educational and scientific processes at tertiary level institutions, as well as the application of innovative approaches in the teaching and learning process and data-driven decision-making, hold significant importance. These interconnected structural changes allow Armenia to completely integrate into the EHEA.

The primary and secondary vocational education sector has also implemented a number of reforms aimed at improving the sector and implementing processes in alignment with international requirements.

1.Higher Education System

Higher education in the Republic of Armenia is implemented through basic and supplementary academic programmes. Academic programmes of higher education are carried out in two cycles: bachelor's and master's degrees. The postgraduate academic programme is one-cycle researcher and clinical residency. Higher and postgraduate academic programmes correspond to the NQF levels 6-8. Higher and postgraduate academic programmes are implemented in state, private, transnational, state-funded higher education institutions in full-time and part-time education modes and operate on the basis of tuition-free and paid models.

According to the RA Government Decree No 2307-N as of 2005 on the introduction of a credit system in the higher education system of the Republic of Armenia, the student's annual full workload is equivalent to 60 credits.

To be awarded the bachelor's degree (first cycle), students must meet the requirements of 240 credits for the whole programme (four years of full-time studies), minimum 180 credits (minimum three years) for police professions, and 300 credits (five years) for medical education.

To be awarded the master's degree, students must meet the requirements of 60-120 credits and 180 credits for medical professions. In the case of part-time education, one academic year is added to the overall duration of courses.

The credit includes:

- participation in lectures, laboratory and practical lessons, internships
- taking of examinations and tests
- index of individual studies
- assessment of performance and quality of individual works, course papers, theses, and other works set by the curriculum.

For the implementation of higher education, education institutions and their programmes are subject to licensing. The licensing is followed by state institutional and programme accreditation of higher education institutions. The programme accreditation is voluntary as opposed to the institutional accreditation (RA Government Decree N 978-N of 2011).

The higher education institutions are granted the opportunity to decide on the amount of tuition fees in accordance with the maximum amount of tuition fees per academic degrees and in accordance with accreditation results approved by the RA Government decree N 163-N of February 19, 2015.

The HEIs' governance is carried out in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Armenia, the charter of the higher education institution, on the basis of self-government, in combination with the principles of sole management, collegiality and implementation of the functions of the higher education institutions' councils, scientific councils as well as rectorates. The HEIs' ongoing activities are managed by the rector.

1. Vocational Education System

The aim of the primary vocational (handicraft) education is the preparation of specialists with primary vocational (handicraft) qualification. The aim of the secondary vocational education is the preparation of specialists with a secondary vocational qualification at least on the basis of basic general education.

The handicraft and secondary vocational education is implemented by the general academic programmes with the award of a qualification degree of craftsman and specialist.

The duration of the study in the case of a craftsman is from 6 months up to 3 years and 2-5 years in the case of a specialist.

Secondary vocational education is provided by secondary vocational education and training institutions (hereafter "VET institutions").

VET education is based on the basic general and secondary (full) general education and is delivered in the form of full time, part-time learning.

As a result of the reforms implemented in the sphere of vocational education, a new list of secondary vocational professions was approved.

Worldwide, there has been an increased demand for the design and strengthening of internal and external quality assurance systems in the tertiary education sector. This is due to the rapid growth in numbers of tertiary level institutions and students, as well as public and private investment funds allocated in the last two decades. The education ministers of all the Bologna Declaration signatory countries have recognized the necessity for the introduction of accreditation or quality assurance systems in the EHEA, (Berlin Communiqué, 2003). The external quality assurance is a mandatory process for all the countries signed the Bologna Declaration. Almost all European countries have responded to this need by designing and implementing systems geared towards the improvement of educational service quality and assurance of results. An emphasis is given to the QA of the TLIs' operations and especially awarding of qualifications and information dissemination to public.

The Berlin Communiqué called on the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (hereafter "ENQA") to work with all its partners to jointly develop a set of commonly agreed standards, procedures, and guidelines on quality assurance, which would ensure consistency of quality assurance in Europe, thereby enhancing academic and professional mobility. Consequently, in 2005, the education ministers of the Bologna signatory countries (Bergen communiqué) established and adopted the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. In 2015, the ESGs underwent revision, reflecting the continuous reforms of quality assurance processes. The ESGs provide guidance to governments, quality assurance agencies, and higher education institutions in the development of national QA systems. The ESGs offer a common regulatory framework for the international recognition of the qualifications awarded.

In their "initial phase", the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area stimulated the development of national education systems. In recent years, the main tendencies towards the development of the tertiary education system have been globalization, popularization, and internationalization of education, culminating in increased student mobility.

Internationalization and development trends are characteristic features for quality assurance and accreditation agencies as well. A considerable number of national and pan-European accrediting bodies have been formed. Technologies and procedures for quality evaluation, applied by the national accreditation agencies, have been changed.

The changes made in the EHEA provided the basis upon which the ESGs for "the second generation" were discussed and adopted by the education ministers of the Bologna Declaration signatory countries during the Ministerial Communiqué in May 2015, in Yerevan.

The policy, procedures, and quality assurance mechanisms adopted by the Republic of Armenia have been developed in compliance with the European standards and guidelines, adhering to national peculiarities.

The Paris Communiqué adopted in 2018, stimulates academic freedom and integrity, HEIs' institutional autonomy, participation of students and stakeholders in the higher education governance, innovation in the learning and teaching processes.

The Rome Communiqué, adopted in 2020, attaches importance to the inclusion of education for every learner and innovation in learning methods. This focus is closely linked to research and practice, including the interconnectedness of educational reform, knowledge transfer, and mobility.

1. Quality Assurance Context

According to the definition adopted in RA education system, quality implies as “fitness for the set purposes”. According to this approach, external review processes determine the extent to which educational services or students’ learning outcomes meet the defined aims. The definition also enables institutions to set clear aims in their missions. The quality will be evaluated and presented according to the achievement level of those aims. External quality evaluation agencies give primary focus to the compliance of the education institutions’ aims with the quality assurance criteria approved by RA government, the priority directions in education development, and public demands.

This approach implies that, first and foremost, the aims and objectives of tertiary education should be defined. As regards educational services and learning outcomes, they should meet the stakeholders’ needs and requirements. Furthermore, it implies that stakeholders should clearly express their needs and requirements. The aims of tertiary education are introduced as general concepts in the mission and are specified on an academic level embedded in the aims of academic programmes as well as intended learning outcomes (ILOs).

The TLI presents how it carries out its mission and assures external reviewers of the effectiveness of its fulfillment. External reviewers, in their turn, assure stakeholders (the third party) of the outcomes effectiveness.

Tertiary education’s quality is closely related to the implementation of academic programmes: the effectiveness and efficiency of teaching. Effectiveness is connected with the objectives of the academic programmes, whereas efficiency is connected with the resources used to achieve the defined objectives.

When evaluating the relevance of aims, the external quality assurance agency pays special attention to their conformity with the NQF, state academic standards, priority areas, as well as the demands of the labor market. The agency also analyses to what extent the aims are accomplished and to what extent the continuity of the processes is guaranteed. The QA in tertiary education is a process of continuous enhancement directed towards the tertiary education’s alignment with the needs of students, stakeholders, and the society as a whole. Quality assurance is guided by two basic aims: accountability and enhancement. The implementation of these aims contributes to the establishment of trust towards institutional performance.

Thus, the education institution plans its activities, implements them and proves their effectiveness. The external reviewers, assure stakeholders (the third party) of the effectiveness of the achieved results and foster the enhancement of institutional performance through recommendations.

Typically, there are two levels of operations in Armenian quality assurance system:

- **“Political” level:** At this level, stakeholders of education sector engage in the processes regarding the development and periodic review of state accreditation criteria and procedures. They also join in further discussions to interpret and comment on those criteria. In case of Armenia, these discussion processes are coordinated and facilitated by an independent QA body, ANQA, which serves as a central “arena” for interaction between stakeholders.
- **“Procedural” level:** At this level, it is necessary that the complete independence of the external quality assurance agency be guaranteed in all accreditation processes. The government or other interested parties can make necessary modifications/adjustments in the Statute on Accreditation or accreditation criteria only at the “political” level of quality assurance framework. Criteria or procedures can be modified when an accreditation processes are in progress. However, as a rule, these modifications may not have a retrospective effect on the education institution, which is already in the accreditation process unless specified otherwise by the legal act.

Quality assurance is a mandatory process for or all TLIs irrespective of their organisational and legal form, as well as subordination. Quality assurance is an officially adopted system aimed at improving and developing the institution’s performance for its compliance with the NQF, state academic standards, and accreditation criteria.

The main processes are formulated within the framework of the RA Quality Assurance and are based on the ESG.

2. Quality Assurance Principles and Framework

The Armenian Quality Assurance Framework of tertiary education is based on the following four principles of the EHEA:

- Tertiary level institutions carry responsibility for the quality assurance of the education they provide.
- Quality assurance responds to the diversity of higher education systems, education institutions, academic programmes and students.
- Quality assurance fosters the creation of quality culture.
- Quality assurance considers the needs and expectations of students, all other stakeholders and society.

The Armenian Quality Assurance Framework for tertiary education includes four different processes:

- external quality assurance of the TLIs
- internal quality assurance (IQA) of the TLIs
- recognition of quality assurance agency by international organisations
- information provision on the quality of services in education sector

2.2 External Quality Assurance

The external quality assurance (EQA) processes have three essential aims:

- **Accountability and transparency:** Quality assurance processes ensure that in case of adherence to accreditation criteria, state academic standards, public interest is safeguarded. The processes also publicize TLIs' quality of educational services within countries and abroad.
- **Control:** The institution not only controls the cost of its resources, but also demonstrates how it accomplishes the highest possible quality, making an efficient use of resources.
- **Quality enhancement:** The institution conducts discussions and analyses with a view to promoting the effectiveness of quality assurance processes, as well as creation and continuous development of quality culture.

In general, external quality assurance attempts to ensure that the TLIs operations are persistent with the answers to the following questions:

- Does the TLI have procedures promoting quality culture that are applied throughout the education institution and for all academic programmes?
- Does the TLI periodically evaluate the progress towards achievement of quality goals, particularly the insurance and further enhancement of educational services?
- Are the findings of quality assurance procedures used to enhance the quality of educational, training services and meet the students' needs?
- Does the TLI monitor the effectiveness of the services offered to the students?
- Are appropriate follow-up actions taken towards elimination of shortcomings identified in the quality assurance process?
- Does the TLI provide its stakeholders with trustworthy information on the institutional effectiveness and quality of academic programmes?

While developing, implementing, and revising quality assurance procedures, the TLI should not be restricted in acquiring easily measurable quantitative data: this may divert attention from other important aspects of quality assurance measured by qualitative approaches to evaluation.

2.1 Internal Quality Assurance

The TLIs' internal quality assurance is a key element of the Armenian quality assurance system of tertiary education. Internal quality assurance processes should be an integral part of the TLIs' academic performance and should provide a basis for its enhancement and development.

The internal quality assurance policy is of utmost importance. It should reflect on the basic mechanisms of the internal quality assurance system and promote the institution's accountability. Besides, it will help to create and foster quality culture, while contributing to the full participation of stakeholders in ensuring quality education.

The policy is based on the principle of continuous quality enhancement, which includes four main operations formulating the driving principle of continuous quality enhancement: plan-do-check-act.

- Plan — defining objectives and formulating possible solutions.
- Do — implementing measures based on the defined action plan.
- Check — evaluating the implemented actions on an ongoing basis.
- Act — summing up the outcomes and reviewing further steps and actions.

This is a principle through which the TLI assures itself and its stakeholders that it has reached the highest results in all aspects of its activities.

In the context of accountability, internal quality assurance is used as a mechanism for monitoring. Students, alumni, employers and society expect from the TLIs to achieve high standards.

The internal quality assurance is a key tool for the TLI's performance ensuring the fulfillment of the demands and needs of society. To ensure the TLI's accountability and transparency, an external review of internal quality assurance strategy and processes is required.

To reach the level defined by the accreditation criteria, it is required that the TLIs provide maximum clarity, accurate flow of information and transparency of procedures in all aspects of their activities and functions. All the documents regulating the TLIs' mission and performance should be published and made available to teaching staffs, students and all other stakeholders.

It is also important that the TLIs ensure the quality of their academic programmes. The TLIs should have programme development, approval and monitoring processes. Academic programmes should be consistent with the education institution's mission and have clearly defined learning outcomes. It is significant that all stakeholders are involved in academic programme development and review processes. The TLIs should give primary focus to students' active participation in the implementation of academic programmes. The student-centered approach to learning is important mainly with regard to the increase in student motivation and active involvement in the learning process. Teaching staff play a substantial role in providing students with a high-quality education. Consequently, the TLIs must have transparent mechanisms for the teaching staff recruitment and professional development.

Great importance is also attached to student admission, progression, qualification awarding and recognition processes, as well as documents regulating all these processes. It is crucial that the existing regulations are consistent with the institution's mission and aims.

2.1.1 Quality Culture

Internal quality assurance processes should be aimed at and foster the formation, development and dissemination of quality culture in education institutions.

In organisations and companies with a quality culture, any service provider and consumer is responsible for the others in cooperation processes. Quality culture is the responsibility of not only quality assurance managers, but also of all employees. Therefore, each subdivision carries a direct responsibility for the quality of its own work.

It is important that any work should be done properly at the first attempt. If the efforts prove unsuccessful, the process is analyzed with the aim of making corrections to prevent a recurrence of the problem.

The quality culture implies evaluation of effectiveness and providing feedback on completion of each process stage. That actions eliminate the special need for outcome evaluation. Outcome evaluation by itself does not provide a solid base for detecting the unit where the mistake has been made in. Consequently, it becomes rather difficult to make enhancement-led steps.

- The education institutions where quality assurance processes are aimed at building quality culture, can demonstrate the following at all levels:
- transparent and active performance, compassionate attitude towards quality
- willingness to carry out critical self-evaluation
- internal regulations with clear-cut procedures and consistent implementation
- coherently and clearly defined responsibilities for quality control and evaluation
- striving for external and internal stakeholders' opinion
- aiming for identification and dissemination of best practices
- performance of appropriate problem-solution actions based on reliable information.

2.2.1 Mechanisms for External Quality Assurance

In EHEA, various mechanisms of external quality evaluation and assurance are applied e.g. external audit, certification, evaluation, accreditation, etc.

Audit: The audit is carried out on the initiative of the institution, with the involvement of external experts. The audit is intended to evaluate the procedures, processes, and mechanisms of the TLIs. In case of audit, the evaluation subject is not direct correspondence with the aims. Instead, it centers on quality assurance procedures, mechanisms and the processes that are directed to the fulfillment of the mission and goals.

Certification: The auditing body officially recognizes the TLI's adherence to predetermined quality requirements and usually grants some privileges to the institution. This process is mainly voluntary in nature.

Review: This process is generally applied at programme level. It is a process, which helps to verify that the TLI's functioning or newly developed academic programme is commensurate with the quality required, meets the stated requirements, its implementation can either be continued or started.

Accreditation: Accreditation is carried out by a state authorized body. It is a process by which an external body evaluates the quality of an institution or specific academic programme, with a view to officially recognizing its compliance with minimum predetermined criteria and standards.

2.2.2 Armenian Approach

In Armenia, the external quality assurance is carried out through state accreditation. The accreditation process in Armenia is being performed by the National Center for Education Quality Assurance foundation, authorized by the state.

In the RA, the external quality assurance is in line with the institution's internal quality assurance processes and maintains the institution's autonomy. In addition, the external quality assurance is based on the information revealed by the internal quality assurance system.

In Armenia, the external quality assurance of tertiary education entails two types of state accreditation:

1. institutional
2. programme

Institutional Accreditation is the state recognition of the correspondence of the TLI's educational and quality assurance processes, academic programmes, state academic standards and institutional accreditation criteria. It is a regular mandatory process for all tertiary level institutions operating in the territory of the RA, regardless of their subordination, organisational and legal form. Institutional accreditation allows to evaluate the effectiveness of the TLI's operations, as well as to find out whether the TLI carries out its mission, follows the policy of continuous enhancement and contributes to the development of implemented academic programmes.

Institutional accreditation is a prerequisite for programme accreditation.

Programme Accreditation is the state recognition of correspondence of the academic programmes, the quality for preparing specialists with state accreditation standards and programme accreditation criteria. Programme accreditation is targeted at separate academic programmes. This process allows to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the academic programmes as well as to monitor whether it thoroughly ensures the students' acquisition of intended learning outcomes. Programme accreditation is carried out at the initiative of the TLI, on a voluntary basis, except for medical academic programmes — the accreditation of which is mandatory.

As an outcome of accreditation process, the TLI or its separate academic programmes are positioned as accredited with a certain validity date.

There are three general phases or steps in the accreditation process:

1. Self-evaluation is an evaluation process of the institution or its academic programme, which is followed by a written report based on the criteria adopted by RA Government.

2. External review is a process whereby an expert panel carries out desk-review of self-evaluation, supporting documents, electronic questionnaire attached and has a site visit to education institution. During the visit, meetings are held with representatives of administrative and academic staff, students, as well as alumni and employers. Accordingly, the expert panel prepares a written report, which includes evaluation and recommendations for enhancement.

3. Decision-making is a process of studying findings by the Accreditation Committee, making a decision, and indicating problems in need of urgent solutions.

3. Decision-making is a process of studying findings by the Accreditation Committee, making a decision, and indicating problems in need of urgent solutions.

2.2.3 State Accreditation Criteria

State Accreditation Criteria serve as a foundation for education institutions to carry out self-evaluation of their activities and academic programmes and to identify areas in need of enhancement.

The criteria are formulated in accordance with the ESGs and provide diversity and sufficient freedom of innovation, taking into consideration considerable variations among the nature of different institutions, essential differences between adopted educational concepts and purposes. Meanwhile, the criteria are precise enough and ensure that their formulation incorporates the important elements that have been piloted and are applicable.

The institution or programme must be evaluated to have met the defined criteria to merit a positive accreditation status.

Criteria are distinct and discrete statements, which define in measurable terms, the attributes of institutions' activities or programmes.

Standards are statements that define the extent to which the institution meets each criterion and conditions necessary for an objective evaluation.

The criteria and standards set by the RA Government can be revised periodically to ensure they are up-to-date, valid, relevant and consistent with the emerging trends and developments in the field of quality assurance.

Institutional Accreditation Criteria

When the TLIs engage in self-evaluation and the expert panel conducts review, a guiding principle is education institutions' governance operations must be oriented towards a continuous enhancement of education, research and services offered to the society. This must be aimed at:

1. forming and developing quality culture
2. establishing an organisational culture conducive to the formation of graduates' transferrable knowledge and skills in compliance with an ever-changing environment

3. raising effectiveness of tertiary level institution and promoting accountability of the institution
4. promoting comparability of qualification degrees, competitiveness as well as transparency of the service provisions at both national and international levels.

Institutional accreditation's criteria and standards are:

I.Mission and Purpose

Criterion

The Tertiary Level Institutions' policy and practices align with its mission, which is in accordance with the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (hereafter the “ANQF”).

- 1.1** The TLI has a clear, well-articulated mission that represents the institution's purposes and goals, in harmony with the ANQF.
- 1.2** The TLI's mission, goals and objectives reflect the needs of the internal and external stakeholders.
- 1.3** The TLI has established mechanisms and procedures to evaluate the fulfilment of its mission and purposes, with a commitment to continuous enhancement.

II.Governance and Administration

Criterion

The TLIs' system of governance, administrative structures and their operations are effective and directed towards the achievement of its mission and purposes, adhering to the governance code of ethics.

- 2.1** The TLI's governance system ensures regulated decision-making process in accordance with defined code of ethics and has necessary human, material, and financial resources to accomplish its educational and other purposes.
- 2.2** The TLI's governance system provides students and teachers with an opportunity to take part in decision-making processes related to them.
- 2.3** The TLI develops and implements short, mid, and long-term planning consistent with its mission and purposes and has clear monitoring and implementation mechanisms.
- 2.4** The TLI conducts environmental scanning and draws on reliable data in the decision-making process.
- 2.5** The management of the policies and the procedures draws on the quality management principle (plan-do-check-act).
- 2.6** There are established mechanisms for evaluating the collection, analysis and use of data on the effectiveness of the academic programmes and other processes.
- 2.7** There are mechanisms for evaluating the publications of up-to-date, impartial and unbiased quantitative and qualitative information on the quality of academic programmes and awarded qualifications.

III. Academic Programmes

Criterion

The programmes are in concord with the institution's mission, form part of institutional planning and promote mobility and internationalization.

3.1 The academic programmes align with the institution's mission, the state academic standards and are thoroughly designed according to the intended learning outcomes which correspond to an academic qualification.

3.2 The TLI has a policy for the selection of teaching and learning methods in line with the intended learning outcomes of academic programmes promoting student-centered learning

3.3 The TLI has a policy on students' assessment according to the learning outcomes and ensures academic integrity.

3.4 The TLI's academic programmes are contextually consistent with other relevant programmes and promote the internationalization and mobility of students and teachers.

3.5 The TLI has a policy to ensure the academic programmes' monitoring, as well as evaluation of their effectiveness and enhancement.

VI. Students

Criterion

The TLI provides student support services to ensure the effectiveness of the learning environment.

4.1 The TLI has clear mechanisms for the recruitment, selection, and admission of students.

4.2 The TLI has policy and procedures for the identification of students' educational needs.

4.3 The TLI establishes advisory services and extracurricular opportunities to support students' effective learning.

4.4 The TLI has established regulation and schedule for students to receive additional support and guidance from the administrative staff.

4.5 The TLI offers career support services for students.

4.6 The TLI promotes students' involvement in its research activities.

4.7 The TLI has responsible body for the students' rights protection.

4.8 The TLI has evaluation and quality assurance mechanisms for students' educational, advisory and other services.

V.Faculty and Staff

Criterion

The TLI has academic and supporting staff equipped with necessary professional qualifications to fulfil its mission and implement the goals set for academic programmes.

5.1 The TLI has policy and procedures for the recruitment of academic and supporting staff with necessary professional qualifications to implement academic programmes.

5.2 The clear requirements for the professional qualities of the teaching staff are defined for the TLI's each academic programme.

5.3 The TLI has an established policy and procedures for the periodic evaluation of the teaching staff.

5.4 The TLI offers professional development activities for teachers based on the needs identified in periodic evaluations(both internal and external).

5.5 The TLI ensures the sustainability of the teaching staff in accordance with academic programmes.

5.6 The TLI has an established policy and procedures for the of academic staff's professional development.

5.7 The TLI has the necessary administrative and supporting staff to achieve the strategic goals.

VI.Research and Development

Criterion

The TLI ensures the implementation of research activities and their link with teaching and learning.

6.1 The TLI has a clear strategy that reflects its research interests and ambitions.

6.2 The TLI has a long-term strategy as well as mid- and short-term programmes that address its research interests and ambitions.

6.3 The TLI ensures the implementation of research and development through clearly formulated policy and procedures.

6.4 The TLI emphasizes internationalization of its research.

6.5 The TLI has well established mechanisms for the link between research, teaching and learning.

VII.Infrastructure and Resources

Criterion

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

7.1 The TLI has an appropriate learning environment for the implementation of academic programmes.

7.2 The TLI allocates appropriate financial resources with necessary equipment and facilities to achieve its mission and goals.

7.3 The TLI has a financial distribution policy to ensure and guarantee the implementation and continuity of its academic programmes.

7.4 The TLI's resource base supports the implementation of its academic programmes and strategic plan, which promotes continuous quality enhancement and sustainability.

7.5 The TLI has a clear policy and procedure for the management of information and documentation.

7.6 The TLI creates safe and secure environment through health and safety mechanisms that consider special needs of students.

7.7 The TLI has established mechanisms for the evaluation of the effectiveness, applicability and availability of resources provided to the teaching staff and students.

VIII.Societal Responsibility

Criterion

The TLI is accountable to the government and society for the education it offers, the research it conducts and the resources it uses.

8.1 The TLI has established policy on institutional accountability.

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

8.3 The TLI has stable feedback mechanisms that contribute to the establishment of relations with society.

8.4 The TLI has established mechanisms to ensure the transfer of knowledge (values) to the society.

IX. External Relations and Internationalization

Criterion

Through external relations, the TLI promotes exchange of practice and enhancement, thus promoting internationalization.

9.1 The TLI has a policy and procedures to foster the formation of external relations, aiming to create an environment conducive to the exchange of practice, enhancement and internationalization.

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

9.1 The TLI promotes fruitful collaboration with local and international counterparts.

9.2 The TLI ensures internal stakeholders' appropriate level of a foreign language to increase the productivity of internationalization.

X. Internal Quality Assurance System

Criterion

The TLI has an internal quality assurance system that promotes continuous enhancement of all its processes and the formation of quality culture.

10.1 The TLI has a policy and procedures for quality assurance.

10.2 The TLI allocates sufficient material, human and financial resources for the management of internal quality assurance processes.

10.3 The stakeholders are involved in quality assurance processes.

10.4 The internal quality assurance system undergoes periodic review.

10.5 The internal quality assurance system provides sufficient basis for the external quality assurance processes.

10.6 The internal quality assurance system ensures the transparency of the TLI's processes, providing information on the quality of the processes to the stakeholders.

Academic Programme Criteria

The academic programme should be continuously enhanced and aimed at:

1. establishing a learning culture that fosters the development of transferable knowledge and skills, preparing graduates to meet the demands of an ever-changing environment.
2. increasing the effectiveness of academic programmes and strengthening societal accountability
3. promoting comparability and competitiveness as well as recognition of the qualifications both nationally and internationally

Academic programme criteria and standards are:

I. Academic Programme

Criterion

The academic programme is in concord with the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (ANQF), qualification profile, state academic standards and the TLI's mission.

1.1 The goals and objectives of the academic programme are aligned with the institution's mission and purpose.

1.2 The academic programme forms part of institutional planning and resource allocation.

1.3 The academic programme is thoroughly described according to intended learning outcomes of the qualifications awarded.

1.4 The academic programme is in line with the ANQF, qualifications profile, and state academic standards.

1.5 The academic programme is clearly designed in terms of content, consistent with other relevant programmes, and promotes mobility for students and teaching staff as well as internationalization.

1.6 The academic programme's intended learning outcomes meet the needs of the students and other stakeholders.

1.7 There are established mechanisms and procedures to ensure the design, approval, monitoring, evaluation and enhancement of the academic programme.

II. Teaching Staff

Criterion

The academic programme is provided with teaching staff owning necessary professional qualifications to realize the goals of the academic programmes.

2.1 The teaching staff's professional qualifications for the academic programme are comprehensively stated and there are policies and procedures promoting recruitment of a highly qualified teaching staff.

2.2 Within the scope of academic programme, there is a clear policy and procedures for periodic evaluation of the teaching staff, fostering to the identification and development of their professional needs.

2.3 The academic programme fosters the development and professional progress of teaching staff.

2.4 The permanent teaching staff ensures the sustainable implementation of the academic programme.

III. Teaching and Learning Practices

Criterion

The teaching and learning practices used within the academic programme ensure the achievement of intended learning outcomes.

3.1 The teaching and learning approaches and methods necessary to achieve the intended learning outcomes are clearly defined within the framework academic programme.

3.2 The academic programme ensures the implementation of good teaching practice and approaches accepted at international level.

3.3 There are mechanisms for evaluation and improvement of teaching and learning processes.

VI. Student Assessment

Criterion

The academic programme provides assessment system that promotes academic integrity, allowing to ensure students' progress as well as the formation and achievement of intended learning outcomes.

4.1 Clear and reliable assessment system for the evaluation of intended learning outcomes, with criteria available to teachers and students are applied within the framework of academic programme.

4.2 Clear mechanisms that ensure the achievement of intended learning outcomes aimed at awarding a qualification are formulated within the framework of the academic programme.

4.3 The academic programme has mechanisms for the improvement of assessment system.

4.4 The academic programme sets a fair and equal approach to students through clear policies and procedures, considering the students' responsibilities and complaints.

4.5 The academic programme promotes academic integrity and combat plagiarism.

V. Research and development

Criterion

The link between learning and research and creative activities is ensured within the framework of academic programme.

5.1 The academic programme has a long-term strategy, mid- and short-term plans that reflect the TLI's interests and aspirations in the research field within the framework of the academic programme.

5.2 The academic programme promotes research development and innovations through clear policies and procedures.

5.3 The academic programme attaches importance to internationalization of the research activities.

5.4 The academic programme has clear mechanisms for linking research and creative activities with education process and improving it.

VI. Learning environment

Criterion

The academic programme contributes to the implementation of quality education, creating an environment conducive to learning.

6.1 The academic programme is provided with necessary resources to support the effective implementation of its stated mission and goals and create an environment conducive to learning.

6.2 The academic programme ensures that all students receive useful and accessible information and recommendations that promote learning.

6.3 The academic programme has necessary methodological resources in line with its content.

VII. Quality Assurance

Criterion

The academic programme has internal quality assurance system that ensures the stability and continuous enhancement of its quality.

7.1 The quality assurance is designed and implemented to follow the social needs and students' requirements, while also evaluating its activities.

7.2 Within the scope of academic programme, there is an effective policy and procedures for internal quality assurance.

7.3 Reliable information is collected about the implemented processes through feedback mechanisms, which is evaluated for the improvement programme's goals and processes.

7.4 The academic programmes' stakeholders are involved in the internal quality assurance processes.

7.5 The academic programme ensures dissemination of good practice.

2.3. Recognition of the External Quality Assurance Agency

To ensure international recognition of educational services, the quality of programmes and qualifications awarded by the RA's tertiary level institutions, the external quality assurance agency should operate its activities in compliance with the ESGs (Section 3: European standards and guidelines for quality assurance) requirements.

As part of the implementation of its mission, main aims and objectives, the agency should carry out external quality assurance activities on a regular basis; should have official status; act autonomously and independently. The agency should employ internal quality assurance procedures to ensure the transparency and enhancement of its activities, as well as provide accountability to its stakeholders. The external quality assurance agency should regularly undergo an external review to demonstrate the compliance of its activities with the ESGs.

2.4 Information Provision

According to the ESGs, the external quality assurance agency should periodically disseminate information on the results and analyses of its activities, as well as on the developments of the education system.

In Armenia, it is required that the information on tertiary education should be made publically available. This policy aims at promoting the transparency of educational services.

2.4.1 State Accreditation Register

With a view to making accreditation results available to public and international organisations, “State accreditation register” has been introduced in concord with the Statute on Accreditation. State Accreditation Register is directly linked to the Database of External Quality Assurance Results (hereafter the “DEQAR”). This means information on accreditation processes becomes directly available on the international platform as well.

State Accreditation Register provides information about accredited institutions and academic programmes.

State Accreditation Register is run by ANQA.

III. ANQA’s Activities

The National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance foundation was established on November 7, 2008, under the Government Decree No. 1486N. ANQA's main goal is to support TLIs in developing, disseminating, and strengthening a quality culture in compliance with the requirements and approaches of RA Legislation.

It is the responsibility of the TLIs to ensure the high quality of educational services as well as the credibility of qualifications awarded. These stipulations require that the TLIs develop internal quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that education quality fully aligns with the accreditation criteria of RA. Those criteria incorporate national requirements and guarantees set out in a wide range of international documents:

- EU Council Recommendation of September 24, 1998 on European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education (98/561/EC)
- “The European Higher Education Area”, joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education convened in Bologna on June 19, 1999 (the “Bologna Declaration”)

- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)

All the TLIs, regardless of their subordination as well as organisational and legal form, shall be guided by Accreditation Criteria for Tertiary Education of RA (approved by the RA Government Decree N 959-N of June 30, 2011) and shall participate in accreditation processes.

1. ANQA's Mission and Strategic Goals

ANQA's responsibility is to promote continuous quality enhancement in the tertiary education system, contributing to autonomy and accountability.

While carrying out its activities, ANQA is also guided by the principles of autonomy and independence.

ANQA promotes public trust, innovation, equity, accountability and cooperation in tertiary education through periodic enhancement of the quality of educational services.

ANQA achieves its mission through the following strategic goals:

To promote and foster continuous enhancement culture of the tertiary education quality.

- To contribute to the enhancement of the teaching quality of all RA TLIs through trainings and external quality assurance processes.
- To collect, disseminate reliable data on the tertiary education system, ensuring the reliability of expert evaluations and ongoing accreditations.
- To promote the dissemination of good practice and contribute to the innovation in tertiary education.

To continuously develop expert capacities in the Republic of Armenia.

- With the implementation of expert recruitment policy, to promote the development of expert capacities in all fields in cooperation with sector-specific TLIs and employers.
- To enrich ANQA's expert database through ongoing trainings, targeting all levels of tertiary education.
- To expand the scope of preparation of student experts, promoting sufficient awareness of external and internal quality processes.

To promote proactive, continuous communication and cooperation with stakeholders.

- Through continuous proactive communication, to increase relations with stakeholders, including employers, students, teachers, and experts of the fields to promote their involvement in education quality enhancement.

To ensure the alignment of the acting legal regulations for the formation of quality education environment.

- Compliance of the acting legal regulations with RA legislation and international requirements as a result of a desk research of local and international legislative regulations and thematic analyses.
- To ensure a key role in the development and implementation of the RA Quality Assurance Framework in compliance with the acting and developing legal regulations.
- To disseminate international good practice and culture.
- To strengthen international partnership through membership in international organisations for the quality assurance of tertiary education, deepening of cooperation with foreign agencies and good practice.
- To take into account the potential of the Armenian Diaspora, to promote the sharing of experience of people educated in the internationally leading TLIs.

To continuously develop ANQA's capacities, attaching importance to the principles of the lean organisation.

- To strengthen the capacity of the organisation's internal quality assurance system.
- To carry out continuous capacity development of the specialists and staff conducting the accreditation process.
- To strengthen financial stability.

ANQA ascertains that the implementation and maintenance of a quality assurance system is the TLI's priority commitment and responsibility. Since there is no comprehensive system of quality assurance, each TLI is therefore expected to develop its own model for internal quality assurance, based on the RA accreditation criteria, state academic standards, and European standards and guidelines.

2. Principles of Quality Assurance

ANQA strives to ensure public trust in tertiary level institutions, guided by the following principles:

- ANQA's services should be comprehensible, transparent, properly organised, and financially efficient.
- ANQA is accountable to the public for its activities.
- Accreditation criteria should be clearly in line with the purpose of QA, as well as be clear and comprehensible to the public.
- ANQA's quality assurance services should be valid, reliable, practicable. Additionally, decision-making should be in line with the defined criteria.
- ANQA carries responsibility for the validity of quality evaluation processes of tertiary education. TLIs are responsible for the education quality.

- ANQA’s services should be accessible to all tertiary level institutions.

ANQA’s services are intended to protect students from poor quality educational services and outcomes. The services should not have a negative impact on them. As regards discussions and proposals directed towards the enhancement of policies and procedures, ANQA has adopted an open and transparent way of functioning. ANQA’s stakeholders can actively participate in the processes.

3. Cooperation with Stakeholders

ANQA’s policies underpin two levels of collaboration with its stakeholders: periodic analysis of stakeholder needs and activities designed to meet those needs and requirements. To address stakeholder needs more effectively, ANQA has set up stakeholder groups and defined the levels of cooperation with each of these groups.

Stakeholders	Cooperation
Government	ANQA cooperates with the Government of the Republic of Armenia with regard to the development of the quality assurance framework.
RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (hereafter “MoESCS”)	ANQA actively cooperates with the authorized body governing education, science, culture and sports in continuous enhancement of tertiary education. This involves participation in the development and revision of policies, laws, by-laws.
Rectors and directors of TLIs	ANQA regularly organises conferences, workshops with the participation of rectors, directors of public and private education institutions. The aim is to facilitate joint discussions on the issues related to the quality assurance system, as well as to foster the establishment and development of a quality culture.
Tertiary level institutions	ANQA works directly with the TLIs and their QA departments to promote the development of their institutional capacities.
Professional associations	ANQA continues to undertake a number of activities aimed at getting the employers’ unions and private entrepreneurs more actively involved in the quality assurance process. ANQA keeps on taking steps to involve professional associations more actively in the process of education quality assurance.
Students	ANQA cooperates with students at different levels: student unions, student networks, individual students. The mechanism through which ANQA collaborates with students is the “Students’ Voice” project, providing a platform for discussions on students’ approaches towards teaching and learning issues. Students are also trained at ANQA, and those who register success are involved as expert students in expert panels set up for accreditation processes.
Academic staff	ANQA directly collaborates with academic staff as a part of its regular meetings, conferences, workshops, webinars and trainings.
Administrative staff	ANQA directly collaborates with the TLIs’ administrative staff within the framework of its regular meetings and workshops.

ANQA strives to enhance the quality assurance procedures through discussions with its all stakeholders.

4. ANQA Recognition

To guarantee the recognition of quality assurance services of Armenia at international level, ANQA periodically undergoes an external review, which is conducted by international agencies according to the ESGs.

Since 2009, ANQA has been an affiliate member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. In 2011, ANQA became a full member of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).

In 2016, ANQA underwent an external review to become ENQA's full member. In 2017, ANQA became a full member for a period of five years.

Following the site visit, ANQA developed a follow-up plan based on a report provided by the experts.

In 2017, ANQA was also included in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (hereafter "EQAR").

According to ANQA's strategic plan, the external review and recognition are of a cyclical nature, which implies that the agency should regularly undergo an external review.

5. Information Dissemination

ANQA evaluates the effectiveness of quality assurance on a cyclical basis. The outcomes of such observations are available to the public. These publications is important for gaining the public trust. In this process, the participation of all stakeholders is highly important.

To make the accreditation results publically and internationally accessible, State Accreditation Register was created and is run by ANQA. The Register is available on the website of ANQA. It was improved and connected to DEQAR. ANQA publishes the decisions of the Accreditation Committee on its website. ANQA also publishes decisions on the annulment of accreditation status. All the documents on the TLIs' accreditation process is published in State Accreditation Register.

In addition, ANQA conducts system-wide and other thematic analyses on a on a three-year cycle basis. The results are presented in different conferences devoted to the education quality and are published on ANQA's website.

6. State Accreditation Register

To make the accreditation results available to the public and international organisations, ANQA has established State Accreditation Register in compliance with the Statute on Accreditation. According to the Statute on Accreditation, the institutional capacities of education institutions and academic programmes are considered accredited from the moment of registration in State Accreditation Register.

The Register consists of two sections:

1. accredited education institutions (institutional accreditation)
2. accredited academic programmes (programme accreditation)

In the "Accredited Education Institutions" section, there is information on the TLIs that have received accreditation, encompassing the institution's name, legal and business address, accrediting agency's name and country, decision details from the Accreditation Committee (number and date), certificate information (series, number, delivery and expiry date), and the RA MoESCS Minister's decree number for the accreditation certificate.

In the "Accredited Academic Programmes" section, there is information on accredited academic programmes, encompassing the programme's name and classifier, the educational institution, accrediting agency's name and country, decision number from the accreditation committee, accreditation certificate supplement's details (series, number, delivery, and expiry date), as well as the RA MoESCS Minister's decree number for the accreditation certificate.

VI. Accreditation process

1. Institutional and Programme Accreditation

The primary purpose of state institutional accreditation is to ensure tertiary education institutions, students, their parents, employers, and interested public that the quality of tertiary education is recognized by the state. Accreditation is a recognition process whereby the state acknowledges the compliance of the quality of the TLIs, academic programmes, preparation of specialists in accordance with state academic standards, leading to the stakeholder and public trust in the quality of educational services. Accreditation is granted for a certain period, assuring that the institution or academic programme possesses the necessary capacity to conduct educational activities with guaranteed quality for a definite timespan. Accreditation entails their professional fields or continue education in other education institutions.

In this respect, the independence of the agencies that make decisions on accreditation is a major principle. It is ANQA's task to avoid any conflict of interest in the accreditation process. Furthermore, transparency, comparability as well as legal bases are attributes needed to engender public trust in tertiary education.

2. Application for State Accreditation

Education institutions seeking accreditation status can apply to ANQA or other quality assurance agencies that are either registered in the European Quality Assurance Register or are full members of ENQA. Education institutions implementing academic programmes within non-EHEA countries or branches of foreign tertiary level institutions of those countries operating in the Republic of Armenia, can apply to recognized accreditation agencies. The list of these agencies is approved by the RA Minister of MoESCS. Any education institution that applies for an international accreditation must notify ANQA of the launch of the accreditation process within five calendar days.

ANQA accepts applications for accreditation throughout the whole year. The applications are submitted according to the relevant templates developed by ANQA and approved by the Board of Trustees.

The education institution appoints a contact person (hereafter “Contact Person”) to care for the organisational, technical issues and to cooperate with ANQA. The contact person's name, surname and contact details are specified in the application.

It is mandatory for education institutions applying for institutional accreditation to state in the application those two academic programmes that will be introduced in the self-evaluation. One academic programme is later chosen by ANQA.

The procedure for acceptance or rejection of application is defined by the Statute on Accreditation.

According to the 7 and 14 points of the Statute on Accreditation, ANQA decides whether to accept or reject the application.

The application may be rejected if the institution:

1. does not have a license, permission to carry out educational activities,
2. has not filled in the electronic questionnaire of ANQA,
3. applies for programme accreditation without prior institutional accreditation.

After checking compliance with the requirements, ANQA decides on accepting the application.

Within one week following the acceptance of the application, the schedule and cost estimates for the process are formed and approved according to the costs set by the ANQA's Board of Trustees. A paid service contract is signed between the institution and ANQA.

The contract includes the following:

1. the beginning and the end of the process;
 2. three academic programmes under review: two programmes chosen by the institution, and the third one chosen by ANQA;
-
1. rights and responsibilities of the parties
 2. schedule of institutional accreditation
 3. service price, including value-added tax (VAT) and payment schedule set in the contract.

2.1 Application Withdrawal Process: Accreditation Termination

The education institution reserves the right to withdraw from the accreditation process according to the paid service contract signed between the institution and ANQA. The head of the education institution informs ANQA's director about the TLI's decision on withdrawal from the accreditation process in a written form. ANQA's director gives an order for accreditation termination and informs the Accreditation Committee about it. Upon the TLI's request, the institution can be provided with the results of the expert panel's work. ANQA provides those results if they are available by the time of the withdrawal from the accreditation process.

In case of withdrawal from the accreditation process, financial issues are regulated under the paid service contract signed between the TLI and ANQA.

3. Expert Panel Formation

To conduct external review of the education institution's institutional capacities or academic programmes, ANQA sets up an independent expert panel of 4-7 members chosen from the expert pool (<http://experts.anqa.am>). The selection of the expert panel is made in compliance with the requirements set forth in the Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel, approved by ANQA's Board of Trustees.

One of the experts of the expert panel is selected as the expert panel chair. The letter is responsible for carrying out the whole external review process, guiding the expert panel performance, chairing all the meetings, planning specific activities and following the guidelines set forth in this manual. The selection criteria, guidelines and requirements for experts, as well as the status and responsibilities of the expert panel's chair and members are set by ANQA' Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel. A more detailed description is provided in section V of this manual.

One of the important steps in the expert panel formation is reaching agreement on the composition of the expert panel.

ANQA submits candidates for seven to ten experts to the Accreditation Committee. Then the expert panel is formed from the agreed list. The preliminary list of the expert panel is sent to the education institution for approval.

The education institution submits its agreement or objections in writing. In case of objections to one or more candidates, the education institution is obliged to submit a well-grounded written withdrawal.

Having scrutinized the substantiation and withdrawal of candidate rejection, ANQA makes respective changes in the composition of the expert panel, selecting another candidate from the list agreed upon with the Accreditation Committee. The data of the new candidate are submitted to the institution for approval. The final composition of the expert panel is approved by the order of ANQA's director. ANQA signs a paid service contract with experts.

The agreement process may last about two weeks. If there is a lack of agreement between ANQA and TLI at the end of the process, the contract is extended up to a month until an agreement is reached regarding the composition of the expert panel. At the end of the process, if there is no agreement between ANQA and TLI, the contract is extended up to a month until the agreement on the expert panel composition is reached. In case of disagreement on the new composition of the expert panel after a one-month period, the contract between ANQA and TLI is dissolved. To restart the accreditation process, a new application should be submitted to ANQA and a new contract should be signed.

ANQA, under the order of ANQA's director, appoints a coordinator (hereafter the "Coordinator"). The Coordinator is responsible for facilitating the general process, including taking care of the overall planning and implementation. The coordinator is also responsible for the accurate and timely facilitation of the procedures set up in the Statue on Accreditation and in this manual (starting from the acceptance of self-evaluation, ending with the preparing the expert panel's final report etc.). The scope of the coordinator's responsibilities is defined in Section V of this manual.

4. Phases of Accreditation

Accreditations are carried out in three consecutive phases:

- **First phase:** Internal evaluation of institutional capacities or academic programmes conducted by the education institution (self-evaluation).
- **Second phase:** External review carried out by the independent external expert panel.
- **Third phase:** Decision made by ANQA's Accreditation Committee on granting or denial of the accreditation status.

4.1 Self –evaluation

The TLIs are encouraged to regularly conduct internal evaluation of institutional capacities and academic programmes. This process gives a chance to review the planned activities, evaluate the results, detect problems, and areas in need of enhancement. The process also allows to take appropriate measures and allocate resources for further enhancement of the processes based on the evaluation results.

The evaluation will help the institution to achieve its goals through coordinated and continuous approach as well as to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of its management.

The accreditation process requires that the institutions analyse the effectiveness of their missions, goals, strategies, different processes and achievements.

Within 12 weeks after the launch of the state accreditation process, the TLI should provide the self-evaluation report of its activities for the past five years.

Within the framework of institutional and programme accreditation, the TLI is to carry out a self-evaluation: an internal evaluation of its institutional capacities and an academic programme subject to accreditation in accordance with Accreditation Criteria for the Tertiary Education, the RA Decree N 959-N of June 30, 2011.

Through the self-evaluation, the institution should raise issues that need external opinion and recommendations. The analytical nature of the self-evaluation, the validity of the decisions made by the institution will contribute to the effectiveness of the external review. This will also help the expert panel in effective evaluations and recommendations, aiming for a clear understanding of the institution's good practice and issues from the perspectives of credible award of qualifications, risk management, enhancement, development opportunities and long-term development.

To facilitate the self-evaluation process, ANQA has developed a series of guidelines, which include but are not limited to:

- institutional and academic programme accreditation's self-evaluation templates, which make up a constituent part of the Statute on State Accreditation
- guide to self-evaluation

It is expected that the institution's self-evaluation report will clarify answers to four important questions regarding the tasks or processes presented:

- What is the TLI's plan on resolving the issues?
- What processes are actually being implemented?
- How does the institution ensure the proper operation of its mechanisms (How are the results intended to be checked and evaluated? What kind of data have been collected? What analyses are available? How the results of the analyses are being applied?)
- What enhancement-led changes can be encountered in the TLI?

It is particularly important to show the extent to which the educational process is directed towards students' learning and the credible award of qualifications.

It is necessary that the institution clearly follow the template for self-evaluation, the structure of the template, the sequence of separate parts and the content without any omissions. It is also important that the self-evaluation's content, references, graphs, and tables be coherent and legible in both paper and electronic versions. In the electronic version of self-evaluation, references should be cited in the form of hyperlinks. The self-evaluation and evidence-based documents should be approved by the relevant body.

Self-evaluation can contain references to documents that are not attached to the self-evaluation as appendix but are presented by the institution in ANQA' electronic questionnaire. The self-evaluation can also refer to the documents that will be introduced to the expert panel at the time of site visits.

Self-evaluation should be submitted in both Armenian and English. Along with the English version of self-evaluation, the institution should submit the English translation of a number of documents to be provided to the international expert. The aforesaid documents include the list of self-evaluation appendices, the charter of the institution, its organisational structure, the mission-related document, the strategic plan, the academic programmes, and qualifications awarded, tools and criteria for student performance, the document describing the quality assurance system and other documents that may be considered necessary by the institution.

Without appendices, the institutional self-evaluation report should not exceed 130 pages. The number of its appendices should not exceed 15 pages.

Regarding the self-evaluation report on academic programme, it should not exceed 70 pages and the number of appendices should not exceed 10 pages. The self-evaluation may refer to the files uploaded to ANQA's electronic questionnaire, excluding duplication of information both in the self-evaluation report and in the form of appendices. The Armenian text should be formatted in GHEA Grapalat font, font size 12, with a line spacing of 1.15, and the English text in Times New Roman, maintaining the same font size and interval.

ANQA makes a decision on acceptance or denial of the self-evaluation in accordance with the procedure set by the Statute on Accreditation.

ANQA may make a decision to withdraw the self-evaluation in the cases defined by the Statute on Accreditation if:

1. it does not comply with ANQA's standardized template, which is a constituent part of the Statute on Accreditation
2. there are contextual, technical, structural, or other imperfections.
3. data reflected in it is unreliable

In such cases, a one-month period is given to the institution for the elimination of imperfections.

4.2 External Review

The aim of external review is to externally evaluate the institutions' infrastructures, processes, separate academic programmes and make a report for submission to ANQA's Accreditation Committee. The expert panel members function as peer reviewers.

During the external review, the expert panel performance is based on the principles of legality and independence guided by the following regulatory documents:

- Statute on State Accreditation of Institutions and their Academic Programmes in the Republic of Armenia, approved by the RA Government Decree N 978-N of June 30, 2011
- Approval of the Accreditation Criteria for Tertiary Education of the RA, the RA Government Decree N 959 of June 30, 2011
- Approval of Decision-making Policy on Awarding Institutional Accreditation by the Accreditation Committee of the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance foundation approved by ANQA's Accreditation Committee Decree N 35-L of December 24, 2020
- Procedure on the Formation and Operation of the Accreditation Committee of the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance foundation, /with new edits/ approved by the
- Board of Trustees of ANQA, Decree N 1-L of May 8, 2020
- Code of Ethics and Conduct of the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance foundation.

The external review evolves three main steps:

- **Desk review:** The expert panel gets acquainted with the self-evaluation report, the package of the attached documents submitted by the TLI, then, it carries out a desk review following ANQA's template, identifying missing information and issues that require clarification during the site visit.
- **Site visit:** Depending on the situation, the site visit is carried out in one of the three formats: offline, online, hybrid (combination of offline and online formats). The site visit format is agreed upon with the tertiary level institution. In addition, a fully or partially online site visit implies the provision of additional documents both through the upload in ANQA's electronic questionnaire and upon the request of the expert panel. The expert panel's studies, group discussions and meetings (offline or online) during the site visit aim to achieve a clearer picture of the activities of the institution under review or the implementation of the academic programme. The peculiarities of online and hybrid external review are defined by the Procedure on the Organisation and Conduct of Accreditation in the State of Emergency of the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance foundation, approved by the Board of Trustees Decree No. 7-L of October 29, 2021.
- **Report production:** The expert panel produces a report, which includes situation analysis, considerations and recommendations for further enhancement.

4.2.1 Desk Review

The purpose of desk review is to evaluate the compliance of the self-evaluation report and respective documents of TLI/AP with accreditation criteria and state academic standards from the perspective of effectiveness and efficiency.

After receiving the self-evaluation and package of documents from ANQA's coordinator, the expert panel examines the documents and carries out the desk review.

During the desk review, the expert panel endeavors to provide answers to the following questions:

- Does the self-evaluation report provide an in-depth analysis assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the TLI/AP?
- Does the self-evaluation report provide enough findings for external review?
- Do the findings stem from the reliable sources?
- Does the self-evaluation provide a strategy and actions directed towards the enhancement of relevant areas?

Thus, within the scope of the desk review the experts are obliged to:

- identify the strengths and weaknesses of the TLI/AP
- bring out reliable findings about each standard, outline findings that are still subject to further verification during the site visit
- identify the documents subject to study
- highlight the areas that need further study and evaluation

The issues to be studied by the expert panel must be summarized and

formulated according to the accreditation criteria. ANQA's coordinator should make sure that the issues are related to the education institution and do not express experts' personal interests.

To equip the expert panel with necessary tools for the effective evaluation of TLI's performance and academic programme, ANQA provides a package of documents that includes:

- necessary normative legal documents
- guidelines and relevant templates for the desk review and preparation of the expert panel's final report
- approved schedule for the accreditation process and site visits
- other required documents

During the meetings designed for the desk review, the expert panel introduce and discuss their observations on each standard according to ANQA's template.

During the desk-review, the expert panel studies the assignments given to the students within the scope of the selected three academic programmes and prepares for the meetings with the APs' managers, teachers and students.

During the desk-review, to increase the efficiency of cooperation with international experts, their observations are translated and provided to all the members of the expert panel. In addition, regular online meetings and discussions are conducted.

By the end of this phase, the expert panel should have clarified various issues, finalized the list of meetings, identified necessary additional information and its sources as well as compiled the list of additional documents intended for the examination during the site visit.

4.3 Site Visit to TLI

4.3.1 Preliminary Visit

Prior to the site visit, ANQA's coordinator in consultancy with the chair of the expert panel, develops a site visit schedule. It should allow the expert panel to comprehensively study all identified issues and obtain the information required for the evaluation. Prior to the site visit, ANQA's coordinator emails the preliminary schedule to the institution's contact Person. Afterwards, two weeks before the visit, ANQA's coordinator, along with the chair of the expert panel, pay a preliminary visit (or an online visit) to the education institution for the discussion on the site visit schedule.

The preliminary visit has four aims:

- to agree upon the site visit schedule with the TLI, ensuring that all activities set by the site visit schedule can be completed within the specified timeframe
- to discuss additional information needed by the expert panel, ensuring the education institution can provide all necessary documents and additional information to the expert panel
- to check whether there are any peculiarities that the expert panel should be aware of
- to check TLI's preparation for the site visit (including the suggested offices, meeting room, technical equipment provided and etc.)

During the preliminary visit, ANQA's coordinator and the chair of the expert panel have a meeting with the head of the TLI and the coordinator of the process and/or with its quality assurance team.

ANQA's coordinator provides the institution with all the necessary information about the external review process, including the site visit schedule

and the expert panel's compiled list of documents for additional study. In addition, the expert panel may want to study some of the documents prior to the visit. Thus, the contact person should arrange their transfer to the experts within the agreed timeframe.

The education institution, in its turn, presents the list of participants offered for each of the meetings. The introduced lists should contain more candidates than required so that the expert panel could make selections. It is the responsibility of the education institution to ensure the participants' presence in the meetings. Thus, the institution should check the possible participation of each candidate in advance and make a realistic list. This mainly concerns meetings with representatives of governing bodies (governing board, academic council) and external stakeholders (alumni, employers, etc.).

According to the site visit schedule, additional meetings may be convened by the choice of the expert panel as well as upon the proposal of the institution and approval of the expert panel.

Prior to the site visit, the education institution should inform all the staff in advance that, during the site visit, the experts can pose any question to any staff member or student ensuring that all responses remain confidential. The heads of the TLI's subdivisions should be informed that as a part of the external review, they should provide the expert panel with all required information, documents and their copies. For that reason, during the preliminary weeks, the contact person holds preliminary meetings with the TLI's staff, students and other stakeholders.

If the education institution performs activities in different locations and the observations during the site visit take much time, mutually agreed visits can be paid in those locations as part of the preliminary visit. Such visits are carried out by a group of expert panel members.

The group should include ANQA's Coordinator, and/or the expert panel's chair as well as one or two other members of the panel. During the preliminary phase, the expert panel can conduct class observations in online or offline formats.

At the end of the preliminary visit, ANQA's coordinator provides the expert panel with the final schedule approved by ANQA's director and the head of the TLI, along with the list of meeting participants provided by the TLI. Within a week, experts select meetings' participants, maintaining the representation of different groups. The coordinator sends the final list of participants to the TLI's contact person during the week prior to the site visit.

4.3.2 Site Visit

A site visit is an important part of the external review. During the process, the expert panel carries out its work at the tertiary level institution. The main purposes of a site visit are:

- to check the verification of the findings and information specified in the self-evaluation
- to acquire some additional information through meetings and surveys
- To study educational processes and additional documents
- to get a better idea of the activities of the education institution under review or its academic programmes

The site visit lasts three to seven days, depending on the accreditation type, the size and specific features, as well as the presence of campuses, branches, among other factors, of the institution under review. The site visit can also be conducted online due to the emergencies. The peculiarities of the online site visit are defined by ANQA's Procedure on the Organisation and Conduct of Accreditation in the State of Emergency of the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance foundation, approved by the Board of Trustees Decree No. 7-L of October 29, 2021.

The site visit is preceded by the expert panel's close meeting, which aims:

- to discuss the outcomes of implemented works with an international expert
- to discuss additional information acquired from the desk review
- to thoroughly outline content of each meeting and focus group discussions, while also addressing any questions that may arise in the process
- to study the technical preparations of the site visit

To ensure the effectiveness of the site visit, the expert panel should clarify the necessary priority information obtained, assign the issues to the experts for study, taking into consideration the experience of the expert panel members. It is the responsibility of the expert panel chair and ANQA's coordinator to organise the process effectively. The chair is responsible for holding all the meetings. The coordinator is responsible for drawing up the minutes.

4.3.3. Types of Meetings during the Site Visit

1. Scheduled Meetings with TLI's Representatives

Scheduled meetings with the TLIs representatives are held at a separate meeting room or on an online platform. The TLI's contact person ensures the presence of participants. The meetings are arranged by the expert panel's coordinator.

The expert panel' members conduct meetings following the issues identified in advance.

The expert panel's coordinator is responsible for making minutes, taking notes, and keeping the schedule. During the meetings, all the panel members also make notes for later use in the expert panel report.

During the visit, the expert panel members should work in a team. However, if necessary, the teams can be subdivided into smaller groups to study areas more relevant to their experience. In this case, the expert panel's chair and ANQA's coordinator should lead different teams.

2. Meetings at the TLI's Subdivisions

Generally, meetings with the staff of the TLI's subdivisions aim to clarify issues raised during the desk review, and to make here-and-now observations of resources. In this case, the expert panel itself visits (offline or online) the subdivisions and conducts observations or interviews. These meetings are included in the site visit schedule. The interview can be done with any member of the staff, administrative staff member and other stakeholders.

3. Professional Talks

The aim of "professional talks" is to discuss the issues raised from the observations of students' assignments within the scope of three APs during meeting with the academic programmes' managers, teachers, and students. For these talks, the expert panel is divided into three groups based on their professional fields. They have discussions to find out the core issues related to students' progress and the issues raised during the development of professional thinking.

The talks take place parallelly, which are pre-fixed in the site visit schedule and agreed upon with the institution.

4. Close Meetings

Close meetings are only intended for the expert panel members and the coordinator. These meetings aim to summarize key outcomes, reach a common understanding, agree upon on each issue and start the preparation of the report. The close meetings take place in three different forms:

a) Daily close meetings usually held at the end of each site visit day. In these meetings the daily outcomes should be summed up according to accreditation criteria and standards. The study of the areas which has been completed should be evaluated, and the questions that need further exploration should be discussed and/or reviewed. The close meetings also allow the expert panel members to sum up the outcomes obtained during the separate expert panel meetings.

b) Ad-hoc close meetings are arranged upon necessity, in response to a specific event occurring during the site visit. Such meetings can be organised by the Coordinator, on the initiative of the expert panel.

c) Final close meeting is held at the end of the site visit. Such meeting is meant for the expert panel to sum up the site visit's outcomes and achievements, as well as outline the content structure of the expert panel report. An important element of this meeting is to reach a consensus on the evaluation of the accreditation criteria and the supporting justifications that are to feed into the expert panel report. It is the responsibility of the expert panel's chair to take notes of the institution's achievements, pinpoint areas in need for further enhancement, as well as maintain the main directions of the report.

5. Open Meetings

Open meetings are envisioned in the site visit schedule allowing stakeholders to meet the expert panel for discussions of specific questions or expression of opinions on the process. The education institution informs about open meetings envisioned in the agreed site visit schedule two weeks prior to the visit. The announcement of the confirmed site visit schedule and open meetings should be available to all stakeholders.

ANQA's coordinator conducts participants' registration in open meetings. Each participant is provided with a chance to meet the experts. The duration of such meetings should not exceed 15 minutes.

Meeting's participants can submit written requests that highlight the issues they wish to bring to the experts' attention.

The expert panel studies any information obtained from the open meetings and analyses them for further consideration.

6. Closing meeting

This is the official closing stage of the site visit, intending to present the visit's initial outcomes to the management of the education institution. The expert panel's members meet with the head of the education institution reviewed. Other employees invited by the head of the institution also take part in the meetings. The expert panel's chair provides a brief recap of the site visit, which is documented by the expert panel's coordinator.

The results of the process evaluation are the basis for further enhancement of ANQA's approaches and procedures.

At this point, it should be noted that no evaluation or discussion is made during the closing meeting.

4.4 Report Production

4.4.1 Expert Panel Report

The expert panel's chair and ANQA's coordinator are responsible for the preparation of the expert panel report. The expert panel report includes findings that describe the TLI's current situation. The local and international experts bring out these **findings** in the self-evaluation report, as well as during the study of the package of document and the site visit. The findings are grounds for making considerations on the evaluation of criteria. The expert panel report includes **strengths and weaknesses** of the education institution or academic programme, as well as the expert panel's enhancement-led **recommendations**.

The **considerations** prepared for each criterion are the expert panels' approach on the findings that are described per criteria. These considerations should point out the key elements that substantiate the evaluation of criteria and the recommendations. For that reason, the considerations should be comprehensive and substantive.

The summary is the sum up of the criterion evaluation. It should be clear, substantial and emphasize the key points.

After the in-depth and comprehensive analysis of each criterion, the expert panel's **conclusion** on each criterion is introduced.

Expert panel reports are presented by one of the following evaluation phrases: “meets the requirements of the criterion” or “does not meet the requirements of the criterion”.

If the expert panel's observations on the TLI's any area show there is an urgent need of enhancement and the continuation of institution poses unacceptable risk to the credible award of qualifications or risk management, enhancement and development as well as long-term development processes, the expert panel's conclusion will be “does not meet the requirements of the criterion”.

If the expert panel has not discovered any threat to the above-mentioned processes and the recommendations are directed towards enhancement, the expert panel's conclusion will be “meets the requirements of the criterion”.

The expert panel report also contains recommendations on the enhancement of each field of study. Recommendations clearly indicate the core issues that require solutions. The recommendations relate to a range of changes in any area, but not to specific actions aimed at changes. The feasible changes and expected outcomes should be sufficiently visible for the TLI.

The recommendations may be aimed at:

- strengthening of the good practice
- further enhancement
- follow-up plan

Findings, considerations, recommendations and conclusion on each criterion included in the expert panel report should be set in a coherent and sequential manner. The logical flow from findings to conclusion and vice versa should be consistent and follow clear order. The observation “from conclusion to findings” will help to filter not required findings and concentrate on the key points of the TLI.

The expert panel, with the support of ANQA's coordinator, make the preliminary version of the expert panel report. The report is based on the desk review, the site visit's outcomes and the observations from all members of the expert panel.

The report incorporates international expert's peer review and recommendations aligned with the ESGs as a separate part, with the aim of strengthening the TLI's competitiveness and integration into EHEA. The preliminary version of the expert panel report is sent to the TLI after its endorsement by all the members of the panel.

If the TLI has any comments or objections to the expert panel report, the institution should substantiate by:

- giving a detailed explanation of the problematic points
- presenting clear facts
- making references to the relevant sections of the expert panel report.
- proposing to rewrite the necessary parts

The only objections and remarks that the TLI can make should be related to the findings and information on the TLI. Observations regarding other components of the report are not accepted.

ANQA's coordinator forwards the TLI's written answer to the expert panel members for the study and discussion of the remarks and suggestions. The Coordinator also organises a joint discussion with the expert panel and the TLI's representatives. Upon necessity, appropriate changes can be made to the preliminary version of the expert panel report.

The changes are made through inserting footnotes about the added part or rewriting.

After this process, the expert panel report is finalized and submitted to ANQA's Secretariat. Within the timeframe stipulated in the Procedure on the Formation and Operation of the Accreditation Committee, the Secretariat, sends the report to the Accreditation Committee and education institution for the preparation of the Committee's session.

Prior to the decision of the Accreditation Committee and the approval of the accreditation certificate by the RA minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, the expert panel final report is considered confidential and is not subject to publication.

4.5 Decision-making within the Expert Panel

The expert panel regularly organises discussions. During the close meetings, the expert panel comes up with decisions to evaluate the compliance of the TLI's institutional capacities or academic programme with the accreditation criteria. ANQA's coordinator and the expert panel's chair should create a friendly and supportive environment so that all the members of the panel would feel free to express their opinions and make impartial and evidence-based discussions.

ANQA's approach on decision-making is that decisions within the expert panel should be made based on a principle of consensus, rather than a simple voting. The voting is not conducive to cooperation and compromise. It reduces the involvement of individual members and their responsibility for the outcomes, while consensus allows each participant to convey their opinion to everyone and promotes unity.

The consensus, in case applied precisely, can lead to a more acceptable solution for the expert panel.

The expert panel's chair carries responsibility for the discussion and consensus process. The chair raises the questions, organises an exchange of ideas between the panel members to find out their attitude and put forward possible proposals. All the members should clearly express their agreement to the chair's proposal. Silence should not be considered as a sign of agreement. If the consensus is not achieved, experts who are not in favor of the proposal, express their attitude, presenting risks and doubts. As a corollary of this, the proposal is clarified, reformulated, or supplemented. Afterwards, a new cycle of consensus commences and continues until a decision satisfying everybody's needs and expectations is reached.

4.6 Follow-up Plan and Schedule

According to the ESGs, from the perspective of integrity of accreditation process, it is vitally important for the TLI to plan and implement further enhancement-led actions. The follow-up plan gives a complete sense to the process, involving planning of activities and bases for the next accreditation. The TLIs' follow-up plan and its schedule (hereafter the "Plan"), required by the Statute on Accreditation, serve that purpose. Meanwhile, the follow-up plan is a basis for the interim reports of the TLIs, the next self-evaluation and accreditation.

The education institution launches the follow-up process immediately after receiving the expert panel's final report. The Plan should be geared towards overcoming the issues identified in the expert panel report and implementing the provided recommendations. The actions should be carried out within the scope of the institution's mission, overall strategy and not affect its normal operation.

Within the timeframe defined by the Statute on Accreditation, the preliminary version of the follow-up plan, along with the self-evaluation, the expert panel report and other required documents, is submitted to the Accreditation Committee for the decision-making process.

The follow-up plan is structured in compliance with each accreditation criterion and demonstrates:

- 1) how the education institution perceives the nature of the issues raised within the criterion
- 2) what approaches/strategies or methods the institution is going to apply for the solution
- 3) what significant outcomes the institution is expecting from the solution to the issues

The follow-up plan should cover several key principles:

- expert panel's recommendation / major issue raised
- expected outcomes
- expected interim results (quantitative and /or qualitative).
- budget provided
- timeline for the evaluation and checking of interim results
- responsible division for the evaluation, responsible division for the outcomes
- reporting template of evaluation
- information on evaluation

The expert panel studies the follow-up plan in terms of **being satisfactory and realistic**, giving answers to the following questions:

- Whether the issues were perceived correctly by the institution.
- To what extent the follow-up plan is realistic in terms of implementation.

The expert panel's observation on the follow-up plan is provided to the Accreditation Committee. Within two months after the accreditation decision, the institution submits the final, revised follow-up plan to ANQA for approval, taking into consideration the observations and recommendations from the Accreditation Committee.

5. Decision-making on Accreditation

The decision-making process of the Accreditation Committee is regulated by the Procedure on the Formation and Operation of the Accreditation Committee and Policy on Decision-making of Awarding Institutional Accreditation by the Accreditation Committee.

5.1 ANQA's Accreditation Committee

The Accreditation Committee is an independent, collegial, permanently operating body, which exercises powers defined by the Statute on State Accreditation of Institutions and Academic Programmes in the RA and the Procedure on Formation and Operation of Accreditation Committee set by ANQA. The members of the Committee can become the persons who meet at least three of the following criteria:

- experience in developing and implementing quality assurance policy in the field of tertiary education
- experience in conducting external review of education quality
- those not serving as education managers, but having experience in education management and administration
- at least ten years of teaching experience
- experience in developing, implementing and evaluating academic programmes in the field of tertiary education
- international experience in the field of education

The management staff of higher education and vocational education institutions (rector, vice-rector, director, deputy director) cannot be included in the Committee. Candidates for the Accreditation Committee members are mainly nominated by tertiary level institutions, employers, professional associations and ANQA.

The Accreditation Committee is made up through a clear selection procedure, thereby guaranteeing legitimacy of its functions.

Accreditation Committee is responsible for:

- establishing principles and approaches for accreditation decision-making
- making decision on institutional and programme accreditation based on the results of the TLI's self-evaluation and expert panel's evaluation
- timely responding and making suggestions to ensure the quality of ANQA's accreditation processes and methodology

The Accreditation Committee operates within the principles of legitimacy and independence, guided by the Approval of the Statute on State Accreditation of Institutions and Academic Programmes in the Republic of Armenia, the RA Government Decree N 978-N, the Approval of the Accreditation Criteria for the Tertiary Education of RA, the RA Government Decrees N 959-N, state academic standards, ANQA's Charter, Procedure on the Formation and Operation of the Accreditation Committee of the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance foundation (with new edits), Policy on Decision-making of Awarding Institutional Accreditation by Accreditation Committee of the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance foundation, and other internal legal acts of ANQA.

The Accreditation Committee exercises its powers through meetings, which are initiated upon necessity at least four times a year. The Accreditation Committee makes decisions through an open voting system.

5.2 Decisions on Accreditation

When making accreditation decisions, the Accreditation Committee gets acquainted with the education institution's package of documents regarding the accreditation process, which includes the following:

- institution's self-evaluation
- expert panel report, which presents the assessment of the TLI's strengths and areas in need of enhancement
- institution's remarks and recommendations on the expert panel report
- follow-up plan
- expert panel's conclusion on the follow-up plan
- scrutiny report prepared by three members of the Scrutiny Group. They thoroughly examine the documents, meet with the Coordinator of the accreditation process, the representatives of the expert panel and the education institution, as well as finalize their standpoints and objections. The Scrutiny Group's scrutiny report includes a substantiated proposal for granting of accreditation and the decision's conclusion.

The meeting of the Accreditation Committee is valid in case of 2/3 of the members' participation.

The decisions of the Committee are made by an open voting (for or against), a simple majority of votes of the participants. In the case of equality of votes, the chair's vote is decisive. ANQA's director with the right to an advisory vote and the secretary without right to vote can take part in the Accreditation Committee's session.

The Committee, based on the accreditation decision-making approaches and principles set in the Policy on Decision-making of Awarding Institutional Accreditation by Accreditation Committee of the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance foundation, along with the education institution's package of documents and substantiations presented by the Committee members, arrives at one of the following decisions:

- to grant an institutional or programme accreditation
- to grant conditional institutional or programme accreditation
- to reject institutional or programme accreditation

At the end of the Accreditation Committee's meeting, the chair of the Accreditation Committee announces the decision on accreditation.

5.3 Publication of the Decision on Accreditation

In case of institutional accreditation, the TLI receives an accreditation certificate, while for programme accreditation a supplement of accreditation certificate is provided.

ANQA, depending on the type of accreditation, submits the Accreditation Committee's decision along with the accreditation certificate or supplement template to the MoESCS for the Minister's ratification. In case of a procedural infringement of the accreditation process, the documents are returned to ANQA for reconsideration.

In case of lack of a procedural infringement, the accreditation certificate or its supplement is ratified by the Minister and submitted to ANQA to make an appropriate record in State Accreditation Register.

The expert panel final report, the decision of the Accreditation Committee on the results of institutional or programme accreditation, the accreditation certificate are published in the State Accreditation Register and on ANQA's official website.

The news about the decision of the Accreditation Committee is published on ANQA's official website. The results of the accreditation may also be disseminated through mass media.

5.4 Inclusion in State Accreditation Register

The institutional capacities or an academic programme of the education institution are considered accredited from the moment of registration in State Accreditation Register. The aim of the Register is to provide information on accredited institutions and academic programmes to the public and international organisations.

Within one working day after receiving the ratified accreditation certificate or supplement, ANQA makes a relevant entry in State Accreditation Register and properly hands over the certificate/supplement to the education institution. ANQA publishes the decision on accreditation on its website.

If an education institution applies to international organisations for accreditation without notifying ANQA, the results of institutional or programme accreditation are not registered in State Accreditation Register.

5.5 Reports on the Implementation of Follow-up Plan

According to the Statute on Accreditation, it is an obligation that the accredited TLI carries out internal institutional evaluation once every two years. That is an interim evaluation of the implementation of the follow-up plan according to the accreditation criteria. The evaluation can be carried out both by the institution itself and the invited external experts. The results are submitted to ANQA.

The Accreditation Committee's decision emphasizes the areas in need for primary and urgent improvement, which must serve as a basis for the next self-evaluation.

Upon gaining conditional institutional or programme accreditation, the education institution submits a written report on enhancement-led measures to ANQA once every six months. When preparing reports, the education institutions should highlight their compliance with follow-up plan and analyse the effectiveness of the implemented actions. ANQA discusses the report and submits its written conclusion to the education institution and Accreditation Committee within fifteen working days.

5.6 Monitoring of Accredited Education Institutions

The accredited education institutions are subject to monitoring according to ANQA's annual plan. ANQA carries out monitoring for the ongoing observation of the institution's activities and study of the follow-up plan's implementation process. The peculiarities of monitoring process are defined by the Policy and Procedure on Monitoring of Tertiary Level Institutions and their Academic Programmes of the National Center for Professional Quality Assurance foundation (approved by the Board of Trustees, Decree N 6-L of October 29, 2021).

5.7 Consequences of Accreditation Rejection and Conditional Accreditation for TLIs

The accreditation rejection or granting of conditional accreditation lead to several consequences for the education institutions, which are defined by the Statute on Accreditation.

In case of a negative result of institutional accreditation, full tuition reimbursement in the form of student benefits allocated by state **are terminated** for the particular education institution for **all academic degrees**, as well as the **thematic funding of scientific and technical activities** dating from the subsequent academic year until the gaining of institutional accreditation.

In case of conditional institutional accreditation the education institution **cannot apply for a programme accreditation and open a new profession**.

In case of a negative result of programme accreditation, full tuition reimbursement in the form of student benefits for the particular academic programme allocated by the state is terminated for the particular academic **programme** from the subsequent academic year until the gaining of programme accreditation.

If the programme accreditation result is negative for a bachelor programme, full tuition reimbursement in the form of student benefits allocated by the state **is terminated for all academic degrees** from the subsequent academic year until the gaining of programme accreditation.

5.8 Appeal of a Decision on Accreditation

According to the Statute on Accreditation, the education institutions are entitled to appeal the Accreditation Committee's decisions on institutional and programme accreditation. Within one month after the publication of the accreditation decision, the institution may submit a written appeal according to the appeal template developed by ANQA. The appeal is submitted to ANQA's Secretariat via email or in paper.

After receiving the appeal, within two working days ANQA's Secretariat submits it to the ANQA's Board of Trustees or turns it down in case:

- the appeal is not signed by the appellant or representative
- the name of the body to which the appeal is submitted is not indicated
- the appeal is missing the year, month, and date
- the appeal is signed by an unauthorised person, or the authorized person has not attached the letter of authorization to the appeal
- the deadlines for the appeal submission were violated

After receiving the appeal, the ANQA's Board of Trustees with the suggestion of ANQA's Director forms an Appeal Commission (hereafter referred to as "Commission") consisted of three members. The Commission is responsible for examining the appeal and providing a conclusion. ANQA's Secretariat submits the appeal accepted by the Board of Trustees to the Appeal Commission. The Commission examines the appeal against the decision of the Accreditation Committee and gives a conclusion within one month.

Based on the appeal, the self-evaluation, the preliminary version of the expert panel report, the institution's consent or remarks and objections (if any) to the preliminary version of the report, the expert panel final report, the Accreditation Committee's decision, additional arguments, statements, including new circumstances, the Commission gives one of the following conclusions on the principle of consensus:

- to leave the Committee's decision unchanged, rejecting the applicant's appeal
- to send it back, with a proposal for a new decision by the Committee

The remuneration costs of the Appeal Commission's members are covered by the appealing party. The functions of the Appeal Commission's secretary are performed by ANQA's Secretariat. The examination process is recorded and documented. The minutes are signed by the Appeal Commission's members and the secretary.

The Appeal Commission's conclusion is submitted to the Board of Trustees.

If the appeal is upheld, the Commission's conclusion is sent to the Accreditation Committee with a proposal to make a new decision.

The decision of the Appeal Commission cannot be appealed to ANQA again.

5.9 State Accreditation Declared Invalid

According to the Statute on Accreditation, ANQA can decide on declaring state accreditation invalid in case:

- accreditation certificate's validity period has expired
- education institution's functioning has been terminated in the manner prescribed by the RA legislation
- education institution's license for the provision of educational services has been declared invalid

ANQA publishes the decision on declaring the state accreditation invalid on its website and makes a respective entry in State Accreditation Register.

V. Requirements, Selection Criteria and Guidelines for Peer Review Experts

With a view to implementing accreditation processes, ANQA uses the services of highly qualified experts. They carry out desk reviews, site visits, and then submit the expert panel report based on the results of the external review. The selection of external peer review experts is one of the most important steps to be taken for the accreditation process. The recognition of accreditation decisions by education stakeholders mainly depends on both the level of adherence to the selection criteria of experts and implementation of the defined procedures.

In 2005, the European Consortium for Accreditation (hereafter "ECA") set down the following principles for the selection of experts:

- Any decision on the composition of the expert panel should be based on the rules, procedures and relevant legislative acts established by an accreditation agency. The process of expert selection should be fully transparent.
- The institutions undergoing accreditation should have the chance to lodge an objection against the selection of experts.
- The accreditation decisions should be made by the accreditation agency rather than the expert panel.
- The experts should be independent and render unbiased judgments.
- The experts should work together to carry out external review commensurate with the purpose of the accreditation.

ANQA's expert selection criteria and relevant processes are consistent with the ECA standards.

The composition of the expert panel includes specialists and students selected according to clearly defined procedure developed by ANQA and approved by the Board of Trustees. The panels consists of local and international experts who are well-known, highly qualified professional specialists skilled at the implementation of quality assurance processes. The experts are selected based on the appropriate level of oral and written communication skills, along with competences in conducting meetings and focus group discussions, analysing and synthesizing a large amount of information. Several important personal qualities are also considered, especially the ones that ensure an unbiased and objective evaluation.

To effectively apply the above-mentioned skills and competences in accreditation processes, ANQA periodically conducts training for the members of the expert panel.

The policy on the recruitment, selection, training and development of experts as well as regulation on the selection and formation of the expert panel are accessible to the public on ANQA's website.

In 2017, ANQA completely reviewed and improved the electronic expert pool. To become an ANQA expert, it is desirable to register in experts' preliminary pool. The guide for registration in the expert pool is available on ANQA's website. The expert pool contains data on experts, who have participated in and registered for ANQA's accreditation processes. Registration in the expert pool facilitates ANQA's process of expert recruitment.

ANQA guarantees the education institution under review that external evaluation processes will be useful and effective through:

- ensuring that expert panel's members are properly trained to undertake the work professionally and skilfully
- ensuring consistency in the use of the same study and review methods for all institutions
- providing institutions with clear and comprehensible results of review

1. Formation of the Expert Panel

1.1 Requirements for Experts

ANQA forms expert panels to perform institutional and programme accreditation processes. The expert panels are composed of:

1. academic staff representatives
2. representatives from the field of education management
3. international expert
4. student
5. representatives/employers from professional or specific field of industry (in case of programme accreditation)

The international experts are selected from either the expert pool of any reputable international quality assurance organisation or from ANQA's expert pool.

To become ANQA's expert, it is necessary to:

1. register in the expert pool
2. complete the expert data questionnaire, following ANQA's approval
3. participate in courses and training designed for experts

The academic staff representatives should have:

- experience in evaluation/ external review of the TLI's institutional capacities or academic programme
- experience in the relevant professional field
- experience in external review processes and education quality evaluation

- experience in education management (desirable)
- international experience in teaching, research or evaluation
- experience in programme development, monitoring, methodology, and external review
- participation in training on accreditation or external review processes

The representatives from the field of education management should have:

- experience in professional external review
- experience in policy and procedure development
- experience in international collaboration
- participation in trainings on accreditation or external review processes

The students engaged in expert panels should:

- be either senior undergraduate or master's students with some experience in social activities
- have participated in trainings on accreditation or external review processes

The representatives/employers from professional or specific field of industry should have:

- experience in professional external review processes
- experience in employing and working with alumni (field of human resource management)
- experience in accreditation and/or education quality evaluation
- experience in the management of an institution (desirable)
- participation in training related to accreditation or external review processes

The experts involved in the accreditation of higher education institutions should hold academic degrees and titles. For the accreditation of vocational education institutions, experts should have at least recognized qualifications of master's degree or should be certified education specialists.

Language Proficiency

The local experts should be fully proficient in both spoken and written Armenian language. At least one of the local experts in the expert panel should demonstrate an appropriate level of proficiency in the English language.

The experts should also have knowledge and skills in applying institutional and programme accreditation criteria and standards:

- knowledge and practical application skills related to the ESGs
- in-depth knowledge of the RA accreditation criteria, standards procedures and their practical application
- profound knowledge of ANQA's review methods
- skills in appropriate interpretation and application of the criteria based on different situations

1.2 Experts' Personal Qualities

The experts should:

- be open-minded and willing to consider alternative ideas and points of views
- have the ability to make clear judgments and demonstrate analytical skills
- have the ability to perceive situations in a realistic way, understanding complex operations and the role of constituent units within the TLI.
- demonstrate prioritization skills
- be honest, fair, sincere and discreet
- be communicative: handle interactions tactfully
- be observant and thoroughly acquainted with the happenings and customs of the surroundings
- be able to make decisions, reasonable conclusions and analyses
- be self-confident and act independently while cooperating effectively with others
-

The experts should possess the aforesaid qualities so that they could:

- collect reliable data and bases
- stay committed to the purpose of the review
- perform the review process without any deviation
- respond effectively to stressful situations
- reach conclusions generally accepted by all the members of the panel and based on the reliable information gathered during the review processes
- remain loyal to the conclusions even if they are under pressure to change them without any reasonable grounds.

2. Functions of the Expert Panel

The expert panel conducts the external review based on the Accreditation Criteria of the Republic of Armenia, the requirements of the Statute on State Accreditation of Institutions and their Academic Programmes in the Republic of Armenia and procedural regulation of accreditation principles.

The expert panel should:

- study and evaluate the education institution's self-evaluation report and the package of documents attached
- conduct the site visit
- check the extent to which the documents and processes comply with the necessary requirements
- prepare an expert panel final report, based on the desk review of the self-evaluation, study of the documents attached and the results of the site visit
- submit the expert panel final report to ANQA
- at the request of ANQA's Accreditation Committee, provide necessary information and meet with the Scrutiny Group formed from Accreditation Committee members
- express their observations on the follow-up plan submitted by the TLI

3. Responsibilities of the Expert Panel

To ensure a fair distribution of responsibilities among the expert panel members, one of the members is appointed as the expert panel's chair. Below you can be briefly introduced with the roles and responsibilities of the panel members, the expert panel's chair, and the coordinator.

3.1 Responsibilities of the Expert Panel Members

The expert panel members are obliged to:

- study the self-evaluations and documents attached
- provide the desk review of the institution's self-evaluation report according to ANQA's template
- take part in the experts' discussion on the desk review of self-evaluation
- participate in the discussions on the issues derived from the self-evaluation report, take part in the development of the site visit schedule
- conduct the site visit, participate in all site visit meetings, close meetings, and decision-making processes
- during the site visit, address the questions and issues assigned by the coordinator or the expert panel's chair
- participate in the preparation of the preliminary version of the expert panel report
- participate in the discussions of the institution's remarks and suggestions on the preliminary version of the expert panel report
- participate in the preparation of the expert panel final report
- take part in the evaluation of the institution's follow-up plan developed on the basis of recommendations made by the expert panel, express observations on the Plan according to the template
- meet with the Scrutiny Group with a purpose to present factual circumstances.

3.2 Responsibilities of the Expert Panel's Chair

The expert panel's chair conducts and leads the whole external review process, assuming responsibility for both methodology and quality of the expert panel's work.

The expert panel's chair is obliged to:

- organise expert panel discussions
- carry out the desk review of the self-evaluation submitted by the education institution
- conduct a preliminary visit to the education institution with ANQA's coordinator to agree upon the site-visit schedule
- manage over all the meetings of the site visit, close meetings, and guide all decision-making processes
- follow the schedule, maintain the work rules (keep the meeting schedule, follow the presentation and clarification of all the issues raised by the expert panel members)

- distribute work between experts and provide them with assignments.
- conduct organisational works
- prepare the preliminary version of the expert panel report with the support of the expert panel
- organise discussions on the institution's remarks and suggestions about the preliminary version of the expert panel report, and, with the support of the expert panel, prepare the final report
- organise the evaluation process of the institution's follow-up plan developed on the basis of expert panel's recommendations and give observation on the follow-up plan according to ANQA's template
- meet with the Scrutiny Group with a purpose to present factual circumstances

The experts are not allowed to express their impressions, make their own discoveries or comparisons during the site visit meetings. The experts should not use the terms satisfactory, unsatisfactory, good or bad.

3.3 Responsibilities of the Coordinator

The coordinator consolidates the link between the expert panel and the TLI while ensuring the adherence to accreditation methodology. The coordinator is not considered a member of the expert panel. They do not make evaluations and judgments on the TLI's or AP's performance.

The coordinator is obliged to:

- follow the smooth flow and effective implementation of all the processes (holding discussions, regulating misunderstandings)
- facilitate the whole process and protect the rights of all members of the expert panel
- carry out a situation analysis (in ad-hoc situations/upon necessity come up with decisions and solutions)
- collaborate with the expert panel's chair to draw up and come to an agreement with the TLI about it
- arrange preparatory meeting to the TLI, check the TLI's readiness for the site visit (provided working room, required equipment etc.)
- ensure the arrangement of all the meetings as per the site visit plan along with a contact person from the TLI
- assist the expert panel in preparing the preliminary version of the expert panel report
- arrange discussions on the TLI's remarks and objections with both the expert panel members and the TLI's representatives
- assist the expert panel in the process of finalizing the expert panel report
- provide the TLI with recommendations on the preparation of the follow-up plan and organise
- organise and participate in the meetings with Scrutiny Group and the representatives from the expert panel and the TLI
- ensure the high quality of the work and processes carried out by the expert panel.
- In special cases, institutional accreditation processes may be simultaneously coordinated by two coordinators.

At the end of the site visit, the coordinator should have all essential documents required for the preparation of the final report. The coordinator should have all the notes of the experts as well.

4. Recruitment, Selection and Training of Experts

With the purpose of recruiting competent and reliable experts, ANQA adheres to the Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel of National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance foundation. The Regulation includes the requirements for experts, as well as procedure on nomination and selection of expert candidates.

To register in the expert pool, it is necessary to enter <http://forms.anqa.am>. A registration guide is accessible at <http://www.anqa.am/media/2244/help-guide.pdf>.

The expert candidate who has submitted incorrect information in the expert pool is not involved in the accreditation processes.

ANQA regularly conducts training for the specialists included in the expert pool.

The training is planned based on the need assessment and sectors. Experts are recruited for training through the following ways:

- the ones registered in ANQA's expert pool (selected according to their qualifications)
- TLI's staff members involved in the groups responsible for the preparation of self-evaluation
- specialists on the recommendation of experts participated in the TLIs' accreditation processes
- invited participants on the recommendation of the heads of the TLIs' quality assurance departments
- participants selected as a result of round table discussions (thematic, sector-specific) organised by ANQA
- teachers researching their teaching practice and publishing related articles
- well-known specialists in the science field.
- employers actively cooperating with institutions
- other sources.

To expand the expert pool, ANQA regularly publishes announcements on its website and social networks. The information is provided to the TLIs' different subdivisions as well. ANQA presents and disseminates information on the expert pool during various conferences and forums.

ANQA annually organises three to five training courses for experts.

The training programme includes a role-play, during which the trainees get acquainted with the real self-evaluation report (without the name of the institution). This entails preparing questions, conducting a site visit and acting as an expert panel, directing questions to students and teachers. Coordinators involved in accreditation processes and students from the Students' Voice project take part in the role-play.

This mechanism helps the trainees to get acquainted with the peculiarities of the expert work in the real environment.

During the trainings, the potential experts also present an example of good practice in ensuring the quality of the academic programmes and courses. ANQA's coordinators study good practice and prepare questions for discussion.

Meanwhile, future experts develop teamwork skills, which are useful for the expert panels engaged in accreditation. The training is concluded with feedback on the work of each participant.

The coordinators assess the experts' skills according to the rubric. The rubric includes points such as:

- innovative knowledge on quality assurance of APs
- report writing skills
- questioning abilities
- teamwork skills
- and etc

The training's participants, who are positively assessed in the majority of points, are included in the pool of trained experts.

ANQA considers it compulsory that experts continue to participate in regular training for the continuous development of their capacities.

Prior to joining the expert panel, each expert is required to notify ANQA in writing about any problem that might provoke conflict of interest with the education institution, and sign an agreement whereby any kind of conflict of interest is excluded.

Once experts have been included in the expert panel, they are expected to sign a commitment of confidentiality and impartiality.

5. Monitoring and Assessment of Expert Work

The proper assessment of expert performance is holds significant importance for ANQA. To ensure the successful operation of accreditation processes, the experts' work undergoes periodic monitoring and assessment. ANQA has clearly developed procedures for monitoring and assessing experts' performance.

The work of new experts is monitored and assessed by ANQA's staff.

5.1 Methods for Continuous Assessment and Monitoring

ANQA monitors the ongoing performance of their experts in the following ways:

- **Monitoring of expert work:** During the site visit, ANQA's internal quality assurance manager or the specialist in charge of the monitoring process studies and prepares a report on the experts' performance, presenting remarks and recommendations for the improvement of their performance.
- **Reviewing expert reports:** ANQA's coordinators and staff analyse the reports and documents produced by the experts from different perspectives (e.g. desk review templates, bases collected during the site visit etc.) to make sure that the compliance with ANQA's requirements and the clarity of writing are guaranteed. Such reviews are carried out systematically serving as a means of feedback to experts.

- **Collecting feedback from institutions:** Collecting oral or written feedback from the institutions is one of the main tools to assess the expert performance. After all the meetings set in the site visit plan, the TLI's representatives involved in the accreditation process, complete a survey questionnaire to assess the expert panel's work. The analysis of the survey results are the basis for the assessment and further enhancement of the effectiveness of experts' performance.
- **Collecting feedback from expert panel members:** Oral or written feedback from experts is also a useful tool for thorough assessment of the experts' performance insofar as different points of view are taken into consideration.
- **Casual observation:** This observation may take place in external review processes or in other situations (such as group meetings and training). That allows to observe experts' review skills or personal qualities.

6. Conflict of Interests, Confidentiality and Integrity

In 2015, ANQA's Board of Trustees approved the Code of Ethics and Rules of Conduct of the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance foundation, which sets out the peculiarities of expert's ethics and conduct during the accreditation process.

Before experts undertake the study or evaluation of documentation on the education institution, they must inform ANQA in writing about any problem that might provoke a conflict of interest with the institution and sign an agreement whereby any kind of conflict of interest is excluded. ANQA has adopted a strict conflict-of-interest policy for experts nominated to take part in the accreditation process. Candidates for the expert panel are considered to have a possible conflict of interest if they:

- have kinship, financial or any other similar relations with a particular education institution or its management staff, impeding their ability to make independent and impartial judgments:
- carry out some functions in the education institution subject to accreditation
- maintain close cooperation with particular institution

Confidentiality: Experts are expected to sign a commitment of confidentiality ensuring that all the information received from and about the institution treated confidential and will be published solely in the expert panel report.

Integrity: ANQA is taking measures to uphold integrity, ensuring that experts are not subjected to undue influence or pressures that might affect their integrity.

Impartiality: Experts must act objectively and be free from any undue commercial, financial or other pressures which could compromise impartiality.

Recommendations: ANQA does not permit expert recommendations unless they are officially specified in the expert panel report.

VI.External Review Expenses

According to the Statute on Accreditation, it is the responsibility of the TLI to cover all the expenses related to the accreditation process, which is based on a paid service contract signed between the TLI and ANQA.

ANQA defines the external review (accreditation) fee based on the nature and duration of the external review, the number of experts involved, and other conditions. The external review's expenses are calculated on a case-by-case basis and is approved by the ANQA's Board of Trustees.

In 2015, ANQA's Board of Trustees approved the institutional accreditation costs for higher education institutions. In 2019, the institutional accreditation costs for the primary and secondary vocational education institutions have been approved. Costs are published on ANQA's official website /<http://anqa.am/>.

ANQA	National center for Professional Education Quality Assurance foundation
Government	ANQA cooperates with the Government of the Republic of Armenia with regard to the development of the quality assurance framework.
ANQF	Armenian National Qualifications Framework
AP	Academic programme
ARQATA	Armenia Quality Assurance and Technical Assistance
DEQAR	Database of External Quality Assurance Results
ECA	European Consortium for Accreditation
ECTS	External Quality Assurance
EQA	External Quality Assurance
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ESGs	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
INQAAHE	International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
IQA	Internal quality assurance
MoESCS	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport
NQF	National qualifications frameworks
TLI	Tertiary Level Institution
VET institutions	Vocational education and training institutions

