

NATIONAL CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE, FOUNDATION



National Center For Professional
Education Quality Assurance
Foundation

EXPERT PANEL REPORT
ON INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC EDUCATIONAL CENTER OF RA NATIONAL ACADEMY OF
SCIENCES

Yerevan – 2016

INTRODUCTION

Institutional Accreditation of International Scientific Educational Center of RA National Academy of Sciences (hereinafter referred to as the Center or ISEC of NAS RA) is carried out with the initiative of the Center based on the application. The process of institutional accreditation is organized and coordinated by the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA). ANQA is 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 requirements of ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel. The expert panel consisted of 4 local experts and 1 international expert.

Institutional accreditation aims not only to the external evaluation of quality assurance but also to the continuous improvement of the institution’s management and quality of educational programs. Hence, there were two important issues for the 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 university’s quality and for its integration to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The report includes the results of the evaluation of the Center’s institutional according to the state criteria and standards for accreditation as well as the results of peer review by the international expert from the perspective of being integrated into EHEA.

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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 Panel¹. The evaluation was carried out according to the 10 criteria set by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N 959-Ն decree.

While carrying out the evaluation the expert panel took into consideration that International Scientific Educational Center of RA National Academy of Sciences is an educational scientific and cultural institution having national and regional role and its mission is “to promote social economic development of the country and integration into international educational area, to ensure quality and competitive education fostering continuous development of an individual as well as smooth and interconnected transition from education to science”.

The Center has not undergone accreditation according to the previous standards and regulation of accreditation. In this current process of accreditation the Center is participating based on its own application.

The Center provides 26 MA programs 23 of which are in full time and 11 in part-time modes of study. The academic programs are structured based on the credit system and according to the state educational standards. They were reviewed in 2014 by adapting academic programs of a number of leading countries with the technical and human resources of the Center and the programs are aimed at preparing specialists with definite scientific educational directions.

The Center has an experience of implementing academic programs in foreign language however currently it does not have any such program neither joint programs with other institutions or double diploma awarding programs. The programs linked with industry are limited. The expert panel is positive about the fact that the Center implements a number of interdisciplinary MA programs however the panel has noticed problems in defining learning outcomes for both the academic programs and separate courses.

The Center is provided with teaching staff with high research skills which is formed on the basis of RA NAS staff on a contractual base. Qualitative criteria for the selection of the teaching staff and procedures on the selection are not applied. Evaluation of the teaching staff is carried out through student surveys, class observations and attestation and the trainings are organized according to the possibilities of the Center. The teaching staff has participated in trainings on the quality assurance in higher education system, and the involvement of the teachers in the leading scientific research project of the institutions of RA NAS ensures their professional development in practice.

Stabilization and rejuvenation of the teaching staff is carried out through the involvement of PhD students in the teaching process.

Current classroom, laboratory and library resources and teaching staff of the Center and the Institutes of RA NAS create and effective learning environment and foster the formulation of the main outcomes of the programs. Financial revenues are formed from the state funding, students' tuition fees, extra budgetary funds as well as scientific research and grant projects. Financial support for the modernization of technical equipment and for the implementation of research component of academic programs is provided by the Institutions of RA NAS and the Center provides resources for the organization of education process and for paying the salaries of the teaching staff. Currently sufficient resources for the stable implementation of the academic programs are under the disposal of the Center.

The operating mechanisms of student recruitment and admission give the Center an opportunity of ensuring stable number of students during the recent years. The number of dismissed students which does not diminish for years is troublesome. It shows that steps taken by the Center in this respect do not serve their purpose. Education processes in the Center are organized in the

¹Appendix 1. CVs of expert panel members

academic environment- with small groups and directly involving students in research activities which fosters students centered learning and the acquisition of learning outcomes. The expert panel gives importance to the fact that according to the students teaching staff and supervisors of the thesis papers are always available for them.

Students become aware of the assessment system through the academic program guidebooks and the availability of mechanisms of assessment appeal and preventing plagiarism promote academic honesty, transparency of assessment process and impartiality.

Expert panel finds it problematic that the assessment methods for practical and laboratory works, internship, participation in the seminars, group and individual works are not clarified in the assessment system.

Interests and ambitions of the Center in research sphere are limited in short-term and long-term projects which are carried out by the staff members of professional chairs in the Institutes of RA NAS within the frames of the topics implemented by the institutes. However taking into account the fact that scientific component should be one of the main directions of research university, the Center should officially define its own primary goals and objectives in research sphere. Operating in the leading research environment of RA NAS the students of the Center have a unique opportunity of effectively combining research and learning.

The management of the Center gives much importance to international cooperation considering the internationalization of research outcomes and integration into EHEA as a primary goal. Without having policy promoting external relations the Center carried out some activities towards internationalization and expansion of external relations. However the Center does not operate effectively in terms of using the external relations of RA NAS and its Institutions for the development and fulfillment of the component of internationalization of the mission. The Department of International Relations does not have necessary professionals and does not carry out regulated procedures and the signed international or local cooperation agreements do not operate effectively. Proficiency in a foreign language, the attractiveness of the current academic programs as well as the activities carried out by the Center are not yet sufficient to enhance the mobility of the teaching staff and students and their participation in international exchange programs.

Management system of the Center is not a traditional one for the educational institutions providing academic programs in higher education. The management of the Center is carried out by RA NAS which is considered to be the founder of the Center, by the executive body- the Director and the Scientific Council of the Center. The Director and the composition of the Scientific Council are approved by the Presidium of RA NAS which can have its influence on the autonomy of the Center's activities. The current procedures on the formation of governing bodies give an opportunity to the teaching staff and students to participate in the decision making processes. The structure, regulations and job descriptions need to be coherent and need to clarify the scope of duties and authorities of the managers of relevant fields of activities².

In RA educational sphere the Center places itself as a model of research university however it does not have a structural unit or person responsible for science. The current structure and management system need to be adjusted to the solution of strategic objectives, as well as to the clarification of the chain of subordination between the higher and lower bodies.

The impact of essential external factors is studied by the Center, necessary information is gathered about the results of implementation of academic programs and other processes. The principle of total quality management while carrying out administration of the processes is in the process of investment³.

The grant "Education Quality and Relevance" provided by the World Bank was an external driver for the establishment of QA department, development of documents and implementation of activities at the International Scientific Center of RA NAS. The Center emphasizes the strategic plan for the continuous improvement of education quality which is reflected in the goals and objectives of the reviewed strategic plan.

QA system of the Center is currently in the phase of development and does not fully carry out its functions. The system does not yet have necessary mechanisms and does not gather sufficient data

²The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions got from the Institution.

³The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions got from the Institution.

for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the academic programs and provided other services to ensure accountability about their quality.

The main QA documents of the Center are summarized in QA manual where QA structure and the allocation of functions among different levels of management and structural units are presented. However QA procedures by which the staff of the Center should be guided while carrying out QA processes as well as the main mechanisms for ensuring the participation of stakeholders in the main processes are not developed yet. The documents concerning QA system are available to the stakeholders through the QA manual placed in the web-site however the responsible staff is not fully aware of their duties⁴.

STRENGTHS OF THE INSTITUTION

- 1) Improved strategic plan with defined goals and action plan.
- 2) Close link with RA National Academy of Science which gives an opportunity to use technical and material resources of research institutions of RA NAS.
- 3) MA as well as interdisciplinary academic programs focusing on the formulation of research skills among students.
- 4) Involvement of students and teaching staff in prioritized scientific research activities, opportunities of participating in conferences and publishing the results of research outcomes in journals.
- 5) Teaching staff with high professional skills.
- 6) Existence of classroom, laboratory, library, technical and other necessary conditions for the organization of education process and research.
- 7) Academic environment promoting students' and teaching staff's professional development
- 8) Aspiration of ensuring transparency and publicity of the activities through internet web site
- 9) Availability of QA manual and documental base for the implementation of QA regulated processes.

WEAKNESSES OF THE INSTITUTION

- 1) The inconsistency of the current management system with the implementation of the strategic objectives⁵.
- 2) The absence of defined ethical norms and passive involvement of internal stakeholders in the decision making processes.
- 3) The insufficiency of SWOT analysis and study of the effectiveness of management system, human, financial and material resources as well as influence of external factors⁶.
- 4) Lack of academic programs in foreign language, joint and double diploma awarding programs.
- 5) Absence of defined procedures and formats for the financial planning and accountability according to strategic priorities.
- 6) Absence of KPIs to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities of the Center. Fragmented information about the effectiveness of academic programs and other procedures⁷.
- 7) Lack of clearly set ambitions and interests in research field.
- 8) Absence of set direction or priorities and common policy on international cooperation, insufficient level of participation of teaching staff and students in international exchange projects, limited number of operating international and local cooperation agreements.
- 9) Absence of QA procedures which should be developed based on PDCA cycle for the main processes, low level of awareness of QA responsible about their duties, passive participation of internal and external stakeholders in QA main processes.
- 10) Lack of professional human resources in QA center and the Department of International Relations.

⁴The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions got from the Institution.

⁵The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions got from the Institution.

⁶The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions got from the Institution.

⁷The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions got from the Institution.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Mission and Goals

- 1) To develop mechanisms and procedures for the evaluation and improvement of results of the implementation of mission and goals.
- 2) To develop a set of qualitative and quantitative indicators for the evaluation of factual implementation of strategic goals and objectives.
- 3) To make the participation of the stakeholders (especially alumni) more active in the processes of the development of mission, goals and objectives of the Center, their implementation, evaluation and improvement.
- 4) To develop own qualifications framework for the professions provided by the Center.

Governance and Administration

- 5) To analyze and evaluate the consistency of the Center's structure with the strategic goals and the effectiveness of the management system.
- 6) To clarify the responsibilities of all the structural units, to introduce the system of job descriptions.
- 7) Through the clarification of functions of the top management, to provide human resources in order to coordinate the scientific-educational activities of the Center as well as research component in the academic programs.
- 8) To develop ethical norms for management.
- 9) To ensure the broader and more functional participation of teachers and students in the decision making processes.
- 10) To develop policy and procedures on the evaluation and revision of strategic plan and the plans of the Center, to carry out monitoring and evaluation of the strategic plan.
- 11) To review the administration of the Center by introducing the principle of PDCA cycle in all processes.
- 12) To develop KPIs for the evaluation of the impact of external factors and the activities of the Center. According to the indicators, carry out annual evaluations and analyses.
- 13) To clarify the gathered information necessary for the analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of academic programs and the management of other processes carried out by the Center, to develop QA necessary mechanisms.

Academic Programs

- 14) To develop policy and procedures on carrying out benchmarking of academic programs and other processes in order to fully apply the international leading practice for making the academic programs of the Center comparable with similar programs provided by foreign universities.
- 15) To clarify the learning outcomes of the academic programs based on the results of benchmarking and the needs assessment of internal and external stakeholders, to ensure the linkage of the learning outcomes and the content of the subjects taught with the mentioned results.
- 16) To improve current interdisciplinary MA programs and to promote the development of new programs. To introduce programs interlinked with industry and other research or educational institutions.
- 17) To develop policy and procedures on the selection, evaluation of the effectiveness and modernization of student-centered teaching, learning and assessment methods in line with learning outcomes
- 18) To clarify the mechanisms of needs assessment and analysis of internal and external stakeholders and labor market in the process of contextual and structural modernization of the academic programs.
- 19) To clarify the criteria for the assessment of thesis papers and learning outcomes mentioned in the assessment system and in course descriptions involving all modes of assessment of teaching and learning results (practical and laboratory activities, internship, participation in seminars, individual and group works, etc.).

- 20) To carry out all the processes mentioned in the regulation of academic program monitoring and regular review with the participation of internal and external stakeholders, to develop indicators for the evaluation of the effectiveness of academic program implementation and QA.

Students

- 21) To develop special policy and procedures on the students' educational needs assessment.
- 22) To improve the activities of career center ensuring their continuity and accountability to the external and internal stakeholders.
- 23) To develop mechanisms and procedures for students to apply to the administrative staff.
- 24) To broaden the level of self-governance of the students ensuring their greater involvement and in governing bodies in decision making procedures.
- 25) To apply the rotation system of transferring students from paid to free of charge education basis.
- 26) To develop QA mechanisms and mechanisms for the evaluation of consultancy and other services provided to students.

Teaching and support staffs

- 27) To apply the Regulation on the Formation of Teaching Staff and carry out the recruitment of teaching staff of the Center on competition basis.
- 28) To develop policy and procedures on the promotion and penalties of the teaching staff including dismissal from work.
- 29) To define requirements for the competences of the teaching staff for all the academic programs in line with the qualifications awarded to the graduates.
- 30) To amend the mechanisms of evaluating the teaching staff including mechanisms of self-assessment and peer-review as well as requirements and procedures of summing the results of multilateral evaluation.
- 31) To introduce system of professional development of the teaching staff and to develop mechanisms of evaluating the effectiveness of trainings.
- 32) To take steps for regulating rejuvenation, assurance of stability and professional development of the teaching staff.
- 33) To develop necessary mechanisms and tools to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities of the administrative staff.

Research and development

- 34) To develop strategy expressing interests and ambitions of the Center in the research sphere, giving importance to the possible merchandise of research outcomes and linking the prospects of the Center's development with it.
- 35) To consider the opportunity of establishing the position of a manager responsible for the coordination of scientific-research activities within the framework of restructuring of the management system.
- 36) To develop policy on the promotion of young researchers, to improve the current mechanisms based on the indicators evaluating the quality and modernity of research outcomes.
- 37) To introduce policy and procedures on ensuring academic honesty and applying mechanisms of preventing plagiarism
- 38) To carry out studies of the effectiveness of mechanisms interconnecting research and education processes.

Infrastructure and resources

- 39) To develop policy on the planning, management and monitoring of the activities of the Center in accordance with the financial resources.
- 40) To develop mechanisms of financial resource allocation in line with strategic goals of the Center involving funding for the services directed to the healthcare and security assurance.
- 41) To develop regulation on the administration and documentation of the Center.

- 42) To review the mechanisms of evaluating the usage, availability and effectiveness of the provided resources involving there the mechanisms of needs assessment of the teaching staff.
- 43) To take steps towards making the chairs of the Center accessible for the students with special needs in terms of organization of education.

Social responsibility

- 44) To remodel the format of reports based on the KPIs.
- 45) To develop indicators for the evaluation of effectiveness of the mechanisms ensuring the accountability of the Center to the public.
- 46) To amend the concept on public relations fixing the tools for the evaluation of operating mechanisms contributing to the formation of public relations.
- 47) To develop tools for the evaluation of additional educational services and consultancy.

External relations and internationalization

- 48) To develop policy and procedures promoting external relations and internationalization taking into account the relations of RA NAS and its Institutes and activating the cooperation with them.
- 49) To improve the resources and the works of the Department of International Relations of the Center, to activate the cooperation of that department with the chairs in order to make the information about the international project available to the possible stakeholders.
- 50) To develop mechanisms for the full implementation of signed agreements, to enlarge the participation of teachers and students in international projects.
- 51) To organize regular trainings of foreign language for students, teaching and administrative staffs.
- 52) To introduce courses and academic programs in foreign language, to develop joint MA programs with foreign and local educational institutions.

Internal quality assurance system

- 53) To clarify the structure of QA system and to align the operating systems with it.
- 54) To develop procedures for the processes of 7 main spheres mentioned in the QA manual of the Center.
- 55) To develop mechanisms for all the responsible parties to implement all the activities envisaged in the QA manual⁸.
- 56) To develop package of documents regulating the allocation of financial and material resources for the implementation of QA processes.
- 57) To develop mechanisms which will clarify the application of survey results for the continuous improvement of academic programs and the functions of external experts in the processes of monitoring and review of the academic programs.
- 58) To develop mechanisms of gathering internal information that will give reliable and fundamental information to the administration of the Center about the effectiveness of the provided educational services and academic programs on the one hand, and to the internal and external examiners, on the other hand.
- 59) To develop mechanisms and tools for regular review of QA system.

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

The international expert is convinced that this part of the expert panel report will be useful for the Center and its stakeholders in terms of internationalization and continuous development of the institution's activities.

⁸The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions got from the Institution.

Observations:

1. The strategic plan of the Center isn't directly consistent with the institution's mission and there are no clear mechanisms of measuring the priorities and goals.
2. In general, the Center has lack of monitoring mechanisms and procedures to evaluation the effectiveness of academic programs, also there are no clear procedures and mechanisms for evaluating quality of services, which makes the process of planning and data analyses difficult.
3. The programs in the Center are educational and scientific, and students have opportunities to get involved in the research carried out in the NAS, this is unique opportunity that gives high reputation to the Center.
4. The Center has some policies but no clear procedures for assessing student educational needs.
5. The International Scientific Educational Center of RA NAS lacks in strategy for the close cooperation with industry (internal and external) as well as joint projects for internship and collaboration (industry-academy, academy-academy, academy- state institutions) which does not meet with international standards.
6. The International Scientific Educational Center of RA NAS has research capacities for internationalization but this potential and EU opportunities are not used properly.
7. There is no harmonization of curriculum and relevant academic procedures to International standards, as a result academic programs do not promote international mobility.
8. There is lacks of targets and appropriate mechanisms and steps ensuring internationalization.
9. There is lacks of human resources with academic level of knowledge of foreign languages and as a result there is no MA program in foreign language which can be good asset for collaboration with international research centers and increase number of international projects and research
10. There is no clear mechanism used by The International Scientific Educational Center of RA NAS for making the correlation between research and academic processes. From the site-visit we found that there are no clearly defined research and teaching performance indicators.

Recommendations:

1. Strategic plan need to have clear strategic objectives and strong measure mechanism for each objective.
2. The Center needs to foster a Quality culture by working on both quality assurance and quality management. Quality assurance focuses on academic matters and services which support students while Quality management focuses on effective development and monitoring of policies and procedures. Also a quality policy and quality goal needs to be publicized and publically available.
3. The academic programs need to have well formulated learning outcomes and the competences have to be defined more precisely.
4. The Center needs to create monitoring system for students' participation in the research projects.
5. The Center should continuously improve the quality by building a much stronger network with the private and public sector and also to include them in the monitoring procedures which will raise skill levels.
6. In order to foster collaboration and projects, the Center should put more effort in encouraging and motivating academic staff and students to apply for mobility and to take part in mobility programs as well as international cooperation.
7. To foster international relationship and attract students and academic staff from abroad the Center should consider offering some academic programs in English and increase the number of English courses in all academic programs.

8. Better alignment between strategic documents of all horizontal institutions (centers) of the Center as well as operational cooperation on many issues of mutual interest could bring benefits to all parties (ex. Interdisciplinary academic programs).
9. The Center needs to have clear action plan for professional development of non-teaching staff, including their involvement in new tasks facing the institution.
10. The Center is encouraged to have international relations coordinator for international relations within each institute.
11. The Center should publish information about its activities, including teaching staff (unified forms of CV in English), academic programs, intended learning outcomes of these programs, admission, the qualifications they award, research activities, other student services as well as graduate employment information. Web-page should be clear, accurate, objective and up-to date.

29.08.2016

Signature of the Chair of the expert panel

DESCRIPTION OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

External evaluation of the institutional capacities of International Scientific-Educational Center of RA NAS has been carried out by the expert panel with the following members:

- 1) **Eduard Hakobyan** – Candidate of technical sciences, associate professor, head of the Chair of Electrotechnics and Electricity Consumption at National Polytechnic University of Armenia, head of the expert panel
- 2) **Nora Gevorgyan** – Candidate of political sciences in the profession of International Relations, associate professor at the Chair of World Politics and International Relations in the Institute of Law and Policy of the Armenian-Russian Slavonic University
- 3) **Meri Ghazayan** – Candidate of technical sciences, associate professor, head of the Chair of Thermal Power and Environmental Protection
- 4) **Azir Alue** – PhD in philosophy in the sphere of Computer Science, professor at the South East European University, Advisor of the Prime-Minister of Macedonia for the spheres of Science, Higher Education and Information Technologies
- 5) **Taguhi Abrahamyan** – 1st year MA student of the faculty of Agro business and marketing at the Armenian National Agrarian University

The works of the expert panel were coordinated by Anushavan Makaryan – Head of ANQA Department of Institutional and Program Accreditation.

The translation was provided by Ani Mazmanyanyan- the Coordinator of the QA Center of Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences.

The minutes were taken by the ANQA lawyer Ofelya Petrosyan.

All the members of the expert panel, including the Coordinator and the translator have signed independence and confidentiality agreements.

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

Application for State Accreditation

The Center applied for institutional accreditation by submitting the application form, the copies of the license and respective appendices to ANQA on September 8, 2015.

The ANQA Secretariat checked the correspondence of the application package with ANQA requirements, the data presented in the application form, the appendices and the ANQA electronic questionnaire completed by the Center. On September 28, 2015 according to the decision on accepting the application request an agreement was signed between ANQA and the Center. The timetable of activities, which is an appendix of an agreement, was prepared and approved.

Preparatory Phase

The initial extended composition of the expert panel set by ANQA Department of Institutional and Program accreditation was agreed upon with the Accreditation Committee after which the members signed agreement on working in the expert panel and excluding conflict of interests. Afterwards the expert panel composition was agreed upon with the Center meeting the requirements of the regulation on state accreditation as well as the requirements of expert panel formation. Service contracts with annex on confidentiality were signed with the panel members.

The expert panel underwent 5 trainings on the following topics:

1. RA regulation of accreditation, criteria and standards
2. Main functions of expert panel
3. Preliminary evaluation as preparatory phase of developing expert panel report, the main requirements of writing the report
4. Methodology of observation of documents and resources
5. Techniques and ethics of meetings and questions

On 21 March 2016 the self-evaluation report was sent to the expert panel for preliminary evaluation. The composition of the expert panel was formed according to the order of ANQA Director as of 16 March 2016. The peer-review was carried out within the period from 24 March till 6 May 2016. The expert panel had regular meetings to discuss the self-evaluation and attached package of appendices. The issues raised by the international expert were involved in the draft evaluation report. As a result the issues that needed to be clarified during the site-visit were identified and meetings with target groups were scheduled.

Based on the issues and problems to be observed, ANQA coordinator of the accreditation process together with the head of the expert panel developed the schedule of the site-visit. The schedule included meetings with all the target groups envisaged by the expert panel, open and close meetings, observation of documents and resources, visits to different structural units of the Center, etc.

Having separated the main issues and documents for review, the expert panel clarified the issues which should be discussed during the meetings. During the regular meeting questions per each standard were clarified and the preliminary package of the expert panel was formed. The package contained schedule of the meetings, issues per target group for the observation and clarification as well as list of additional documents which should be observed during the site-visit. From the list presented by the institution teaching staff members with whom the meeting was scheduled, were selected.

Self-evaluation of the Center

The Center started to carry out self-evaluation since 2013 within the framework of grant project "Investment of Internal Quality Assurance System and its Further Development".

The self-evaluation report and the package of appendices were submitted to ANQA on 4 December, 2015. ANQA coordinator examined the self-evaluation in terms of checking its compliance with technical requirements set by the Regulation on Accreditation. Based on the opinion of the coordinator, on 25 December, 2015 ANQA made a decision on rejecting the self-evaluation and the document was returned to the institution.

The English and Armenian versions of the revised self-evaluation as well as package of supporting documents were accepted by ANQA on 4 March, 2016 after getting the positive opinion of ANQA coordinator.

In general, self-evaluation report which was written with a critical approach, was considered as a useful document to get information about the Center and to organize discussions. However some parts of the self-evaluation report were missing or were not much clear and they needed further clarification during the meetings. A number of regulatory documents were presented in the appendices which dated back to 2014.

Preliminary visit

On May 3, 2016 ANQA coordinator together with the head of the expert panel visited the Center to finalize the schedule of the site-visit. The room provided for the panel, the meeting hall and technical resources were observed. The list of documents to be observed and the structural units which the panel wanted to visit was presented to the institution. Organizational and technical issues for the site visit as well as issues concerning the behavior and ethical norms during the meetings were discussed with the Director of the Center and the contact person.

Site-visit

On May 9, a day before the site-visit all the members of the expert panel gathered at ANQA for a close meeting according to the beforehand prepared agenda (the agenda of the meeting is attached).

During the meeting the expert panel exchanges its preliminary impression about the report, discussed strong and weak points of the institution, finalized the list of identified issues/questions, decided upon each responsible person per criteria as well as discussed the organization of meetings with target groups. Then the expert panel members discussed the evaluation scale which has two levels: 1. **Satisfies/meets the requirements** of the criterion 2. **Does not satisfy/does not meet the requirements** of the criterion.

The site-visit took place in the period of 10-13 May, 2015. All the meetings took place according to the time-schedule (it is attached). The site-visit launched and finished with the meetings with Director. Meetings were organized with heads of departments, heads of chairs, self-evaluation working group, teaching staff, students, alumni and employer representatives. The expert panel chose the participants of focus groups randomly. During the open meeting staff members of the Center who were also graduates of the Center were present.

Besides meeting with different target groups the expert panel also conducted observation of documents⁹ and resources¹⁰.

The expert panel highly appreciated the open discussions with the focus groups. The information got during the different meetings as well as the main results of the observation of documents and resources were summed up at the end of each day and during the close meetings. The expert panel discussed main outcomes and came to a general agreement about meeting the requirements of the criteria and standards by the Center. During the final close meeting the considerations and final conclusions per criterion and standard were agreed upon with all the members of the panel based on the consensus approach.

Expert Panel Report

After the site -visit the head of the expert panel and ANQA coordinator prepared expert panel draft report. All the members of the expert panel had their contribution in the facts, considerations and evaluation of each standard as well as they all gave their feedback on the unified draft version. Comments of the expert panel members were taken into consideration during the finalization of the draft report.

The international expert prepared his conclusion and separate opinion on peer-review. Both documents were translated and provided to the head of the expert panel. The responsibility of involving the opinion and approach of the international expert in the expert panel report lied upon the head of the expert panel and ANQA coordinator of the process. International expert's opinion on the peer-review was fully integrated in the expert panel report. The draft report agreed upon by all

⁹Appendix 3. List of observed documents

¹⁰Appendix 4. Resources observed

the local members of the expert panel was translated and sent to the international expert. Based on his comments the draft report was edited and currently it presents main results of the evaluation, considerations and recommendations.

Draft report was presented to the Center on 29 August, 2016.

Its comments and suggestions concerning the draft expert panel report the Center presented to ANQA on September 16, 2016. A discussion of comments was carried out between the expert panel members and the representatives of the Center. As a results of the discussion of additional documents and justifications presented by the Center, some changed have been made to the final expert panel report and notes about them is presented in the footnotes of corresponding pages.

The final report was presented to the Center on November 14, 2016.

29.08.2016

Signature of the Coordinator

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY

HISTORY: the International Scientific-educational Center of RA NAS was founded in 1997 on the bases of PhD studies (aspirantura) being operated within the RA NAS Presidium. The main objective of the Center was the preparation of scientific personnel through PhD and doctoral education. In 2004 the Center enlarged its scope of activities organizing also education with 25 MA programs. This was a step to bring closer higher education institutions with the academia and to enhance the education quality by involving talented young students in scientific research activities and integrating science in education.

The mission of the Center is to “foster socio-economic development of the country and integration into international educational area, to ensure quality and competitive education promoting personal continuous development through creation of knowledge and its transmission into scientific-educational sphere, thus ensuring fluent transition of knowledge to science and their interconnection”.

The Center carries out its activity being led by its Strategic Plan 2014-2018 and the time-schedule. There are a number of clauses defined in the self-evaluation, strategic plan and other documents which reflect the Center’s interests and ambitions in different fields.

Education. The Center implements higher and postgraduate professional education programs and respectively awards MA and PhD qualifications. Currently 26 MA academic programs are being implemented in 21 chairs of the Center; 23 of them – for full-time studies and 11 – part-time studies.

Amongst other education related issues highlighted in the mission, the Center emphasizes:

- “...preparation and training of specialists in concordance with current requirements of scientific-educational sphere;
- internationalization of education and assurance of its competitiveness;
- preparation of masters and postgraduates in accordance with current requirements of labor market and globalized society”.

The Center gives importance to the “continual structural and content modernization of academic programs, investment of progressive learning methods and mechanisms in academic programs, continuous improvement of knowledge grading system, development of services fostering students’ career”. The education should be implemented by the highly qualified academic and support staffs “in the learning and working environment equipped with modern technologies”. The Center should promote to the continuous development of professional potential of academic staff, increase of research and creative activities, creation of corporate environment favorable for professional self-development”.

RESEARCH: The scientific and innovative activity of the Center is a strategic priority. “The formation of preconditions for increasing the scientific-research works and broadening the scope of involvement of academic staff and students in research projects, promotion of internationalization of research works” are among strategic goals of the Center.

Research direction for MA programs, significant involvement of students of the Center’s professional chairs in scientific-research projects being carried out in the scientific institutes of the RA NAS system, close interconnection of research and educational activities, promotion of applied research direction of internships and internationalization of research activities as well as integration into European research are planned by the Center.

The research outcomes are planned to be invested in education processes.

INTERNATIONALIZATION: The ambitions relating internationalization are mainly defined under the section “Educational Activity of the International Scientific-Educational Center” set in the strategic plan. “The broadening of international networking of the Center, promotion of educational and scientific cooperation with European universities and international higher education units” are defined as a strategic goal.

The Center gives importance to the internationalization of research activities, integration into European research area, educational and scientific cooperation with European universities and

international higher education units as well as participation of students and academic staff in international exchange program. According to the strategic plan, the Center plans to take steps towards creating favorable conditions for broadening participation of invited foreign teaching staff members in academic programs, being involved in academic unions and networks together with leading higher education institutions and scientific-educational centers.

QUALITY ASSURANCE: The Center has set a strategic goal towards “investment of internal quality control system, organization of regular self-analysis, planning and implementation of targeted activities”. The main issues of this field are the continual improvement of QA mechanisms of academic programs and processes, assurance of transparency of information on quality of the Center’s activity for all the stakeholders as well as creation of sufficient grounds for the external review of QA for the fulfillment of which sufficient human, material and financial resources should be provided. It is also important to ensure the involvement of internal and external stakeholders in QA processes.

While making evaluation, the expert panel has been led by the principle of “correspondence to the goals” and has considered the above mentioned information as main ambitions and goals of the university.

CRITERION I. MISSION AND PURPOSE

CRITERION: The policies and procedures of the institution are in accordance with the institution's mission which is in line with ANQF.

FINDINGS

1.1 The institution has a clear, well-articulated mission that represents the institution's purposes and goals and is in accordance with National Qualifications Framework (hereafter NQF).

The mission of the Center is presented in 2014-2018 revised strategic plan: "to promote social economic development of the country and integration into international educational area, to ensure quality and competitive education fostering continuous development of an individual as well as smooth and interconnected transition from education to science".

The Center has clarified the directions of its activities: "preparation and training of specialists meeting the current requirements of the labor market and competitive educational scientific sphere, the development of research opportunities, internationalization of education, introduction of innovations in the sphere of service to society". The mission, main values and priorities are the basis of the strategic plan of the Center and the concrete actions are described in the action plan-schedule of the implementation of the Center's strategic plan. The action plan is formed based on the strategic goals and current priorities. In the mission statement the Center has clarified the alignment of qualifications awarded by the Center with NQF levels (master degree and researcher). Implementation of that component of the mission the institution justifies with the fact that the current academic programs are structured based on the state educational standards where learning outcomes for each profession are involved (knowledge, skills and competences). Other analysis of alignment have not been carried out at the Center and the Center does not yet have developed its own qualifications framework though there is an ambition to become a research university.

1.2 The mission statement reflects the needs of the internal and external stakeholders.

The Center clearly outlines the scope of external (employers, RA NAS with its scientific research institutions and centers, interested organization from the sphere of education, science and research) and internal (students, teaching staff, scientific and administrative staffs) stakeholders whose needs were taken into account while formulating mission, goals and objectives. International stakeholders are not clarified yet. The scope of international organizations, institutions and foundations, with which the Center should have firm relations and which is derived right from the mission and strategic goals of the Center, is not separated yet. The link with alumni- as important stakeholders is also weak.

Representatives of internal and external stakeholders are selected and nominated by the Director of the Center to be involved in the collegial governing bodies of the Center and they took part in the processes of amendment and discussion of the strategic plan. The Center gives importance to the needs assessment of students which is ensured by their independence and by the application of mechanisms of regularly conducted surveys. The further analysis of the survey results, their application and their impact on the decision making procedures on the needs of stakeholders are not clarified yet.

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

To implement the strategic plan the Center has short term operative plans through which performance of the planned activities and actions are monitored for the period of an academic year. As a mechanism for the evaluation of the implementation of mission and strategic goals the Center applies bottom up accountability system, where annual reports of the chairs, of other structural units and of the director are involved. The report of the director is involved also in the annual report of RA NAS. The Center does not carry out evaluation of the results of implementing mission and goals as the mechanisms and procedures are in the phase of development. On the other hand, the outcomes which should be monitored and evaluated are not indicated in the action plan of the strategic plan.

The progress of the implementation of current strategic plan is not controlled either because of the absence of KPIs which are also in the process of development. Mechanisms and procedures of improving the results of the implementation of mission and goals are not developed either.

CONSIDERATION

Current strategic plan of the Center which is the amended and elaborated version of 2012-2016 strategic plan of the Center, clarifies the institution's mission, core values, its priorities, strategic goals and concrete actions. The development and approval of the strategic plan was carried out with the participation of stakeholders who either cooperate with the Center as staff members of different units dealing with the organization of education process or are involved in different governing bodies. The Center carries out needs assessment of internal and external stakeholders mainly in the form of surveys however the mechanisms of further using the results are not clarified, and this decreased the effectiveness of the use of such mechanisms. In this respect it can be considered that mission and goals of the institution are in line with the needs of the stakeholders.

In terms of the ambition of the institutions to become a model of research university, there is a need to analyse the alignment of academic programs and the awarded qualifications with the level descriptors of RA NQF as well as to have its own qualifications framework.

Objectives and activities concerning the implementation of the strategic goals, deadlines and responsible people are set in the time-schedule of the strategic plan which gives the Center an opportunity mainly to fulfill the planned goals and objectives. Short operational plans are developed for the implementation of the strategic plan. Due to these plans the performance of the activities and events planned for the current year are monitored. However evaluation of the outcomes of fulfilling goals and objectives of the Center is not carried out as clearly defined outcomes are missing and the mechanisms of their evaluation as well as procedures for the improvement are still in the phase of development.

Annual reports of the Director and the structural units are considered to be the main mechanisms of evaluating the fulfillment of mission and goals. These reports give an opportunity to have an idea about the achievements and shortcomings of the Center. However with the absence of the evaluation of performance as well as absence of quality indicators it is not possible to evaluate the real effectiveness of the activities and impact of achievements, to make decisions for further improvements. It is a positive fact that the institution itself admits the necessity of developing clear system of KPIs.

SUMMARY: Taking into consideration that the Center has a strategic plan which includes a well-articulated mission, core values, priorities and principles as well as time-schedule, internal and external stakeholders are somehow clarified (except for the international ones) and the strategic priorities were discussed with the stakeholders, the main activities of the Center are in line with its mission, the expert panel concludes that the Center meets the requirements of the criterion.

CONCLUSION: The correspondence the Centre's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 1 is *satisfactory*.

CRITERION II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

CRITERION: The institution's system of governance, administrative structures and their activities are efficient and are aimed at the accomplishment of mission and goals of the institution preserving ethical norms of governance.

FINDINGS

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

According to the current Charter the governance of the Center is carried out by RA NAC, the executive body of the Center (the Director) and by the Scientific Council. During 2012-2013 the Center regulated the activities of a number of administrative and educational units.

However, the study of the organogram of the hierarchy of structural units of the current management system of the Center as well as the meetings with management and administrative staff members during the site-visit have shown that the coordination spheres and frameworks of responsibilities and authorities are not clearly differentiated. In particular, some functions of deputy Director, Head of Education Department and the Dean are replicated however they are clarified in the job descriptions¹¹.

There are some structural units in the management system (e.g. scientific groups, HRM department) the functions of which are not specified and the regulations of the activities are missing. The management of the Center admits that there is a necessity to clarify the functions of structural units and responsible people of the given fields.

The Director conducts management of the current activity of the Center and the Scientific Council coordinates the scientific and scientific-technical activities. Election of the members of the Scientific Council isn't envisaged in the Center. The composition of the Scientific Council elected through rotation system and the number of the members is approved by the Presidium of RA NAS with the suggestion of the Director of the Center. According to the current regulation the Dean is appointed by the Director of the Center¹².

The Center does not have defined ethical norms on which it can be based to carry out regulated procedure of decision making in the management system. The main educational-scientific units of the Center are the chairs that unite the teaching staff of the same professions who are generally staff members of RA NAS. Educational and scientific-research activities are carried out in the chairs using the resources of the institutes of RA NAS. The chair is managed by the head of chair elected for a five-year period. There is a Procedure on the Selection and Deployment of the Teaching Staff however competition is not carried out.

The Center considers that its management system has necessary human and material resources to carry out its functions however it does not conduct study of its organizational structure, human, material and financial resources as well as evaluation of the effectiveness of the current structure.

2.2 The institution's system of governance gives an opportunity to student and the teaching staff to take part in decision making procedures.

Taking into account the structural peculiarities and current regulations of the Center, internal stakeholders (teaching staff and students) have the opportunity to participate in decision making procedures on some levels. The participation of the teaching staff in the management processes is factually limited to the sessions of the chair as well as their involvement in the surveys conducted by the QA department. Among the governing bodies it is only in the Scientific Council that one member of the teaching staff and two students are involved and the regulations of their formation do not clearly endure the involvement of teaching staff and students in the management of the Center.

¹¹The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions got from the Institution.

¹²The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions got from the Institution.

Students take part in the discussions organized within the framework of the activities of the Student Council. One of the students presented as a member of the Scientific Council is the president of the Student Council and he is involved in the Scientific Council ex officio.

Another opportunity for the students is the communication with deans through the monitors of the academic groups which gives an opportunity to reveal students' academic needs in a non formal way. Besides, the students are involved in the surveys evaluating education quality and the effectiveness of the activities of the teaching staff. The Center has not yet carried out analysis on the effectiveness of the involvement of teaching staff and students in decision making processes.

2.3 The institution formulates and carries out short-term, mid-term and long term planning consistent with its mission and goals as well as has appropriate mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of those plans.

As a document for long-term planning the Center considers its strategic plan and its time-schedule where for the implementation of each strategic goal activities, their deadlines and responsible units are mentioned. For the implementation of strategic plan yearly operative plans have been developed that help to monitor the performance of the activities planned for the given academic year. However mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of the strategic plan are not regulated that's why the Center applies the report of the Director and that of the heads of other structural units. The Center plans to develop also a set of KPIs¹³

2.4 The institution conducts the study of factors influencing its activities and draws on reliable findings during the decision-making process.

The Center has not yet clarified the mechanisms and tools examining the factors that influence its activities. The QA Manual of the Center does not contain information about those mechanisms and does not involve approaches to evaluation and revision of the plans. The information on the basis of which decisions should be made about the goals and objectives of the Center as well as changes of the strategies of different spheres is not clarified.

SWOT analyses are carried out partially, needs assessment of the internal and external stakeholders are limited.

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

Giving importance to the administration of the Center according to QA principle, in the QA manual it is viewed as a mechanism for continuous improvement of quality. However after the study of the self-evaluation and after the observations during the site visit it became clear that the Center currently does not have sufficient normative and factual grounds to show QA principle applied in action.

Long-term planning is carried out through the Strategic plan and time-schedule of its implementation however planning of the monitoring of the strategic plan as well as risk assessment is not carried out¹⁴. As general means of the evaluation of achievements annual reports of different spheres of activities are applied. Outcomes of the activities, precise responsible people/units and indicators are mainly missing in the plans. There are few cases of changes made as a result of evaluations when the operating QA mechanisms promote improvements.

2.6 The institution has evaluation mechanisms in place ensuring data collection, analyses and application of the data on the effectiveness of the academic programs and other processes.

In 2014 the Regulation on monitoring and revision of the academic programs as well as the questionnaire for the evaluation of the academic programs by the alumni were developed and officially approved. Based on these documents in 2014-2015 surveys among alumni were conducted, analyses of results were carried out and reports were prepared. Indices of students' academic achievement are also mentioned in the Regulation.

¹³The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions got from the Institution.

¹⁴ The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions got from the Institution.

Besides the academic programs the evaluation of the effectiveness of other activities are not regulated in the Center. QA processes of the current mechanisms evaluating information gathering, analysis and application are not defined.

The system of information gathering is partially regulated in terms of academic programs. In terms of other activities the system is not completed yet.

2.7 There are objective mechanisms in place evaluating the quality of quantitative and qualitative information on the academic programs and qualification awarded.

For the promotion of information about its academic programs and awarded qualifications the Center applies annual reports, its web-page and facebook page. Besides, the Center prepares guides for the professional orientation of applicants and provides information about the academic programs to students. However the mechanisms evaluating the availability and objectiveness of the provided information are still in the phase of development. The study of the above mentioned sources of promoting information revealed that the presented information does not include comprehensive and regularly updated information about the situation and activities of the Center.

CONSIDERATION

Management system of the Center is not a traditional one for the educational institutions providing academic programs in higher education. The management of the Center is carried out by RA NAS which is considered to be the founder of the Center, by the executive body- the Director and the Scientific Council of the Center. The approval of the Director and the members of the Scientific Council by RA NAS Presidium can influence the autonomy of the Center.

Since 2014 the Center has started the process of regulating the activities of its structural units in line with the objectives of the 4th Strategic Goal of the section "Financial stability, effective management and anticorruption plans" of the revised Strategic plan.

According to the current regulations the scope of duties and authorities of the managers of relevant fields of activities of the Center (Deputy Director, Head of Education Department and Dean) overlap though they are clarified in the job descriptions.¹⁵ Besides, functions of some structural units (e.g. scientific groups, HR department) and their functional significance in the management system need to be clarified.

In RA educational sphere the Center places itself as a model of research university, however it does not have a relevant structural unit or person responsible for that sphere the priorities of which should be the definition of requirements for the scientific research and education interlaced environment, the emphasis of research component in the education process and the coordination of research outputs. Currently this is involved in the functions of the Dean¹⁶.

The cases of violation of ethical norms or facts on decision making through the violation of ethical norms are rare despite of the fact that approved norms of ethics are missing and studies about them have not been carried out.

The management of the Center finds that the management system of the institution is ensured with necessary human and material resources to implement its functions. Nevertheless the confidence can be considered reasonable in case study of organizational structure, human, material and financial resources as well as evaluation of the effectiveness of the current structure are carried out.

Competition based selection of the teaching staff is stipulated by the corresponding procedure but only heads of chairs are selected by competition. The factual recruitment of the teaching staff is carried out by the head of the chair which limits the involvement of qualified staff members from other institutions and does not promote transparency of management system.

Collegial approach is given much importance to in the strategic plan of the Center and some conditions are created to give the teaching staff and students the opportunity of being involved in the decision making processes. However the current procedures of the formation of governing bodies limit the extent of involvement and as a result only one member of the teaching staff and one student are involved in the governing bodies regardless of their position. Practical participation of students

¹⁵ The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions got from the Institution.

¹⁶ The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions got from the Institution.

in the sessions of the chairs is also not sufficient. The president of the Student Council is involved in the Scientific Council ex officio.

Long-term and annual plans of the activities of the Center are directed to the fulfillment of its mission and goals and through annual reports their performance is monitored. However impartial evaluation of the implementation of activities is problematic in the absence of measurable outcomes, concrete responsible people and precise indicators of evaluation.

Partially carried out SWOT analyses, when all the sources of data collection, the mechanisms of data analysis and application are not clarified, do not foster the evaluation of full influence of the environment. The invested system of automatic management of information gives some valid data about education process and students.

However the absence of the results analysis of the evaluation of Strategic plan's performance, the officially approved policy on evaluation and revision of plans as well as the absence of the specific facts assumes that while making strategic decisions some risky factors can be left out by the Center.

The development of the Regulation on the Monitoring and Revision of the Academic Programs and the use of application tools is a good example of the administration of processes based on the principle of quality management though the sources of gathering information about the efficiency of the academic programs do not involve all the necessary directions, particularly education support services and educational resources.

However current facts about the QA planned processes, analysis of conducted evaluations, and implemented improvements based on them state that principle of QA management is In the phase of development in the administrative sphere¹⁷.

Giving importance to the effectiveness of the implementation of the academic programs it is necessary to coordinate the evaluation of other activities as well, to study the gathering of information about them, its analysis and application which will give an opportunity to improve the mechanisms and tools in use, to gather reliable information, to have impartial evaluations and to make reasonable decisions.

The same is about the mechanisms publishing information about the quality of the academic programs and awarded qualifications.

In this case also the system of gathering information is partially regulated, only in terms of the academic programs. The absence of the mechanisms evaluating the availability and objectiveness of data can hinder the accurate development of academic programs and the proposed set of information about other activities of the Center in terms of providing accurate, reliable and impartial information of internal and external stakeholders.

SUMMARY: Taking into consideration that the current system of management is mainly aligned with the implementation of strategic objectives of the Center, the structure of the Center and the job descriptions clarify the scope of responsibilities and authorities of the managers of respective spheres, the operating mechanisms give an opportunity to the internal stakeholders take part in decision making processes, the impact of essential external factors is somehow examined, the principle of quality management is partially applied during the administration of the activities, as well as there are mechanisms which evaluate the gathering, analysis and application of information on the efficiency of academic programs and other processes, the expert panel concludes that the Center meets the requirements of the criterion¹⁸.

CONCLUSION: *The correspondence the Centre's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 2 is satisfactory*¹⁹.

CRITERION 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.**

¹⁷The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions got from the Institution.

¹⁸ The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions got from the Institution.

¹⁹ The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions got from the Institution.

FINDINGS

3.1 The academic programs are in line with Institution's mission, they correspond to the state academic standards and are thoroughly described according to the intended learning outcomes of the qualification awarded.

International Scientific Educational Center of RA NAS provides higher education in two levels: master and researcher (PhD). The investment of credit system in the Center finished in 2010 as a result of which the academic programs have changed greatly and have been aligned with the requirements of the system. 21 chairs of the Center currently implement 26 MA academic programs 23 of which with full time and 11- part time modes of studies and 62 PhD academic programs. Those programs were developed and approved according to the Regulation on the Approval of the Academic programs of the International Scientific Educational Center of RA NAS. During the development and revision of the academic programs the professional groups of the chairs studied mainly the academic programs of leading universities of a number of CIS and other countries. However it should be noted that the current academic programs are mostly aligned with the technical and human resources of the research institutes following also the state academic standards. Learning outcomes are not always clear and measurable thus they need to be reviewed. It should be mentioned that out of the academic programs that were observed during the site visit particularly the context of the courses of "International Relations" academic program are repetitious and are not compatible with similar academic programs in foreign universities and the choice of the courses mainly serve the needs of the teaching staff rather than the students.

All the academic programs provided by the Center are available in the web-site through the Guide on the education with credit system and course guides. The guide involves the description of the academic program, its structure and content, curriculum mapping which links learning outcomes with relevant modules or courses. The courses have course descriptions which involve the aim of the course, learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, competences), teaching and learning methods, assessment methods and criteria.

The implementation of the academic programs at the Center is carried out following the Regulation on the organization of education process (with both full- time and part-time modes of studies) with credit system. The Center has an experience of implementing academic programs in a foreign language however currently it does not have any such program. The number of programs having close links with industry is limited but there are also interdisciplinary programs.

3.2 The Institution has a policy that promotes alignment between teaching and learning approaches and the intended learning outcomes of academic programs, which ensures student-centered learning.

Teaching and learning methods planned by the teaching staff are presented in the course descriptions. However during the meetings with the students, teaching staff and researcher it was not clear what approach the Center applies and how the teaching and learning methods are chosen. As a separate document the Center does not have set policy and procedures on the selection of methods as well as their modernization.

The management of the Center and the teaching staff consider that the applied teaching and learning methods which are based on the principle "learning through doing research" mainly foster the acquisition of learning outcomes.

The effectiveness of teaching and learning methods applied by the teaching staff of the Center is evaluated through the surveys conducted among students about the quality and efficiency of teaching and through the analysis of the results of students' academic achievements during the exams.

Lessons are organized in small groups in the academic environment of the Institutes directly involving students in research activities. At the meetings during the site visit the students mentioned that teaching staff and supervisors of MA theses papers to whom they are attached since the first year of their studies, are almost always available for them.

3.3 The Institution has policy on students assessment according to the learning outcomes and promotes academic honesty.

With the investment of credit system in 2010, the Regulation on Students' Assessment, modes of organizing exams and checking have been revised at the Center and 20 points assessment scale

was introduced. The assessment system was last revised in 2014. Oral or written exams or chackings are defined in the new regulation as main assessment methods.

Time-schedules and procedures of the organization of current and final exams as well as assessment criteria and regulation of final attestation are presented.

Information is not existent in the Regulation on how such activities of students as practical and laboratory works, a two-week obligatory internship, participation in seminars, literature review, individual and group works are assessed and it was not clearly described by the teaching staff during the expert panel site-visit either.

Assessment criteria and modes are available to students through the Guide on the education with credit system and course guides. Students can appeal their marks (in case of oral examination immediately after being informed about their mark).

The Center has mechanisms promoting publicity and objectiveness of assessment and some mechanisms preventing plagiarism. There are certain copy-books for written examinations, retaking are organized with the presence of the head of the chair, MA theses papers are checked also through "anti-plagiarism" system and the process of defense is recorded.

The effectiveness of the approaches to assessment and prevention of plagiarism has not been analyzed yet.

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

Study of the leading practice of a number of universities from CIS countries, Europe and USA was carried out by the working groups developing the academic programs however the grounds of applying the results of those studies in the academic programs of the Center were not presented to the expert panel.

The alignment of the content of the academic programs provided at the Center with other similar academic programs has not been analyzed.

The data presented in the self-evaluation and provided during the site-visit show that the level of mobility of teaching staff and students within the academic programs is very low. Besides, the Center does not implement joint programs or programs awarding double diploma with other universities.

3.5 The Institution has policies in place ensuring academic program monitoring, evaluation of effectiveness and improvement.

The Center has developed and approved the Regulation on Current Monitoring and Regular Review of the Academic programs at International Scientific Research Center of RA NAS which it follows during the organization of some processes. In 2014 the Center initiated structural and content wise modernization of the academic programs within the framework of "Education Quality and Relevance" grant project. Discussions were organized, reforms implemented in the sphere of education and the necessity of education quality assurance were presented.

New course descriptions were put into action which were developed in line with the modern demands of labor market and European criteria for programs.

The Center does not have a set policy on the revision of learning outcomes taking into consideration stakeholders' needs however according to the suggestions made by the teaching staff some courses were removed from the curricula and new courses were involved. During the site visit the fact that the Center considers the Institutes of RA NAS as its main external stakeholders and employers and the Center finds that the Chairs placed in the Institutes and their staff express their needs and the needs of the labor market immediately during the development of the academic programs. Other methods of assessing the needs of internal and external stakeholders are surveys conducted by QA department among the employers on their satisfaction with professional qualities of students and alumni. The mechanisms of monitoring, evaluation and revision of the academic programs as well as the effectiveness of the academic programs are not analyzed by the Center.

CONSIDERATIONS

The Center provides education according to higher education 7th and 8th levels (master and researcher) of Armenian National Qualifications Framework. The provided 26 MA

programs are in line with state educational standards however partly correspond to the mission of the Center “to promote social economic development of the country and integration into international educational area” as there is a scarce number of academic programs having immediate links with industry and there are no programs currently being implemented in a foreign language.

The expert panel finds it positive that the Center is carrying out a number of interdisciplinary MA programs and promotes such approach however the panel finds some problems in terms of development of learning outcomes both in the level of academic programs and separate courses. Not clearly defined and not measurable learning outcomes of the courses do not allow to correctly choose teaching and learning methods as well as to evaluate the progress of a student, besides in case of the academic programs the objectiveness of awarding qualification is put at a risk.

The Center emphasizes the scientific research component in education and the selection and application of teaching and learning methods in line with the learning outcomes. For this reason besides the classical ways of teaching, approaches that allow to immediately involve students in research activities are applied by the Center.

The organization of lessons in the academic environment with small groups and direct involvement of students in research activities fosters students centered learning and the acquisition of the main learning outcomes however in terms of evaluation and quality assurance of the chosen teaching and learning methods the Center needs to develop policy and procedures on the selection and modernization of teaching and learning methods. The expert panel gives importance to the fact that according to the opinion of students, teaching staff and supervisors of the theses papers are always available for them.

Information about the assessment criteria and modes of assessment is presented in the academic program guidebooks that are provided to students which ensure the awareness of students about the assessment system. At the same time the existence of mechanisms preventing plagiarism and mechanisms of appeal foster academic honesty, transparency and objectiveness of assessment processes. Nevertheless, the revised Regulation on Assessment does not clarify the methodology of creating questionnaires for mid-term and final exams, the minimum thresholds of assessment, the evaluation of curricular and extracurricular hours, thus this does not foster complete and objective assessment of learning outcomes of courses. The expert panel notices some problems that are not clarified in the assessment system: how practical and laboratory works, internship, participation in seminars, literature review, group and individual works are assessed.

Taking into account the mission of the institution and vision on internationalization the management of the Center emphasizes the alignment of the academic programs with similar international programs. The studies of leading practice carried out by the Center had their positive impact on the structural and content-wise changes of a number of academic programs. Whereas the compatibility of the academic programs with similar programs in foreign universities, development of joint programs and double diploma awarding programs can promote the integration into international educational area and can foster mobility of teaching staff and students.

Within the framework of QA of academic programs the Center has started to implement monitoring however the developed regulation has not been fully put into action yet. Not all the phases of PDCA cycle are implemented. The effectiveness of monitoring can greatly increase in case key performance indicators for the evaluation of academic programs are developed and stakeholders’ needs are taken into account during the revision of intended learning outcomes.

SUMMARY: Taking into consideration that the current MA programs are developed based on ECTS; are in line with state educational standards and partly with the mission of the Center, have precise aim of preparing professionals with scientific research skills; education processes are organized in the academic environment with small groups and through involving students in research activities which fosters the student centered learning and the acquisition of learning outcomes; there are some mechanisms ensuring the transparency and objectiveness of the assessment system; there is a practice of preventing plagiarism; the expert panel concludes that the Center meets the demands of the criterion.

CONCLUSION: The correspondence the Centre’s institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 3 is *satisfactory*.

CRITERION IV. STUDENTS

CRITERION: The Institution provides support services to students ensuring productive learning environment.

FINDINGS

4.1 The Institution has set mechanisms for promoting students' recruitment, selection and admission procedures.

Students of the International Scientific-Educational Center of RA NAS are formed from BA graduates of other universities. The main mechanism of student recruitment is the admission announcement according to the academic programs put in the web-site of the Institution and dissemination of information through mass media. Besides "Open days" are organized, the staff of the Center participates in Education Expos and disseminated the brochures of the Center.

Admission and competition are carried out according to the "Regulation on Admission and Education in MA studies at Higher Education Institutions" approved by RA Ministry of Education and Science, the procedure on "Admission of Part-time Studies in RA State HIEs" as well as according to the "Regulation on the Organization of Admission and Education in MA in MA studies".

The competition is organized according to professions and modes of studies based on the list of approved examinations and places of admission. The number of students transferred from other universities to continue their education in the Center is limited (maximum 6 students per year) but the number of students that moved from the Center to other universities is even less (1 student per year). The number of dismissed students is more – from 73 to 112 students annually which is quite more than readmissions (maximum 24 students annually).

According to the studies by the Center the main reason for the dismissals are social conditions and low level of academic progress. The Center puts efforts to improve the situation through fund raising from different charity foundations to support socially vulnerable groups and through the establishment of flexible system of discounts of tuition fees. The Center does not apply rotation system of transferring students from paid system education to free of charge one. The mechanism of accountability is the discussion of admission results in the Scientific Council of the Center.

4.2 The Institution has policies and procedures for assessing student educational needs.

The Regulation on Student Survey on the Effectiveness and Quality of Teaching at International Scientific-Educational Center of RA NAS is a basis for the organization and implementation of students' educational needs assessment.

Students' participation in the Scientific Council of the Center as well as in the sessions of the chairs as needed also promote students' needs assessment. However it should be mentioned that there is low level of involvement of students in governing bodies where reports concerning different spheres of the activities of the Center are presented and discussed.

Student Council also serves for students' needs assessment. The president of the Student Council is also a member of the Scientific Council. During the site-visit the students mentioned also about the roles of the monitors of student academic groups who raise the issues concerning the group in the sessions of the chairs. Students also brought examples of cases when the problems were solved.

4.3 The Institution provides opportunities for extra-curricular activities and advising services aimed at supporting students' effective learning.

Additional classes are organized by the Center for students. During the site-visit the students mentioned about courses on professional foreign language, Russian language and Psychology from which they got certificates. The students informed that they got regular consultancy from academic supervisors to whom they are attached since the first year of their study as well as from the teaching staff who is mainly available.

There is a position of academic advisor whose main function is to carry out activities towards the enhancement of the academic progress of students as well as provide them information about the organization of education process.

In addition to this, chairs and the Alumni and Career Development Department also provide consultancy to students and organize different seminars, courses and meetings which are additional opportunities to meet students educational and other needs.

However additional consultancy meetings are not organized regularly and with a set time-schedule and their aims are not regulated. Additional classes on professional courses which will help the students who have some difficulties in comprehending the materials of the courses or who have many absences from classes are not organized in the Center.

4.4. There are precise regulation and schedule set for students to turn to the administrative staff for additional support and guidance.

The Center does not have clearly set regulations and time-schedules for students to turn to the administrative staff. However, factually the students have the opportunity of turning to the education department and to the deans (orally or in a written form) with different issues. For a number of processes there are precise procedures for student to present applications but during the meeting with the students it became clear that main issues are presented orally.

Regular meetings of the administrative staff (Director, Deputy Directors, Head of the Education Department, Dean, etc.) with the students are organized at the Center.

The students can address their issues to the administrative staff also through the Student Council and the representatives of the Student Council are involved in the Scientific Council of the Center.

4.5 The Institution has student career support services.

The Center has a Alumni and Career Development Department. According to the regulation of that Department it provides different services promoting students' career development, it ensures students' participation in job fairs and through the cooperation with potential employers, employment centers and Career Centers of other universities it tries to foster career development of the students.

The students of the Center are aware of the activities of the Department however only 50% of the respondents of the survey are satisfied with the services provided by that Department. At the same time the Department needs to have quality professional to fully carry out its functions.

4.6 The Institution promotes student involvement in its research activities.

One of the objectives mentioned in the Strategic Plan of the International Scientific Educational Center is to "enlarge students' involvement in research activities". MA programs envisage assurance of the involvement of students in different scientific-research activities and their implementation is a mandatory educational component.

Due to the close link with RA NAS the Center has sufficient human, material and laboratory resources as well as relevant academic environment to involve students in scientific-research activities. This is a sufficient condition for the students to be involved in research activities since the first year of their study, to be involved in the international projects and research topics being implemented in scientific institutions. The students take part in scientific discussions and seminars, make speeches during conferences and publish scientific works based on the research they make. As a rule, the themes of course papers and MA theses are chosen within the framework of the scientific-research projects carried out at the Institutes of RA NAS. The number of research carried out by the students and closely linked with industry is limited.

4.7 The Institution has a special body, which is responsible for the protection of students' rights.

The Center has Student Council which functions according to its charter and ensures processes of students' self-governance. The meetings with students and the representatives of Student Council showed that the Student Council is able to express students' demands in the Governing Bodies of the Center, the students are pleased with the situation and they don't find it necessary to have another body dealing with students' rights. The Students' Council does not have a separate room or place, it is placed in the same room as the Alumni and Career Development Department. The effectiveness of the activities of Students' Council has not been evaluated yet.

4.8 The Institution has set mechanisms for evaluating and ensuring the quality of educational, consultancy and other services provided to students.

QA policy and QA necessary processes are presented in the QA Manual of the Center. However during the site visit it became clear that the current main mechanism of evaluation and quality assurance of students' educational, consultancy and other services is the organization of "Students

surveys on Teaching Quality and Efficiency” and “Surveys on Alumni’s Satisfaction with Education Provided by the RA NAS Center” where a number of questions on the mentioned issues are involved.

The results of surveys among the students and alumni and the revealed issues are discussed in the Scientific Council of the Center and if necessary relevant changes are made.

CONSIDERATIONS

The current mechanisms of students’ recruitment and admission give an opportunity to the Center to ensure the number of students within 600 however the Management of the Center wants to increase the number of students. In this case there is a need instead of common reports to analyze the effectiveness of applied mechanisms in order to find out where and what kind of additional reserves are in place. The great number of dismissed students which does not diminish for years shows that the steps taken by the Center in this respect do not serve their purpose. The expert panel suggests within the current regulations to revise the policy applied in case of dismissals and to apply the rotation system of transferring students from paid to free of charge education basis.

The Center does not have separate policy and procedures on students’ needs assessment however the implemented activities foster students needs assessment. First of all these are different surveys among students the results of which are discussed and spread in the chairs. Based on the survey results improvement steps are carried out however the mechanisms are not clarified and their effectiveness is not analyzed. Another mechanism is the involvement of students in the Governing Bodies of the Center where the percentage of their involvement is low. The participation of the monitors of students academic groups in the sessions of the chairs is not regulated which can limit their impact on the sessions.

Generally the students (about 80% of respondents) are satisfied with the additional classes organized by the Center and by the provided consultancy however the expert panel finds that the effectiveness of meeting students’ educational needs will increase if their aims are clarified, if the activities towards meeting students’ educational needs are organized regularly and with a clear time-schedule. The procedure on organizing additional classes for the students who have many absentees from professional courses needs to be regulated.

Time-schedule and regulation on turning to the administrative staff are not defined by the Center however this is not an obstacle for students to turn to the administrative staff (in an oral way) both directly and indirectly- through the Students’ Council, whenever they have some issues. The existence of the regulation would make the implementation of the process more effective and the responsibilities clearer and would set limits on the deadlines for the discussions of the issues.

The expert panel finds the existence of the Alumni and Career Development Department a positive fact at the same time the expert panel mentions that the lack of qualified specialists can be a risky factor for the complete implementation of the factions of the Department.

Using the human, material-technical and laboratory resources of the Institutes of RA NAS the Center creates a favorable environment to involve students in research activities.

Closer collaboration with industrial enterprises, development and implementation of joint projects with them can increase the number of applied research carried out by the students and can bring funding to the students and the Center.

There is a Students’ Council at the Chair the activities of which mainly satisfy the students however the effectiveness of the work of the Students’ Council as a body protecting students’ rights has not been evaluated yet. At the same time the expert panel was informed about the facts showing that the Students’ Council does not have strong position at the Center, for instance the absence of its own space and also the absence of the rotation system at the Center.

As a mechanism evaluating educational, constancy and other services provided to students and as a QA mechanism the center applies surveys among the students and alumni. Even if the survey results contain concrete information about the above mentioned processes, they are not separately analyzed and improvements are rarely made based on these result.

SUMMARY: Taking into account that the Center’s current policy on student recruitment, selection and admission ensure stable number of students, applied mechanisms mainly foster needs assessment of students, additional classes, consultancy and services fostering career development of students are given much importance to, students are given the opportunity of turning to the

administrative staff directly or indirectly with the issues troubling them, there is a favorable environment to involve the students in research activities, there is a separate body dealing with the issues of protection of students' rights, the expert panel concludes that the Center meets the requirements of the criterion.

CONCLUSION: The correspondence the Centre's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 4 is *satisfactory*.

CRITERION V. TEACHING AND SUPPORT STAFF

CRITERION: The Institution provides a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff to achieve the set goals of the academic programs and institution's mission.

FINDINGS

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

In order to carry out election of teaching staff having necessary qualifications, the Center has developed a new regulation on "Formation of Teaching Staff" which defines the rules and conditions of selection on the competition basis and positioning of the main teaching staff, the descriptors of different categories (professor, associate professor, assistant, teacher), as well as provides the system of signed contracts with the teaching staff.

During the site-visit of the expert panel, it turned out that the main teaching staff of the Center is formed from the staff members of research institutes with the suggestion of the head of the chair and with the order of the director of the Center. The Center also makes external recruitment of specialists that institutes cannot provide. Selection on the competition basis of not main teaching staff is not carried out either; the teachers are recruited according to the order of the Center's director for a one-year period. The Center also has a normative base for the formation of vacancies of teaching and support staffs, however, there are no job descriptions.

The main teaching staff of the Center is currently comprised of 253 specialists, 22 of which are academics, 55 – doctors and professors, and 176 – candidates of science and associate professors.

The Center does not yet have a clear policy and procedures on the promotion of the teaching staff.

5.2. The requirement for the qualifications of the teaching staff for each program are comprehensively stated.

Teaching staff with relevant qualifications for each academic program is ensured by the chairs of the Center. They are highly qualified specialists with professional skills and practical competences necessary for the implementation of research in their fields. However, the requirements which describe the alignment of their professional qualities with the program or course are not clearly defined. That's why it is not possible to evaluate the correspondence of the competences of the teaching staff with the qualifications awarded within the academic program.

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

The main mechanism evaluating the current teaching staff of the Center is considered to be student surveys on teaching quality and efficiency by means of which students evaluate "scientific-pedagogical and moral-psychological characteristics of the teaching staff". Class observations are carried out though not regularly, and clear requirements and procedures for their implementation as well as analysis and application of results are not developed.

During the site-visit the directors of the institutes also mentioned about the attestation of the scientific staff which is carried out once in a 5 year and can be viewed as a professional evaluation of the teaching staff of the Center.

In order to increase the efficiency of the system of teaching staff evaluation, the Center has planned to invest regular evaluation by immediate manager, peer-review among teaching staff as well as self-evaluation process.

5.4 The Institution promotes professional development of the teaching staff in accordance with the needs outlined during regular evaluations (both internal and external).

Different trainings for qualification enhancement of the teaching staff have been carried out in the Center, particularly in the framework of the current reforms in the context of Bologna process. Training-seminars directed to the quality assurance in the higher education system have been carried out in the following 4 main directions - professional qualification enhancement, improvement of pedagogical skills, organization of education process according to the credit system and IT application in education process.

The staff of the QA department mention that the topics of the trainings have been chosen and provided in accordance to the results of needs assessment.

5.5 The Institution ensures that there is a permanent staff to provide the coverage of qualifications adequately.

The chairs provide teaching staff having respective qualifications to the Center. Every chair ensures educational modules in accordance with the main teaching staff, as well as organizes their short-term and mid-term substitution. In the academic environment of the RA NAS research institutes the teaching staff have the opportunity to obtain and develop skills in accordance with their personal interests and required by the academic programs. Besides, targeted project on recruitment and rejuvenation of the teaching staff through PhD students involved in research projects is carried out by the Center taking into account the changes in the list of professions. The chairs ensure necessary conditions and provide support to the PhD students in terms of professional consultancy and provision of material-technical resources. Support is also provided in terms of business trips, presentation of the outcomes of the research works in international conferences and publications in the scientific journals. Full-time PhD students are provided with the necessary conditions for pedagogical internship and their further activities. However, the mentioned processes are not regulated.

5.6 There are set policies and procedures for the staff promotion

The professional advancement of the teaching staff of the Center is directly carried out in the scientific-research institution where the teacher carries out his professional activity as a researcher being involved in the national and international research projects with the participation of the given institute. The Center doesn't take part in this direction.

The Center has organized trainings concerning the organization of education process in 3 directions: improvement of the academic programs, development of skills on computer science and pedagogy.

A number of documents regulating the sphere are in the phase of development, e.g. policy and procedures on "Assurance of Promotion and Professional Development of Beginner-Teachers" and "Mentoring of Beginner-Teachers".

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

As far as there are no job descriptions for administrative and support staffs, the Center finds that it has respectively qualified specialists. The efficiency of the activity of the administrative staff is evaluated through the surveys on the satisfaction with the received education, carried out among the MA graduates. The support staff which functions in the chairs and the education department, is accountable to the respective management.

CONSIDERATIONS

Giving importance to the necessity of having highly qualified teaching and support staffs, the Center applies the mechanism of staffing on the contractual base with the certain time period. Factually the teachers of the Center are mostly the representatives of the main staff of the relevant institutes of the RA NAS who are selected by the heads of chairs with the agreement of the Director of the Center. This

approach does not correspond to the requirements of the officially approved regulation on “The Formulation of the Teaching Staff”, to the provisions of the Strategic Plan as well as to the QA standards of the given field. The way of appointing the positions should not be considered as the only mechanism of the formation of teaching staff as it limits the opportunity of recruiting highly qualified specialists from other institutions. Besides, in terms of complementing the procedures, it is necessary to amend the regulation on the positioning of the teaching staff with the procedures of their promotion and dismissal.

The assurance of the teaching staff with necessary qualifications for the implementation of the academic program is the responsibility of the chairs of the Center. The heads of the chairs are led by the set of qualitative standards defined for the different categories of the teaching staff mentioned in the regulation on the competition. The Center currently has specialists with advanced research skills. However, the requirements mentioned in the regulation are very generic and do not specify the qualifications necessary for particular academic programs, while the competences of the teaching staff should correspond to the qualifications awarded within the framework of the academic programs, and they should be specified for each academic program.

The mechanisms evaluating the current teaching staff of the Center which are based only on the student surveys and non-regularly organized class observations by the Dean, cannot ensure reliable and valid results unless self-assessment and peer review are used. Multivector evaluation and the analysis of the received results can serve as a reliable basis for decision making concerning the teaching staff: incentive, prolongation or termination of job contracts, etc.

In order to fulfill its current strategic goals as well as based on the results of the evaluation of the teaching staff, the Center has implemented trainings towards the qualification enhancement of the teaching staff within the framework of different projects. However, these trainings are not continuous and cannot be viewed as regularly implemented activities towards the improvement of professional and scientific-methodical activities.

The Center needs to establish a system of qualification enhancement of the teaching staff based on the clearly defined set of academic and training programs as well as to develop mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of their implementation.

The teaching staff of the professional chairs of the Center which is based on the scientific potential of the RA NAS, ensures the substitution and stability of the teaching staff and their involvement in prioritized scientific-research projects ensuring professional development of the teaching staff.

The implementation of the process of recruiting teaching staff through PhD students involved in respective research projects is already giving its first outcomes in terms of rejuvenation of the teaching staff. However, the issues on assurance of their advancement are still in the agenda. The Center itself finds that the tendency of aging of the teaching staff still remains.

The management of the Center gives importance to the necessity of continuous development of administrative and support staffs and is satisfied with its current staff. At the same time, the evaluation of the effectiveness of the administrative staff is currently not carried out because of the absence of necessary mechanisms and tools.

SUMMARY: Taking into consideration that the Center has skillful teaching staff with good research skills which is formed based on the staff potential of the institutes of the RA NAS, a number of qualitative standards are developed for the selection of the teaching staff with different categories; evaluation of the teaching staff is carried out through student surveys, class observations and attestations; the teaching staff has participated in a number of trainings on QA of higher education system; the involvement of the teaching staff in prioritized research projects ensures their professional advancement, and actions are taken in terms of rejuvenation of the teaching staff through providing support to the PhD students, the expert panel concludes that the Center meets the requirements of the criterion.

CONCLUSION: The correspondence the Centre’s institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 5 is *satisfactory*.

CRITERION VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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

FINDINGS

6.1 The Institution has a clear strategy promoting its research interests and ambitions

The strategy of the Center expressing research interests and ambitions of the Center is mainly based on the provision that RA NAS is a self-governed scientific institution having special status and the International Scientific Educational Center is one of its infrastructures. The scientific research institutes and Scientific-Industrial centers of RA NAS, where the Chairs of the Center are placed, carry out applies research in the main directions of the fields of Physics and Mathematics, natural, technical and social sciences. Besides, there are 2 groups in the Center within the project funded by RA MoES implementing scientific and scientific-technical activities in the fields of Superconductivity and Bioinformatics and 1 group with thematic funding in the field of Philology.

There is no separate section in the Strategic Plan of the Center expressing fields of the strategic priorities of the Center and the field is not regulated with any official document.

6.2 The Institution has a long-term strategy and med-term and short-term programs that address its research interests and ambitions.

There are planned activities in the actions of the implementation of some objectives of the Center's 2014-2018 Strategic Plan. These activities can be viewed as interests and ambitions of the Center in research field. These activities or actions are formulated in a very general way without tangible outcomes and the same way they were expressed in the action plan of the Strategic Plan.

Research component of the work plans of the chairs of the Center are considered as short-term and mid-term research plans which are being implemented within the framework of research projects carried out by the respective Institutes and centers. The outcomes of these projects are presented in the annual reports of the chairs.

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

Factually the scientific research activities of the Center are organized and implemented in the Chairs and the coordination is mainly carried out by the scientific units of the Institutes because in the organizational structure of the Center there is no respective coordinating manager (e.g. Deputy Director on Scientific Affairs). The responsibility of creating favorable conditions to carry out quality research activities is put also on the Institutes and centers of RA NAS-getting budget and thematic funding for the development of research activities.

In order to promote research activities of the young teaching staff the Center does not have an approved policy though it carries out necessary actions in this respect by providing necessary data, supporting the participation of the young teaching staff in conferences and helping them with publications, etc. The center has implemented the research project on "The Contemporary Issues of Armenian Fairy Tales" with the funding of "Support Program for Young Scientists" Foundation of State Committee of Science of RA MoES.

Tools for the evaluation of quality and monitoring of the outcomes of research activities as well as indicators for the evaluation of the effectiveness and modernity of scientific research activities are not developed. The Center and the research Institutes do not yet have approved policy and procedures ensuring academic honesty (objectiveness) and preventing plagiarism.

6.4 The Institution emphasizes internationalization of its research.

Though the Center, as a separate institution, tries to internationalize its research activities, the main factors for internationalization are considered to be the cooperation of RA NAS, international grant projects and joint events. RA NAS has a great experience in scientific cooperation with the academies of sciences and universities of different CIS, European and Asian countries. As a result joint programs

were developed, new laboratories were established, modern facilities of their laboratories are used to carry out research according to international standards. These activities surely coincide with the mission and strategic goals of the Center. As main scientific achievements of the recent years the Center presents the achievements of different Institutes and research groups within the international research projects.

The analysis of the effectiveness of the Center's policy on internationalization of research activities for the recent 5 years is missing.

6.5 The Institution has well established mechanisms for linking research with educational process.

The International Scientific –Educational Center of RA NAS places itself as a model of research university where it is possible to combine scientific and educational components of education with higher efficiency. The educational components of MA as well as PhD programs are implemented on the basis of professional and modern resources of the scientific centers of RA NAS.

The academic programs of the Center are formed in a way to ensure students involvement in research activities since the very beginning of their studies.

First of all, students become familiar with the research directions and topics of the research Institutes and afterwards with the technological means and laboratories. Each MA student has his supervisor who regularly reports about the achievements of the student in the sessions of the chair.

A requirement of the research component is set both for course papers and Master theses. The topics of the Master theses are mainly based on research activities currently being carried out in the Institutes and centers of RA NAS. Besides, the best students are involved in international projects as well as in thematically funded research works.

In the observed chairs of natural sciences the principles of “learn by working” is applied which allows the heads of the Institutes to enroll the graduates in the activities of research groups immediately after the completion of the education process.

During the meeting of the site-visit students, teaching staff and heads of the Institutes mentioned that they were overall satisfied with the current situation of interrelating research activities and education process although the Center hasn't yet made studies in this directions.

CONSIDERATIONS

Functioning in the system of RA NAS the Center has an exceptional opportunity to carry out its research activities in such an environment where scientific centers of the Republic carrying out fundamental and applied research activities in the direction of natural, technical and social sciences are centralized. There is a necessary environment which efficiently combines the scientific and educational components for the preparation of highly qualified specialists which is derived from the mission of the Cenetr. Nevertheless taking into consideration the fact that the scientific component should be one of the main directions of the Center's research activity, the Center should officially specify its main goals and objectives in the research field.

The Center's interests and ambitions in the research field can be viewed as the activity envisaged by the short-term and long-term plans which are carried out by the staffs of the professional chairs placed in the scientific-research Institutes. It is not planned by the Center as fas as the chairs are led by the research priorities of the scientific institutes which is again conditioned by the structural peculiarities of the Center. Generally taken, the Center does not follow the modernization of the in-use research activities, it does not make investments in research field, it does not take part in the merchandising of research outputs and does not yet relate its development with it.

The internationalization of the Center's research activities is mainly build on the international relations of RA NAS or separate Institutes as well as current contracts and grant projects. The human and information resources of the given structural unit of the Center are limited in terms of contributing to the internationalization of research activities. Besides, the study of the self-evaluation and of the factual situation in the given field shows that there is a problem concerning information exchange and cooperation which is a result of the poor link between the Center and the research Institutes. It is possible that due to the investment of unified interdepartmental management and information system or the Coordinator of scientific-research activities, the mentioned problem will be solved. In terms of internationalization the analysis of the efficiency of the Center's activity will

allow to find out strong and weak points of the policy and to take steps towards ensuring progress of the Center's activities.

In order to ensure international recognition of research outcomes it is necessary to carry out monitoring of research outputs and evaluate their quality in accordance with assessment indicators of efficiency and modernity of the research works as well as to apply mechanisms ensuring academic honesty and preventing plagiarism.

The Center gives a good opportunity to combine scientific and educational components for which the staff and resources of scientific Institutes of RA NAS serve as a basis. The involvement of the students in research activities since the beginning of their education process, the provision of separate supervisor for each MA student as well as the regular reports of the supervisors on students' progress can significantly contribute to the formulation of students' research skills. The requirement of the research component set for the course papers and master theses also foster the formulation of students' research skills.

The expert panel is positive about the practice of involving advanced students in international projects and thematically funded research projects, the principle of "learn by working" which should be disseminated as best practices.

The studies will provide objective information about the situation combining the research activity and education process and they will show what percentage of students, teaching staff and employers are satisfied with that process.

SUMMARY: Taking into account the fact that the Center has a exceptional opportunity to carry out its research activities in such an environment where the main potential of human and technical resources of the Republic are centralized; short-term and long-term national and international research projects are carried out in the professional chairs in accordance with the research priorities of the respective scientific Institutes, the Center can use international relations and current contracts of RA NAS for the internationalization of its research activity; good opportunity is given to the students for combining research and education processes, the expert panel concludes that the Center meets the requirements of the criterion.

CONCLUSION: The correspondence the Centre's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 6 is *satisfactory*.

CRITERION VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

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

FINDINGS

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

The academic programs of the International Scientific-Educational Center are mainly carried out in the institutes and centers of RA NAS as well as in the classrooms of the Center. Over 30 libraries, 20 reading halls, 19 lingaphone labs placed in the institutes of RA NAS correspond to international standards and serve for the fulfillment of students' educational and research goals. A number of resource bases and electronic materials are also available for the users of the library: Elibrary.ru, mathnet.ru, SPRINGER, EBSCO, DOAJ. In order to develop students' practical skills, scientific-research laboratories of RA NAS, computer classrooms, classrooms for distance learning etc. are used. Students' education is carried out in a highly developed academic environment.

The site-visit has stated that modern resources are provided for the implementation of research during the education process which foster the formation of learning outcomes of MA programs. The results of the surveys show that 85% of students is satisfied with the resources necessary for the education process.

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

The Center's policy on the provision of resources is based on the goals and actions of the Strategic Plan according to which the funding for the acquisition and provision of necessary resources and equipment is planned annually. The budget of the Center is mainly formed from the following sources: state funding, financial resources received from students' tuition fees, extra budgetary sources, scientific research and grant projects. The expenses are spent based on the previously formed estimate of the budget. The budget is mainly spent on the organization of education process, more specifically on salaries. No budget allocations are made for research or service to the society. It should be mentioned that the role of scientific-research institutes in terms of financial support for the implementation of academic programs is significant. Financial means necessary for the technical, territorial and other resources are allocated by the scientific institutes of RA NAS, and the Center carries out the financial management of those resources which are under its direct supervision.

7.3. The Institution has sound policy on the allocation of financial resources and capacity to sustain and ensure the integrity and continuity of the programs offered at the institution.

The Center does not have set policy on financial resource allocation, however, factually some mechanism of allocation is in place: every year the director of the Center, head of the education department and the accountant form the estimate of the budget of the next year where the directions of financial resource allocation are reflected. Analysis of indicators of admission of previous year and the predictions for the upcoming year serve as a basis for the planning of financial resources. The budget allocation is not carried out according to academic programs, and the salaries of the teaching staff are paid in accordance with their position irrespective of in which chair the workload of the teaching staff is implemented. The estimate of the budget is discussed and approved in the session of the Scientific Council of the Center.

Another operating mechanism of resource allocation is the purchase of goods and services based on the applications got from separate structural units. In this case the applied approach is not regulated either, and the priorities of decision making are not clarified.

The Center admits the importance of spending financial resources. For this purpose steps are taken to ensure stable increase of inflow of applicants and financial support which is received from alternative sources, mainly from international projects.

7.4. The Institution's resource base supports the implementation of institution's academic programs and its strategic plans, which promotes sustainability and continuous quality enhancement.

The resources necessary for the implementation of academic programs are mainly formed from the resources of scientific institutes of RA NAS. Before the approval of new academic programs the institution should show that it has necessary resources and should present the necessity of getting additional resources. Acquisition of laboratory equipment and resources is also carried out on the account of the institutes or grant projects. The enrichment of the library funds of RA NAS fundamental scientific library with modern professional literature and other additional resources is carried out with the funding of RA NAS.

The Center provides resources for the organization of lessons and acquisition of in-use materials. The acquisition of necessary resources for the education process is carried out in the centralized way and their allocation is carried out according to the applications received from separate structural units.

This situation ensures certain stability for the implementation of academic programs.

The Center does not carry out clear allocation of resources according to strategic objectives. Neither the action plan of the strategic plan, nor estimates of annual budget contain allocation of resources according to strategic goals and objectives.

Resources necessary for the quality assurance of education process are allocated only to the QA department.

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

Certain mechanisms and tools are in place at the Center and they are directed to the management of information and documentation process. IN particular, the new reviewed web-site (2015) and electronic information management system serve for the mentioned purpose and by means of which the internal and external stakeholders get informed about educational, administrative, research and other types of processes of the Center. Regulated process on administrative decisions and orders is carried out in the Center and comprehensive and reliable information about the process is provided to internal stakeholders through computer network.

The Center has developed a PR concept where the spheres and functions of responsible structural units are outlined.

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

The infrastructures and staff responsible for the security of Institutes involved in the RA NAS system also serve for the students and teaching staff of the Center. In order to ensure and control the security of the Center's territory a number of cameras are fixed in different places and there are fire protecting means in the territory of the Center and in scientific centers.

The Center does not have any dormitory but it has recently initiated activities for the construction of medical unit. The Chairs of the Center aren't mainly adapted to the organization of education for students with special needs.

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

Students surveys which are carried out by the QA department of the Center refer to the technical means necessary for the academic programs, to the satisfaction with professional literature and other educational-methodical means but not to the application and evaluation of their efficiency. As the meeting with the teaching staff representatives has shown the participants of the meeting weren't aware of any mechanism evaluating the recourses which are provided to the teaching staff.

CONSIDERATIONS

The modern laboratory and material technical base of scientific Institutes of RA NAS which are used by the Center, the library resources and reading halls which are placed in RA NAS Institutes, the computer and education classrooms equipped with necessary technical facilities as well as the academic environment existing in the Institutes ensure favorable conditions for the implementation of the academic programs and foster the formation of learning outcomes.

There are certain procedures on allocation of financial resources of the Center, however there isn't a clearly set policy. There aren't principals in planning the activities in accordance with the financial means; any mechanisms ensuring purposefulness of financial management, monitoring and expenses; any priorities or principles on resource allocation.

The expenses of the previous year and the predictions of the upcoming year somehow serve as a basis for the allocation of financial resources. However a clear planning in accordance with academic programs or strategic goals isn't carried out. It should be mentioned that the financial planning of the Center is factually carried out upon need as far as the process doesn't have regulated procedures. The above mentioned problems can be solved in case of the development of financial policy and its consistent fulfillment. Taking into consideration the resources provided by RA NAS Institutes, the Center is mainly ensured with resources necessary for the implementation of the academic programs and the solution of the strategic objectives however the QA processes need separate funding.

The documentation system of the Center is carried out in accordance with certain procedures although the sphere is generally not regulated. The internal and external processes of information circulation are based on certain principles: availability, transparency, convenience. In this respect it is positive that the Center has set an electronic information management system and has ensured its availability to students and staff.

The Center operates some means ensuring personal security and fire protection of students however medical services are not yet provided. If the chairs of the Center are adapted to the needs of students the organization of education for students with special needs will be possible and on the account of that the number of students will increase.

Conducting only surveys on satisfaction of students and graduates without studying the opinion of the teaching staff the management of the Center will face problems analyzing the application, availability and efficiency of resources which are provided to students and the teaching staff. Only in case of objective evaluation it is possible to make substantiated decisions on the provision and allocation of resources. And only after that it will be logical to analyse the mechanisms evaluating the efficiency.

SUMMARY: Taking into consideration that the teaching staff, classrooms, labs and library resources existing in the research Institutes and the Center form a efficient academic environment; the financial insurance of research component of the academic programs is carried out by the Institutes of RA NAS; the Center provides means for the organization of the education process within its capacities; certain tools of gathering information are developed as well as there are sufficient resources for the stable implementation of academic programs the expert panel concludes that the Center meets the requirements of the criterion.

CONCLUSION: The correspondence the Centre's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 7 is *satisfactory*.

CRITERION VIII. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

CRITERION: The Institution 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 Institution has a clear policy on institutional accountability

The accountability on education, research and used resources of the Center is ensured by the functioning mechanism and it has a bottom-up structure; the reports of educational-scientific and administrative structural units of the chairs as well as the director's annual report which is based on the mentioned reports are presented to the Presidium of the RA NAS. The Center also prepares an annual financial report which is presented according to the time schedule set by the Tax Legislation of RA. Director's annual reports are also considered to be a mechanism of reviewing the performance of the strategic plan. During the site-visit the reports of the managerial staff and chairs showed that not all the spheres of the Center's activity are illustrated. The policy, procedures and mechanisms of ensuring accountability to stakeholders are in the phase of development.

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

Giving importance to the assurance of transparency and availability of its activity to internal and external stakeholders, the Center provides information on its activity by using different printed and electronic means, in particular, annual reports, website, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube pages, scientific journal "In the World of Science", scientific yearbook "Collection of Scientific Articles" etc. This way the Center makes the information about its activity, respective regulating and procedural documents, news and announcements available to its internal and external stakeholders.

There is an electronic system of organization and management of education processes in the Center. The expert panel thoroughly examined the functioning of the system during the site-visit.

The Center developed a course guide and guidebooks of all academic programs in accordance with the credit system in 2014 which are available on the webpage of the Center. This way the Center provides information about the content of the current programs and awarded qualifications.

However, it should be mentioned that the analyses of the implemented processes of the Center which are available to external stakeholders are few. Besides, the Center doesn't make evaluation or monitoring on efficiency of mechanisms ensuring public accountability.

8.3 The Institution has sustainable feedback mechanisms for establishing contacts with society.

The concept on Public Relations (PR) of the Center was approved in 2014 which defines the PR issues of the RA NAS as well as the functions in the sphere of PR. According to the provisions of the concept, 4 structural units of the Center - Foreign Affairs Department, IT Department, QA Department, and Alumni and Career Development Department, perform PR functions within the frame of their authorities. The Center considers its official website, Facebook page and RA NAS Student Council as the main feedback tools of PR although the website is not interactive.

The Center accepts the fact that the mechanisms by means of which public opinion about the Center is examined, are missing. Besides, the Center hasn't made analysis on efficiency of in-use mechanisms fostering the establishment of PR.

8.4 The Institution has mechanisms that ensure knowledge /value/ transfer to the society.

As an important achievement of transferring knowledge (values) to the society, the Center points out the organization of continuous academic programs for distance learning. The Center takes steps towards licensing continuous academic programs for distance learning. The RA NAS library, publishing house and Psychological Observatory serve the society for knowledge transfer.

The tools evaluating the additional educational and consultancy services are in the development phase.

CONSIDERATIONS

The accountability system accepted by the Center is based on the annual reports of all the structural units on the basis of which the director's annual report is prepared and submitted to the RA NAS Presidium. Afterwards the data are included in the RA NAS annual reports and are published in the report on the main results of scientific and scientific-organizational activities of the RA NAS. This way it keeps the society informed about its activity, provides up-to-date information and fulfils social responsibility. But as far as the set of key performance indicators is missing, it is difficult to provide objective, valid and full information and respectively put forward the progress and gaps of the activity. Besides, the development of tools by means of which internal and external evaluations of policy and procedures on accountability, additional educational and consultancy services provided to the society are made, is important for the coordination of the sphere.

By using different means and ways, the Center strives to provide comprehensive, full and objective information about its activity to the internal, external stakeholders and society, thus ensuring the availability of the information and the transparency of its activity. The expert panel mentions that the Center does not make evaluation on efficiency of mechanisms ensuring public accountability which doesn't allow to identify and rectify the observed shortcomings and gaps in the processes of providing external information.

Giving importance to the continuous improvement and expansion of PR, the Center has approved the PR concept, thus outlining the authorities, functions and issues of responsible units in the given profile. This will give an opportunity to the Center to properly coordinate the given sphere of its activity. The analysis of efficiency of current mechanisms fostering the establishment of PR will let the Center substantiate the suitability of the applied mechanisms or make improvements based on the evaluations.

The Center, which functions within the RA NAS system, acts in different directions which is aimed at upbringing, reinforcement and dissemination of scientific, educational, moral and intellectual values as well as those directed to the preservation of the nation among wide range of the society. It is derived from the mission and strategic goals of the Center. As such, the organization and implementation of continuous academic programs for distance learning is considered to be one of the best practices of the Center. The reason of not making analysis on evaluation of additional educational and consultancy services is the lack of toolsets.

SUMMARY: Taking into consideration the fact that the Center uses the director's report and reports of structural units as an accountability mechanism, there are documents which are publicly available and ensure the transparency of the activity, PR concept has been developed and relations with the society are established, there are a library, publishing house, Psychological Observatory and

processes which allow the knowledge to be transferred to the society mainly by means of distance learning, the expert panel concludes that the Center meets the requirements of the criterion.

CONCLUSION: The correspondence the Centre's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 8 is *satisfactory*.

CRITERION IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

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

FINDINGS

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

The Center of RA NAS gives importance to the *internationalization of education and experience exchange which is reflected in the Strategic Plan of the Center: "Fostering internationalization processes of research activities of the Center, integration into European Higher Education Area, expanding international networking, fostering educational and scientific cooperation with European universities and international organizations of higher education as well as promoting participation of students and teaching staff in international exchange programs"*.

At the same time the Center doesn't have any policy and procedures on the fulfillment of strategic goals which promote the development and internationalization of external relations. There aren't such procedures in those Institutes where the chairs of the Center are placed. The Institutes carry out some activities towards internationalization of research independent from the Center.

The Center has not yet clarified the main mechanisms of internationalization of its activity and the development of external relations. After the different meetings of site-visit the expert panel came to the conclusion that such mechanisms are in place but they are not regulated by the Center, in particular, the mutual visits of the staff for the experience exchange, participation in international research projects, grant projects, conferences, trainings in foreign universities etc. The Center doesn't make coordinated analysis on the efficiency and impact of current policy and mechanisms promoting exchange of experience and internationalization.

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

In 2010 the Center established a separate unit- Department on International Relations which aims to ensure cooperation with foreign and local education institutions and scientific centers, to promote the participation of students, teaching and administrative staffs in exchange programs. The general coordination of the activities of the structural unit is carried out by the head of the department who is directly accountable to the director of the Center. Factually the Department on International Relations has two staff members who apart from their main functions fulfill various technical and organizational functions.

The Center finds that the lack of disseminated information in the chairs about international projects as well as the low motivation of potential participants of the projects because of the low level of proficiency in English have negative impact on the effectiveness of activities fostering internationalization. The same can be said about the lack of functioning of a number of signed contracts and agreements and one of the main reasons is the lack of staff members in the Department on International Relations.

Technically equipped distance learning portal was invested in the Center, online conference hall was also established where the students and teaching staff have an opportunity to listen to the lectures provided by the foreign leading specialists. The Center has real opportunities to use international activities of the institutes of RA NAS to ensure the development of its external relations and internationalization. However, cooperation with the institutes in this respect is poor, and the number of specialists with necessary qualifications isn't sufficient to carry out a coordinated process.

9.3 The Institution effectively collaborates with local and international institutions and organizations.

The Center has signed partnership agreements and memoranda with a number of international institutions and organizations (USA, CIS, Europe, Middle East countries, etc.). However, because of the poorly developed component of operating the signed international contracts, they mainly do not function. The lack of qualified specialists in the staff of the Department of International Relations as well as their overloading with other functions also hinder the practical implementation and monitoring of international contracts.

The expert panel finds it necessary to mention the following about the achievements of the Center as a result of international cooperation:

- a) 2009-2013 – within the framework of TEMPUS TACIS a new MA program on “Library Information Resources” in line with the European educational standards was established in the Center which successfully functions so far.
- b) In 2013 together with European partners - PARMA and Middlesex Centers, the RA NAS Center initiated a program on the organization of additional distance continuing education. Corresponding programs, materials and manuals were developed, training of teaching staff was carried out, MOODLE system was translated into Armenian which is also being operated currently.
- c) In 2013 together with 20 Armenian and European universities and educational organizations the RA NAS Center participates in TEMPUS “Structural Development of the Third Cycle Based on Salzburg Principles” project the aim of which is to improve post-graduate education system in Armenia aligning it with the European Qualifications Framework and Salzburg Principles.
- d) In 2014 due to the agreement signed with the internationally recognized AMADEUS organization in the sphere of tourism, the students of the Department on Tourism Management had an access to AMADEUS system, and the teachers and the staff of the RA NAS Center participated in trainings and received respective certificates for working in the AMADEUS program.

On the other hand, the expert panel finds it necessary to mention that the materials in foreign languages presenting the activities of the Center are few, and the inflow and outflow of students and teachers within the framework of long-term cooperation projects is limited. The Center doesn't have academic programs implemented in a foreign language, as well as short-term internship or cooperation projects which will be attractive for the local and international stakeholders. It should also be mentioned that no joint or double diploma awarding MA programs are implemented with other educational and scientific-research institutions.

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

In order to expand the involvement in international cooperation projects, the Center strives to ensure sufficient level of foreign language among its teaching staff and students by carrying out trainings. However, trainings are not enough to ensure necessary level of proficiency in a foreign language and to enhance the effectiveness of internationalization as the trainings are not continuous and are carried out within the framework of agreements and projects.

The Center admits that one of the main reasons hindering internationalization of its activities is the low level of foreign language proficiency. At the same time there are no courses or programs in a foreign language in spite of the fact that according to the data presented in the self-evaluation, the number of teachers with the proficiency in foreign languages in 2014 was 176.

CONSIDERATIONS

The Center doesn't have documented policy and procedures promoting the establishment of external relations. However, based on the strategic goals and action plans directing the Center's functions in the given sphere, the Center carries out some activities towards internationalization and development of external relations. It is mainly based on the existing international relations and projects of RA NAS and scientific institutes. In this respect it non-effective activities of the responsible

unit of the given sphere should be mentioned which is particularly explained by the lack of concrete action plan and qualified specialists. Besides, the chairs state that there is a problem of availability of information about international projects for target groups. This states about the poor cooperation among the chairs of the Center placed in the institutes of the RA NAS and the non-regulated activities of the given sphere.

Less attractiveness of the academic programs of the Center in the international level, the non-compatibility of the academic programs with similar programs implemented in foreign universities, the absence of joint or double diploma awarding academic programs hinder the effective cooperation of the RA NAS Center with international institutions and organizations. In general, the Center gives importance to the proficiency in a foreign language and gives an opportunity to students and teaching staff for addition education and development. However, this process does not yet have tangible impact on the participation in international exchange programs as well as on the increase of the number of academic programs or courses provided in a foreign language.

SUMMARY: Taking into consideration that the Center does not efficiently use international relations of the RA NAS and scientific institutes for the development and fulfillment of international component of its mission; the responsible unit does not have sufficient number of qualified specialists and does not carry out regulated activities; the signed international and local partnership agreements are not implemented effectively; the Center gives importance to the proficiency in a foreign language and creates an opportunity for internal stakeholders to get improved, however, the current level of their proficiency in a foreign language is not yet sufficient to increase the level of participation of students and teaching staff in international projects, the expert panel concludes the Center does not meet the requirements of the criterion.

CONCLUSION: The correspondence the Centre's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 9 *is unsatisfactory*.

CRITERION X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

CRITERION: The Institution has an internal quality assurance system, which promotes establishment of a quality culture and continual improvement of all the processes of the Institution.

FINDINGS

10.1 The Institution has internal quality assurance policy and procedures.

The QA concept and policy were approved by the Scientific Council in 2014. The mentioned documents as well as QA organizational structure and QA main fields of the Center are presented in the QA manual which was developed within the framework of the World Bank 2nd grant project "Education Quality and Relevance" provided by MoES. In the QA manual the QA policy of the Center is defined, the QA principles are described and the allocation of responsibilities among different structural units and at different levels of management is provided. The manual also includes the 7 main fields of QA (Academic Programs and Courses, Teaching Staff, Teaching and Learning, Student Assessment, Resources and Infrastructures, Research Activity and Social Integrity). The section on "QA Processes and Procedures of International Scientific-Educational Center" partially describes the processes, however, it does not reflect the set procedures.

The availability of all the official documents relating to QA system is limited even for the chairs as far as it is possible only through the manual in the section of "Manuals" of the web-site. The QA department currently has its separate page in the website of the Center. The QA manual and all other regulating documents are planned to put in the QA and accreditation online resource base in the future²⁰.

²⁰ The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions got from the Institution.

The Center hasn't made analysis of efficiency of QA policy and procedures so far, and their impact hasn't been evaluated.

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

QA department of the Center was established based on the decision of the Scientific Council of the Center in 2013 within the framework of the World Bank grant project "Education Quality and Relevance". Due to the same project the Center has been equipped with necessary office equipment, furniture and material resources. As the expert panel's observations on the working conditions and staffing of the Center made during the site-visit have shown, the Center currently has an office and necessary equipment, however, the list of staff set by the charter of the Center is not fully enrolled. In terms of fulfilling its functions, particularly organizing and implementing processes of electronic surveys among different stakeholders, QA department tightly cooperates with the staff of the Information department.

Since 2014 QA Steering Committee attached to the Scientific Council of the Center has been functioning the activity of which is regulated. The Committee aims to establish a regulatory and methodological base for QA processes. In the scheme of organizational structure of QA system mentioned in the QA manual, the Committee as well as other responsible parties are missing. Other parties (staff members responsible for QA management and QA representatives of chairs) according to the structure of the Center's QA system and the manual, have defined functions but the chairs aren't aware of their activities. During the site-visit it was also stated that besides the above mentioned resources, the Center allocates human and financial resources for the conduction of surveys among internal and external stakeholders.

The staff members of the QA department mention that there are human, material and financial resources for the implementation of processes although the Center hasn't made any evaluation and analysis on satisfaction with resources. It should also be mentioned that the documents regulating the allocation of financial and material resources which ensure the implementation of QA processes are in the phase of development.

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

The involvement of internal and external stakeholders of the Center in QA processes is regulated in the QA manual. The Center has adopted QA principles of "Enlarged participation of staff" and "Involvement of students and external reviewers". The mentioned principles include students' participation in surveys which assess education quality, and surveys which assess alumni's satisfaction with academic programs. There are student representatives involved in the Scientific Council, QA Committee; one student also participated in the working activities of the self-evaluation working group. Surveys on employers' satisfaction with professional quality of alumni are carried out among external stakeholders, and employers are also involved in committees on alumni's final attestation. Some academic programs have been expertise by the external experts.

The mechanisms of involving internal and external stakeholders in main QA processes of the Center are not specified. The Center does not make analysis on the participation of stakeholders in QA processes and its efficiency.

10.4 The internal quality assurance system is periodically reviewed.

The QA system of the Center is not fully formulated and it hasn't yet assessed the efficiency of its activity. The Center gives importance to the continuous improvement of quality as the most important principle of its policy, however, the Center doesn't yet have procedures, mechanisms and necessary tools for the review and improvement of the developed system. The QA department of the Center accepts that fact. Besides, the benchmarking of policy and procedures on implemented QA processes is imperfect; QA department has been limited with the experience of Charles University (Prague) with which the Center has a partnership agreement.

10.5 The internal quality assurance system provides valid and sufficient grounds for the external quality assurance processes.

One of the 9 QA principles of the Center (“interconnection of QA internal and external processes”) foresees that “Internal quality assurance serves a basis for external review and it is structured taking into consideration the criteria and procedures of external review”. According to this principle, self-evaluation process for the Center’s institutional accreditation should be regularly organized.

The Center had the first experience on information gathering for the external review during the Center’s self-evaluation which was carried out within the grant project on “Investment or improvement of internal quality assurance system” in 2013. At that time the Center was guided by the information which was required by the ANQA format of self-evaluation of institutional capacities. Currently external QA requirements, i.e. RA institutional accreditation criteria and standards, are reflected in the strategic directions, goals and objectives of the Center. Nevertheless, the Center doesn’t have indicators for the evaluation of strategic goals and objectives, and it hasn’t developed a full set of internal information which is sufficient for internal and external evaluations. There are still problems regarding the lack of information in the self-evaluation (2015) which hinder the Center as well as expert panel to analyze and evaluate a number of processes.

10.6 The internal quality assurance system ensures the transparency of the processes in the Institution providing valid and up to date information on their quality to the internal and external stakeholders.

The Center indicates the director’s annual report as a mechanism of ensuring information to internal and external stakeholders. The report includes the main results of activities of educational, scientific-research and administrative structures, as well as reports of the Center’s chairs and other structural units. The report is published as a part of the RA NAS annual report. The annual analyses of surveys on satisfaction of students and alumni with education quality are provided to the chairs for their information after the analyses are presented to the Scientific Council.

The electronic dean system which functions in the Center involves information on student academic progress and mobility. Internal and external stakeholders can get detailed information about the academic programs of the Center through guidebooks on the organization of full-time and part-time education in accordance with the credit system as well as program guidebooks (re-developed in 2014) which are available online.

The internal processes and the documents regulating them are partially posted on the website (<http://www.isec.am>) which is considered to be the main mechanism of ensuring transparency of the Center’s activity as well as a platform for the organization of discussions on new initiatives. On the webpage of the QA department the objectives and functions of the department are only presented, and the regulating documents, results of the current processes or their analyses are missing.

For further development of information system, the Center plans to replenish the system with new modules which aims to broaden the scope of availability of information for the stakeholders. This is planned to be carried out within the framework of the grant project on “Investment and development of internal quality assurance system”. At the same time the Center doesn’t make analyses on the level of stakeholders’ awareness, nor it evaluates the efficiency of the in-use mechanisms ensuring transparency of the Center’s activity.

CONSIDERATIONS

The World Bank 2nd grant project “Education Quality and Relevance” provided by MoES in 2014 was an external driver for the establishment of the QA department, development of documents and implementation of processes. The QA concept and policy approved by the Scientific Council of the Center, as well as the developed processes are in accordance with the mission and strategic goals of the institution, and necessary base was established for the formation of the QA system. It should be noted that the Center gives importance to the strategy of continuous improvement of education quality which is reflected in the strategic goals and objectives.

The organizational structure of QA system and the main QA fields of the Center are presented in the QA manual which was also developed within the framework of the grant project. Although the allocation of responsibilities among different management levels and units are described in the manual, the actors are not fully aware of their responsibilities. One of the reasons is that the availability of QA system related documents, including the manual, is limited to the stakeholders. On the other hand, in the section of “QA Processes and Procedures of International Scientific-Educational

Center” there isn’t any description of procedures except for the regulation of student survey on teaching quality and efficiency. In case of missing procedures, it is unclear who the responsible people are, what deadlines are set, in what sequence and what kind of QA activities should be carried out.

The QA department of the Center was established within the framework of World Bank grant project “Education Quality and Relevance”. Due to the same project the Center has been equipped with necessary office equipment, furniture and material resources. The QA department is currently funded on account of the Center and partially from the international grant projects.

The Center allocates additional financial and human resources for the implementation of QA processes, however, not all the vacancies are occupied, and separate allocations for QA processes are not planned in the budget. The situation will become clear after the documents regulating the allocation of financial and material resources which ensure the implementation of QA processes are developed. The absence of those documents do not allow the Center to make mid-term and long-term planning in the field.

The QA organizational structure of the Center presented in the QA manual does not correspond to the currently functioning system. In the scheme the QA Steering Committee of the Center, as well as other actors (chair representatives responsible for quality management and quality assurance) are missing; their functions are defined but the chairs are not informed about the activity.

Giving importance to the role of internal and external stakeholders in QA processes, the Center has regulated their participation in the QA manual according to different processes. Some of them are carried out (participation in different surveys, assurance of representativeness in councils, program expertise), however, the mechanisms ensuring stakeholders’ participation in the main processes are not developed. Only the conduction of the survey is already a small part of the PDCA cycle, and being merely a respondent assumes passive role for students and alumni. Mechanisms ensuring students’ participation in survey planning, development of survey results and improvement of academic programs based on the mentioned processes are developed. The same refers to the external stakeholders’ participation in the processes of QA monitoring and review of academic programs. QA department needs to evaluate the level of internal and external stakeholders’ participation as well as efficiency of mechanisms ensuring their involvement.

Currently the QA system of the Center is in the phase of formation and it doesn’t fully carry out its activity. The analysis on the efficiency of QA policy and procedures hasn’t been made yet, and their impact on the Center’s activity has been evaluated either. The mechanisms and tools of QA system improvement haven’t yet been developed either. The Center gives importance to the continuous improvement of quality considering it as the most crucial principle of its policy and correspondingly it accepts the necessity to develop the mentioned toolset.

The expert panel finds it positive that while collecting information for external review, the Center is led by the information required by the ANQA format of self-evaluation of institutional capacities which is also reflected in the strategic directions, goals and objectives of the Center. At the same time the absence of indicators evaluating the strategic goals and objectives and full set of information does not allow to make objective evaluation. Because of the lack of valid and reliable information the institution (and later on the expert panel as well) didn’t have an opportunity to make analysis and evaluation of a number of processes in its self-evaluation (2015). Currently the QA system isn’t ready to give sufficient information about the services provided to the governing bodies of the Center and the efficiency of academic programs.

The director’s annual report in which the activity results of the structural units of the Center are provided, is an accepted mechanism of providing information to internal and external stakeholders. It would be preferable to discuss that report by the staff of the Center and to publish it separately. In case the analyses of surveys on students and alumni’s satisfaction with education quality, as well as the report are published, more stakeholders can be aware of the situation and can make significant investments through their suggestions in the improvement processes.

The Center quite actively uses its webpage to introduce the internal processes and documents regulating them to its stakeholders, as well as to inform them about the program guidebooks and make them available. It’s not clear why the QA manual and other regulating documents haven’t been posted on the QA department webpage so far. The website of the Center is the main mechanism ensuring transparency of the Center’s activity, consequently there is a necessity to evaluate the efficiency of that mechanism and the level of stakeholders’ awareness. In this case the replenishment

of information system of the Center with necessary information and modules will be grounded. And in the current situation, because of the absence of data on evaluations and analyses made by the QA system, the website doesn't provide sufficient information about education quality and other education processes to the stakeholders.

SUMMARY: Taking into account that QA system of the Center is currently in the phase of development and does not yet function fully; QA procedures are not developed yet, the documents concerning QA system are not available for the stakeholders, and the responsible people are not fully informed about their duties; mechanisms ensuring participation of stakeholders in the main activities are not developed; the system does not provide necessary mechanisms and sufficient data about the evaluation of the effectiveness of the academic programs and provided educational services; mechanisms and tools for the improvement of QA system are not developed the expert panel concludes that the Center does not meet the requirements of the criterion.

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

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

<i>CRITERION</i>	<i>CONCLUSION</i>
1. Mission and Goals	Satisfactory
2. Governance and Administration	Satisfactory
3. Academic Programs	Satisfactory
4. Students	Satisfactory
5. Teaching and Support Staffs	Satisfactory
6. Research and development	Satisfactory
7. Infrastructure and Resources	Satisfactory
8. Social Responsibility	Satisfactory
9. External Relations and Internationalization	Unsatisfactory
10. Internal Quality Assurance System	Unsatisfactory

29.08.2016

Signature of the Chair of the expert panel

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. CVs OF THE EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

Eduard Hakobyan: Graduated from the faculty of Electrotechnics of the Yerevan Polytechnic Institute in 1982. In 1986-1989 studied PhD in Moscow Automobile and Road Institute at the same time lecturing in the Chair of Industrial Electronics and Automation. He is a candidate of technical sciences, associate professor. Currently he is the head of the Chair of Electrotechnics and Electricity Consumption at National Polytechnic University of Armenia. He is an author of more than 40 scientific articles, manuals and methodical works. He has participated in a number of trainings in RA and abroad concerning investment and development of QA internal systems (Turin, Italy), Quality management in higher education system (Koblentz, Germany), Bologna process in higher education system (Genova, Italy), etc. As a coordinator and expert-advisor he has participated in a number of TEMPUS and World Bank grant projects. In 2011 he was the head of the expert panel carrying out institutional accreditation in Yerevan State University of Architecture and Construction.

Azir Alue: was born on April 15, 1976. Doctor (PhD) in Philosophy in the sphere of Computer Science. In 2007-2009 he was the head of Research center at South East European University. In 2011-2013 he was the Vice-Rector on Science in the same University, since 2012 he he is a lecturer in the mentioned University. In 2011 he got the title of Doctor of Technical Sciences. Since 2013 he has been the Advisor of the Prime-Minister of Macedonia for the spheres of Science, Higher Education and Information Technologies. Since 2007 he has been managing a number of scientific and educational projects, has been coordinating and participating in TEMPUS and World Bank projects. He is a member of a number of international scientific organizations and professional unions. He is an author of many scientific articles and monographs.

Nora Gevorgyan: In 2014 she graduated from Leiden University (Leiden, Netherlands) MA program on International Relations and European Studies. She is a Candidate of Political Sciences in the profession of International Relations and associate professor at the Chair of World Politics and International Relations in the Institute of Law and Policy of the Armenian-Russian Slavonic University. She also teaches at the Chair of UNESCO Human Rights, Democracy and European Studies at Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences. She was a visiting scholar and has given lectures in a number of European and American Universities (Florida State University, Leiden University, University of Tartu, etc.). She has participated in a number of international conferences and Program of the development of professional education (Prizewinner of U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Prizewinner of Cultural Affairs' Junior Faculty Development Program, Public Service Fellowship Program (PSFP) of the U.S. Department of State's Public Affairs Section, Prizewinner of Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education (NUFFIC), Warsaw Euro-Atlantic Summer Academy (WEASA), etc.).

Meri Ghazaryan: She graduated from MA with the profession of Environmental Protection (the branch of Energetics) of Armenian State Engineering University. In 2003-2006 she was PhD student at the Chair on Thermal Power. In 2007 she defended the PhD dissertation, she is a Candidate of Technical Sciences, associate professor. She has published 15 scientific articles, 3 methodical guides and one manual. Since 2003 she has been working in National Polytechnic University of Armenia. She has been a deputy head on science on the Department of Energetic, acting head of the Department on MA education, acting director of the Regional Nuclear Security Training Center. Currently she is the head of the Chair of Thermal Power and Environmental Protection. At the same time she is a member of Scientific Technical Council attached to the RA Minister of Environmental Protection. Since 2007 she has participated in a number of local and international projects and trainings on professional development, education management, investment of three-tier education system within the framework of Bologna process, application of E-learning toolsets, etc.

Taguhi Abrahamyan: 1st year MA student of the faculty of Agro business and marketing at the Armenian National Agrarian University, she is the President of the Committee on PR and Information at Armenian National Students' Association (ANSA). She has been a member of Students' Scientific Union of the Faculty, the President of the Students' Council and also a member of University Governing Board. She has participated in trainings held in International University Collage of Bulgaria (five-day courses at the "Academy of Young Leaders") and in Koblenz-Landau University

(on the topic of “Issues of Reinforcing the University-Labor Market Linkage”).She is participant of trainings for student-experts organized by ANQA.

APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE-VISIT

10.05.2016 –13.05.2016
10.05.2017

10.05.2016		<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting with the Director of the Center	9:30	10:15	45 minutes
2	Meeting with Deputy Director, Head of the Education Department and Dean	10:30	11:30	60 minutes
3	Meeting with the self-evaluation working group representatives	11:45	12:45	60 minutes
4	Break, discussions of the expert panel	13:00	13:45	45 minutes
5	Observation of documents and resources (Education Department, Dean's office)	14:00	15:00	60 minutes
6	Meeting with alumni	15:15	16:15	60 minutes
7	Meeting with employers	16:30	17:30	60 minutes
8	Close discussions of the panel	17:30	18:30	60 minutes
11.05.2016		<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Observation of documents and resources	9:30	10:30	60 minutes
2	Observation of documents and resources	11:00	12:00	60 minutes
3	Meeting with teaching staff representatives	12:30	13:30	60 minutes
4	Break, discussions of the expert panel	13:45	14:30	45 minutes
5	Meeting with the Heads of Chairs	14:45	15:45	60 minutes
6	Meeting with the heads of units (IT, external relations, Alumni and Career Development Department, PhD)	16:00	17:00	60 minutes
7	Close discussions of the panel	17:15	18:30	75 minutes
12.05.2016		<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting with the members of Student Council	9:30	10:30	60 minutes
2	Meeting with student representatives	10:45	12:00	75 minutes
3	Observation of documents and resources	12:15	13:45	90 minutes
4	Break, discussions of the expert panel	14:00	14:45	45minutes
5	Meeting with the heads of units (financial, HR management, economic)	15:00	16:00	60 minutes
6	Observation of documents and resources	16:15	16:45	30 minutes
7	Close discussions of the panel	17:00	18:30	90 minutes
13.05.2016		<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting with the staff of QA Center	9:30	10:30	60 minutes
2	Observation of documents and resources	10:45	12:00	75 minutes
3	Open meeting with the panel	12:15	12:45	30 minutes
4	Meeting with the members of presidium of RA National Academy of Sciences	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
5	Break, discussions of the expert panel	14:00	14:45	45 minutes
6	Meeting with the staff selected by the panel	15:00	15:45	45 minutes
7	Close discussions of the panel	15:45	16:15	30 minutes
8	Meeting with the Director of the Center	16:30	17:15	45 minutes
9	Close discussions of the panel	17:30	18:30	60 minutes

APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

N	NAME OF THE DOCUMENT	CRITERION
1	Self-evaluation of the Center	1-10
2	Charter of the Center	1, 2
3	Strategic plan of the Center	1-10
4	Time-schedule 2014-2018 for the implementation of the Strategic plan of the Center	1-10
5	QA manual	1-10
6	Justification of the amendment of 2012-2016 Strategic plan of the Center and approval on the involvement of 2014-2018 period	1-10
7	Estimate of the Center's 2014-2015 budget	1, 2, 7
8	Annual report of the Center (2014)	2, 8, 10
9	Charter of the Department on external relations of the Center	2, 9
10	Regulation on the admission and education in MA studies at the Center	4
11	Regulation on the Allocation of Student Allowances	4
12	Regulation on the approval of the academic programs of the Center	3
13	List of the MA professions at the Center	3, 4
14	Excerpt of the decree of RA NAS Presidium	3
15	Regulation on the Current Monitoring and Regular Review of the Academic Programs	3, 10
16	Regulation on the Admission to PhD studies, Doctorate Education and registration as PhD applicant	3, 4
17	Regulation on the Formation of the Teaching staff	5
18	Regulation of the Scientific Council of International Scientific-Education Center of RA NAS	2
19	Policy and Procedures on the Staff Recruitment, Transfer, Dismissal, Promotion, Incentives and Penalties.	2, 5
20	Analyses by the QA Department of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	5, 10
21	Regulation on the Professional Development and Enhancement of Qualifications of the Teaching Staff of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	5
22	Regulation on the Establishment and Functioning of the Chairs and the Election of the Heads of Chairs.	2, 5
23	Charter of the Department of Information Technologies of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	2, 8
24	Concept of PR of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	2, 8
25	Regulation of the Alumni and Career Development Department	2, 4
26	The Structure of the the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	2
27	Training of the Teaching Staff of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	5
28	Curricula and Minutes of the Sessions of Three Chairs	5
29	Regulation on the Activities of the Dean of the International Scientific – Research Center of RA NAS	2
30	Regulation on the Center of Applied Psychology o the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	5
31	Regulation on the Activities of the Educational Methodical Department of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	2

32	Regulation of the Students Council of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	4, 10
33	The lists of the main staff members and double jobbers of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	2, 5
34	External Relation of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	9
35	Work-regulation of the QA Steering Committee of International Scientific – Research Center of RA NAS	10
36	Decrees of RA Government and Orders of RA MoES	2
37	Decrees of the Scientific Council of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	1-10
38	Regulation on the Organization of Education Process in the Center with Credit System /full-time, part-time, with new edition/	3, 4, 5
39	Academic programs- Pharmaceutical Chemistry, Environmental Protection and Nature, International Relations	3, 4, 5
40	Annual reports of QA Department of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	10
41	Analyses of benchmarking carried out by the International Scientific – Research Center of RA NAS	10
42	Examples of annual reports, minutes of discussions and sessions of the Chairs and other units of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	1-10
43	Examples of progress for the last three years in the sphere of international activities of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	9
44	Analyses of the effectiveness and modernity of additional educational and consultancy services organized by the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	8
45	Examples of mid-terms and short-term plans expressing the research interests and ambitions of the the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	6
46	Training plan, action plan and topics for the professional development of the teaching staff of RA NAS	5
47	Reports of QA survey results and the evaluation of educational, consultancy and other services provided to the students by the International Scientific – Research Center of RA NAS	4
48	Charter of the Students’ Council of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS, examples of the implementation of 2.1.3-2.1.8 provisions	4
49	Mechanisms evaluating the effectiveness of the services promoting students’ career development	4
50	Reports on the results of pilot program on the students’ educational needs assessment and studies	4
51	Examples of organization of additional lessons and consultancy within the frames of three academic programs	4
52	Data on the mobility of the students of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS for 2015 and 1 st semester of 2015-2016	4
53	Reports on improvement, evaluation of the effectiveness and monitoring carried out within the framework of the three academic programs involved in the self-evaluation report of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	3
54	Examples on the implementation of the policy of the International Scientific – Research Center of RA NAS on improving the indicators of the mobility of teaching staff and students	3

55	Reports of implemented benchmarking within the framework of the three academic programs involved in the self-evaluation report of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	3
56	Examples of applying mechanisms and policy on preventing plagiarism at the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	3
57	Examples of applying mechanisms ensuring the objectiveness and transparency of Students' Assessment system	3
58	Examples of course guides of courses involved in three academic programs mentioned in the self-evaluation of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	3
59	Reports of the analysis of labor market carried out within the frameworks of the new academic programs that are being reviewed and invested	3
60	Reports of the data collection on the effectiveness of the three academic programs mentioned in the self-evaluation report of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS, analysis and evaluation of those data	2
61	Reports reflecting the analysis of the impact of internal and external factors carried out by the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	2
62	Examples of the evaluation of action plan of the International Scientific – Research Center of RA NAS	2
63	Job-descriptions of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	2
64	Performances of monitoring of the activities and events planned by the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS in the academic year	1
65	Short-term operative plans for the implementation of the Strategic plan of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	1
66	Annual reports of the evaluation of the results of fulfillment of mission and goals of the the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	1
67	Examples of analysis of the results of surveys conducted by the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	1
68	Document on the approval of the action plan of the Strategic plan of International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	1
69	Mechanisms of the development of the Strategic plan of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS and analytical documents/materials concerning it	1
70	Analytical documents/materials proving the operation of education quality assurance and control at the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	1, 10
71	Documents/materials justifying the necessity of approving 2014-2018 Strategic plan of the International Scientific –Research Center of RA NAS	1

APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED

Main campus of the International Scientific-educational Center of RA NAS

1. Deans office (also the electronic dean)
2. Classrooms
3. Classroom of distance learning
4. Library (also electronic one)
5. Reading hall
6. Canteen
7. The common room of the Alumni and Career Development Department and the Student Council
8. Department of information technologies
9. QA Center
10. Courtyard

RA NAS Center for Ecological Noosphere Studies

11. Chair
12. Classroom
13. Working rooms
14. Laboratories
15. Library

RA NAS Scientific Technological Center of Organic and Pharmaceutical Chemistry

16. Chair
17. Conference hall
18. Classroom
19. Computer room
20. laboratories
21. Courtyard

RA NAS Institute of History

22. Chair of international relations
23. classrooms
24. hall-conference hall
25. Library-reading hall of the Chair

APPENDIX 6. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIS- Commonwealth of Independent States

USA – United States of America

HEI- Higher Education Institution

EREA- European Higher Education Area

NAS- National Academy of Science

SC- Scientific council

EU_ European union

MOES - Ministry of Education and Science

ANPU- Armenian National Polytechnic University

NUACA- National university of Architecture and Construction of Armenia

RA- Republic of Armenia

AP-Academic programme

TLI- Tertiary level institution

QA- Quality assurance

ANQA- National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance, Foundation

NQF- National qualification framework

AC- Academic staff

PDCA- Plan, do, check, act

SP- Strategic plan

IT- Information technologies

SSO- Student Scientific organization

SC- student council