

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE
FOUNDATION



EXPERT PANEL REPORT
ON INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF ARMENIAN STATE UNIVERSITY OF
ECONOMICS

Yerevan – 2019

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of “Armenian State University of Economics” SNCO (hereinafter ASUE) was carried out based on the application presented by the University. The process of institutional accreditation was organized and coordinated by the National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance, Foundation (hereinafter ANQA).

Whilst carrying out its operations, ANQA was guided by the regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs” set by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N978 decree as well as by N959-Ն (30 June, 2011) decree on approving RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation.

The expertise was carried out by the expert panel formed according to the demands of ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel. The expert panel¹ consisted of 4 local experts and 1 international expert.

Institutional accreditation aims not only to carry out the external evaluation of quality assurance but also to ensure the continuous improvement of the institution’s management and quality of educational programs. Hence, there were two important issues for local and international expert panel members:

- 1) To carry out an expertise of institutional capacities in line with the RA standards for state accreditation.
- 2) To carry out an evaluation for the improvement of institution’s quality and for its integration to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The report refers to the expertise of institutional capacities of ASUE according to the state criteria and standards for accreditation as well as to the peer review from the perspective of integration into the EHEA.

¹ Appendix 1 CVs of Expert Panel Members :

CONTENTS	
INTRODUCTION	2
SUMMARY OF EVALUATION	5
EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA	5
PEER-REVIEW FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EDUCATION INSTITUTION'S INTEGRATION INTO EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA	12
DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW	22
COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL	22
PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW	22
EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA	25
BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT TLI (TERTIARY LEVEL INSTITUTION).....	25
I. MISSION AND PURPOSES.....	28
II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION	30
III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMS	36
IV. STUDENTS	42
V. FACULTY AND STAFF.....	46
VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT	51
VII.INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES	53
VIII. SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY.....	57
IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION	58
X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE.....	61
EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA	67
APPENDICES	68
<i>APPENDIX 1.CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS</i>	68
<i>APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF THE SITE VISIT</i>	70
<i>APPENDIX 3. LIST OF ASUE DOCUMENTS OBSERVED</i>	73
<i>APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED</i>	75
<i>APPENDIX 5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION</i>	76
<i>APPENDIX 5. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</i>	77

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

The expertise was carried out by the expert panel formed according to the requirements of ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the 10 criteria of institutional accreditation approved by the RA Government decree N959, dated June 30, 2011.

During the assessment it was taken into consideration that ASUE is an institution with significant and real potential for conducting applied research in economy, the main mission of which is: to prepare specialists competitive both in the RA and in the international labor market, armed with applied skills and abilities in economics, modern business and administration sub-spheres, specialists guided with social responsibility and democratic principles; and to train leaders capable of implementing social and economic changes through academic freedoms and autonomy, education-labor market cooperation, SC learning and applied knowledge transfer, concentrating professional potential on applied research and establishing an innovative environment for teaching and learning. Among other factors, "the challenges faced by ASUE because of the entry into the market of economic education services, mainly to international universities, and the intensification of competition" also resulted in the revision of the Mission.

ASUE had undergone an accreditation process back in 2014 in accordance with the 10 criteria of institutional accreditation. Considering the accreditation recommendations, the TLI had established a follow-up plan. Taking this into consideration, the progress of the University since the previous accreditation was evaluated during the expert site-visits.

Since then the TLI has implemented reforms in a number of areas, particularly in the fields of formulating Academic Program LOs, external relations, research and internationalization. However, it should be noted that the majority of the actions designed by the follow-up plan, including especially the SP goals, development of mechanisms and indicators to evaluate the efficiency of ASUE processes, application of academic staff selection mechanisms, internationalization and marketization of research among others, were left unimplemented.

Thus, on the basis of the previous accreditation the University has revised its Strategic Plan. Adopting the revised SP the University has clarified the main directions of its activities, emphasizing the applied, research and internationalization components in them. The TLI has mechanisms to ensure internal stakeholders' participation in implementing the SP goals. Yet, external stakeholders' participation in developing and realizing the SP goals is rather weak, which was also highlighted by external stakeholders.

ASUE has a traditional governing system typical of educational institutions providing higher professional academic programs. The University is governed by the Governing Board, the Rector and the Scientific Council. According to the Charter, the Rector is elected by the Governing Board, which has not been realized by the current Governing Board. There are ongoing structural changes in the governing system, the frequency and causes of which together with the resulting processes at the University may affect the sustainability and credibility of the institution. Current operational procedures of the governing bodies enable academic staff and students to participate in relating decision-making processes. However, the structure of the governing system, regulations and descriptions of individual posts still

need to be aligned to the fulfilment of strategic objectives, mutual agreement, and clarification of the scope of powers and responsibilities for managerial bodies, relevant areas and individuals.

In the RA field of educational services, ASUE is positioning itself as an applied and research university, while cooperation and feedback with employers is still weak. The University scarcely observes the impact of external factors, and the procedures for applying information built on the basis of the results of implementing academic programs and other processes are subject to refinement. The financial planning of the SP is not based on the principles of long-term and risk assessment.

ASUE implements 6 academic programs in full-time and part-time education systems. The programs are structured on a credit basis and are in accordance with the state educational standards. They have been revised through the accreditation recommendations (2015) and the benchmarking with a number of academic programs of foreign HEIs. The University has an experience of delivering an academic program in a foreign language in MA, however, ASUE has no such a program, nor does it jointly implement any BA program with other institutions issuing a double diploma. On the positive side, the University highlights the implementation of academic programs in line with employers' requirements, but the lack of involvement of employers in formulating the LOs of both academic programs and separate courses remains problematic. Additionally, resource security of the academic programs is not a component of the planning system.

The current students recruitment and admission mechanisms ensure a sufficient number of learners for the University. Although the continuing decline in the number of students and the lack of long-term plans and steps developed by ASUE to resist the decline are worrying.

The educational processes at the University are organized in an academic environment: the lectures are conducted in relatively large and seminars in small groups. The student-centered learning is considered to be a priority in the TLI, however, no practical mechanism for its implementation is applied both from the perspective of actively engaging students in research activities and protecting students' interests. The expert panel highlights the fact that students can come up with their own suggestions for graduation and MA thesis topics.

The students are informed about the assessment system at the beginning of the courses or via the Student Manual. But the absence of developed mechanisms for the struggle against plagiarism and appeal in assessment system does not promote academic integrity, transparency and impartiality of assessment process. There are no regulated mechanisms for the students to appeal the results (which have significantly specific components) of oral exams. The assessment of students' internships, their participation in seminars, and individual and group activities is not specified in the assessment system.

The TLI is mainly assured with academic staff formed with both by lecturers with contracts and primary lecturers. There are election procedures for selecting the academic staff which, however, are not used. The academic staff position passports are not developed either. The assessment of the academic staff is implemented through surveys carried out among students. It is also envisaged to introduce the attestation mechanism for assessing lecturers, a new system of organizing trainings based on the results of the lecturers' identified needs. Actions are taken to stabilize and rejuvenate the academic staff by involving ASUE graduates in teaching process.

Classroom, library resources and academic staff of the TLI establish a satisfactory learning environment and contribute to the implementation of the programs. ASUE financial entries are formulated by state funding, tuition fees, research and grant programs. The financial assurance for realizing academic programs in terms of research and the modernization of technical equipment is also

implemented by resources formulated within the framework of international programs. The TLI mainly provides resources for organizing teaching process and paying salary to the academic staff and also for implementing capital expenditure. Now the current resources of the TLI are sufficient to steadily implement the academic programs.

In research field the interests of the TLI are mainly limited with activity, envisaged with short-term programs, mostly implemented by Amberd Research Center employees within the framework of the proposed topic. However, taking into account that the scientific component should be one of the primary directions of a research-led University, the TLI's priority goals and objectives need specification in research field, especially given that Amberd Research Center provides students with an exceptional opportunity to effectively combine research and learning processes.

ASUE attaches importance to international cooperation considering integration into European academic and research area as its primary goal. The TLI, not having an overall foreign relations and internationalization policy, still undertakes certain activities aimed at internationalization and expansion of foreign relations. However, the TLI does not use the international relations effectively for its development and implementation of the international component of the mission. The Foreign Relations Division does not implement regulated processes to integrate foreign students, and the sealed international and local cooperation contracts are not effective. Particularly, the local cooperation contracts are only confined to organizing internships. The foreign language proficiency level, the allurements of acting academic programs and the measures implemented by the TLI do not still assure the students' and academic staff's high participation level in mobility and international exchange programs.

The requirements of the accreditation criteria, approved by the Government of the Republic of Armenia, have been external incentives for the development of documents and the implementation of processes by ASUE Quality Assurance Center. The TLI's QA system is currently undergoing structural changes and subordination clarification, the successful implementation of which can contribute to upgrading the level of self-dependence and independence of the QA Center. The continuous improvement in the quality of teaching is highlighted by the TLI, which is also reflected in the goals and objectives of the reviewed Strategic Plan. However, the TLI's QA Center does not collect sufficient data on a regular basis and with regulated mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of academic programs and other services, implemented in the TLI, and to ensure accountability about their quality. The main QA documents of the TLI are summed up in the QA manual, where the structure of the QA System, QA procedures are presented as well, however, a clear distribution of responsibilities within the framework of implementing QA processes is not described. The existing documents related to the QA System, QA guide are available to the stakeholders in the official website of the TLI as well, but the majority of the stakeholders are unaware of their role and importance in the QA System. The mechanisms for the stakeholders to participate in QA processes have not been developed either.

The strengths of the University are:

1. Improved Strategy Plan to implement goals and activities,
2. Opportunities for making the internal stakeholders' concerns be heard in the Governing Board,
3. Formulation of LOs at the level of academic programs and individual courses,
4. Chances of closer connections and cooperation with the real sector of the economy,
5. Participation and integration in international programs,

6. Large proportion of externally adjunct academic staff with highly professional capacities, practical skills,
7. Availability of classroom, technical, library and other necessary facilities to organize learning process and research,
8. Striving to ensure transparency and publicity of University activities through the website,
9. Resilience in University activities and ability to respond quickly to environmental changes,
10. Potential of cooperation and implementation of research by Amberd Research Center for economic and governmental bodies,
11. Great potential of graduates and its wide use.

The weaknesses of the University are:

1. Unclear distribution of powers among individual units within current ASUE management system,
2. Absence of ethics and academic integrity system,
3. Poor involvement of external stakeholders in decision-making processes,
4. Scarcity of thorough research and SWOT analyses of management system effectiveness, human, financial and material resources, and of impact of external factors,
5. Absence of BA programs delivered in a foreign language, jointly implemented or awarding double diplomas,
6. Absence of defined procedures and formats on risk assessment and accountability according to the financial planning of the SP goals,
7. Absence of essential indicators of assessing the TLI's activity effectiveness, collecting incomplete information about the effectiveness of academic programs and other processes,
8. Incomplete mechanisms for student surveys, lecturer-centered teaching,
9. No long-term ambitions well-articulated in the research field,
10. No subscription to library and research databases,
11. No necessary conditions for organizing education for students with special needs,
12. No overall policy in the defined directions of international cooperation, dissatisfactory level of students and academic staff participation in international exchange programs, scarcity of current international and local cooperation contracts and inconsistent application,
13. Inconsistent application of QA procedures developed by the PDCA cycle for primary processes, low level of stakeholders' awareness of QA System, poor involvement of internal and external stakeholders in the primary QA processes.

Mission and purposes

1. To develop mechanisms and procedures aimed at assessing and improving results of implementing the mission and the goals,

2. to separate the strategic objectives and goals, to develop a complete set of key qualitative and quantitative indicators to assess the actual progress of the implementation of the strategic goals and objectives,
3. to activate the stakeholders' (particularly the employers') participation in the processes of development, implementation, assessment and improvement of the TLI's mission, goals and objectives,

Governance and administration

4. to reform the organizational structure of the University: to exclude the repetition of the functions of units, to activate horizontal connections between units and to develop a clear system for assessing the effectiveness of the management system,
5. to promote and activate the involvement of the external stakeholders in management processes,
6. to review the financial planning system aligning it with the implementation of ASUE strategic objectives,
7. to introduce a mid-term planning and risk analysis and assessment system,
8. to develop a set of measurable indicators of the impact of external factors, of monitoring, assessing and reviewing the SDP and mechanisms for using them for assessment and analyses,
9. to clarify and regulate the amount of necessary information collected for assessing and analyzing the efficiency of academic programs and other processes, mechanisms for its development and application,

Academic programs

10. to ensure the realization of the outcomes of academic programs: to really align the learning and teaching methods with the outcomes and ensure their application, to align the student assessment with the outcomes and introduce a process ensuring academic integrity,
11. to ensure a review procedure of the academic programs by involving all the stakeholders and external, independent experts in the process,
12. to upgrade the relevance of the academic programs to such internationally recognized programs by adding flexibility to the academic programs, introducing an assessment and classification system,

Students

13. to activate the students' participation in research activities, to develop cooperation mechanisms for implementing research programs with students and employers, which will be aimed at upgrading the students' motivation to do research activities,
14. to develop a regulation for the students to apply to the administrative staff, which will clarify the implementation of the process, define responsibilities and their clear deadlines,
15. to develop mechanisms of control over the activity of the students' rights protection bodies by the students themselves,
16. to expand the coverage of the domain of the questionnaires of surveys, done among students, including consulting and other needs assessment issues, to ensure a clear periodicity of surveys and discussions of the results with the stakeholders,

Faculty and staff

17. to develop a procedure for involving the youth and beginners in teaching activity, to regulate the institution of mentorship,

18. to formalize the process of adapting specialists, largely integrated from the practical field, to the academic environment, to attach importance to preparing them for teaching,
19. to significantly improve, regulate the training processes of the academic staff, to put into practice the documents “The policy of identifying the professional development needs of ASUE academic staff”, “The policy and procedure of professional training of the academic staff”, still as a draft,
20. to develop a well-grounded, free from subjectivism as much as possible procedure for rating the academic staff,
21. to develop effective, incentive mechanisms for the academic staff such as publications,
22. to expand the activities to disseminate quality culture among the academic staff,
23. to minimize the number of courses taught per teacher,
24. to develop faculty SDP based on the SDP of HEI,
25. to have action plans of administrative units, develop assessment and feedback mechanisms,
26. to make the assessment process of the lecturers periodical, to invite all the students to participate in the survey, to remove the responsibility of conducting them from the competence of the faculty,
27. to improve the institute of consultants on education,

Research and development

28. to formulate the TLI strategy in the research field as soon as possible and to introduce short-term and mid-term programs based on that,
29. to formulate principles to measure the research quality and to insert them in action plans and workload based on the estimation,
30. to emphasize the research component in learning methods and attach to the LOs by assuring a research-education link,

Infrastructures and resources

31. to provide resources for subscribing to databases necessary for economic research and to increase the funding for library fund replenishment,
32. to review the financial planning and resource allocation policies by introducing a long-term planning system for the resource assurance of academic programs and sustainability,
33. to review the role of Amberd Research Center by discussing from the perspective of organizing research and using resources, including financial, alternative opportunities,
34. to introduce and to improve the assessment mechanisms for applicability, accessibility and effectiveness of resources provided to students and lecturers and plan proper improvements based on them,

Societal responsibility

35. to ensure accountability to the external stakeholders through an appropriate elaboration and to develop accountability assessment indicators,
36. to conduct surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of the mechanism for disseminating information about the accountability to the external stakeholders,
37. more frequently update and improve the content of the foreign language version of the University website by providing more and comprehensive information,

38. to improve the activities of life-long education and training division by introducing mechanisms for planning the activities of the department and assessing the results,
39. to introduce training procedure, mechanisms for providing training credits or certificates,

External relations and internationalization

40. to develop an internationalization policy with clear priorities of internationalization in Armenia and abroad,
41. to expand the such an academic profile, that is cooperation with Universities of applied sciences,
42. to develop a long-term strategy to recruit foreign students,
43. to include intercultural and global elements in academic programs in order to equip the students with capacities that are important to international employment,
44. to study the opportunities for students and staff to participate in online courses organized by partner Universities abroad,
45. to develop an internationalization program of research,
46. to expand the personnel policy by introducing higher requirements for foreign languages,
47. to study the reasons for students' low level of English and take into account the importance of language certificates awarded by the international bodies at the end of English courses,
48. to increase the number of courses in English and make them accessible to all students,
49. to launch summer schools in foreign languages together with foreign partners,
50. to formalize the cooperation with employers (to make the cooperation official),
51. to provide regular analyses of the effectiveness of cooperation with local and foreign partners,
52. to develop the content in the foreign language version of the website,

Internal quality assurance system

to develop their own approach to the continuous quality improvement, this long-term goal of integrating with ASUE processes, procedures and PDCA cycle,

53. to specify processes and develop procedures for all areas of activity,
54. to create an action plan for quality improvement in the result of discussing the problem with the external and internal stakeholders,
55. to improve the system of collecting information about analysis taking it as a ground for making decisions about QA. To expand the circle of surveys and improve their quality,
56. to develop a new quality manual, which will coordinate the processes and procedures of the new IQA system,
57. to develop a methodology and implement IQA cyclic reviews with the external overviews.

Mariam Momjyan, Head of Expert Panel
November 29, 2019

PEER-REVIEW FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EDUCATION INSTITUTION'S INTEGRATION INTO EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

General remarks: This report is based on the few documents that are available in English, namely on the SAR (“ASUE Strategic Development Plan for 2018-2023” with Vision and Mission, “ASUE Charter”, “ASUE Internal Quality Assurance Concept”, “Regulation On Teaching, Learning And Assessment According To Learning Outcomes”, “Requirements For Development of Master’s Degree Programs At the Armenian State University of Economics” and other) and on the views expressed at meetings with university stakeholders. On the whole, the teaching/learning process and education quality assurance comply with solutions developed within the European Higher Education Area. However, quite a number of those initiatives have not yet gone beyond initial implementation stages, while some of them are still in the design phase.

Vision, Mission and Strategic plans. ASUE has developed its Vision, Mission as well as Strategic Plans for the 2018-2023 period. It also possesses annual operative plans. Certain University policies have also been prepared, such as the Quality Assurance Policy and the Research Policy. *The Vision mentions that “by the year 2025 ASUE will have become a leading institution providing innovative and practical knowledge in the fields of Economics, Modern Business and Administration, generating applied research-based knowledge and actively collaborating with the public and private sectors, as well as research organizations”.* To say the least, this wording of the Vision seems controversial as it refers to the medium and not to the long term. Basically, it describes the three functions of the University that are normally presented in its Mission. It is difficult not to agree with the authors of the Self Assessment Report when they say that the Mission is too long-winded which makes it unattractive for marketing purposes. These documents should provide a clearer determination of ASUE’s distinctive features and its market position. It would be just as advisable to emphasize education and research quality as well as add the entrepreneurial spirit to the values. The said Strategic Plans lack the names of people responsible for their implementation. They also contain no well-defined strategic KPIs, whereas the operational KPIs are left at the level of ASUE’s individual units. It seems that having met certain conditions the strategic KPIs may be a useful tool evaluating the success of ASUE’s Strategic Plans. It is surprising that no solutions ensuring academic integrity have been implemented. The new Code of Ethics is yet to become effective. It is quite difficult to accept that a higher education institution providing Economics programmes has no plans for its long-term development. This is all the more important that its five-year strategic plan does not explain how ASUE intends to counteract their declining numbers of students, nor does it identify potential risks.

ASUE’s Strategy is formulated with the participation of representatives of internal and external stakeholders being members of various academic bodies. The mechanism identifying their needs is not fully operational. Their participation in the evaluation of objectives is not very clear - such evaluations boil down solely to annual plans prepared by individual units, and their results are published in the Rector’s annual reports only. This weakness is mentioned in the SWOT analysis concerning this standard (SAR pp. 9-10). The Strategic Plans provide that the Scientific Council is to conduct a biannual evaluation of the

HEI's main strategic objectives. However, there is no systematic reflection and no mechanism evaluating the outcomes of ASUE's activity within five-year periods.

Quality Assurance Policy and the Internal Quality Assurance System. ASUE's Mission promises the "reinforcement of the culture of internal quality assurance". The HEI has developed a concept of the internal quality assurance system (IQA), identified basic processes and implemented its organisational structure.

Formally, the Quality Assurance Policy (QAP) encompasses the three areas of the HEI's operations: education, scientific research and university governance. The current Strategic Plan lists the following priorities: "improvement of academic programmes quality", "enhancing operational effectiveness" as well as consolidation and cooperation in the area of "applied-research education and applied-research economy". English language documentation and SAR demonstrate that the operation of the Internal Quality Assurance system is narrowed down to issues relating to study programmes and their implementation, teaching staff quality, learning resources, information system and the efficiency of mechanisms and procedures of quality assurance. Therefore, Internal Quality Assurance, research quality and University governance have not been integrated into one uniform quality management system. Also, the quality loop is not closed and the individual phases of the PDCA cycle are not developed to the same extent. This is particularly true for the last phases – CHECK and ACT - containing activities aimed at continuous quality improvement.

The above documents do not provide a clear formulation of long-term objectives in the area of quality assurance policy. "Quality improvement", "quality system enhancement" and "quality culture" are used interchangeably. SAR (p. 81) states that the "principles of quality control...lie at the basis of the documents" regulating each process. It is truly commendable that in the 2017-2018 the HEI has developed a decentralised approach to the development of quality culture being based not so much on procedures as on supporting various quality assurance groups (with the participation of students) monitoring and analysing quality assurance processes. However, there is little hard evidence of their actual influence on the processes of education quality improvement. Also, the awareness of quality culture and IQA among the university stakeholders is not high as it was demonstrated during the meetings with the review team. Making use of foreign HEIs' experience in the development of IQA (training sessions, mobilities to Spanish, Romanian and Italian universities) is another thing worth mentioning. From the formal point of view, IQA undergoes systematic evaluations, however, SAR contains scant information concerning changes made to IQA in 2018. ASUE's English-language website contains no reports documenting progress in the implementation of quality assurance objectives. Selected areas of IQA, for example study programme quality, teaching staff, are evaluated every year. However, it is not known how often and in what way a comprehensive evaluation of IQA and QAP is to be performed. Unfortunately, the University does not have an accurate description of the processes, procedures and organizational structure of IQA implemented since 2018.

University Governance structure. The organisation of ASUE is based on the traditional university structure encompassing faculties and departments as well as specialised units of university administration. The Ambers Research Center of the Armenian State University of Economics is also included in the organisational structure. Apart from the hierarchical

structure (rectors, deans, heads of departments), University governance is based on ASUE's numerous collegial bodies which are mostly of an advisory and consultative nature.

The organisational changes that ASUE is planning are not fully aligned with its strategic objectives such as innovativeness, creation of applied knowledge, cooperation with business or interdisciplinary programmes. No formal platform supporting knowledge and technology transfer between ASUE and the business sector has been developed. In European HEIs, such units usually operate as business/entrepreneurship incubators, start-up labs, etc. Such solutions enhance creativity, stakeholders' innovativeness and competition within a region while offering support to students and graduates in the process of setting up new companies, which directly results in increased employment rates. The implementation of that kind of solution would strengthen the integration of research, education and cooperation with the socio-economic environment. It would be really useful to consider bringing ASUE closer to the entrepreneurial university model and shaping an organisational structure promoting entrepreneurship. Not all solutions supporting academic integrity have been implemented, for example there has been no appointment of a student ombudsman who, in European HEIs, supports students during conflict solving and ensures their fair and impartial treatment. Frequent changes in the position of rector and other managerial positions are not conducive to the development of strong university leadership and the continuation of previously implemented projects.

The

Programmes. Ensuring the satisfaction of stakeholders, above all that of students and employees, is the main objective of the education policy as stipulated in ASUE's Mission. ASUE's Mission and Strategy identify the main principles of the concept of education. According to this concept, education should be innovative, oriented towards the implementation of the SCL idea, well-rooted in applied research, taking account of labour market requirements and of foreign HEIs' experience. Study programmes are to be regularly improved (strategic goal No. 1) and updated basing on the best international standards. ILOs compliant with ANQF are formulated for each programme. The provision of training in the formulation and implementation of learning outcomes deserves mention. International benchmarking is widely used in designing and programme changes. ASUE has launched not only its first study programmes provided jointly with foreign partners but also courses offered in English. Every year there are programme evaluations which, among other things, take account of students' opinions.

Some developments already announced are still at an early stage. For example, a graduate career database is to be prepared not earlier than in 2020. The cooperation with employers is not well developed. Innovativeness is reduced to an increase in the percentage of applied knowledge in curricular contents from 20% in 2020 to 50% in 2023. Similarly, the percentage of first- and second-cycle students participating in research is supposed to grow up to 30% in 2023. A methodology intended for the monitoring of classes and applied aspects of courses is yet to be created. Talks will be held with other universities in the area of interdisciplinary programmes, but no number of such courses has been set. An audit of short-term undergraduate programmes is to start in 2020. Although ILO matrices covering individual fields of study have been prepared, many English-language syllabus of classes offered to foreign students contains learning outcomes, it just lists learning objectives. ASUE has introduced changes to its education offer but their reasons, especially those linking them

with employers' needs, are not documented to a sufficient degree. It is also worth considering whether or not in a period of radical changes to technology and the national economy structure ASUE is justified in offering a wide range of fields of study (78) and specialities. In the context of promising closer cooperation with the business sector and making ASUE's programmes more practical, the absence of programmes provided jointly with business corporations is quite striking.

Students, teaching and learning processes and continuous improvement. The system of candidate recruitment is formally based on candidates' outcomes achieved in the previous educational institution and on the results of entrance examinations. The real selection of candidates is weakened by the fact that there are fewer and fewer people wishing to start studying a programme and - as it seems - by increasing differences in their preparation for entry into tertiary education. The University does not conduct research into the influence of such differences on the quality of education. No special forms of support to students struggling to fulfil the minimum academic requirements are offered, either. Information obtained suggests that an overwhelming majority of second- and third-cycle students are ASUE's graduates. Foreign students are few in number. That kind of policy does not enrich the teaching and learning process.

In quite a number of its documents the University emphasises the idea of student-centred learning by boasting of a wide range of teaching methods ensuring student involvement. New teaching and learning framework was prepared. Each study programme and course have its own matrix showing the relationship between ILOs, teaching/learning methods and ways of assessing student performance. Students can voice their needs through the collegial bodies of which they are members, Student Council, programme satisfaction questionnaires or directly at meetings with ASUE's administration representatives. In students' opinion, this system functions well. However, it has certain weaknesses in practice. Firstly, students and teachers has not provided clear picture, how various activities aimed at increasing active student participation in the learning process form a coherent SLC system. Secondly, the system of gaining an understanding of student needs through surveys is not well developed and there is no mechanism regularly analysing survey results with the participation of all students. Thirdly, students' choice and shaping of their individual learning pathway is limited due to legal regulations (curricular differences may not exceed 20 ECTS) and the University's profile offering courses linked to Economic Sciences only. It is only in 2022 that the percentage of electives is to reach 25% of all courses. Fourthly, the current teaching methods and the system of support offered to student development poorly reflect the differentiation of the student population. Lastly, very large student groups (not more than 35 persons) do not favour the implementation of active teaching methods.

ASUE operates a formal system assessing student performance at various stages of education, including final examinations and theses. There are uniform principles of documenting credits and examinations. The fact that at least 50% of Final Certification Committee members are academic teachers from other universities is very commendable. However, certain shortcomings of this system stand out. Firstly, it seems that this is a system assessing student performance at course level and not at the level of achieved learning outcomes. Such assessments are incomplete as not all syllabuses have ILOs defined for them. Actually, there is no assessment of Achieved Learning Outcomes at programme level, not even of the distribution of grades across courses, academic programs and forms of education (full-time studies vs. on-line studies). Learning outcomes demonstrated at final examinations and in theses are not analysed regularly. Secondly, an anti-plagiarism system is being implemented only now. The introduction of a zero-tolerance policy would help reduce unethical conduct.

No procedure governing complaints linked to student performance assessment has been developed. Thirdly, there is no evidence of regular analyses concerning the assessment system and the way in which partial interim reviews (for example examination period results) are applied to the continuous improvement of education. In the same way, making use of the views of employers and students on ILOs demonstrated in labour markets is poorly documented. Fourthly, there is no procedure in place which would recognise learning outcomes achieved outside of the higher education system - something that is a standard in European higher education institutions. The assessment of final learning outcomes should happen with the active participation of external institutions. For example, fluency in foreign languages indispensable to conduct research involving use of foreign sources could be verified on the basis of language tests administered jointly by the University and external certification units (eg.: LCCI, Pearson, BULATS, OSD Zertifikat, Goethe-TEST-PRO). The absence of a formal system and procedure for lodging and considering complaints and appeals is one of the main weaknesses relating to this field.

Academic staff. ASUE pays a certain attention to the recruitment of qualified academic teachers. This is ensured by the high earnings policy that it operates, meaning that its staff's salaries are about twice as high as in other HEIs. The average number of students per one academic teacher seems satisfactory (18/1). However, the breakdown of this index paints a different picture. For example, according to information posted on the ABFUG page - only 25 academic teachers holding at least a PhD degree, including 5 professors, provide eight programmes in this branch campus. An overwhelming majority of them obtained their academic degrees in their home HEI as it is ASUE graduates that are employed as academic teachers. Apart from a few cases of visiting professors providing classes, no teachers from foreign HEIs or with degrees obtained abroad participate in the teaching process. This highly homogeneous staff does not apply various teaching methods acquired in other HEIs.

Academic teachers' didactic, research and organisational achievements also undergo evaluations. Students' views expressed in questionnaires and obtained during class observations are included in those evaluations. Student as such have positive opinion of the quality of classes provided to them. However, the evaluation of teaching staff is not conducted regularly. SAR mentions that the principles of annual teaching staff evaluations have been developed, however, they have failed to be accepted by the teaching community.

The Strategic Plan promises to employ younger teaching staff members as the average age of the current staff is relatively high. The HEI offers some forms of supporting teachers wishing to develop their teaching and academic qualifications, such as training (every year 1/5 of staff participate in it), work placements abroad. Such activities do not target the youngest group. Mentoring provided by heads of departments and professors is one of the support forms listed in SAR. Among the training courses mentioned in SAR there are no courses oriented towards the improvement of teaching methods, student-centred learning and research methodology. The support system aimed at the improvement of research competencies, publishing of valuable articles in renowned scientific journals and at the preparation of grant applications etc., is poorly developed. The staff recruitment process does not require foreign language proficiency certificates which limits the provision of courses in those languages as well as participation in international mobility and research programmes. One of the main obstacles to conduct a long-term personnel policy is - unprecedented in Europe - the dominance of short-term employment contracts, usually concluded for one year.

Scientific Research. Scientific research is a specific indicator of a HEI's international position while being a basis for the achievement of the highest standards in education. Seen from

this perspective, ASUE's achievements are rather modest and its presence is poorly visible in rankings and international bibliographical databases. Few scientific articles have been published in impact factor journals (SAR quotes only 2 within the last 5 years). Limited access to international databases containing primary data (for example, disaggregated at the level of households, firms, employees, unemployed, etc.) may be one of the reasons. The new strategic plan emphasises the development of applied research in cooperation with business and its relevance to education. However, basing on documentation provided in English it is difficult to identify research priorities or ASUE's comparative advantage in this field. It is promised that the percentage of employees participating in research is to grow and the same goes for the percentage of students involved in research projects (up to 30% in 2022). It is less clear, however, how the University motivates its academic staff to increase their research intensity. Research is conducted in a decentralised way by departments and supported by the Amberd research centre. However, basing on the documentation that was made available it is really hard to determine its real role, for example how it monitors calls for proposals relating to research projects, what assistance is offered throughout the process of preparing successful grant applications, etc. Moreover, despite the statement referring to cooperation with business there is no structure in place to support such cooperation. At this stage it would be advisable to allocate means to selected projects implemented by large research groups with the participation of foreign researchers.

In light of past achievements in research, allocating 3% of the University's budget to research projects does not seem enough and it will perpetuate a gap between ASUE and other economic universities, especially those from abroad. SAR provides no information concerning a system assessing the quality of research.

Resources. ASUE's infrastructure requires modernisation, and above all - introducing modern technologies used in the teaching/learning process and research. Library does not subscribe any major scientific journal in economic sciences or professional journal (The Economists, Financial Times etc.), and does not provide access to the national or international statistical databases. Some computers have outdated software, e.g. Windows 7. The virtual teaching and learning environment is very weak and the infrastructure is not adapted to disabled persons' needs. However, the University has no long-term plan of developing its teaching and research infrastructure.

ASUE is a not-for-profit institution, however, for the last 5 years there has been a permanent and high surplus (about 20%) of income over expenditure. ASUE's budget is strongly dependent on demand for educational services as 4/5 of income are generated by fees. The share of income from budgetary grants is also increasing. In total, those two items account for almost 95% of total income. Remuneration costs are the largest expenditure item (about 70% of expenditure). Proposals concerning increased income from research and its capitalisation, cooperation with business as well as increased graduates' payments formulated in the strategic plan have not been corroborated by quantitative indicators. The University's financial policy is evaluated every year and every quarter. It seems that financial planning involves neither risk assessment nor creating various income scenarios. Taking into consideration the fact that fewer and fewer candidates are interested in studying at ASUE and uncertain public finance and future budgetary grants, the risk of the University's financial instability in the future is increasing. When increasing the

involvement of business guided by the rules of market effectiveness, the ASUE's authorities should identify its risks and respond to them by using financial risk management tools. Such risks could be reduced by increasing the provision of fee-based postgraduate programmes offered jointly with companies and public institutions and by introducing summer schools during summer holiday periods.

Internationalization. The current Strategic Plan promises "expanding the scope of internationalization" understood as participating in international research and mobility projects. There have been procedures developed for staff and student exchange and new agreements with foreign universities have been signed. On its page 76, SAR lists a dozen or so projects implemented with the participation of partners from abroad. Concluding agreements concerning the provision of joint degree and dual degree programmes with foreign partners is highly commendable. Foreign students can study Business Management in English and the number of courses provided in English has grown to 26. Student exchange is developed to a limited degree, within the last 5 years only 25 foreign students have studied at ASUE.

While recognising the full worth of the above steps, it is impossible not to spot certain weakness of the internationalisation policy. Formally, it has not been formulated, therefore, it is not known how foreign partners are selected. Its scope is narrow. It seems that when striving for the development of applied knowledge, ASUE should put more emphasis on the development of cooperation with applied sciences universities. The Strategic Plan says nothing about curriculum internationalisation, for example by introducing multicultural, multiethnic and international values to curricular contents. No principles of assessing the internationalisation policy have been developed, therefore, it is now known how it is used to increase education quality.

Accountability and Information Policy. SAR lists four forms of ensuring institutional accountability and transparency: participation of external stakeholders in the University Governing Board, annual distribution of Rector reports, social support for students and external institutions, contribution to the development of regions in the form of establishing campuses in Gyumri and Yeghegnadzor. A closer look at the practical solutions already applied allows me to say that the extent to which the accountability and information policies are implemented is quite moderate. The Mission identifies the basic academic values that underpin ASUE's operations, but no principles and ethical practices have been implemented to ensure consistency between statements contained in university documents and actual activities undertaken in the field of education, research and effective public funds spending. It has already been said that solutions guaranteeing academic integrity (such as those concerning corruption including bribery, cheating, nepotism, mobbing, sexual harassment, plagiarism, selling or giving grades unaccompanied by appropriate student work) are at an initial stage of development.

No coherent policy for informing external stakeholders and the general public about processes and their results has been developed. ASUE's webpage and - to a lesser extent - social media, radio, TV, printed publications are the main tools of communicating with them, whereas electronic networks are used to keep in touch with internal stakeholders. The foreign-language versions of ASU's website have come in for criticism as they contain neither reports documenting ASUE's credibility nor a lot of fundamental information about

study programmes, research and quality assurance. There are no analyses of the credibility of the information collected as the basis for making rational decisions.

Periodic reviews of activity and its results performed by independent auditors are a significant element of developing any HEI's high credibility. So far ASUE has only been reviewed externally by ANQA, the most recent review taking place in 2014. Not all recommendations recorded in the 2014 External Evaluation Report have been implemented or their implementation has only just begun. The University has not applied for professional accreditation granted by international organizations for programs, faculties or universities.

Areas for improvement:

- *Reformulate the Vision of ASUE so that it expresses the ambitions of the University in the long term.*
- *Draw up long-term development plans for ASUE covering a minimum period of 10 years.*
- *Prepare and carry out a procedure for periodic assessments of five-year development plans.*
- *Start regular research into the needs of key stakeholders, including graduates and employers.*
- *Publish analytical reports concerning the degree of implementation of individual strategic goals as well as undertaken and intended improvement actions.*
- *Combine the quality assurance of teaching and learning with the quality assurance of research and University governance into one integrated quality management system.*
- *Develop and strengthen a system of holistic analysis of the quality assurance policy and IQA from the perspective of the University's strategic goals and quality culture.*
- *Publish analytical reports on progress in quality enhancement.*
- *Evaluate the organizational structure of the University from the perspective of compliance with its strategic goals, in particular innovation and cooperation with the business sector. Consider the establishment of an academic business incubator.*
- *Appoint a student ombudsman and entrust them with the evaluation of the effectiveness of the complaints procedure.*
- *Provide a more professional analysis of ASUE educational offer from the perspective of educational and labour market needs.*
- *Increase the number of inter-disciplinary and dual degree programmes provided with the participation of domestic and foreign universities and business partners.*
- *Conduct periodic analyses of ASUE's educational offer from the perspective of educational and labour market needs.*
- *Carry out regular reviews of syllabuses from the perspective of active teaching techniques.*
- *Encourage the Student Council to prepare periodic reports on the quality of education, also for the purpose of external reviews.*
- *Increase the role of students in raising the quality of courses, for example by analysing survey results and developing potential solutions to problems reported, together with course providers.*
- *Evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes from the perspective of graduates' achievements in the labour market, above all their employability.*

- *Co-teaching consisting in the provision of a course by two people: an academic staff member and a business practitioner is a new form of providing classes which should be considered, especially in the case of specialisation subjects.*
- *Increase diversification of forms of supporting students which take account of their various needs.*
- *Develop procedures evaluating progress made in the development of SCL at ASUE.*
- *Develop a system of periodic and comprehensive evaluations of teaching staff performance.*
- *Increase the number of visiting professors from abroad and the percentage of teaching staff graduated from and obtaining academic degrees in other HEIs.*
- *Launch coaching sessions raising competencies relating to the preparation of scientific texts, training courses in publishing in JCR journals (for example conducted by scientific journals editors), training in voice emission, visual thinking, speaking in public, methodology workshops, research grant workshops, making use of modern online platforms in the teaching process (for example “Financial Times” resources).*
- *In light of the intensification of cooperation with the socio-economic environment, it would be advisable to introduce the category of networking with business and the public sector into the periodic evaluation of academic teachers.*
- *Consider establishing an Advisory Board (with the participation of international experts) for research policy.*
- *Develop a coherent system of evaluation of scientific research and its outcomes.*
- *Provide a system of incentives and relevant supporting measures for promoting the publication of papers in peer review high impact journals.*
- *Increase the number of projects run jointly with business companies.*
- *Develop a long-term development plan concerning ASUE’s infrastructure.*
- *Assess ASUE’s financial risk, at least in the medium term.*
- *Develop a long-term internationalisation policy at home and abroad containing clear priorities and identified foreign partners.*
- *Increase the language competences of ASUE’s students and teaching staff. English classes could prepare for the LCCI certificate. As regards ASUE’s staff, they should provide a certificate of language competencies (at least at the level C1).*
- *The number of courses taught in English should be significantly increased and participation in them should be open to all students, not only those from abroad.*
- *Consider increasing the extent of course/programme internationalisation, for example courses offered online, virtual projects implemented by international student teams.*
- *Contents posted on the English- and Russian-version pages of your website should be radically developed to attract more foreign students. Consider the establishment of a summer school for foreign students.*
- *Introduce internationalisation policy periodic assessments with the participation of foreign partners.*
- *Develop and implement a policy of counteracting academic corruption and misconduct in education and research.*
- *Develop ASUE’s information policy which would be clear as to which information is shared with external stakeholders only and which with other stakeholders. Implement a mechanism serving its periodic evaluation.*
- *Use your webpages to post reports documenting the quality of educational processes and research and the effectiveness of fund management*

- *Develop contents posted on the foreign-language versions of your webpages.*
- *Apply education quality standards developed by industry organisations to your teaching/learning process, for example in the field of project management (PMI), quality management (PCBC), logistics (ETL, CSCMP) as well as in the area of finance and accounting (ACCA, CIMA, CFA) and apply for their certificates at some point.*

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The external evaluation of the SAR and QA operations of ASUE was carried out by the expert panel having the following composition:

1. **Mariam Momjyan** - PhD in Economics, Associate Professor, Deputy Head of the Tariff Policy Department of the RA Public Services Regulatory Commission, lecturer at Russian-Armenian University, Chair of the RA expert panel;
2. **Gourgen Hovhannisyan** – PhD in Geography, Associate Professor, Head of the Educational and Methodological Department of BA Division, Yerevan State University, member
3. **Vahagn Grigroyan** – PhD in Economics, Head of the Monetary Policy Department of Central Bank, member
4. **Mieczyslaw Socha** – Professor at Warsaw University and State Management School, Doctor in Economics, member of the Financial Committee of the European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA), Poland, international expert, member;
5. **Nency Mkrtchyan** – 4th year BA student of the Faculty of Marketing at the French University in Armenia, student-expert.

The composition of the expert panel was agreed upon with the University and approved by ANQA Director.

The works of the expert panel were coordinated by *Anahit Utmazyan*, Head of ANQA Secretariat.

The translation was provided by *Mariam Karapetyan*, lecturer at Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences (YSULS).

The minutes were drafted by *Gayane Ananyan*, a specialist at ANQA Institutional and Program Accreditation Division.

All the members of the expert panel and the Secretariat have signed confidentiality and impartiality agreements.

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

Application for State Accreditation

ASUE applied for institutional accreditation by submitting to ANQA an application form including the copies of the license and its appendices on June 14, 2018. The ANQA Secretariat checked the application package, the data presented in the application form, the appendices and the ANQA electronic questionnaire completed by the University. The decision on accepting the application request was made on June 28, 2018. A bipartite agreement was signed by ASUE Rector K. Atoyan and ANQA. The timetable of accreditation processes was prepared and approved. On February 6, 2019, Ruben Hayrapetyan, acting rector of ASUE, applied to ANQA with a request to extend the deadline for submission of institutional capacity self-assessment taking into consideration the significant changes in the ASUE governing bodies and the necessity of adjusting ASUE development priorities in the context of those changes. As a result, a new timetable was drafted and approved.

Self-Assessment

In line with the format established by the Accreditation Policy and within the scheduled deadlines, the Armenian and English versions of the SAR on institutional capacities and adjacent documents were submitted to ANQA. The self-analysis of the University was carried out by a working group formed for

SAR purposes by the order of ASUE Acting Rector. The SAR presented mainly contains general and descriptive information, is not based on analysis, and does not emphasize the reforms and achievements of the University since the previous accreditation.

Preparatory Stage

ANQA coordinator observed the report with the aim of revealing its correspondence to the technical requirements of ANQA. Taking into consideration the feedback of the coordinator, ANQA made a decision upon accepting the SAR. Afterwards ANQA sent the self-assessment report to the expert panel the members of which had been agreed upon with the University and confirmed by ANQA Director.

To prepare the expert panel for the accreditation works and to ensure the effectiveness of processes ANQA and the group discussed the RA Accreditation Policy, criteria and standards, key functions of the EP members, initial assessment as a preparatory stage for the expert report, basic requirements of the report, meeting and interview techniques.

Having observed the self-assessment report and the package of adjacent documents of the University, the expert panel conducted the initial assessment according to the format, preparing the list of the documents needed for additional observation, as well as the list of questions for different target groups and subdivisions.

Within the scheduled deadlines the expert panel summarized the results of the initial evaluation and formed the plan-timetable of the site-visit²: According to the ANQA manual on the expertise the intended meetings with all the target groups, close and open meetings, document review, visits to different infrastructures and else were included in the timetable.

Preliminary Visit

The preliminary visit took place 2 weeks prior to the site visit with the participation of an EP member, a specialist of ANQA Institutional and Program Accreditation Division, and the coordinator of the accreditation process.

During the preparatory visit the plan-timetable of the site visit was agreed upon with the University, the list of the documents needed for additional observation, as well as the list of members were submitted. Additionally, discussions and mutual decisions were reached referring to organizational, technical, information-related questions of the site visit. The rooms prepared for focus groups and expert panel works were considered, the issues related to the technical equipment and facilities were clarified.

The site visit timetable was approved by ANQA Director and D. Galoyan, acting rector of ASUE.

Site Visit

The site visit took place from October 7th till 12th, 2019. The work of the expert panel started with a closed meeting the day before the expert visit with the aim of discussing and agreeing with the international expert upon the scope of the expert assessment, the issues to be studied during the visit, the strengths and weaknesses of the TLI by criteria, the focus group meetings procedure, and to clarify further steps. The expert panel, the ANQA coordinator, translator and the secretary took part in the visit.

The site visit launched and completed with the meetings with the Rector.

Representatives from the academic staff, students, deans, heads of chairs, employers and alumni were selected randomly from the list provided beforehand. All the meetings, foreseen by the schedule, have

² Appendix 2. Schedule of the site visit

been carried out. Throughout the site visit the expert panel had document review³, resource observation⁴ and focus group meetings in different subdivisions of the University. 15 people, including students, lecturers of different chairs, a deputy dean, were registered to participate in the open meeting with the expert group scheduled for the visit.

The information obtained during various meetings, as well as the key results of document reviews and observations were summarized at the end of each day and at the concluding meeting of the site visit.

The panel, using the principle of consensus, discussed the main results and reached a general agreement on the accreditation criteria first and then on the requirements of the standards.

Expert Panel Report

The expert panel prepared the draft version of the expert report based on the self-assessment report of the University, the adjacent documents and the observations during the site-visit as a result of regularly organized discussions. On the basis of the observations withdrawn after discussions, the Head of the expert panel, with the assistance of the ANQA Coordinator, prepared the draft version of the Expert Report, which was agreed with the experts.

The international expert prepared his own conclusion and a separate opinion and consultation for peer-review. These documents were translated and provided to the expert panel. The responsibility for incorporating the international expert's opinion and approaches into the expert report rests with the team leader and coordinator. The peer-review has been holistically included into the report.

Anahit Utmazyan
Coordinator

November 29, 2019

³ APPENDIX 3. The List of the Observed Documents

⁴ APPENDIX 4. Resources Observed by the Expert Panel

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT TLI (TERTIARY LEVEL INSTITUTION)

1. History

In accordance with the University Charter (approved by the RA Government decisions N1718-Ն dated back October 6, 2005, and decision N1436-Ն on making changes and additions dated back November 15, 2012) “the activities of the University aim at organizing economic education, fundamental scientific research and learning in general education, average tertiary, higher tertiary, postgraduate and further educational levels corresponding to the Legislature of the Republic of Armenia and through different teaching methods and academic programs”.

Armenian State University of Economics (ASUE) delivers educational services at three levels of higher education. Within the 2014-2018 period the educational subdivisions have been improved by organizing education through 6 BA programs. In order to ensure a liaison between its activities and mission the University shall use a strategic management approach (Charter, Article 15.2), with its strategic development plans resulting from the mission and vision. Additionally, the acting ASUE strategy defines that while implementing its functions deriving from its mission, the University shall be guided by a number of principles including the efficiency of its practice. The latter means that the efficiency of the practice is assessed by the orientation towards realizing the mission and the vision in the first place.

While implementing the activities resulting from its mission, ASUE is guided by the following values; quality upgrade, applicability, academic freedom, student-centered learning, consistent encouragement of innovations, efficiency of practice, improvement and development of employees’ capacities, formulation of a culture of new corporate ethics and social responsibility.

2. Education

Academic programs

The improvement of educational processes was defined as a strategic priority by the 2016-2020 Strategic Development Plan (Goal 1). It implied a gradual improvement of academic programs in line with the job market requirements, expanding and activating cooperation with different organizations (especially in the processes of developing academic programs and organizing internship), to upgrade the level of lecturer and student involvement in the processes of developing and achieving the LOs. ASUE Strategic Plan for 2018-2022 underlines the improvement of the quality of academic programs in line with a number of clarified targets as a priority goal (Goal 1).

Academic Staff

ASUE Strategic Development Plan for 2016-2020 defines highly qualified human resources as a strategic priority (Goal 2). By 1.3 sub-goal of the Strategic Plan for 2018-2022 it is envisaged to ensure a generation change in chairs and inclusion of highly qualified and leading specialists for the purpose of teaching especially the modules of academic programs having a practical component.

Teaching-Learning

ASUE Strategy defines student-centered learning, practical knowledge, orientation of the professional potential towards the practical research, preparation of specialists through creating an innovative environment for teaching and learning as strategic priorities. For that very purpose the methods used in the processes of teaching and learning aim at training specialists with practical skills.

Learning Environment

ASUE SDP prioritizes student-centered learning at the mission level. The University seeks to increase the students' role in forming and evaluating educational services as much as possible with a purpose of expanding student's chances to have an impact on the development of their curricula, involving them in the formal and informal mechanisms of evaluating the quality of education support services (surveys, initiatives, other mechanisms for feedback).

For the spheres specified within the University's qualifications framework the library resources, possibilities for prompt implementation of information flow throughout the environment, contemporary and traditional elements of the environment, components providing an optimal correlation between creativity and discipline are prioritized as primary elements of the learning environment. These emphases are present at the University as descriptors of the material and cultural aspects of the learning environment.

3. Research

According to the Strategic Development Plan the 2018-2022 the University seeks to expand its research capacities, to develop mechanisms for integrating research results into academic programs, to formulate platforms for cooperating with the external stakeholders in the research field and to orientate the research towards the easily commercialized practical field (Goal 3).

Among ASUE statutory goals and University objectives, from the perspective of research and development implementing fundamental and practical research promoting science development, education and economics, creation of knowledge through research activities, introduction of obtained results into economy, transfer and dissemination of knowledge to the public, integration of the knowledge achieved through research into the educational processes are main areas of ASUE ambitions.

4. Internationalization

The internationalization of the University has been stated as a strategic development priority for the 2016-2020 period (Goal 4) and ASUE Strategy for 2018-2022 set purposes of expanding the participation in international programs; and increasing students' and lecturers' mobility (Sub-Goals 4.1 and 4.2).

During 2014-2019 the University has attached importance to the development of international relations, the positive influence of internationalization on the professional trainings, on the exchange of advanced teaching methods and, in general, on the quality assurance of education. Importance is also attached to the professional and student mobility by expanding the active cooperation, originated in previous years, with universities of Armenia and other countries, as well as with international organizations. The internationalization has been viewed as a continuing process and new partnerships have been developed with universities every year.

5. Quality Assurance

If the complete implementation (by increasing the assurance of human, financial, material and information resources, by expanding the stakeholders' involvement and by the use of PDCA (plan, do, check, apply) cycle in all areas of activity) of the Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) system of education was considered as a priority by the SDP for 2016-2020, then the SDP for 2018-2022 values that the University prioritizes the strengthening of IQA culture targeted at the implementation of its vision and mission.

The primary QA principles at the University are the centralized management of the IQA system and the procedural regulation, decentralized implementation of Internal Quality Assurance processes, expanded participation of the academic and administrative staff, availability of formal procedures of approving the academic programs, the involvement of students, graduates and employers, the interconnection between the Internal and External Quality Assessment processes. ASUE Quality Assurance Policy is implemented with the appropriate procedures being developed through maintaining the above-mentioned principles.

The expert panel was guided by the principle of "compliance with goals" and considered the above-mentioned information as the main ambitions and goals of the TLI.

I. MISSION AND PURPOSES

CRITERION: The Tertiary Level Institutions' (TLIs) policy and practices are in accordance with its mission, which is in accordance with the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (hereafter ANQF).

FINDINGS

1.1 The TLI has a clear, well-articulated mission that represents the institution's purposes and goals as well as is in accordance with the ANQF.

The TLI has a well-articulated mission reflecting the goals and objectives of the TLI in compliance with the ANQF.

The mission of Armenian State University of Economics (ASUE) has been reviewed and defined in ASUE SDP for 2018-2022 where the mission of the University is defined as follows; "ASUE mission is to prepare competitive specialists in the Republic of Armenia and international labor markets, armed with practical skills and capacities in the subfields of economics, contemporary business and administration, with social responsibility and democratic principles and to train leaders capable of making changes in the society and economics through academic freedom and autonomy, education-labor market cooperation, student-centered learning and providing practical knowledge, orientation of professional potential in applied research, creating an innovative environment for teaching and learning". In the basis of the mission review, among other factors, were also "the new challenges to Armenian State University of Economics in the market for economic education and services mainly due to the entry of international universities and the impact of intensified competition". The University's strategy is based on its vision, the new challenges to ASUE and the approaches of the HEI to solve them based on which the strategic development goals and sub-goals are listed in the Strategic Plan. The University has clarified the priority of training specialists armed with practical skills and capacities in the result of implementing its own academic programs in the mission statement. The institute justifies the implementation of that mission component by the fact that it is envisaged to introduce internship of organizing courses with employers in the academic programs which, however, has not been implemented yet.

1.2. The TLI's mission, goals, and objectives reflect the needs of the internal and external stakeholders.

The TLI Strategic Plan for 2018-2022 has defined the subgoals of the upgrade of the internal and external stakeholders' involvement level, the formulation of an efficient cooperation system with the stakeholders in the stage of developing, realizing, evaluating and making changes to the academic program, the formulation of a cooperation platform in research field with the external stakeholders and ASUE research reorientation to the easily commercialized applied field. But in the result of a site visit it turned out that the TLI Strategic Plan has been discussed neither with the external stakeholders nor with the current Governing Board. The internationalization is also defined in the priorities of the TLI Strategic Plan, even though the international stakeholders have not even been clarified. The framework of the international organizations, institutions or foundations with which the TLI plans to cooperate is not distinguished, which immediately derives from the mission and strategic goals of the TLI. The connection with employers, important participants of stakeholders, is also weak. Unlike the external stakeholders, the representatives of the internal stakeholders (together with the branch Directors) being included in the collegial Governing Boards, have participated in the processes of discussing the SDP draft. The activity of the Student Council and the surveys, carried out with not clear periodicity and with not all the students' involvement, only partly reveal the students' needs. Additionally, the stakeholders' needs are not included in the decision-making process as the survey results, revealing them,

are not analyzed (a clear procedure and a mechanism responsible for its implementation are not developed).

1.3. The institution has approved mechanisms and procedures to evaluate the achievement of its mission and purpose and to further improve them.

Short-term action plans are used in the TLI (though not in all units) with which for one academic year the performances of planned separate actions and measures are monitored. The bottom-up accountability system is viewed as an evaluation mechanism for implementing mission and strategic goals in the TLI, which includes Annual Reports of the Chairs, those of the Deans, the Heads of the departments and the Directors of the branches. Separate Thesis Papers are also found in the Rector's annual report. On the other hand, there is a lack of measurable activity outcomes which are to be monitored and evaluated in the activity plan of implementing the Strategic Plan. There is no measurable evaluation of results of implementing the progress of the Strategic Plan, the mission and the goals in the TLI, as their indexes are currently being developed (in accordance with the SAR). Mechanisms and procedures, for improving the results of the institution's mission and goals (that were also in the follow-up plan developed due to the previous accreditation results), still are not developed.

Considerations. ASUE SDP for 2018-2022, which is the elaborated and reviewed version of the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan, clarifies the mission, the priorities of the activity, the strategic goals and sub-goals, the current priorities and the specific actions. The development and approval of the Strategic Plan were carried out by the involvement of internal stakeholders to some extent, those stakeholders work in responsible units of separate divisions or are involved in different Governing Boards. During the site visit it turned out that a SDP was not discussed with the current TLI Governing Board and a wide circle of the internal stakeholders. As a result, the needs of the country are not reflected in the Strategic Plan either.

The TLI mainly conducts research about the internal and external stakeholders' needs through surveys, but a clear periodicity of conducting them, the circles of participants and the mechanisms for the further use of the results are not yet clarified, which reduces the efficiency of implementing them and does not completely reflect all the stakeholders' view. From the perspective of the feasibility of becoming an applied and research-led University there is a need to analyze the compliance of the academic programs and rewarded qualifications to the requirements of the external stakeholders involving the latter in it, too. The current activity of the TLI is partly derived from the long-term Strategic Plan program requirements considering flexibility of ASUE activities as a key issue for the TLI, the introduction and specification of the performances' evaluating mechanisms and the long-term resource-based planning necessary for the activity are not valued either.

The steps and deadlines to reach the SP goals are fixed in the follow-up plan formed with the results of the previous accreditation in order to implement the SP goals, however their performance has not been evaluated or specified. Short-term action plans are developed at the level of separate units to plan the activity, through it is impossible to completely evaluate the qualitative and quantitative components of the performance of the actions and measures provided with the Strategic Plan. As a result the outcomes of implementing the TLI's mission and goals are not evaluated, for well-articulated, measurable outcomes are missing and their evaluating mechanisms as well as the procedures for their improvement are not developed yet.

The Rector's annual reports and Reports of the units based on the Rector's annual reports are considered to be a primary mechanism for evaluating the implementation of the mission and goals, providing some insight into current achievements and objectives of the TLI. In addition, the objectives, mentioned by the Rector, have been repeated for the last 3 years, and the steps for solving them are not specified.

However, given the absence of the performance evaluation of the SDP outcomes, moreover the that of the quality indicators, it is impossible to evaluate the real efficiency of the present processes and the extent of the impact of achievements in the TLI in order to make decisions for further improvements.

Summary: Taking into consideration the fact that the TLI has a reformulated mission, a Strategic Plan defining activity priorities with an implementation schedule, the needs of internal stakeholders, with whom the strategic priorities have been discussed, are somewhat specified, the primary activity is in compliance with the mission (of the aspiration to become an applied HEI), the expertise panel finds that the TLI meets the requirements of the criterion.

Conclusion: The expert panel assesses the correspondence of ASUE's institutional capacities to the requirements of CRITERION 1 *satisfactory*.

II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

CRITERION: The TLI's system of governance, administrative structures and their practices are effective and are intend to the accomplishment of its mission and purposes by keeping the governance code of ethics.

FINDINGS

2.1 The TLI's system of governance ensures regulated decision-making process in accordance with defined code of ethics and has efficient provision of human, material and financial resources to accomplish its educational and other purposes.

According to ASUE Charter “the University is governed based on the principle of autonomy, in combination with the principles of sole management and collegiality, by performing the functions of the University Council, Science Council and the Rector”. The Rector manages the current University activities, and the University Council (the Governing Board) and the Science Council are the collegial Governing Boards. The internal stakeholders of ASUE are chiefly involved in the process of running the University through different surveys identifying their needs and through participation in decision-making sessions at separate levels. The representatives of the students and academic staff form the 25% of the members in the Governing Board and Science Council. The representatives of the founding and authorized body of the University are involved in the Governing Board. Moreover, during the site visit the representatives of the University Council stated that ASUE SDP has not been discussed with them and the processes at the University have handicapped the organization of the Rector's election. Prior to the expert visit, two meetings were organized with the University Council, where budget approval and other current issues were discussed.⁵

It was found out through the results of the site visit that the University has an operational, situational management model not in close cooperation with the highest board of collegial governing, the Governing Board. Structural and separate units for the implementation of relevant functions operate at the University; a Department on Organizing Educational Process, Department on Organizing Research Activities, Department on Life-Long Learning and Training, Amberd Scientific Research Center and others.

Based on the consultation from the previous accreditation in 2014 the TLI has regulated the activity of the managerial and academic administrative units, a number of fundamental documents have been developed and introduced, which, however, only partly regulate the activities of the structural units of the University and the organized processes. With the confirmation of separate units' charter the framework of the activities of these bodies have been clarified, the procedure of appointing the academic staff based on the competition policy has been developed, different position passports (chiefly

⁵ The text was rewritten as a result of the discussion of the institution's remarks and suggestions.

administrative staff) have been developed, however according to these regulations the election process has not been implemented yet in the sense that the competition document packages did not mention the passports, their rights and responsibilities⁶. An attempt to select academic staff based on a competition was made in 2019 but it failed.

The analyses of the structural scheme of the chain of subordination of the existing governing system of the TLI and the meetings with the management and teaching staff during the visit showed that the frameworks of responsibilities and powers of separate units are not clearly differentiated. In particular, it was found out during the site visit that the functions of the department of organizing the academic process are of a technical nature, perform technical 'audit' of documents (whereas the regulations envisage analysis of academic programs as well) and the functions envisaged by the regulations of the department are performed by the Educational and Methodological Council adjacent to the Schince Council whose work is paid and is included in the workload of the committee members as extracurricular hours. The activities of the department of life-long education and training, foreign relations, labor market and graduates partly coincide with each other as well. Even though the organization of activities with employers is involved in the functions of the 3 above-mentioned departments, however, the meetings with the employers have stated that those are not effective. The Governing Board accepts the necessity of reconsidering and improving the governing system of the University too.

The University organizes its activity based on the affirmed annual budget while a financial planning consonant with the goals of the Strategic Plan is not implemented. In ASUE SDP the necessary financial resources and their funding sources for implementing the mentioned steps are not presented.

Moreover, the funding of the Student Council for 2017-2018 exceeded the resources for modernization of the library fund. In addition, the latter shows a decreasing trend.

Code of ethics are not developed and fixed in the TLI so relations connected with maintaining the ethics in the governing system are not regulated.

The TLI governing system is mainly provided with human and material resources for implementing its functions, even though it does not conduct research of organizational structure, about assurance of human, material and financial resources and also evaluation of the current system efficiency. It should be noted that in Gyumri branch the quality assurance function is implemented by the unit of foreign relations, responsible for science and quality assurance, and in Vayots Dzor branch the accountant implements the quality assurance function. By the way the latter has not formally been given such responsibilities.

2.2 The TLI's system of governance provides students and teachers opportunity to participate in decision-making processes directed to them.

The University Charter and the acting regulations grant opportunities to the internal stakeholders (lecturers and students) to take part in the decision-making processes that relate to them at some levels. The 25% of the members of ASUE Governing Board and Science Council are the students, who are nominated by the Student Council (although the criteria of selecting the candidates are not clearly defined). Academic staff representatives are also presented in the Governing Board and the Science Council. At other levels the lecturers participate in administrative decision-making processes at the chair, faculty levels, and the students - through the Student Councils and partly through surveys. Another opportunity for students is to communicate directly with the Deans through monitors in groups, which also informally identifies students' academic and other needs.

⁶ The text was rewritten as a result of the discussion of the institution's remarks and suggestions.

In ASUE follow-up activity plan for 01.10.2014-01.10.2018 as well as the elaboration and implementation of documents envisaged in the framework of governing system reforms also aimed at expanding the involvement of external and internal stakeholders in University governing processes. Nevertheless, during the site visit it was found out that despite the positive precedents for solving the problems raised by the students (cancellation of intermediate exams and several economic objectives) students are not actively involved in the discussion of managerial decisions in a collegial Governing Board. The TLI does not still carry out analysis of the effectiveness of academic staff and student involvement in the decision-making process.

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.

The TLI views its Strategic Plan and the Action Plan of the latter as a long-term planning document for 5 years, which enumerates the steps, responsibilities and indicators for each strategic sub-goal (but not clearly measurable). The mechanisms for implementing and monitoring the Strategic Plan are not regulated and the reports of the Rector, director of the branches and the heads of the units are used for that. The performance ASUE follow-up plan for 01.10.2014-01.10.2018 has not been analyzed either where the overwhelming majority of defined actions have not been wholly implemented.

For organizing an ongoing work (although they should have been for the implementing of the Strategic Plan) annual action plans are formed, although mechanisms used for their monitoring are not available. With the help of the annual reports of the units based on these only the actual performance of activities for each academic year is monitored without analyses. By the way not all the units make action plans (for example the organizational department of core academic process, which was justified by the fact that the work carried out by the department is repeated every year).

Based on ASUE SDP a regulated mid-term planning, evaluation of risks and no long-term planning specification are made based on it. ASUE Budget Planning is implemented for the short-term period with one year estimate where the financial entries and expanses are reflected in compliance with separate articles for the whole University (and not according to structural units or directions of academic programs or activity). In this context as well, there are no clear mechanisms for monitoring and improving (including the effective use of resources) budget execution.

During the site visit it was mentioned in the meeting with the Rector that measurable indicators of the goals of Strategic Plan are not developed therefore they are not included in the regulations of the activity of separate structural units.

2.4 The TLI conducts environmental scanning and draws on reliable data during the decision-making process.

ASUE **management** decisions are mainly based on the results of the surveys aimed at identifying the needs of the stakeholders and the results of the oral discussions. Although taking into consideration the decreasing number of students, short-term paid training programs are developed in the TLI for the purpose of diversification of financial resources, the importance is attached to the flexibility in the organization of activities, however, there are no regulated mechanisms for predicting external factors and assessing their impact, the TLI has not yet clarified the mechanisms and tools for examining the factors affecting its work, the quality assurance manual does not contain information about these mechanisms either.

The information is not clarified, and in the basis of its analysis decisions should be made about the goals and objectives of the TLI as well as the directions / priorities for the change of the strategy of activities and the allocation of resources. SWOT analyses are partially used, there is little research on opinions in the external and internal stakeholders' circle, in particular the analyses of the external environment

directly affecting the internationalization (including overseas labor market requirements and other target factor assessments).

2.5 The management of the policies and the processes draws on the quality management principle (plan-do-check-act).

The TLI, prioritizing implementation of the administration through the principle of quality assurance, sees it as a mechanism for continuous quality improvement in the quality assurance manual. The functions of the Quality Assurance Center allow to implement the principle of cyclical quality management. But from the self-assessment and observations made during the visit it became clear that the TLI does not still have sufficient facts to demonstrate the activity completeness of the quality management system. The long-term planning is implemented by the action program of the Strategic Plan, but no planning of monitoring the same program or evaluating the risks is implemented. The annual reports of the senior management and the units are used as a general assessment of achievements. The plans generally lack outcomes and clear indicators for the implementation of the processes. Information is collected through various processes (including in a way of reports), however there are few cases of changes made as a result of assessments when quality assurance mechanisms have contributed to improvements. The issues mentioned in the last 3 years of the Rector's reports are repeated each year, actions for eliminating them are not mentioned, and the reasons for it (not solving the objectives) were not substantiated. That is, the evaluation and improvement processes are not regulated.

The overwhelming majority of processes in the TLI are in the planning and implementation phases, the PDCA (plan, do, check, apply) cycle is not closed.

2.6 There are mechanisms in place ensuring data collection on the effectiveness of the academic programs and other processes, analyses and application of the data in decision-making.

Monitoring and review procedure of academic programs according to the outcomes was developed and officially set in March, 2019. Graduates have conducted separate surveys for the evaluation of the academic program in a small circle of graduates, the results of which were to record the facts, and samples of further improvements have not been presented. The information collection system is partially regulated in terms of academic programs. The expert panels formed by the Quality Assurance Department have presented their conclusions on the academic program (including that it is negative for the most part) with the result of which samples of improvements have been presented at the Financial Accounting Chair. The processes for evaluating the effectiveness of other processes in the TLI are not regulated, besides mechanisms for evaluating the collection, analysis and practice of information are not defined. During the site visit, however, the importance was attached to the involvement of external stakeholders in processes aimed at improving academic programs of specialties (including organizing discussions with them, obtaining information from them through surveys) however, employers did not provide examples of such cooperation.

2.7 There are impartial mechanisms evaluating the quality of quantitative and qualitative information on the academic programmes and qualification awards.

Publications of quantitative and qualitative information on the quality of academic programs and qualifications awarded at ASUE are mainly posted on the University website, Facebook page, as well as in the guide for freshmen. At the same time, all the courses taught in Gyumri branch and their assignments within their framework are available on the new online platform. The TLI also uses the annual reporting system to provide information.

ASUE College Potential is also actively used for the purpose of professional orientation of applicants. However, regulated mechanisms for assessing the objectivity and affordability of the publications of

academic programs and the quality of rewarded qualifications and the frequency of updating information, have not yet been developed. There is only separate information about practical success of the graduates.

Considerations. The expert panel finds it positive that taking into consideration the consultations of the previous procedure of the accreditation as well and in fulfillment of reviewed Strategic Plan, the TLI has started the process of regulating the activities of its units, the SDP has been reviewed, some structural changes were made (establishment of separate departments for international relations, labor market and graduates, life-long education and training, etc.). However, communication and cooperation with the TLI's Governing Board is weak.

The development of the activity regulations of the units, the reunification of chairs and the process of developing position passports are still processing in ASUE. Steps have been undertaken at the TLI from the perspective of the change in the functional significance of the structural units due to enlargement of the academic program. However, taking into consideration that the TLI, in the academic service market, has positioned itself as an applied and research-led University, the functions of some of the structural units responsible for these areas of activity are still unclear. In particular the above-mentioned functions of external relations, labor market and graduates, life-long education and training departments, and chairs in terms of clear division of the work implemented with the employers, identifying the job market requirements, in terms of organizing the learning process and monitoring and revising the Educational and Methodological Committee, the academic programs, in terms of organizing scientific research and the functions of Amberd Research Center in the interconnection of scientific research and learning. At the same time, combining the quality assurance function in the branches with the functions of the separate positions reduces the role of the quality assurance system and makes the effectiveness of the work carried out in that regard risky. Only for the administrative posts having position passports developed but not being used in practice can affect on the assurance of appropriate professional staff in ASUE and on the quality of services provided to students. The selection of the academic staff, based on the competition policy, is envisaged by the appropriate procedure, but the actual formation of the academic staff is done by the head of the chair, which limits the recruitment of qualified staff from other institutions, does not promote governance transparency and may affect the quality of academic services.

The expertise panel considers it positive that the internal stakeholders are generally able to participate in decision-making processes related to them, but the criteria for electing representatives in Governing Boards also need clarification. The level of initiative of the students to raise questions in the Governing Boards is also low. Information about students' practical participation in chair sessions was missing in the chair extracts provided to the panel.

Actions are also being done to increase the external stakeholders' activity, but the mechanisms are not yet regulated. Whereas the incomplete information about the labor market requirements can make the implementation of strategic goals risky in terms of becoming an applied university and preparing competitive graduates.

The fact that ASUE does not have established ethics norms is a matter of concern, there is no disciplinary committee as a result of which ASUE SDP has not been discussed with the Governing Board. As a result, it may lead to a reduction of the executive body's decision-making and objective implementation and reduction of trust towards them.

From the meetings with ASUE Governing Boards and internal stakeholders it was revealed that the governing units have not evaluated the assurance with human and material resources of implementing the Strategic Plan in terms of implementing their functions, which may reduce the stakeholders' trust

in the efficiency of the provided resources. The evaluation of the allocation efficiency of human, material and financial resources of structural and separated units by the University has not been carried out either. At the same time, the meeting with the Rector prioritized the diversification of the University's financial resources. However, it should be noted that there is no clear policy for its implementation in the TLI.

The reviewed Strategic Plan is considered to be the long-term planning document in ASUE, that lacks clear measurable development outcomes, does not have a set of measurable performance indicators, which makes the assessment of the performance of strategic goals risky and elaborating development scenarios based on that. At the same time the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan are not divided either.

Regulated mid-term planning, risk evaluations are not carried out at ASUE and ASUE views 1-year activity plans of the units as short-term plannings Reports are the performance indicators for implementing the work, which has the nature of recording facts and objectives and do not provide an assessment of the effectiveness of the actions. The lack of measurable results, specific responsibilities and clear evaluation indicators can lead to a reduction in the objectivity of the process evaluation.

And the yearly repetition of tasks in the Rector's annual reports lowers the trust towards the tool for monitoring and further improvements of the reports. In addition, the financial planning is carried out on the University basis and not for strategic goals, which is a risky factor in terms of the assurance of the material and financial resources needed to meet the strategic goals and the efficiency of the allocation of those resources. Particularly in terms of enhancing students' ability to conduct research and enter the international market, resource planning is required in the long term and in the medium and short term period.

Not periodical and incomplete surveys are conducted in ASUE with which the issues relating to the internal stakeholders' have been only partially raised, however the sources of the needed information, mechanisms for data processing, analysis and practice are not specified, are implemented mainly as needed and with situational management principles without providing feedback with the stakeholders. In addition, besides the surveys, the lack of research on external factors affecting the University performance, the lack of risk assessment, SWOT analysis limits the reliability of the data obtained and cannot afford to evaluate the complete impact of the environment. With the improvement of the mechanisms for evaluation and analysis of collected information, it will be possible to upgrade the level of stakeholders', especially the employers' engagement. The automated survey information system provides some information about the learning process and students, but the lack of the assessment results of the performance of the previous Strategic Plan, analysis of follow-up plan as well as the absence of formally adopted policy of evaluating and reviewing the plan and of concrete facts can lead to a reduction of trust in the consistency of strategic decision making.

Separate procedures and regulations have been developed in order to raise the efficiency of the assurance system in ASUE, which has a positive impact on the provision of service administration. Developing a regulation for monitoring and reviewing the academic programs according to the outcomes is positive for the administration with a principle of quality management process, but the collective sources of information do not wholly cover the other directions of the TLI activity, in particular, support services and learning resources. The scarcity of quality assurance processes, implemented evaluations and analyses and the improvements based on them indicate that in most of the governing system processes, the PDCA cycle is not yet closed; they are in the planning or implementation phase, and mechanisms for evaluating the information collected about the processes under review and for systematic approaches to applying them for improvement have not been

developed yet. At the same time attaching the importance to the effectiveness of the implementation of academic programs, it is also necessary to coordinate the evaluation of the effectiveness of other processes at the TLI, to study the collection, analysis and practical use of information about them, which will help to improve the used mechanisms and tools, to collect reliable information, make objective assessments, and make substantiated decisions.

The same applies to the publication mechanism of the information about the quality of academic programs and awarded qualifications as well. The University uses its official website, Facebook page, and college potential to make information about its academic services available to its stakeholders. However, the development and practice of mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of other ASUE processes, collecting, analyzing, and applying credible information on the quality of academic programs and awarded qualifications will promote the trust of stakeholders and partners of the University by providing accurate, reliable and unbiased information to internal and external stakeholders.

Summary. Taking into consideration the fact that there is a vague distribution of powers within the ASUE governing system, external stakeholders are not involved in the processes of improving the governing system, the assurance of ASUE governing system is not provided with the necessary human and material resources, there are no mid-term planning and risk assessment components, the governing quality assurance principle is not fully implemented (PDCA), the expert panel finds that ASUE does not meet the requirements of criterion 2.

Conclusion. The expert panel assesses the correspondence of ASUE's institutional capacities to the requirements of CRITERION 2 *unsatisfactory*.

III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

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

FINDINGS

3.1 The academic programs of TLI professions are thoroughly formulated according to the intended learning outcomes, which correspond to an academic qualification and are in line with the institution's mission and the state academic standards.

The University suggests academic programs for higher and post-university education in all the levels defined by NQF (in the Bachelor's, Master's and Researcher's degrees) in line with its mission.

Since the previous accreditation the academic programs in the TLI have been essentially reviewed. "A Guideline to formulate academic programs" has been created, and based on it, an expert panel, formed by the TLI, started academic programs' development process, just in the stage of development, as an obligatory requirement, securing the compliance of the latter to the NQF. As a result, from 2016 to 2017, 11 new BA programs have been confirmed, developed by new format, and complied to the intended learning outcomes of given qualifications, only 6 of which are acting as of 2018-2019.

A similar process is being implemented for the MA programs, which was intended to fully insert in the academic year of 2019-2020. From the perspective of connection to the mission, it must be mentioned, that in its Strategic Plan, TLI attaches special importance to conducting practical research aimed at meeting the needs of stakeholders and academic programs, based on the practical outcomes. From this point, their application is widely reflected in academic programs, both according to outcomes and content. Certain kinds of efforts have also been put to align the academic programs with the needs of stakeholders, but after the meetings their involvement became obvious, in terms of exploring the requirements, however during the elaboration of academic programs no kinds of examples about their involvement or cooperation have been noted during the site visit.

The outcomes need some improvements at the levels of separate courses, as they are often formulated as professional, spherical in subject matter (for example in “The economist”, “Finances” academic programs). The clarification of capacity is also important, as it is often formulated in the form of knowledge (for example in “The economist”, “Finances” academic programs) or does not differ greatly from capacity and bear a general character (for example “Statistics” academic program). The matrix of subject and outcome alignment is rather thin, some subjects and outcomes are strictly separated from the others, up to alignment of one subject to one outcome and vice versa (for example in “The economist” academic program generally one subject covers only 1.6 outcome). The latter also speaks about high subject abundance of academic programs, the vast majority of which bears a compulsory character (for example there are 55 subjects in “The economist” program, 64 subjects in “Statistics”, 79 in “Finances”). At the same time in compliance with the 6th level of the TLI, the necessary flexibility is missing in “The Bachelor” academic programs, in terms of specialization.

According to the second step of improvement, based on the results of the accreditation, it was intended to develop a training package (module) of formulating and developing academic programs relevant to learning outcomes. In the University an implementation program of the module “The training of specialists with the capacity of developing academic programs relevant to learning outcomes” has been betaken. Those specialists, who have passed training, have developed BA academic programs according to the defined format.

3.2 The TLI has a policy that ensures alignment between teaching and learning approaches and the intended learning outcomes of academic programs promoting student-centred learning.

Relevant to the intended learning outcomes of academic programs, a regulating document reflecting the policy of teaching and learning is missing in the package of documents presented in frames of self-analysis. In some descriptions of established academic programs methods of teaching and learning exist relevant to intended learning outcomes, which, however, bears a general character. In 2019 “A policy of teaching appropriate outcomes, learning and assessment” has been established by the TLI, where 5 types of educational courses and program outcomes are defined, relevant to NQF and different established classifications, as well as general descriptions of accepted learning methods. But this category still does not actually work. At present the alignment of learning and teaching methods to outcomes is not monitored by the TLI, and is being implemented in the frames of lecturers’ individual envisions. At the same time the lecturers do not follow educational outcomes during teaching. The TLI admits that only seminars and practical courses are observed as a means of internship, and the students’ individual papers mostly bear a formal character. The implementation of learning and graduate internships is generally conducted on rather a sufficient level, but there are needs of improvements. Partly, the objectives of internship study are not in concord with the subject of graduation paper or thesis paper, as well as the practice institution characteristics. The attention to the subject content of internship by TLI is very faint, which substantially reduces its efficiency, from the point of aligning to learning outcomes. During the meeting with employers they came up with a desire to direct graduation papers, thesis papers, which could be implemented in their organisations, through this step they increased the practicality of studies, researches, however the employers are not included in that process at all. Nevertheless some efforts on improving the methods of teaching and learning are obvious, for example at least inserting and using modern technologies. It is a positive point, that some lecturers provide students with lectures in advance, and the lecture is based on discussions. Practically, in the frames of separate subjects (“Accounting”, “Statistics”, to some degree “Finances”) there is a great achievement

in terms of learning and teaching methods alignment, which inferred from the high level of the programs' application and was somehow evaluated by the stakeholders, too. At the same time all the employers noted that the level of general capacity, partly for example in terms of communication, presentation, judgment and analysis drastically yields to universities with student-centred learning.

Class observations showed that teaching methods are not focused on student-centred learning, and learning methods utterly beared an inactive character. The lecturers present at the meeting did not have the slightest image about student-centred approach (they confused it with cooperative learning). Besides, the TLI did not have a developed procedure to train and improve present and newly hired lecturers. The primary shortcoming is in the absence of policy of developing and using student-centred learning and teaching, which would provide a substantial improvement to the TLI program outcomes. The needs of the students are not in the centre of learning process, they don't have an active role and freedom of choosing and forming learning methods and content. The absence of student-centred system beyond modern tendencies of education will inevitably have a negative effect on the development of the TLI, the market position and future capacity.

This refers both to Management and Academic staff.

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

"Policy on Teaching Compliant with Learning Outcomes, Learning and Assessment" has been established by the TLI, which, however, is not applied. The TLI lacks the policy of academic integrity. The assessment policy bears a subjective character and is based on the lecturer's individual approach. Most of the assessments are carried out through oral exams, through which mostly knowledge is checked. The methods of outcome assessments, mentioned in the programs, bear merely a mechanical character (for example a test, oral examination or assessment of individual work), but they are not directed to answer the question, which criteria the lecturer should follow to evaluate the learning outcomes, especially in the point of capacity assessment. Only graduation and thesis papers are a means of capacity checking, which is obviously not enough.

The assessment system has recently undergone changes; partly no formative check-ups are used. It has been done by the request from the Student Council, reasoning that the students are super busy. However, the TLI did not have other sound grounds, analyses, and justifications for that decision, as a result of which the multitasking of the assessment system suffers. Similarly, such grounds do not exist in the decision of passing to 20-points assessment system from 100. Besides, during the site visit, it became clear that the students were not even aware of those changes.

"Methodological Instructions on Graduation Paper Defense" and "Methodological Instructions on Thesis Paper Defense" are elaborated in the TLI, the application of which is provided in terms of process, which is not enough, and in terms of content it is not even conducted. The assessment requirements are missing in the instructions. According to methodological instructions stated above in graduation paper reviewer's 2-3 pages report the alignment of the work to the academic program outcome should be mentioned. In the feedbacks, given by the graduation papers' advisors, studied during the site visit, that requirement was missing. Such definitions were also missing in the reviews of graduation papers. By the way the requirements referring to reviewers were missing in the mentioned methodological indications. Nothing is mentioned about what kind of decision could be made in case of obvious plagiarism. The considered thesis had dramatic drawbacks from the point of view of meeting the requirements of research paper, for example the hypothesis is not soundly defined, the applied methods are not understandable, the references are either few, or not objective,

and the conclusions do not derive from the results of the analysis. And let alone the fact, that according to methodological indications of the TLI, about 30 percent of the literature cannot be reflected in the work. The pre-defense of the works is not obligatory, which could ensure the work quality. There is no automatic system or program package against plagiarism; it was intended to be inserted from the academic year of 2019-2020.

The final attestation exam is conducted in respect to the order and inner regulations of the RA MES. The final attestation reports of the supervisors given to the expert panel did not provide a full image about the alignment of the graduation paper outcomes.

3.4 The academic programs of the TLI are contextually coherent with other relevant programs and promote internationalization and mobility of students and staff.

During the formulation of academic programs, the TLI has studied similar academic programs of other well-known professions and tried to align them to those programs. The formulation and improvement of academic programs in the University has been implemented taking into consideration the experience of local and advanced foreign institutions, which is mentioned in the Strategic Plans of different years in the University, as a superior direction. From acting universities in Armenia a special attention has been given to Transatlantic universities, and from foreign ones mostly to North-American, European advanced universities and to Russian ones.

However, as already stated above, the correspondance of programs to educational programs of well-known professions, is not yet complete, by the way, not only in terms of methods and outcomes, but also content. The results of benchmarking of appropriate programs of 10 foreign universities are summed up in the department of appendixes of each ASUE BA academic program, however benchmarking has been conducted mainly at the levels of separate courses, but comprehensive analysis, as such, has not been implemented. So the best experience supposes a considerable flexibility beyond one general program, in terms of specializations (for example Harvard University Economist Program)⁷. Compulsory subjects in limited numbers, and chances of developing specializations through elective courses are based on the latter. The classification of subjects according to the level of difficulty and a precise connection to each other, which is not identified in the existing academic programs, is a bare necessity for such a structure.

One of the missing points of comparability of academic programs is the student load with subjects, which vary from 6 to 11 during the term. After the class observations it became apparent that the information content of separate subjects is very thin, which allows to have subjects of such proportions. On the other hand, it would be more effective to reduce the number of subjects and increase the content of information, suitable to the best international experience, and also to transfer the learning load on students, inserting learning methods through work.

From the perspective of the content of academic programs there is a considerable deviation in the theoretical part. The knowledge given in the theoretical part is mostly based on non-modern literature, which causes deviation between the content and their application. By the way, the digestion and the transmission of advanced knowledge supposes serious changes at first in academic staff training, as well as in the spheres of improving the TLI resources and implementing researches.

⁷ General flexibility of programs is restricted by the RA Government decision N1240-Ն dated back August 25th, but the flexibility can be ensured in frames of the same program, through inserting specializations.

The TLI has also inserted great efforts in ensuring the mobility of students and lecturers, in the direction of program correspondance. In this point a considerable advancement has been noted since the previous self-analysis, which is rather positive. The international mobility of students and the academic staff of the University is provided by Erasmus + Programe and inter-university contracts.

Due to the broadened international mobility framework “A policy on Implementing a Mobility System within the Framework of Erasmus+ Programe” in the Armenian State University of Economics” was established in 2018. From the academic year of 2017-2018 joint MA academic programs are being applied in the University, “Project Management” (with the Politechnical University of Architecture and Construction) and “Business Management” (with the Swiss University of UMEF).

However, during the site visit, it came out that subject and credit differencies of foreign universities and ASUE learning programs greatly blocks the mobility of students. This speaks only about one thing, that the TLI academic programs are not yet sufficiently aligned with their equivalent international programs. At the same time no kind of attention has been given to the mobility between educational institutions inside Armenia, which could have really been useful for the correspondance of the TLI academic programs and from the perspective of improving competitiveness.

The primary shortcoming lies in the circumstance of the inflexibility of the programs, which essentially reduces the efficiency of the programs and the opportunity of quickly responding to labour market needs.

3.5 The TLI has policy ensuring academic program monitoring, effectiveness assessment and improvement

The investment of academic programs at the BA level occured in the BA programs of 2016/2017. According to the SAR, the “Guidline of Developing Academic Programs” intends to improve and monitor the academic program once a year, but it has been implemented only in 2017. Although documentts such as “Assessment Policy on Student Satisfaction with the Quality of Educational Process”, and “Monitoring and Assesment System of Stakeholders’ Satisfaction with the Quality of Educational Process”, but they have not been asserted by the TLI yet. A widespread student survey was conducted once in 2018, but there are some objectives about the purpose of survey (as it has not been directed to content assessment of academic programs), involvement (the students have been selected according to their progress), as well as the results (during the meetings it became clear that not all the results have been summed up). Only a “Procedure on Class Observations and Result Analysis” is asserted, which is not yet effectively used. According to the TLI, the effeciency of the programs will be possible to evaluate only after the end of the phase. Therefore, as a result, the TLI does not have a policy of assessment, improvemet and academic program determination. The current content changes of the program are not being monitored. In this case, the further review of the academic programs turns to be next door to impossible, which puts the fulfillmet of the TLI mission under the risk.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel evaluates it positive, that ASUE has reviewed the quality of academic programs, aligned the latter to the characteristics of the NQF, since the previous accreditation, taking into consideration the international experience too, which is important for the accomplishment of the

mission. As the orientation of practical knowledge and researches is considered to be a priority, the expert panel thinks that the academic programs still need improvements both in terms of content and methods to correspond to the best international standards. But, in order to accomplish the latter, it is needed to quickly develop and insert academic programs' assessment system to provide the upgrade of the efficiency and strategic correspondance during the course of time. Otherwise, there are risks of losing the academic program developing rate and direction, and this objective should always be kept in the center of attention of the academic program administration. By the way, it is also very important that, all the other stakeholders also be included in the systems of academic program elaboration and assessment, especially employers, except for the TLI administration and the academic staff.

The expert panel thinks, that the mechanism of ensuring the actual application and connection among teaching, learning and assessment methods, developed by the outcomes and based on it, also need improvements. As a result, the outcomes of the programs are being assessed part by part, mostly in the frames of separate subjects or graduation papers/ thesis, but they are not being assessed systematically. The latter can cause rating risk for the TLI from the perspective of education quality assurance.

The correspondance of the programs to other well-known international programs still needs considerable improvement. In terms of structure the main objective is the extremely little flexibility of programs, the absence of the specialization, lack of elective subjects, as well as the current and general overload of the subjects, the lack of subject classification criteria. The lack of flexibility also makes the inter-subject specialization opportunities impossible, which plays a very significant role in the development of modern economics. In terms of content, the upgrading of studying material, as well as a transfer from passive methods to active ones, stimulating student-centred learning. The lack of flexibility also is seen in the organisation works of internship and graduation papers, which are frequently not suited to students' needs. At the same time, the expert panel evaluates the efforts of ensuring program applicability positively, beyond which there is a great achievement in some specializations (for example "Accounting", "Finances", "Statistics").

The primary shortcoming is the absence of academic integrity system and appropriate assessment of the outcomes.

SUMMARY:

Taking into consideration that the academic programs have improved drastically and align with the NQF characteristics, are mostly in line with the University's mission, the content of the programs has been suited to the experience of a number of foreign universities to some extent, as well as there has been an experience to align the teaching, studying and assessment methods with the defined outcomes, the expert panel thinks that ASUE corresponds to the requirements of Criterion 3 with some reservations. The reservations include the absence of teaching, studying and assessment policy, based on the outcomes, as well as the policy of determination, efficiency assessment and improvement.

CONCLUSION: The expert panel assesses the correspondance of ASUE's institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 3 *satisfactory*.

IV. STUDENTS

CRITERION: The TLI provides relevant student support services ensuring the effectiveness of the learning environment.

FINDINGS

4.1 The TLI has set mechanisms for promoting equitable recruitment, selection, and admission procedures.

The ASUE student population is formed and the recruitment of the students is being carried out according to the defined regulations by RA government by professions and the forms of learning methods. Although the TLI tends to include a greater mass of international students, a regulation of directing and organising the admission of foreign students has not been developed in the TLI yet.

According to the self-analysis, the admission of foreign citizens is being conducted by the RA Government decision N 7000 of April 28th, 2011 by the defined order. The foreign students, who want to enter the faculty of studying languages and relevant profession and do not master the subjects intended for examination, study in the preparation courses of the University. During the site visit international students did not provide information about such courses, only mentioning that in order to overcome the difficulties, there is a support from the TLI. The primary mechanism of the student recruitment is sharing admission applications of academic programs in web sites and social media. Besides that, meetings are being organised in schools, tertiary learning institutions, "Open-doors Days", the TLI takes part in expo-exhibitions and spreads the TLI leaflets. The number of students, who came to ASUE from other educational institutions is not great (the stream of students to the TLI in the relevant academic years of 2017 and 2018 was 2 students a year). The cases of exclusions are also not substantial, mostly there are returns. According to the TLI studies the main reason of excluding students is the low progress rating (80-85 percent of the cases). Despite this analysis, no kinds of active mechanisms have been mentioned in the TLI to support students with insufficient progress. The TLI uses the rotation system of transfer process from paid to free tuition. The applied mechanism of accountability is the discussion of organising admissions each year in the TLI scientific council, however, no examples of further events or development of action plans have been put forward.

4.2 The TLI has policies and procedures for revealing student educational needs.

On March 2018 "Procedure on Student Survey for Course Assessment and Implementation" was established, which is the basis of the process of organizing and revealing students' educational needs. However, the surveys are being conducted by a specially chosen option (among students with great achievement). Besides that, in the purpose of implementation and assessment, the procedure of holding surveys among students in the University does not cover the objective of assurance with learning resources, the connection and efficiency of acting assessment and teaching methods, or other objectives referring to the procedures in educational institutions.

Besides that, though the students' participation in the TLI scientific council sittings, as well as other sittings of the chairs, if needed, can contribute to the revelation and survey of student educational needs, it became clear from the records of the chairs' sittings and scientific council sittings, presented to the expert panel, that the students' involvement and participation in the works of governing bodies, where the fulfillment of surveys and reports, referring to different spheres of the TLI activity, is very low.

The Student Council also has authorities and opportunities of revealing student needs, the head of which is a member of Scientific Council. However, during the site visit it became clear that the cooperation of

the Student Council and the Quality Assurance Department is not sound, especially concerning organizing surveys (the cooperation failed with the previous staff of the SC).

During the site visit the students noted the role of monitors, who can identify the needs of the course in the meetings with the deans, which they are invited to. The students mentioned separate cases, when the issues, raised by them, got solutions (partly the elimination of formative exams in the assessment system and some other questions of economic character).

4.3 The TLI provides advising services, opportunities for extra-curricular activities supporting students' effective learning.

In ASUE the advising services for students from the academic staff is intended for their load, and the hours and the schedule of academic staff advising services is put on the tables in the chairs. During the site visit it became clear, that the students were not aware of those advising services and did not use them. And the reasons of students' not participating in the advising services are not studied by the TLI. On the SC initiative some foreign language training meeting- courses are being organized. The students informed, that they got advising services from the lecturers, who are mostly available. In the ASUE chairs there are some vacancies for course monitors, the main function of whom is to provide information on organising learning process, which, as appeared during the meeting with the students, they were not aware of either. In the TLI on the initiative of chairs different seminars, open classes, advisory meetings are being organized, which give students additional opportunities to satisfy educational and other needs and secure knowledge. The students get informed about it from the announcements in the ASUE web site. However, the procedure of organizing such meetings is not regulated and they are not being conducted by stable schedule.

Additional tertiary courses are not being organized in the TLI, which would help the students with difficulties to learn the subject, or those who have been absent. As a result, no examples or cases to raise the achievement of students have been mentioned in the TLI during the visit.

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

No kinds of well-asserted regulations and schedules for students to apply to the administrative staff are active in the ASUE. However, practically the students have opportunities to turn to the deans in written form and verbally with their different bothersome objectives and issues, but after the meeting with the students it became clear, that most of the applications are given verbally. For a number of activities (partly in terms of ensuring scholarships) certain procedures of presenting applications from students are defined.

Regularly meetings are organized with the deans for students in the ASUE. The students can turn not only via the monitors elected by the course, via the SC, but also during individual meetings with the deans.

The students can apply to the administrative staff with their bothersome objectives, via the SC, the representatives of which can appear in the sittings of the TLI scientific council with appropriate questions.

4.5 The TLI has student career support services.

The TLI has a Career Centre (by the way, it has been formed based on the results of the previous accreditation), the functions of which, according to the charter of the center, tend to provide different services contributing to students' career, the insurance of cooperation with participation and employment centers of students in work fairs. However, during the site visit, it became clear, that the cooperation with potential employers, the Career Centers of other universities, local and foreign

organizations is not limited by only organizing internships and securing their participation in the TLI work fairs. At the level of BA academic programs, no active examples of cooperation with the employers, or already accomplished programs tended to the development of the students' career have been presented. During the meetings with the expert panel the employers mentioned about not close cooperation. Partly, there are many signed memoranda, the vast majority of which is not being accomplished (the cooperation is especially weak in reviewing the academic programs in terms of their involvement).

During the site visit, it became clear, that the vast majority of the TLI students are not informed about the Career Centre services. No questions have also been asked by the TLI about the satisfaction with the provided services and the factors on the basis of it. From 2018 a program of forming an undergraduate network has started, but no information about the results has been given to the expert panel.

At the same time, it is worth underlining, that during the site visit it became obvious, that the cooperation with the Municipality of Shirak and the employers is much more active in the branch of Gyumri. During the meeting the representatives noted about the positive influence of the cooperation outcomes on students and the branch.

4.6 The TLI promotes student involvement in its research activities.

It is intended to expand the involvement of the students in research activities via the TLI Strategic Plan; by the way, it has also been done on the basis of counseling given by the expert panel during the previous accreditation. The MA academic programs are planning to provide the students' involvement in different scientific-research works. However, in the BA level the research component does not have a sound division in the assessment system, and its implementation, in frames of separate courses, is not always a compulsory educational component.

Due to Amberd Scientific-Research Center the TLI has enough logistic and technical opportunities, as well as an appropriate academic environment to involve students in scientific research works, as the students can form only $\frac{1}{4}$ in those research activities, implemented by the center. However, well-asserted standards and regulations on electing students have not been developed. It is also necessary to mention that the majority of the students were unaware of the activity of Student Scientific Society either; none of the SSS representatives took part in the meetings with the expert panel and the new SSS representative elected from the new academic year did not answer questions about SSS activities related to the accreditation period⁸. The topics of graduation papers and MA theses, as a rule, are chosen by the chairs and are not being discussed in the frames of scientific-research programs, implemented by Amberd Scientific-Research Center. At the BA level no examples of research by the students, through cooperation with the genuine part of the economy, were presented. Incentive mechanisms of students' and employers' involvement and cooperation in research activities have not been elaborated yet.

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

The TLI has a Student Council, which, on the basis of its charter, provides the activity of students' self-management. The meetings with students and the SC representatives showed that the main function of the Council is to spread information. The confidence in the SC within students, from the perspective of identifying student needs in the TLI administrative bodies, was not high. In students' claims the SC is mainly involved in the functions of organizing entertainment, cultural events, and the fulfillment of its functions is not based on the principles of transparency or stability insurance, on the contrary, it is being conducted based on "friendly" relations with the SC members in different courses. Besides that, in the SC administrative bodies the elective standards of nominating students' candidatures are not well-

⁸ The text was rewritten as a result of the discussion of the institution's remarks and suggestions.

asserted either. Also the processes and elective standards of candidates nominated by the SC for scholarships are not clear; they had a subjective character and were not justified in the records of sittings of the chairs. The SC has a separate room at its disposal, where the service of the SC Hot line is active. The efficiency of financial means provided to the SC and the activity of the structure has not been evaluated by the TLI yet.

4.8 The TLI has evaluation and quality assurance mechanisms of student educational, advisory and other services.

The quality assurance activities of the TLI educational and other processes are presented in “Student Guidelines” and the ASUE quality assurance manuals. However, during the visit, it became clear, that the main mechanism of providing quality assurance of student educational, advisory and other services are the surveys, which do not fully take into consideration the demands of “Procedure on Student Surveys for Course Implementation and Assessment”. The surveys do not include questions, that refer mainly to the assessment of the TLI advisory and other services. During the site visit it became clear that not all the student groups take part in the surveys, besides, they are sometimes conducted without the participation of the QA Department (by the administrative staff in the Computer Centre). The survey results of the students and undergraduates are presented to the TLI Scientific Council discussion, but they are not being discussed with the students.

CONSIDERATIONS

The acting mechanisms for the recruitment and admission of students allow the TLI to provide a sufficient number of students merely for organising 6 academic programs. TLI wishes to increase the number of students, mostly via involving foreign students. The expert panel considers it positive, that the mechanisms of recruitment, election and admission of students in ASUE provide the distribution of information, however the absence of foreign students’ well-asserted involvement strategy and policy endangers the implementation of the mentioned purpose. In recent years, after the discussion of the TLI admission results in the Scientific Centre, they have not formally found their reflection on the document grounds of the TLI activity (at least as a stable long-term program based on the actions). Besides that, no analysis of the efficiency of the applied mechanism for admission and a development of mechanisms exploring additional reserves based on them, has not been presented to the panel. The number and the reasons of exclusions and returns from the TLI prove, that the TLI does not undertake steps to eliminate the main cause of exclusions, that is a support given to students with low progress. No kind of student need identifying complex, asserted policy or procedures are developed in the TLI (only on March 2018 “A procedure of holding student surveys for the purpose of course implementation and assessment” was asserted). The individual and non-general surveys only partly contribute to the identification of student needs, concerning all the groups. Of course the student survey results are being discussed in the Scientific Council, but they are not discussed directly with the students. Improvement steps have been taken based on the survey results, but the mechanisms of improvement, development and assessment are not clarified, and no analyses of their efficiency is being conducted, which makes the existence and upgrade of the stakeholders’ confidence in the educational and learning environment for the students, auspicious, transparent and objective, very risky.

Not analysing the causes of student involvement, low participation in the TLI administrative bodies and in the sittings of the chairs, can cause the reduction of information based on the factors, influencing the development of the TLI and a non-complete statement of improving directions. Although their participation in open-classes and seminars is not regulated by well-asserted schedule, purposes and outcomes. The analysis of the necessity and efficiency counselling implementation by the TLI is not being conducted either, which cannot reflect on student needs’ improvement positively in that point.

The TLI has not defined a schedule and regulation to turn to the administrative staff, however it does not keep students away from turning verbally to the staff with bothering objectives both individually and intermediary via the SC and the monitors. The expert panel considers the existence of the Career Centre positive, but the directions and mechanisms of its activity need reviewing.

The logistic ensurance, present in the TLI, creates opportunities to involve students in scientific-research works, however acting (and also incentive) mechanisms have not been developed yet. Conducting the students' involvement in research activities at the BA level by voluntary principle can risk high quality assurance of graduation papers (the evidence of which is the absence of references in separate works in the theoretical part given to the expert panel). And in research works the tightening of the connection with the employers, the development and application of collaborative programs in line with them can increase the practical researches, implemented by the students. A Student Council exists in the TLI, from the activities of which is the dissatisfaction of students, their not close cooperation with the QA Department for the purpose of exploring students' needs, not evalutaing the efficiency of financial and organizing aspects endangers the implementation of charter principle of student needs' protection.

SUMMARY:

Taking into consideration that the TLI acting policy of student recruitment, selection and admission ensures a sufficient number of students, however the student needs' identifying mechanisms applied in the TLI do not fully contribute to student needs' identification and improvements; implementation by their results, the efficiency of organizing advisory services for students is not being evaluated, additional classes are not being conducted to support students with low progress (which formulate the main reason for students' exclusions from the TLI) the implementation of services contributing to the career of students and the cooperation with the employers is evaluated not effective, and the level of students' awareness of the functions of the CC is low, no well-asserted regulations and schedules for turning to the administrative body are developed, also the confidence in the activity objectivity of the responsible body for student rights' defense is low however as a result of discussions with the institution it was remarkable that many activitiea are currently in place to ensure the protection of students rights, to involve students in the university processes and to improve the mecahnisms for assessing the students needs. Considering the above mentioned positive tendences the experts panel concludes that the TLI meets the requirement of the Criterion⁹.

CONCLUSION.

The expert panel assesses the correspondance of ASUE's institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 4 *satisfactory*.

V. FACULTY AND STAFF

CRITERION: The TLI has a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff to accomplish the institution's mission and to implement the goals set for academic programmes.

FINDINGS

5.1 The TLI has policies and procedures promoting recruitment of a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff capable of ensuring program provisions.

According to the self-analysis, presented by the University, by 1.3 sub-purpose, defined by 2018-2020 strategy, it is intended to provide efficient generation changes in the chairs and involvement of qualified and well-known specialists of that sphere for the purpose of teaching the modules of certain academic programs, especially including practical component. In the University's website a policy of

⁹ The text was rewritten as a result of the discussion of the institution's remarks and suggestions.

electing and substituting the ASUE academic staff, which was established on April 30th, 2019, and which thoroughly presents the conditions of the competition and criteria of substituting academic staff positions.

According to the SAR, in the academic year of 2017-2018 Doctors and Candidates of Science or those who had academic degrees in the sphere of the RA Economics correspondingly formed 53 and 45% of the lecturers at the University. All the recruitment for academic staff vacancies in the University has been intended to conduct via competitive selection.

According to the SAR, the University has passed to the concept of talent recruitment, defining standards characterizing the opportunities of human resource development in line with standards for the competition, typical to already acting specialist.

According to the SAR, one of the most significant principles of the University's policy is the involvement of lecturers with bigger and new practical experience. The University PhD students can also join the academic staff.

The selections of the deans and the heads of the chairs are being held via corresponding procedures.

Unlike the academic staff, there is no reference to the selection and procedures of the education support staff in the SAR. Some documents on the procedure and policy of the education support staff selection were also missing.

5.2 The teaching staff qualifications for each programme are comprehensively stated.

Well-asserted requirements for the academic staff qualifications for each academic program are not defined in the TLI. According to the analysis, the University at first considers the requirements presented to the academic staff, asserted by the decisions of the RA government, during the licensing as basis, but these are only minimum requirements.

It is mentioned in the self-analysis, that the requirements, presented to the professional qualities of the academic staff, are defined via TLIs, and course programs are being edited based on the student surveys. While by the ASUE improvement program it is intended to develop work descriptions and requirements presented to the AS professional qualifications for each TLI, for which, the assessment of the applicability of the requirements, presented to the lecturers, should have served as an indicator, however this point of the improvement program has not been carried out.

5.3 The TLI has well established policies and procedures for the periodic evaluation of the teaching staff.

According to the SA, several procedures are run in the university for academic staff evaluation purposes. Among those procedures, student surveys and class observations referring to the teaching quality and productivity are given great importance. Amberd Research Center has developed and experimentally implemented the "Monitoring and Qualification of the ASUE Academic Staff's Performance" policy project during 2016-2017 academic year. The latter is still left on the project level. During the site visit, it turned out that the class observation policy has just been implemented in the University (approved in May 2019). Therefore, it could not serve as a means for lecturer's qualification, as mentioned in the SA. The University also agrees that despite the variety of current assessment methods, they are not in joined form yet. In fact, they are not even realized yet.

According to the ASUE improvement program, provisions are made to develop and validate academic staff assessment methods, methodology and procedure. However, this point in the improvement program has also not been realized. All the validated assessment method, methodology, and procedure are missing.

5.4 The TLI implements teacher professional development in accordance to the needs outlined during regular evaluations (both internal and external).

As stated in the SAR, it practices the “ASUE Teachers’ Professional Development” conception. In accordance with the acting conception, the internal teacher professional development is carried out in two directions: teacher general development and teacher professional development. English language trainings are periodically organized in the University to upgrade the lecturers’ knowledge level of the English language. The University also views the Erasmus+ Teaching Mobility Programme as a teacher professional development procedure. Another element for teachers’ improvement is the participation in the lectures and discussions organized by hosted lecturers. Class observations are considered additional methods for uncovering lecturers’ needs. This also cannot serve as a tool since the class observation policy has been introduced to the University only in 2019. “ASUE Teachers’ Professional Development” conception is not present in the given documents. The questionnaire about teacher professional development given during the visit verifies that the teacher professional development program is meant to be carried out in two directions. The questions in the questionnaire also allow to identify other needs of the lecturers: for instance, the upgrading of experimental activity (in English). During the visit, it was found out that the external and internal evaluations meant to reveal the lecturers’ needs are not practiced in the University. Thereby, the opportunity for the lecturers’ improvement and the identification of their needs is limited. Although the University has a questionnaire created for identifying the needs, the teacher professional development programs are not carried out, as it was learned from the lecturers taking part in the meeting with the expertise panel. As it was disclosed, in reality, those are highly necessary in the University.

It is also unclear how the teacher professional development circumstance will influence on the further activity, competency, and qualification of the lecturers.

5.5 The TLI ensures the sustainability of the teaching staff according to academic programs.

In line with the SA, the University offering academic studies reaches the preparation of aspirants and the movement of lecture work through the sustainable provision of the appropriate academic staff, categories through the career growth providing scale, the conception of talent integration, and through the approaches towards the lecturers’ workload (the employment of at least two professionals for each course).

Through the provision of sustainability, the University also gains attractive employment conditions, more specifically high wages, health insurance, and the policy of supporting newly formed families.

5.6 There are set policies and procedures for the staff promotion.

In keeping with the SA, to stimulate the advancement of academic qualification, the University defines differentiation in academic staff wages depending on the academic level and rank. The method of merit pays has been practiced in the University last year. The amount of merit pays generally ranges within the limits of 50-100% of the wage.

The University also develops the project of “Academic Merit Pay Policy,” which intends to be a new method for wage differentiation along with promoting the productive advancement of the teachers’ professional qualifications and the process of their work evaluation. Nevertheless, it turned out that merit pays are given without any differentiation-equally- without any criterion, which cannot be a stimulus for advancement.

The University also sees the professional advancement provision in the policy of individual and collective mentorship of entry level lecturers. During the visit, it was found out in the meeting with the heads of the chairs that mentorship has informal nature, which is not affirmed with any policy, it is not stated in the norms of the workload, which would make the process more efficient.

It needs to be considered positive that currently it has become mandatory for the University aspirants to participate in educational processes as a pedagogic internship. As the Vice-Rector asserts, they see the implementation of mentorship policy in it.

5.7 There is necessary technical and administrative staff to achieve the strategic goals.

Several structural units have been created and recreated in the University meant to systematize the educational processes and realize the University strategic priorities.

The functions of education support staff are defined in the corresponding official instructions, which enhances a chance to monitor the fulfillment of defined responsibilities.

Internal and external professional development program is carried out for several groups of the staff: for the advancement of the administration and education support staff activity's quality.

Education support staff has been trained in the Universities of European countries within the framework of Erasmus + mobility program.

During the visit, the introduction of deans and the heads of chairs, faculties and chairs activities allows one to claim that the University administration and education support have sufficient capacity and exercise productive activity. It has the essential potential to accomplish the strategic goals of the University.

Nonetheless, the methods and procedures for evaluating the quality of administration and education support staff's activity have not been developed, as initially planned in the ASUE improvement program.

CONSIDERATIONS

As a result of the site visit during the previous accreditation, three goals have been defined in the ASUE Follow-up plan to realize the suggested recommendations: clarification of the requirements presented to human resources for realizing the academic programs, evaluation of academic staff and administration quality for constant improvement purposes, as well as productively carrying generation change of the academic staff into life for providing sustainability through the enlargement of younger academic staff engagement.

By highlighting the quality and experienced professionals within the process of the University activity improvement, ASUE has mentioned it as a strategic priority in the 2016-2020 and 2018-222 SDPs.

In the 2017 University Report, it is mentioned that within the scope of the benchmarking taken place for developing and reviewing the academic programs, not only the content of the study programs of educational institutions, the assessment policy, procedures, teaching and educational approaches had been observed, but also the requirements for the academic staff qualifications along with ensuring that those are fixed in the study program. Considering this a much positive approach, it is necessary to notice that for example, the requirements for the teaching quality in the Resource Safety section of the *Finances* academic program are more of the descriptions; such as in reality, who currently teaches in this academic program.

The authorized documents with the requirements for the academic staff professional qualities and job descriptions, not available yet, should have served as an outcome for the mentioned goals in the ASUE follow-up work plan. Therefore, it is also impossible to evaluate the practicality of requirements presented to the lecturers.

As intended in the 2018-2022 SDP, in 2019, the "Regulation on ASUE Academic Staff Election and Employment" has been developed and published for the productive generation change of the academic staff and the inclusion of qualified and dignified professionals from the teaching sphere of academic program involving the applied component of modules. The results of the competition based on this regulation have been invalidated by the Science Council during the meeting held on August 28th, 2019.

In other words, in reality, this step taken based on the regulation has not reached to its completion. Thereby, this aspect has failed to be realized.

The intensive integration of foreign lecturers for practicality purposes can be viewed as means of educational practicality provision.

During the visit, it was found out that although the policy of qualified, dignified lecturers, “the inclusion of lecturers with great and fresh practical experience” supports the transfer of practical knowledge and skills, it has made the University encounter with new problems, more specifically, in terms of bringing them into the academic field. Methodological trainings have not been arranged for them. Thereby, facing some difficulties related to teaching methods, some of them have begun turning down teaching offers. This has created a new problem for the chair in terms of replenishing the staff with new lecturers.

In the framework of the next goal for the University improvement (evaluation of academic staff and administration quality for constant improvement purposes), it is intended to develop a policy of regular evaluation of the academic staff, methods for academic staff evaluation, methodology and procedure, methods and procedures for uncovering the needs of the academic staff for professional development, as well as to prepare and insert a policy and procedure for professional growth and development, establish methods and procedures for the evaluation of the quality of the education support staff activity. As also known from the 2017 University Report, during the visit, it turned out that those documents are still left on project level, and they have not been realized yet. The activity of Continuing education and professional development section is set to boost the realization of those documents.

Student surveys are viewed as means for defining the requirements for the university academic staff professional qualities or for improving them. However, since those surveys are not conveyed systematically, they cannot serve as productive means. Besides that, the questions stated in the survey papers do not give that opportunity to do so. It turned out that student surveys not only are not conveyed systematically, but the displays of subjectivity have also been noticed (it is obvious when the surveys are conveyed and monitored by the dean of the given faculty. Besides that, some of lecturers participating in the meeting with the expertise panel voiced such an opinion, too. It turned out that the student surveys were not regular, did not reflect the full picture, in particular, when the sample was organized on the basis of IOG, when the polls were conducted, supervised by the dean's office of the given faculty¹⁰. Class observation policy has just been inserted in the university (affirmed in May 2019). Thereby, it also could not serve as means for identifying and qualifying the lecturers' improvement needs in the past, as pointed in the SAR. The University also agrees that *‘despite the variety of current assessment methods for lecturers (they are desirable, yet unrealistic), they are not in joined form yet.’* Not only they are not in the joined form yet, but they are not even realized yet.

“ASUE Lecturers' Professional Development” concept presented in the documents was missing. The survey about professional development program truly verifies that the given questions also allow to identify the lecturers' other needs: for instance, the improvement of experimental activity (in English). On the other hand, the survey did not have questions about meeting the needs for academic articles, in particular, about preparing their publication in international journals.

The absence of procedures and methods for the teacher professional development did not allow to find out how the teacher professional development circumstance would influence on the further activity, competency, and qualification of the lecturers.

¹⁰ The text was rewritten as a result of the discussion of the institution's remarks and suggestions.

Nothing is mentioned about the policy of the academic staff professional improvement provision and its encouragement in the SA. Merit pays are awarded without appropriate and clear¹¹ standards, often equally. Therefore, it cannot serve as means of encouragement. The absence of academic staff qualification also cannot be a standard for encouragement. The linked file also misses the policies about improvement. The linked file in the SAR did not meet the given standards (“ASUE Code of Honor”). Despite considering it positive that the University has adapted the policy of the individual and collective mentorship, the methods for realizing it are not precise yet, they bear a speculative nature as they are not officialized. According to the University improvement program, surveys should have been conveyed with the young staff for learning about the productivity of exchanging experience. Nevertheless, judging by the ASUE Annual Report, they have not been conveyed. Thereby, it is barely possible to evaluate the productivity of the mentorship policy with such an implementation.

Although it is considered positive that the education support staff has been trained in the universities of European countries within the scope of Erasmus+ mobility program, the policy and procedure for electing the education support staff is missing.

By getting to know the deans and the heads of chairs activities, the operation of faculties and chairs, it can be claimed that the university administration and education support staff have sufficient capacity and exercise productive activity, it has the essential potential to realize the University strategic goals. The only flaw is the lack of appropriate SWOT analysis about the standard. This factor does not allow to identify the strengths and weaknesses fully.

SUMMARY: Considering the fact that many of the objectives still continue to be on the planning level, and the programs developed still hold the project statues and are not implemented yet, thereby, it is difficult to evaluate their productivity. Besides, since the previous accreditation, a considerable part of the ASUE improvement program activities have not been realized. Expertise panel finds that the TLI does not meet the requirements for this standard.

CONCLUSION: The expert panel assesses the correspondence of ASUE’s institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 5 *unsatisfactory*.

VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

CRITERION: The TLI ensures the implementation of research activity and the link of the research with teaching and learning.

FINDINGS

6.1 The TLI has a clear strategy for promoting its research interests and ambitions.

The TLI operates the “ASUE Scientific Research and Innovative Activity Development Procedure for 2012-2017”, however, it has not been reviewed. In the experimental report of the previous institutional accreditation, it was mentioned about the necessity of developing a long-term strategy, which has not been realized. According to the TLI, the Research Activity Procedure for 2019-2024 is in the preparation process. It can be noticed from the TLI SDP and vision that the TLI has integrated the applied research direction, but it is not reflected in a separate document. As a result, both the TLI and its stakeholders do not have a chance to understand, analyze and/or evaluate the TLI’s goals and the process of their realization.

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

¹¹ The text was rewritten as a result of the discussion of the institution's remarks and suggestions.

As already mentioned, TLI does not have a long-term research strategy, thereby, the mid-term and short-term programs based on it are missing, too. The only thing mentioned as programs are just the separate research programs and researches of candidature and PHD, which, however, are not summarized in any of the research program documents. Amberd Research Center only has a well-defined mission, which also has not been stated as a strategy or a program. Thereby, the expertise panel finds it difficult to evaluate TLI research interests and ambitions.

6.3 The TLI ensures the implementation of research and development through sound policies and procedures.

TLI research direction is guided in “2018-2022 Development Strategy and Actions Plan” document, in which ‘*the provision of unification and cooperation in the applied research-education and applied research-economy sphere*’ is mentioned as strategically prioritized goal. The enlargement of research skills, the integration of research results in educational programs, the development of platforms for cooperation with external stakeholders of the researches, and the reorientation of researches towards easily marketalized applied sphere are mentioned as the sub-goals. However, the events for 2018-2019 under the sub-goals have not taken place, which makes the realization of TLI SDP related to the researches challenging.

In 2014, “Regulation about Scientific-Educational Groups Research Programs Competition” was developed and inserted, based on which Amberd Research Center announced a contest for 8 different researches in March 2014. Nevertheless, during the further years, contest announcements have not been posted, which speaks about the de facto inaction of the aforementioned regulation.

Consequently, the direction of general research policy absence is not systematized, and instead of representing the TLI’s interests, they generally mirror the interests of individual researchers. Although the latter is positive from the perspective of academic independence, it verifies the absence of institutional approach as a process. It is also verified with the circumstance that the TLI research requirements do not represent the academic staff, as well as there is no system of material support for research work.

6.4 The TLI emphasizes the internationalization of its research.

In the SAR of the TLI institutional capacities, the internationalization of the research activity is viewed in two directions: the publications in international journals, and the international cooperation. The publications in the international journals are done for almost completely unqualified, majorly not related to economy, and generally in territorial journals. This indicates the low quality of the researches. The TLI has created a foundation for taking care of the publication expenses and stimulating the publications of the academic articles in the peer-reviewed journals with high International Standard Serial Number (ISSN).

TLI has engaged in several international cooperation programs, as well as the academic staff’s participation in international conferences has increased.

6.5 The TLI has well established mechanisms for linking research with teaching.

The TLI publishes the “Young Scientist” periodical, in which third-year BA students can publish their papers, which is very positive. On one hand, it appears that applied research activity is not implemented as a complete element of educational methods. Examined individual works, graduation and MA theses papers do not mirror appropriate research skills, which means that the research activity is not sufficiently integrated in the educational process. Students’ participation in scientific-educational groups, lab works, or researches conducted by the Amberd Research Center is generally done on voluntary basis. Therefore, students’ engagement percentage in research work is still low.

On the other hand, the inclusion of researches in the educational processes is also not clarified, and it is implemented by the individual choice of the lecturers. The inclusion of applied research is noticed in some majors (“Marketing,” “Statistics,” etc.). However, such an experiment is left quite limited.

CONSIDERATIONS

The research processes organized by the TLI is quite weak. Separate strategies outlining the research directions are missing, short-term and mid-term programs are not developed. Although the conduction of research is considered a priority in the SDP, the sub-goals mentioned in the SDP are not realized yet. The quality of the research conducted is insufficient, the number of articles published is small, and the journals’ popularity is low. In general, after the SAR of the previous institutional capacities, there has not been noticed a progress in this field: the sphere of research is at the beginning of the PDCA cycle. This is a great issue from the perspective of the TLI management, the realization of long-term visions, and the productive use of resources.

There is some progress in terms of the participation in programs with international research components and in the provision of research opportunities for the students, however, those are highly limited and do not allow to evaluate the whole standard as sufficient.

SUMMARY: Considering that the TLI does not have a strategy representing its research interests and ambitions, it does not generate the appropriate mid- and long-term programs, its developed policies and procedures are incomplete and currently are not practiced, as well as research process is not sufficiently integrated in educational process. The correspondence of the TLI’s institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 6 is unsatisfactory.

CONCLUSION: The expert panel assesses the correspondence of ASUE’s institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 6 *unsatisfactory*.

VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

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

FINDINGS

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

ASUE academic programs are implemented in the 6th building of the ASUE headquarter, as well as in Gyumri and Vayots Dzor branches. Five of the headquarter buildings are located next to some other RA HEIs- within the area of the university district. The library together with 3 reading halls and computer laboratories serve for students’ educational needs. Actions for improving the electronic library are in the process. It is possible to have access to the electronic library through the University official website. It is also connected to the internal network.

The ASUE computer libraries, conference halls (including the ones funded and furnished within the scope of international programs), and the lecture room funded by Chinese government are used for checking students’ knowledge and arranging some other events. During the site visit, it was found out that the resources used for students’ research purposes are not regularly refreshed, and both the library and the Amberd Research Center are not subscribed to international databases and journals. Nevertheless, according to the data in the SAR, 65% of the students are satisfied with the provision of essential resources for learning purposes. The ASUE outdoor infrastructure is in good condition.

There are gyms operating in the University campus. Healthcare service and cafeteria are not operating yet. The ASUE campus provides WIFI coverage and internet accessibility.

7.2 The TLI provides appropriate financial resources with necessary equipment and facilities as needed to achieve its mission and objectives.

The TLI resource assurance policy is not based on goals and activities in the SDP. The annual expenses for obtaining essential means and technologies and supporting service are planned based on the application presented by separate structural subdivision for obtaining material resources. Major part of the TLI budget (the 80% in 2018) has been developed from finances created from student tuitions, the rest comes from the following sources: government funding, grant programs, and other sources. Payments are made based on budgeting planned created in advance, the budget is generally spent on organizing the educational process, more specifically, in respect to the wage article. Wage expenses are only the 70% of the total expenses (according to the presented initial budgeting and financial reports, it does not show which part of the wage expenses is directed towards paying the University academic staff and administrative staff wages, and which part to paying the wages of other structural subdivisions' staff; for instance, the college staff, dormitory workers, and others). According to the financial reports, funds are also directed to ongoing and capital renovations, obtaining devices and technologies, other bare necessities (furniture), publication and printing expenses, acquiring books and literature, and education support expenses. Nonetheless, it needs to be mentioned that the library expenses have shown sustainable decrease tendency in 2016-2018.

It is not clear which part from the 4% academic expenses in the total expenses is directed to the research considered a priority in the SDP.

During the site visit, it turned out in the meeting with the Vice-Rector that funds developed from the international grant programs' savings are also directed to research in TLI.

7.3 The TLI has sound financial distribution policy and capacity to sustain and ensure the integrity and continuity of the academic programs offered at the institution.

The TLI does not have a sustainable financial distribution policy. In fact, there is some mechanism of financial distribution for annual cases. Every year the TLI plans the next year's initial budget, in which the directions of financial distribution are mirrored. Financial planning is based on the analysis of the previous years' financial indicators and predictions for the year under the planning process. Budget distribution is not implemented in accordance with study programs. In line with the SDP goals, the financial resources assurance planning is not implemented, either. Until 2018, a differentiated approach was applied in the TLI towards assistance and deciding general academic staff wage rates although differentiation in assistance and general academic staff's activities does not take place. Budget plan is discussed and approved during the TLI Science Council meeting. Budget discussion with the Governing Board has not been arranged yet. Stakeholders do not have immediate participation in the process of financial budgeting. Purchases of goods, works, and services based on the application of separate subdivisions are viewed as a mechanism for resource distribution. Here applied approaches are not regulated, either, and the priorities in discussion making are not clarified. TLI agrees about the significance of enlarging budget funding sources and investing diversification. For this purpose, measurements are being taken to organize separate short-term paid trainings and to receive financial aids from international programs, however, those are not meant to ensure the long-term growth of financial resources.

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

Resources necessary for the implementation of academic programs are generally developed via resources under the TLI control: income from student tuitions and separate research. The obtainment of essential utilities, furniture, library fund enrichment with professional literature and other

supporting resources, and obtainment of technologies also take place via the TLI funds or grant programs. Currently, the available library resources of the TLI do not guarantee a necessary resource basis required for long-term development of the academic programs (including the essential basis for entering an international market).

The TLI provides financial resources for planning the teaching processes and for purchases materials used in those processes. Obtainment of essential resources for the learning process are implemented in centralized manner, and their distribution is made based on the applications of separate subdivisions. Financial resources provided to the academic staff have not indicated increasing tendencies in 2016-2018.

In accordance with the strategic tasks, the TLI does not implement precise resource distribution yet, neither the timeline-plan of the SDP implementation, nor the annual budgeting plan in respect to the strategic goals or tasks involves resource distribution.

For the quality assurance of learning processes, resources are provided only when necessary: for the implementation of contests announced or programs (for instance, expertise contest for the analysis of academic programs).

7.5 The TLI has a sound policy and procedure to manage information and documentation.

The TLI has some mechanisms and tools set to manage information and documentation processes. Internal computer network is particularly applied for it, which allows to share the information with different subdivisions. Measurements are being taken for improving the electronic library. The University website and Facebook page also promote the process of sharing information, through which external and internal stakeholders of the University are informed about educational, administrative, research and other types of processes implemented in the TLI. However, the English version of the University website does not provide sufficient information about processes implemented in the TLI. There is also a regulated process in the TLI for fulfilling administrative decisions and orders, about which complete and trustworthy information is provided to internal stakeholders via computer network. Moodle system is in the process of introduction. Nevertheless, the TLI does not pay sufficient attention to information security.

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

Subdivision of security sustainability and its staff in the TLI provides secure environment for TLI students and academic staff. In various parts of the buildings and constructions under the TLI's control have 24-hour security service, however, few of the buildings have security cameras. The University has fire suppression system, fire extinguishers are placed, and evacuation schemes are posted there. the TLI has taken some measurements for constructing health care center and organizing food supplement services only recently. the TLI subsidiary buildings are not adjusted for organizing the education of students with special needs. At the time of the site visit, there were not students with special needs learning in the University, nevertheless, the University is willing to display an individual approach for students with special needs. "Civil Defense" subject is included in the University academic program as a compulsory course, which is run by the chair of physical education.

7.7 The TLI has mechanisms in place for the evaluation of the effectiveness, applicability and availability of resources given to the teaching staff and learners.

Student surveys conveyed by the TLI quality assurance department include questions related to the provision of essential technical means and other academic materials for the teaching programs, but there are not questions about their practicality and productivity evaluation (also including resources provided to one student). It turned out from the meetings with students that objectives with their

resource accessibility are discussed in the meetings with the administration. However, improvement measurements based on surveys conveyed with students for identifying their needs are not presented.

Participants in meeting with the academic staff did not mention about any of the methods used for evaluating resources provided to the academic staff. Nevertheless, according to the data in the SA, about 74% of the academic staff are satisfied with the provided resources.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel finds that in general, material, financial, and human resources, including the logistic base, library resources, and reading halls, computer and educational laboratories equipped with essential machines, and educational environment provide conditions sufficient for realizing ASUE mission and strategic goals. However, it is not analyzed to which extent they support the development of educational programs' outcome and the constant advancement of academic programs, considering the TLI potential of becoming applied and research university and engaging international students.

There are some procedures for the distribution of financial resources, but there is not a precise long-term complex policy. Although the previous year's expenses and predictions for the year under the planning process serve as a base for distributing financial resources to some extent, there is not a precise planning according to the academic programs and SDP goals. Financial planning in the TLI takes place when necessary as the process still does not have regulated procedures. The principles for planning finances, financial management and monitoring, mechanisms guaranteeing the targeted use of financial expenses or the principles of their determination are not defined, which is specifically challenging for the TLI activity long-term development, the SDP realization and from the quality assurance constancy viewpoint.

Considering the goal of the international students' inclusion and the fact that the main part of the income is given to the wages, the expertise panel believes that the planning of financial resource distribution based on the academic programs and the introduction of resource assurance long-term planning system will promote the assurance of the University competency in long-term visions.

It is positive that there are sufficient number of formal and informal procedures for managing the processes of information and documentation (including procedures developed based on the recommendations given during the previous accreditation). Processes for external and internal information cycling are also based on the electronic data management system, providing its accessibility to students and academic staff. However, the absence of analysis about their accessibility, transparency, and comfortability declines confidentiality about their productivity. The mechanism for accessibility assurance of information about scholarships also needs to be revised. Considering also the factor that automatic computer systems are used in the TLI for checking students' knowledge, the management of information security system, and the provision of financial resources for purchasing licensed programs in the TLI need additional improvement.

There are some mechanisms in the TLI for providing individual and anti-fire safety system for students and academic staff, physical education clubs are created, however, health care services are not available yet. The TLI buildings are not adjusted for supporting the learning process of students with special needs, which influences the visional increase of such students' inclusion.

By conveying surveys about the sufficiency of the TLI resource assurance mainly within the scope of students and graduates, and by not making evaluations about their practicality and productivity, the further completion and constancy process of resource assurance becomes challenging.

SUMMARY: Considering that generally ASUE provides an educational environment essential for the implementation of academic programs, the resource base in its turn enables the implementation of academic programs, there are procedures for managing the process of information and documentation, services for sustaining academic environment assurance, health and security, expert panel finds that ASUE satisfies the requirements of CRITERION 7.

CONCLUSION: The expert panel assesses the correspondence of ASUE's institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 7 *satisfactory*.

VIII. SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY

CRITERION: The TLI is accountable to the government and society for the education it offers and the resources it uses as well as for the research it conducts.

FINDINGS

8.1 The TLI has clear policy on institutional accountability.

According to the University Regulation, the Rector presents a report annually. In addition to this, the Rector's Annual Reports are discussed with a wide number of stakeholders, and published on the University website.

Besides the system of internal accountability, there are mechanisms of external institutional accountability inserted in the University.

In regard with the rights and restrictions, the University shall present reports to the authorized body and different state departments (State Committee of Science, State Revenue Committee, and Statistical Committee).

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

Transparency of the University activities is generally assured by the Department of Media and Public Relations via the University website, the "Economist" journal, and other means. The Department of Media and Public Relations has developed the project of "ASUE Information Management Processes", which states the policy of sharing information about the University, the policy of evaluating the productivity of information processing and improvement, and the procedure of ensuring transparency in the University activities.

The main tool for assuring the availability of procedures and processes is the University website.

8.3 The TLI has sustainable feedback mechanisms for establishing relations with society.

University website is the main means for the promulgating information about personal activities and contacts. Considering the tendencies developed in public, the University equally posts the entire information on social media, particularly, on the University Facebook page.

Website visits are visible on the website only by the number of views of each individual post.

It is unclear how the University learns about public interests for posting information. Besides that, the website is missing the feedback tab.

8.4 The TLI has mechanisms that ensure knowledge transfer to the society.

The Department of Continuing Education and Professional Development for the implementation of staff professional development and lecturers' qualification upgrade programs operates at the University. The department arranges additional academic services. Trainings are arranged not only for internal stakeholders but also for civil servants of the authorized government bodies.

CONSIDERATIONS

The main basis of ASUE institutional accountability is the Rector's Annual Report defined by the ASUE Regulation. This is verified by the contents of the 2011-2018 Reports presented by the University.

However, it must be noticed that reports are not always written in accordance with the SDP priorities and indicators. Those reports are published on the University website.

The Rector's Reports are presented to the Governing Board formed from external and internal stakeholders. Gyumri and Yeghegnadzor branches of the University are also in the framework of the institutional accountability.

The Department of Media and Public Relations is highly productive in terms of the accountability and transparency assurance. The department has developed and put into practice the "ASUE Information Management Processes" project, which gives an opportunity to broaden information exchange around the University, to improve the evaluation of information processing productivity, and to assure transparency of the University activities.

The University website lacks *feedback* mechanisms. It is carried out based on only the count of views for each post, and on Facebook - based on the number of likes. Surveys have not been conducted in the University for evaluating the information sharing rates referring to the accountability of the external stakeholders. Although the website is also available in English and Russian particularly for foreign stakeholders, these webpages are not periodically updated. Besides, they do not provide sufficient information, for instance, about the descriptors of the academic programs, curricula, etc.

The transfer of knowledge (values) takes place via the Department on Continuing Education and Professional Development, which provides a variety of educational services for professional development and qualifications upgrade.

SUMMARY: Data collected from the ASUE SAR and the site visit allow to notice that the implementation of the accountability and the policy of information is done on a satisfactory level. Nevertheless, attention must be paid to the setbacks stated in the section for this standard of the improvement activity program developed since the previous accreditation.

CONCLUSION: The expert panel assesses the correspondence of ASUE's institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 8 *satisfactory*.

IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

CRITERION: The TLI promotes experience exchange and enhancement through its sound external relations practices, thus promoting internationalization of the institution.

FINDINGS

9.1 The TLI promotes its external relations through sound policies and procedures aimed at creating an environment conducive to experience exchange and enhancement as well as internationalization.

Internationalisation is particularly emphasised in the University's Mission and Strategy. The Mission states that graduates are to be competitive on the international labour market. The 2012-2022 strategic plans list three objectives relating to internationalisation: international collaboration, performance internalization and internalization enhancement. The 2018-2023 plans are aimed at "expanding internationalisation" as the main objective in this field. Two goals are meant to be achieved as part of the plan: increased student and teaching staff mobility and larger participation in international programmes. Among other things, the 2018-2020 Action Plan envisages "establishing a subdivision for fundraising", "foundation for publications" in renown journals, and elective courses in English for graduate students. The year 2018 was supposed to witness "negotiations with other RA HEIs to offer joint academic programmes", however, their outcomes have not been presented so far.

Erasmus+ student and staff exchange is a driving force for internationalisation. There are Erasmus+ participation procedures in place that have been developed. Candidates are recruited from among the

best students and they have to sit an internal examination in a foreign language. Apart from mobility programmes, actual cooperation with foreign partners takes various forms, such as joint programmes, benchmarking and participation in research. There are attempts to recruit foreign students (mainly from India) interested in studying at ASUE. The information provided during the site visit reveals that students and staff returning from foreign universities share their experiences at meetings organised at the University. Information concerning the development of public relations is presented in the Rector's annual reports.

ASUE also develops cooperation with domestic partners, including companies, public sector entities and international organisations operating in Armenia (for example UNDP). SAR states that internal contact is encouraged at the lowest levels, meaning institutes (chairs) and employees. Among other things, in 2019 at least one course should be provided with the participation of an external specialist.

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

The Department of Foreign Relations (DFR) is responsible for the institutional implementation of the cooperation programme involving domestic and international environments. Its employees deal with such issues as international exchange, graduates, labour market research, lifelong education and training. Its tasks also include services provided to foreign students and visiting professors. Four DFR employees have undergone training at foreign universities. So far, no action plans for individual processes have been developed. The panel is aware that the first action plan is being prepared and that it will be presented at the end of the current academic year. There is no separate body at the level of the University which would deal with internationalisation issues.

The University is poorly equipped with advanced IT facilities and its library is out of date, thus ensuring no access to the latest teaching and scientific literature as well as domestic and international statistical databases. This fact does not help the development of international cooperation. The University has no adequate infrastructure to enable students and academic staff to participate regularly in online courses offered by foreign HEIs. Insufficient funding earmarked for internationalisation was an issue frequently raised at the meetings with the review team.

No formal platform has been developed so far - apart from bilateral agreements - to enable ASUE's cooperation with business. Contact with graduates is not satisfactorily developed. There is no regular graduate career tracking. Despite the creation of the Alumni Association and the first graduate database, neither of them is continued. Employers present at the meeting with the review team did not confirm the existence of surveys involving their group. In the opinion of ASUE representatives, the University's webpage is supposed to be one of the main tools used to collect external stakeholders' views and opinions. Its foreign language versions provide only basic information about the activity of ASUE.

9.3 The TLI promotes fruitful and effective collaboration with local and international counterparts.

There are a few forms in which cooperation with external partners is developed. First of all, ASUE has cooperation agreements with institutions and companies representing the public sector of the Republic of Armenia. ASUE employees prepare expert opinions at the request of domestic partners. The information provided to the review team reveals that cooperation with local partners is also developed in ASUE's branches. The Director of the Gyumri branch informed the review team about the creation of 3 joint focus groups (statistical information, analysis, conference). The Director of the Ehegnadzor branch of the University said that its strategic plan was consistent with the regional development plan. Secondly, the University closely cooperates with them when organising student work placements. However, cooperation involving the preparation of master theses commissioned by the business sector

is less obvious. Thirdly, representatives of business and public administration participate in the development of study programmes and - as lecturers - in their implementation. Fourthly, over the 2014-2019 period, several dozens of agreements and memoranda concerning cooperation with foreign HEIs and international organisations have been signed (for example with the UN Department of Public Information Office in Armenia). Apart from students and staff, University administration workers also participate in international exchange. However, representatives of foreign partner HEIs are not involved in university governance processes or in the work of academic advisory bodies.

An increase in student and staff exchange is a result of the development of international cooperation. In 2014-2019, 94 students and 111 staff members have gone abroad. ASUE has hosted 24 students and 66 visiting professors as well as administration workers. Foreign students are offered 26 courses provided in English. The provision of two study programmes together with foreign partners is ASUE's significant achievement. The provision of the first of them, entitled "Project Management", involves - apart from ASUE - the Polytechnic University of Valencia (UPV) and the National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia (NUACA). The other one - the Master's Degree Program in Business Administration (MBA) - is offered together with the Swiss UMEF University (Geneva). **Foreign experience is used in the process of developing and revising study programmes as well as improving IQA.** Among other things, all Bachelor's degree programmes have undergone the process of benchmarking. Moreover, the Chair of International Economic Relations can enjoy financial support offered by Jean Monnet Activities to launch three modules whose topics cover with UE issues. Foreign students can study Business Management in English. In the last 5 years, ASUE employees have participated in 14 projects implemented by foreign partners. Amberd ranks quite high as a think tank on index reports prepared by the University of Pennsylvania. SAR also lists 6 higher education institutions taken into consideration in the process of shaping policies and procedures concerning internationalisation and external contact.

9.4 The TLI ensures internal stakeholders' appropriate level of a foreign language to enhance productivity of internationalization.

SAR states that internal stakeholders are given an opportunity to participate in courses improving their command of English. It is a good command of English that is one of the recruitment criteria applicable to new employees. However, it is noteworthy that ASUE offers no opportunity to obtain international certificates confirming at least B2 English language skills. On the contrary, students participating in exchange are offered additional language examinations. Although ASUE representatives suggested that the University operated a policy encouraging the development of teaching staff's language competences, ASUE teachers did not confirm that. They said that providing classes in English involved no additional remuneration.

CONSIDERATIONS:

The University is more active than before when it comes to developing cooperation with national and foreign partners. This is evidenced by increased participation in mobility programmes and research projects and by a growing number of cooperation agreements signed not only with companies and institutions operating in the public sector of the Republic of Armenia but also with foreign universities and international organisations. The joint provision of education with foreign partners proves the development of internationalisation processes. It is a very good thing that the University wishes to apply its foreign experience to the development of study programmes, IQA and administration training.

However, ASUE has not developed a formalised policy serving the purpose of the development of public relations with domestic and international communities which is why its activities are not consistent. Therefore, despite the obvious progress that has been made since the most recent evaluation, the degree of internationalisation policy implementation is still modest. This mainly refers to small numbers of foreign students coming to study at ASUE. Those decreasing numbers from 8-9 in 2015-2016 to 2 per year in 2017-2018 are quite striking. It seems that there are three basic obstacles hindering the further development of internationalisation. The first one of them consists in legal restrictions. ASUE's Bachelor's degree programmes last 4 years, whereas in most EHEA countries only 3 years. Not all learning outcomes achieved abroad are recognised in Armenian HEIs. Only foreign students may participate in courses provided in English. The second obstacle boils down to students' and staff's poor command of English which was evident at the meeting with the review team. The University has made no significant progress in this field and the 2016 ANQA Report recommendation has therefore not been complied with. The third obstacle is caused by insufficient funds allocated to foreign exchange programmes. It is also worth emphasising that the research projects that are listed in SAR concern cooperation in core economic disciplines, but only to a small extent. ASUE's poorly developed foreign language versions of its webpage do not serve the purpose of the University's promotion in the international education market nor do they attract foreign students. The 2014 ANQA report contained Recommendation 24 concerning the need for the development of information on the foreign language versions of the University's webpage. The Recommendation has not been implemented. Most importantly, there are no reliable analyses of the internationalisation policy. For example, the reasons why students' and staff's English skills are so poor are unknown.

The expert panel believes that promoting the university staff's participation in courses offered by foreign universities can support the development of external relations and internationalization.

The results of the cooperation with domestic and foreign partners will be more significant if the impact of collaboration on the educational process and research development, based on clear procedures is regularly examined.

SUMMARY: Taking into consideration that the University has a Department coordinating the strengthening of internationalization and external relations, international cooperation programs have been actively implemented for recent years, joint academic programs have been introduced together with other local and international institutions, most of the strategic goals related to internationalization are properly implemented, internationalization is not only being expanded but also strengthened, the expert panel concludes that ASUE meets the requirements of Criterion 9.

CONCLUSION. The correspondence of TLI's institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 9 is *satisfactory*.

X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

CRITERION: The TLI has an internal quality assurance system for promoting establishment of a quality culture and continuous improvement of all the processes of TLI.

FINDINGS

10.1 The TLI has internal quality assurance policies and procedures.

The presentation of QAP and a description of IQA are contained in Chapter 2 of the ASUE Quality Assurance Guide (published in 2013), entitled "ASUE Internal Quality Concept". The Quality Assurance

Policy intends “to enhance the educational, research and efficiency of managerial processes of the university”. “Continuous quality enhancement” is fundamental to QAP. Quality assurance issues are reflected in ASUE’s Mission, Strategy and Action Plans. The Mission states that “ASUE considers it vital to reinforce the culture of internal quality assurance”. The current Strategic Plan, however, narrows this issue down to two objectives: academic programmes quality improvement and enhancing operational improvement. It became obvious during the visit that the actual activities undertaken in the area of quality assurance focussed on study programmes and the provision of teaching.

Before 2018, IQA was based on a multilevel structure encompassing such units as ASUE’s Board of Quality Assurance, Faculty Committees of Quality Assurance, Working Group of Quality Assurance and the Quality Assurance Division. Certain basic processes and procedures had been identified and formulated. In the opinion of the Head of the QAD, the system was too regulated and internal communication was deficient. Attention was focussed mainly on documentation. That is why - as SAR states - a “decentralized model of quality culture” was introduced in 2018. In the new system, procedures are to be less important while the key role will be played by quality assurance expert groups. The spreading and strengthening of quality culture is supposed to lead to the development of IQA. QA processes are to follow the PDCA cycle. The experience of 6 foreign HEIs was used to introduce those changes to the quality assurance system.

However, no description of the new system has been offered yet and the objectives of QAP have not been redefined. There is no full information as to which procedures have been cancelled or reviewed and which have been redeveloped. Neither documentation nor interviews held as part of the visit explain how the academic community understand quality culture, how much progress has been made concerning its development and how it is linked to the new IQA policy. It is not clear, either, how the current organisational units support the implementation of QAP strategic objectives. According to the 2018-2023 Action Plan, the main task of those groups is to review academic programmes and processes of internal coordination. The first analyses of ASUE’s study programmes have been undertaken in the current year. In the new system, QAD intended to coordinate the work of quality assurance experts is directly subordinated to the Rector. It is not known, however, how this coordination is to occur as QAD has not even developed an annual Action Plan. The QAD Statutes were revised in 2016, and the scopes of activity it describes do not seem to be fully adapted to the requirements of the new and decentralised IQA system.

10.2 The TLI allocates sufficient time, material, human and financial resources to manage internal quality assurance processes.

QAD provides teaching and organisational support to the implementation of IQA. It offers 5 posts out of which 3 (and in fact 2 as according to the information that was obtained by the review team one person left during out site visit) are manned. ASUE’s branch in Gyumri quality assurance tasks are performed by an accountant and in Yourgamann - by an employee who is also involved in education. SAR says that apart from their statutory duties QAD employees are also involved in the implementation of international projects.

Quality experts are recruited from among ASUE workers and students on the basis of competition and their work is remunerated. So far 16 expert groups have been appointed. The coordination of those expert groups is a responsibility of QAD and one vice-rector. Annual expert turnover may cause some doubts. Moreover, SAR says that temporary expert groups may be established to perform tasks imposed by the Governing Board.

Poorly developed facilities, especially IT infrastructure, do not favour the implementation of ambitious QA tasks, mainly such as information collecting and processing. The activity of QAD is funded by ASUE's budget and international programmes. The subordination of QAD to the Rector could mean that its activity is financed to a sufficient degree to perform its statutory tasks. However, it is clear from the interviews we held that it is difficult to obtain additional funds to finance new tasks. As early as in 2014, ANQA experts said that it was necessary to allocate more funds to QAD (Recommendation 43).

10.3 The internal and external stakeholders are involved in quality assurance processes.

QA processes involve mainly external stakeholders, students, academic teachers and administration workers at departments implementing QA tasks. Students participate in the work of collective academic bodies, they can apply for the post of quality assurance expert and they also express their views in questionnaires. The questionnaires mainly focus on the teaching process and not on all areas of university activity. Student feedback is based on surveys, however, no evaluation of the reliability of this source has been performed and student views are not confronted with those of their teachers. Some students question the anonymity of surveys and the fact itself that they are administered. It is worth emphasising that academic teachers and professional staff have no opportunity to express their collective interests in surveys. Cooperation between students and teachers is largely based on informal and direct contact, and - to a lesser extent - on procedures. This refers to situations where complaints are lodged directly to representatives of ASUE's authorities.

External stakeholders are formally and directly involved in designing and modernising study programmes and they are members of final examination boards and the Governing Board. However, no participation of external stakeholders is envisaged in analyses of IQA functioning. The remaining external stakeholders, including the general public, may contact ASUE through its webpage. Cooperation with ASUE graduates has been neglected. No foreign experts are invited to work within QA structures.

There is no regular and comprehensive evaluation of stakeholder participation in QA processes which is contrary to the recommendations contained in the 2014 Report.

10.4 The internal quality assurance system is periodically reviewed.

SAR offers no evidence of IQA monitoring and periodical evaluation. The review team was not shown the results of the previous IQA system evaluation and the system that is currently in operation has not been evaluated yet. There is no methodology and procedures for a comprehensive evaluation of the IQA system. No KPIs have been defined which could serve the purpose of a more professional assessment of the achievement of QAP objectives. Certain elements of evaluation, mainly those referring to academic programmes, are contained in QAD annual reports submitted to the Rector and in reports issued by quality assurance experts. The 2018 QAD report says: ... among other things, QA experts analyse the participation of stakeholders in the development of study programmes, consistency between ILO and AP objectives, teaching and assessment methods.

Therefore, the PDCA cycle is not fully closed. There are no procedures imposing the cyclical nature of internal assessment, IQA audit relating it to external audits.

10.5 The internal quality assurance system provides valid and sufficient background for the success of the external quality assurance processes.

There is no full presentation of the new IQA system, including its processes and procedures and no comprehensive evaluation of IQA effectiveness in relation to ASUE's core activities. This, in itself, makes it difficult for external reviewers to offer a reliable evaluation of the quality assurance policy. In this

situation, ASUE's self-assessment presented in SAR is the main source of information. ASUE's presentation in this report is incomplete and requires incorporating information collected during the site visit. Therefore, the informative value and analytical quality of SAR is rather poor as it quotes information that is out of date (for example about ASUE's access to the EBSCO database) or not fully adequate to a specific standard (for example standard 10.4), insufficient care was taken when presenting information (for example the table documenting students' and teaching staff's English language skills was not completed, see page 77) and certain opinions were formulated on unknown grounds. The information that was provided in SAR and during the site visit was not always confirmed. For example, the Heads of the Institutes of Macro- and Microeconomics listed English language textbooks used during intermediate and advanced courses and said that students were equipped with those books to a sufficient degree, however, it was impossible to find those items in ASUE's library. Therefore, it has to be concluded that the self-assessment process requires significant improvement, despite a large number of internal stakeholders and a large purpose-specific team involved in the preparation of SAR.

In 2014 ASUE underwent just one external evaluation performed by ANQA and - which is slightly surprising - no other evaluations offered by international organisations accrediting study programmes relating to Economics have been applied for so far. Although there is no formal follow-up procedure, the implementation of ANQA experts' recommendations is presented in a follow-up plan. Not all of those recommendations are implemented and no reasons for this are provided. In fact, SAR basically offers a description of the system existing before 2018. Also documents such as the QAP Manual come from that period.

10.6 The internal quality assurance system ensures the transparency of the processes unfolding in the TLI through providing information on the quality of the processes to the internal and external stakeholders.

A large part of IQA-related documentation is published. Among other things, QAD publishes its reports. It is noteworthy that SAR is posted on ASUE's webpage and disseminated among the University's academic community. Part of the documentation mentioned is not very professional, for example some reports issued by quality assurance experts do not contain the titles of courses undergoing evaluation, experts' names or their signatures.

Despite the declarations that are contained in the Quality Manual, no evaluation of the reliability of tools used to collect information and views takes place. This mainly refers to student surveys and the effectiveness of the information policy. Information provided by students, teachers and deans shows that students are familiar with the results of their lecturers' evaluation, but their suggestions are not discussed with their teachers. Therefore, it is difficult to formulate recommendations to improve the teaching/learning process even at course level. No regular analysis of the effectiveness of the information policy among external stakeholders is conducted. At the meeting with the review team, participants did not frequently know basic solutions contained in IQA or quoted conflicting information. This may point towards insufficient communication between the management and internal stakeholders.

CONSIDERATIONS: Over the last five years, IQA has undergone certain changes. Looking at the issue from the perspective of building quality culture and continuous improvement it has to be said that the strengthening of the lowest IQA levels by establishing QA expert groups with the participation of students is a very commendable thing. These groups are responsible for education quality monitoring at academic programme level. The academic community's understanding of quality culture and quality enhancement is relatively poor which is why ASUE's move towards the decentralisation of IQA should

be treated with caution. It is difficult to evaluate its effectiveness as the current structure is not clearly presented in SAR, nor was it clarified at the meeting with ANQA experts.

The system currently implemented does not encompass all strategic objectives and academic processes. It is mainly focussed on study programmes and - partly - on learning and teaching. It is in this area that certain links between quality improvement and quality assurance procedures can be seen. However, in relation to study programmes not all phases of the PDCA cycle are developed to the same degree. There are evident weaknesses in the last two phases of key importance to quality enhancement, that is Checking and Acting. The quality of Master's theses is not analysed although the academic standard of some of them gives rise to certain doubts (one of them quotes just one item of literature).

Generally speaking, student feedback concerning their learning experience is based on surveys but there is no reliable evaluation of this tool. There is no evaluation of employer influence on changes made to study programmes and on the process of learning and teaching. Graduates' views on study programmes and employability are not taken into account, either. It is the University's ambition to include research and University governance into the IQA system. However, no procedures or criteria have been developed to assess the quality of operations in these fields, the same is just as true for internationalisation.

The organisational structure supporting IQA is not clear. As the review team obtained inconsistent information, it is difficult to get a clear picture of how the Vice-rector and QAD coordinate the work of expert groups, what role is to be played by deans and institutes in the development of quality assurance and how tasks are divided between QAD and other University units. There is evidence to say that QAD does not analyse - for example - survey results, it is the Education Department that performs certain tasks in this field. QAD representatives say that there are ongoing discussions between quality experts and institutes. However, at the meeting with the panel it was confirmed that quality issues should be better understood and communication within the system should be more effective. The frequent replacements of the Rector and those occurring at ASUE's lower management levels are responsible for no continuity in the implementation of the quality policy and even for IQA understanding among the University's management. It seems that this insufficient awareness of IQA results in the fact that QAD has no strong support provided to its activity. It is given more and more tasks while its funding remains unchanged. QAD human resources are diminishing. If this situation is tolerated, the implementation of IQA may start occurring in an uncontrolled way. In particular, there may be a risk of making decisions not based on reliable analyses of IQA results. It is also necessary to develop a new approach and methodology in respect of collecting, processing and analysing information which should go beyond the main source of information - currently students' views expressed in survey questionnaires.

It would be premature to demand an evaluation of the IQA system introduced in 2018 but the preparation of methodological tools and procedures to be applied to its holistic evaluation could be expected. So far, no methodology evaluating IQA effectiveness has been proposed. Quite a number of groups met by the review team were unable to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the current system and formulate any ways of improving the situation. Therefore, it is necessary to talk to internal and external stakeholders, which would hopefully result in a more effective implementation of activities expanding all areas of ASUE's activity.

SUMMARY: Taking into consideration that IQA system is experiencing a number of changes, and its structures are not sufficiently clarified, the PDCA cycle of QA is not sufficiently developed, the QA Department is not properly supported by the University management, ASUE external stakeholders do

not partake in QA processes, quality culture is neither developed nor widespread at the University, QA system is not periodically evaluated and improved, the expert panel concludes that IQA system is not promoting establishment of a quality culture and continuous improvement of all the processes of TLI.

CONCLUSION: The correspondence of TLI's institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 10 is *unsatisfactory*.

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

<i>CRITERION</i>	<i>CONCLUSION</i>
<i>I. MISSION AND PURPOSE</i>	Satisfactory
<i>II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION</i>	Unsatisfactory
<i>III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES</i>	Satisfactory
<i>IV. STUDENTS</i>	Satisfactory
<i>V. FACULTY AND STAFF</i>	Unsatisfactory
<i>VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT</i>	Unsatisfactory
<i>VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES.</i>	Satisfactory
<i>VIII. SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY</i>	Satisfactory
<i>IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION</i>	Satisfactory
<i>X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE</i>	Unsatisfactory

Mariam Momjyan
Chair of Panel

29 November 2019

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. CVs OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

1. **Mariam Momjyan** graduated from Yerevan State Institute of Economics (now Armenian State University of Economics) with a major in Business Economics and Management, Faculty of General Economics, in 2004. Ms. Momjyan has been a PhD student at ASUE Chair of Microeconomics and Entrepreneurship for 2004-2008 period. She received an Academic degree of a Candidate of Economic Sciences by defending her dissertation on “Problems of Introducing the E-Commerce into the Field of Organizing Entrepreneurial Activities (by RA example)” in 2008, and she received an Academic Title of Associate Professor in 2012. Miss Momjyan has been the Head of Tariff Division of the Tariff Policy Department of the RA Public Services Regulatory Committee for 2006-2018, later she became the Primary Specialist and has been the Deputy Head of the same department since May, 2018. She has been teaching in ASUE for 2009-2013, since 2013 she has been teaching at Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University. Miss Momjyan has participated in over 2 dozen national and international courses, is an author and co-author of more than twenty articles and 4 methodological manuals. She is a member of the gas working group of the EU Energy Community Regulatory Board.
2. **Gurgen Hovhannisyan** is a specialist in Geography. He became a Candidate of Geographical Sciences in 2006, “The Problem of the Content of School Geography in the RA”, and received an Academic Title of Associate Professor in 2007. The research covers the fields of education, educational management. During his career he has occupied the following positions: from 2006 up to now - Head of BA Division of YSU Educational-Methodological Department, Scientific Secretary of the 005 Professional Council of Geography, Deputy Executive Secretary of YSU Admission Committee, Secretary of the Council of YSU Geography Faculty, Deputy Dean of YSU Geography Faculty, Lecturer of Diaspora Armenian teachers’ training courses, Executive of cultural programs, leading Specialist in Human Resources in the Ministry on Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia, Scientific worker, Secretary at the Pedagogical Research Institute, Head of the Admissions Committee of the subject “Geography” of YSU distance learning, Head of the Committee of the subject “Geography” of the state phase of the school olympiad, Geography teacher. The areas of published articles are geography, content of school geography, structure, knowledge testing, methodology. He is a member of the Armenian Geographical Society. Mr. Hovhannisyan has passed ANQA trainings, has participated in institutional accreditation processes as a member of an expert panel and a team leader.
3. **Vahagn Grigoryan** has graduated from the Faculty of Management, Yerevan State Institute of Economics (now Armenian State University of Economics), receiving the qualification of Economist-Manager. He has received an Academic degree of a Candidate of Economic Sciences in 2005. He has graduated from the school of International and Public Affairs of Columbia University, USA, within the 2011-2012 period, Mr. Grigoryan has received his MA Degree in State Administration. For 2003-2010 he lectured at the Chair of Economics in Gladzor University, Yerevan, and in the Chair of International Economics of ASUE within the 2013-2014 period. He has been working at the Monetary

Policy Department of the Central Bank of Armenia since 2000, first in the Foreign Economic Relations Department as a Macroeconomist, then as the Head of the Department and as the Head of Monetary Policy Department since 2014.

4. **Mstislav Socha** graduated from the University of Lodz (Poland) in 1969 receiving an MA degree in Economics, completing his PhD at Warsaw University of Economics in 1974. Mr. Socha became a Doctor of Science at the University of Warsaw in 2000. He is currently teaching at the University of Warsaw, at the Leon Kozminski Academy, at the Northern State University, at the European College, at the School of State Administration. He has been a member of the Advisory Board of the Polish Accreditation Committee since 2014 and since 2017 has been a member of the International Advisory Board of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee. Mr. Socha has been an expert in the Polish Accreditation Committee for higher education since 2002 and a member of the Financial Committee of the European Consortium Accreditation (ECA) of higher education since 2014. He has participated in numerous research programs, national and international courses and conferences. Socha is an author and co-author of over 120 scientific papers (books and articles) and more than 40 conference reports published in a number of local and foreign magazines.
5. **Nensi Mkrtchyan** is a 4th year student at the Faculty of Marketing in French University Foundation of Armenia. An Executive of UFAR Student Enterprise LLC, marketing and communication since August, 2018. A Coordinator of national database of student-experts of Student National Association of Armenia since August 2018.

APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF THE SITE VISIT

07–12.10.2019

	07.10.2019^{p.}	<i>Start</i>	<i>Finish</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting ASUE Rector	9:30	10:15	45 minutes
2	Meeting Vice-Rectors	10:25	11:10	45 minutes
3	Meeting SAR working-group	11:20	12:05	45 minutes
4	Meeting with the Director of the External Relations Department, Financial Director, the Director of the Department of Administrative and Economic Affairs	12:15	13:00	45 minutes
5	Break, panel discussions	13:10	14:20	60 minutes
6	Meeting faculty deans	14:30	15:30	60 minutes
7	Meeting the representatives of the Governing Board	15:40	16:25	45 minutes
8	Document review Closed panel meeting	16:35	18:00	85 minutes

	08.10.2019	<i>Start</i>	<i>Finish</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting with the representatives of Division of Organization of Education Process	9:30	10:15	45 minutes
2	Meeting with Chair head, including those of three APs	10:25	11:25	60 minutes
3	Meeting with teaching staff representatives (10-12 people)	11:35	12:35	60 minutes
4	Break, panel discusiones	12:45	13:45	60 minutes
5	Meeting with the ASUE employers (10-12 people)	13:55	14:55	60 minutes
6	Meeting with ASUE graduates (10-12 people)	15:00	16:00	60 minutes
7	Document review Closed panel meeting	16:00	18:00	120 minutes

	09.10.2019	<i>Start</i>	<i>Finish</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting with the director of ASUE Gyumri Branch	09:30	10:15	45 minutes
2	Meeting with heads of administrative and educational units	10:25	11:10	45 minutes
3	Meeting with teaching staff representatives (10-12 people)	11:20	12:25	45 minutes
4	Meeting with student representatives (bachelor, master, part-time, full-time) (10-12 people)	12:35	13:20	45 minutes
5	Break, panel discusiones	13:30	14:30	60 minutes
6	Meeting with the director of ASUE Ehegnadzor Branch	14:40	15:25	45 minutes
7	Meeting with heads of administrative and educational units	15:35	16:25	45 minutes
8	Meeting with teaching staff representatives (10-12 people)	16:35	17:20	45 minutes
9	Meeting with student representatives (bachelor, master, part-time, full-time) (10-12 people)	17:30	18:15	45 minutes
10	Document review Closed panel meeting	18:20	19:00	40 minutes

	10.10.2019	<i>Start</i>	<i>Finish</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting with Student Council, and Student scientific Council representatives (10-12 people)	9:30	10:15	45 minutes
2	Meeting bachelor student representatives /full time, part time/ (10-12 people)	10:25	11:25	60 minutes
3	Meeting with master student representatives /full time, part time/ (10-12 people)	11:35	12:35	60 minutes
4	Break, panel discusiones	12:45	13:45	60minutes
5	Meeting with international student representatives /full time, part time/ (10-12 people)	13:55	14:25	30 minutes
6	Site-visit to deans' offices and chairs, document review	14:35	16:35	120 minutes
7	Document review Closed panel meeting	16:45	18:45	120 minutes

	11.10.2019	<i>Start</i>	<i>Finish</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting IQA represntatives	09:30	10:30	60 minutes
2	Revision of the resources (classrooms, laboratories, computer cloassrooms, cabinets, library, gym, aid station, buffet, etc.)	10:40	12:40	120 minutes
3	Break, panel discusiones	12:50	13:50	60 minutes
4	Open meetings	14:00	14:40	40 minutes
	Meeting with representatives of Amberd Research Center			40 minutes
5	Meeting in Subdivisions (Research Division, International Relations Division, Labor Market and Alumni Division, Continuing Education Training	14:50	15:50	80 minutes

	Division, Human Resources Division, Media and Public Relations Division)			
6	Document review Closed panel meeting	16:00	18:00	120 minutes

	12.10.2019p.	<i>Start</i>	<i>Finish</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting the staff chosen by the expert panel	9:30	10:30	60 minutes
2	Document review Closed panel meeting	10:40	12:40	120 minutes
3	Break, panel discusiones	12:50	13:50	60 minutes
4	Document review Closed panel meeting	14:00	16:00	120 minutes
5	Meeting with the ASUE management team	16:10	16:40	30 minutes

APPENDIX 3. LIST OF ASUE DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

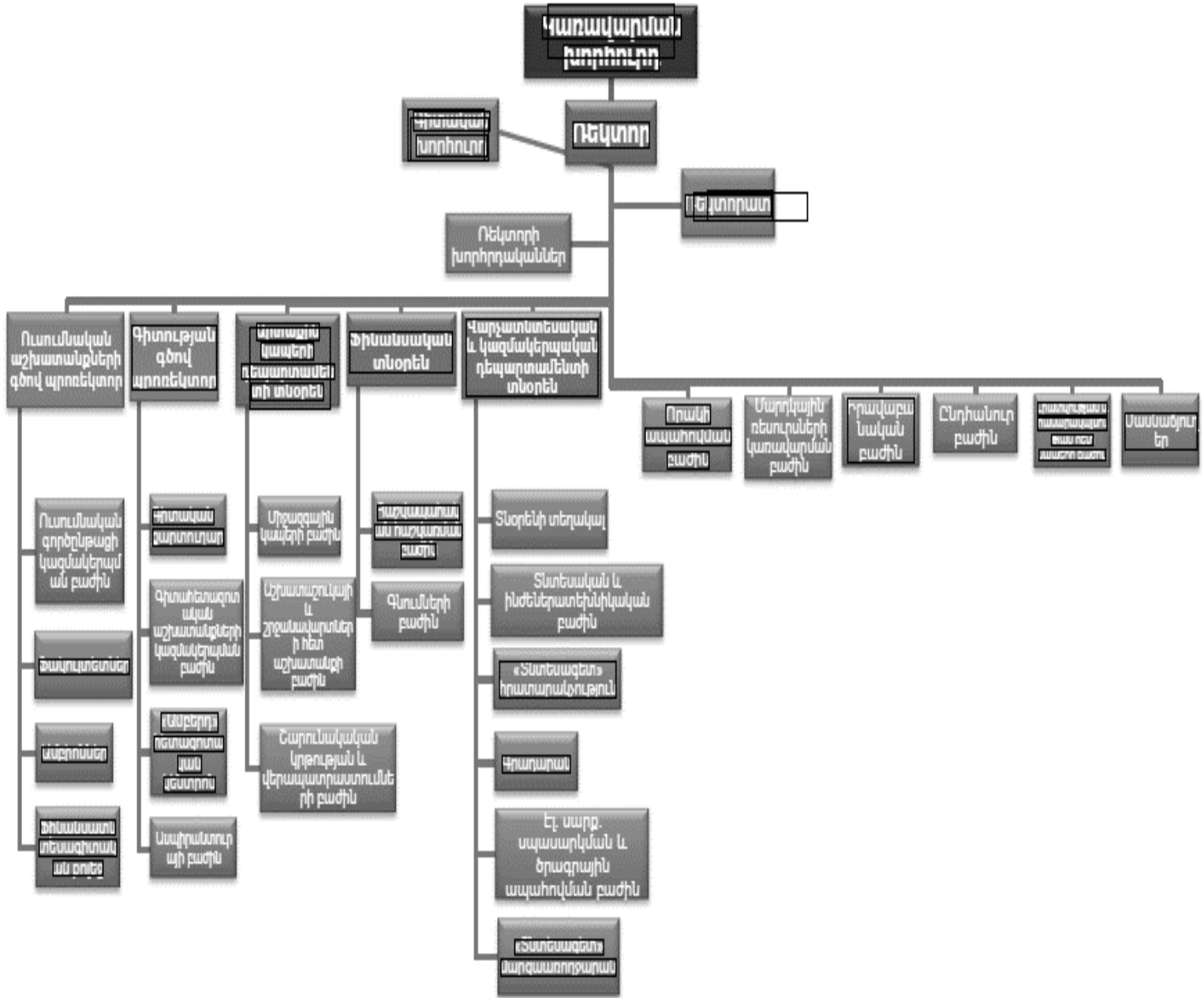
N	Name of the Document	Criterion/ Standard
1.	Analysis of ASUE Former Strategic Program Implementation	1.1
2.	Analysis of the Impact of External and Internal Factors on University Management	2.4
3.	Efficiency Assessment Results of Midterm Programs /of the TLI / of the Departments/ Annual Plans of Chairs / Faculties	2
4.	Position Passports /Heads of Chairs, ES Staff/	2
5.	Analysis of anagement Quality ENsurance Cycle /PDCA Cycle/	2.5
6.	Passports/ Descriptions and/or Annual Plans/ of the Chairs, 3 academic programs of which have been submitted	5
7.	Timetable and Plans on Academic Staff Trainings	5.4
8.	Benchmarking Policy, Requirements of Developing MA Academic Programs	3
9.	Lists of Graduation Paper Topics /for the last 4 years/	3
10	Curricula	3
11.	Analysis of AP Assessment Results	3.2
12.	Samples of MA and BA Graduation Papers	3.5
13.	Internship Registers	3
14.	Questionnaires on Evaluating the Efficiency of Training Courses	3
15.	Protocols of Graduation Thesis Defense Committees /Full-Time and Correspondence Education/	3
16.	Statistics/Analysis on Employment of 3 APs	4.5
17..	Numerical Data on Staff for each AP	5.2
18.	Number of Young Lecturers	5.5
19.	Average Age of the Academic Staff	5.5
20.	Lecturer-Student Ratio /for the last 4 years/	5
21.	Samples of Lecturer Annual Workload7	5
22.	Course Guides of Courses Delivered in Foreign Languages	9.4
23.	Documents on ASUE Student Mobility/Incoming, Outgoing/, /Local, International /	9
24.	Documents on ASUE Lecturer Mobility/Incoming, Outgoing/, /Local, International /	9
25.	Analysis of Surveys Among Students, Lectureres, Employers	10
26	Registers	3
27	Labor Market Trends in Armenia	3
28	Protocols of Science Council Meetings, March 7	2
29	Samples of Experiment Diaries and Programs	3
30	Curriculum of Accounting and Taxation	3
31	Graduation Paper Topics for Part-Time 5 th year BA Students /Chair of Financial Accounting/	3

32	Conclusions of Expert Panel	10
33	BA Management Academic Program	3
34	Expert Panel's Conclusion /Marketology, Marketing/	10
35	Recotr's Orders	2
36	Academic Staff's Position Passports	5
37	Academic Programs of Theory of Economics, Macroeconomics, Microeconomics Basic Specialties	3

APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED

1. Classrooms
2. Departments
3. Deans Offices
4. Chairs
5. “Smberd” Research Center
6. IT Center
7. Subdivisions
8. Gym, Shooting Ground
9. Library
10. Reading Hall
11. First Aid Center
12. Hall
13. Class Observations

APPENDIX 5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION



APPENDIX 5. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. EHEA- European Higher Education Area
2. QAD – Quality Assurance Department
3. AC – Academic Program
4. TLI – Tertiary Level Institution
5. IQA – Internal Quality Assurance
6. QA – Quality Assurance
7. ANQA -National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation
8. ESG – European Standards and Guidelines
9. NQF - National Qualifications Framework
10. AS – Academic Staff
11. PDCA - plan, do, check, apply
12. SAR – Self-Assessment Report
13. SP – Strategic Plan
14. QAP – Quality Assurance Plan
15. IT – Information Technologies
16. SC – Student Council
17. SSA – Student Scientific Association
18. KAI – Key Assessment Indicators
19. SWOT - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
20. KPI - Key Performance Indicators