

**“NATIONAL CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE”  
FOUNDATION**



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT  
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF  
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ACADEMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA**

**Yerevan – 2023**

## INTRODUCTION

The institutional reaccreditation of Public Administration Academy of Republic of Armenia (hereinafter “PAA of RA” or “Academy”, “Institution”) is carried out based on the application of the education institution.

The process of institutional accreditation was organized and coordinated by the “National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance” Foundation (hereinafter “ANQA”). ANQA was guided by the Regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Education Institutions and Their Academic Programmes” set by the RA Government Decree N978-N, dated June 30, 2011, as well as the Decree N959-N, dated June 30, 2011, on “Approval of RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation”.

The expertise was carried out by the independent expert panel formed in accordance with the requirements set by the ANQA Regulation on “Formation of the Expert Panel”. The expert panel consisted of 4 local experts and 1 international expert.

Institutional accreditation is aimed not only at external quality assurance, but also at the continuous improvement of the quality of management and study programmes. Therefore, local and international experts had two tasks:

1. To carry out institutional capacity assessment in accordance with RA state accreditation criteria;
2. In order to improve the quality, to carry out an expert assessment in terms of compliance with international developments and integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The Report contains the results of the PAA of RA institutional capacity assessment according to the RA tertiary education accreditation criteria and international expert's peer review for EHEA integration.

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## SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

### EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

The expert evaluation of “Public Administration Academy of Republic of Armenia” /herein after PAA of RA, Academy, Institution/ was carried out by the independent expert panel formed in accordance with the requirements set by the ANQA Regulation on “Formation of the Expert Panel”. The evaluation was carried out according to 10 accreditation criteria set by the RA Government Decree N959-N, dated June 30, 2011.

The expert panel took into account that it is the 3<sup>rd</sup> time that the Academy implement the accreditation process and the last time in 2020 the Academy got conditional accreditation for a period of two years. Taking into account the recommendations of the previous accreditation expert panel the Academy implemented a number of improvement activities: structural changes, the system of the KPIs was redeveloped, the code of ethics was developed, the redeveloped APs and students’ guideline, etc.

While the evaluation the expert panel took into account, that the Academy according to the mission set in the Strategic Plan for 2019-2024 /approved in 2019, February/, implements higher education and additional educational programs that meet the requirements of preparing highly qualified management personnel for the public and private sectors, encourages scientific and applied research activities, provides consulting services, provides the public administration sector with information and analytical materials, as well as international scientific and educational cooperation in the public administration sector. According to the six main goals and the accountability system developed in the Academy the departments implement annual reports, in which the link between the implemented activities and strategic goals. It should be noted that the reports are not always analytical.

It should be noted that the Academy has a problem of making its mission more understandable for the stakeholders. Defining the ideal type of graduate and including it in the mission will contribute to clarifying the Academy's role in society and generating interest towards the Academy among applicants.

The Academy implements Academic programs according to characteristics of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> levels of the NQF (master's and postgraduate education) in full-time, part-time and distance learning forms. 12 master degree APs are implemented during the academic year 2022-2023.

According to the recommendations of the previous accreditation, the Academy made improvements of the APs. According to the first goal of the Strategic plan: strengthening the culture of teaching quality and establishing a credit system in accordance with the requirements of the Bologna process, the academic programs of the Academy have been redeveloped, there is a student-centered approach in teaching, learning and evaluation methods and a regulation of academic honesty. However, after the revisions some elective courses have been left out of master's programs, the absence of which is an obstacle for students to ensure the trajectory of their studies. In order to modernize the educational programs and promote the mobility of students and professors, benchmarking was carried out with international and local universities. At the same time, the implementation of benchmarking depends on the chair's own initiative<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The sentence was reformulated based on the institution's observations

The Academy has teaching and support staff, as well as invites professionals from public sector with practical experience, which ensure the achievements of the professional learning outcomes. The necessary procedures were developed by the Academy for the evaluation of the teaching staff by the students, the results of which are discussed in the relevant departments, being the basis for improvements in some cases. The expert panel site-visit revealed that the stakeholders, as a strong point of the institution, particularly mention the high professional level of the teaching staff.

The Academy is provided with the necessary space for providing education and additional education, classroom fund, as well as the necessary equipment for providing distance education. In terms of the budget, the salary fund dominates the expenditure items, the funds allocated to scientific research activities are quite small, and the budget does not provide any expenses for quality assurance processes, professional development of professors and research incentives.

The Academy has all the conditions of resource security. It is positive that the center of attention of the Academy is the work aimed at creating a favorable environment for people with special needs.

The expertise revealed that the Academy ensures reliable awarding of qualifications, preparing competitive personnel for the public and private sectors.

The Academy, taking into account the recommendations of the previous accreditation, improved the organizational structure, regulating the responsibility of different departments. The mechanism of developing mid-term and short-term plans according to the SP, as well as ensures the accountability of all the departments. At the same time, the regular analyses of internal and external factors are highlighted and the decision making based on them, which should be highlighted in the further improvement plan of the Academy.

According to the recommendations of the previous accreditation as a result of structural changes the Academy's IQA department is under the subordination of the Rector. Material and human resources are provided for the internal QA activities of the Academy, however, the IQA system needs improvements, for many processes the improvements after the evaluation are not clear, which hinders the establishment of quality culture and dissemination of best practices.

In order to spread the quality culture, the expert panel highlights the active, motivated and extensive involvement of the external and particularly internal stakeholders, aimed at improvement of the educational processes, solving problems of internal stakeholders and continuous development of various fields of the Institution. Academy stakeholders do not have full access to information about individual processes, which limits their identification of weaknesses and participation in quality assurance processes.

The current mechanisms of the student's admission and recruitment ensure the awareness among applicants. The Academy cooperates with different organizations to involve applicants. In order to solve the problem of the decrease in the number of applicants, the heads of chairs are taking steps in the form of developing and introducing new subjects, APs.

Students are mostly satisfied with the educational and consulting services they received. The Academy has various mechanisms for raising students' needs (surveys, meetings, discussions), but the percentage of participation in surveys is low.

The research is mainly conducted by the teaching staff of the Academy with their own initiative within the framework of own interests, mainly with own funding, as there is no system of incentives for professors, as well as internal grants. The low level of interest of teaching staff and students in carrying out research activities endangers the formation and development of students'

research abilities and skills, and can become an obstacle for the professional improvement of teaching staff.

The inclusion of research results in the educational process has a situational nature and is not carried out through clearly functioning stable mechanisms, and it needs further improvement, implementation in an interdisciplinary format.

The Academy has an important role in the transfer of knowledge to the society: the training of civil servants, the process of developing training programs is the second main goal of the Academy's Strategic Plan, which promotes close cooperation with the state Public Administration system, regional governing bodies, local self-government bodies and non-governmental organizations.

The Academy emphasizes the process of internationalization, and has defined the development of external relations and internationalization as a priority in the SP, developed a number of documents for the development of the field, which promotes regulated work. These processes are coordinated by the Center for International Cooperation and Development in PAA, which regularly implements reports, but the Center for International Cooperation and Development still has work to do in terms of the participation of the academy in international research projects.

#### **Strengths of the Institution:**

- Creation of prerequisites for strategic management and participation in decision-making in the Academy.
- The continuous improvement of educational programs and the involvement of external and internal stakeholders in it.
- Involvement of professorial and support staff from the practical field and with the necessary professional qualifications.
- Availability and regular updating of resources necessary for the implementation of the educational process.
- Involvement of the Academy staff in international projects, regular expansion of external relations.
- Improvement of knowledge transfer mechanisms to society.
- Availability of additional educational services for the public and private sector.
- Continuous improvement of the accountability system.

#### **Weaknesses of the Institution:**

- Weak connection of scientific research and educational processes, lack of involvement of students in scientific research activities
- Absence of interdisciplinary research activities among chairs
- The incompleteness of the PDCA cycle for strategic purposes
- Weak dissemination of best practices of the Academy
- The absence of a clear policy of encouragement for the research and international activities of the professorial staff
- Passive participation of students and professors in quality improvement processes
- Inconsistency of the implemented self-analysis and SWOT analyzes with the real state of the Academy

#### **Main recommendations:**

#### **Mission and Purposes**

- Clarify the ideal type of Academy graduate and reformulate the mission from this perspective
- Clarify key performance indicators /KPIs/, including quantitative and qualitative values, and conduct analysis on an annual basis

### **Governance and Administration**

- Improve data collection mechanisms, emphasizing the study of external factors and making decisions based on them
- Improve monitoring mechanisms of strategic planning, emphasizing problem identification and planning based on them
- Implement the quality management cycle (planning, implementation, evaluation, improvement) for the Academy and its divisions

### **Academic programmes**

- Regulate the function of the responsible for the Academic program, include it in the individual workload
- To regulate the methodology of calculating the number of hours of individual works and their evaluation
- To make the educational block of elective courses mandatory in the curricula of all Academic programs
- Improve the benchmarking process and involve the results into the improvement of the APs
- Develop evaluation criteria (rubrics) for master's theses in the procedures related to master's theses, emphasizing the research component
- Develop sustainable communication mechanisms with external stakeholders and employers.

### **Students**

- Establish an alumni association to facilitate exchange of experience and improve career support services
- Develop and implement incentive mechanisms to involve students in research activities

### **Faculty and staff**

- Develop and implement a clear policy for the encouragement of teaching and support staff and ensure the periodicity of professional trainings
- Regularly analyze the effectiveness of teaching staff trainings and clarify the scope
- Clarify the mechanisms of periodic assessment of lecturers and ensure the implementation by all chairs

### **Research and Development**

- Evaluate the scientific potential of the Academy, develop and specify the scientific directions of the Academy
- Develop and implement procedures for encouraging the performance of research activities
- Introduce a system of internal grants in the Academy and invest funds for the development of the research goal
- Expand the infrastructure for the implementation of scientific research works - research laboratories.
- Develop mechanisms for inclusion of research results in the educational process.

### **Infrastructure and Resources**

- Ensure membership of the Academy library in international library networks.
- To carry out an analysis of the needs necessary for the implementation and continuity of each AP in order to effectively distribute financial resources.
- To improve financial management according to the goals of the SP and to carry out activities in the direction of fundraising, contributing to financial stability.

#### **Societal Responsibility**

- Expand feedback mechanisms among alumni and employers
- Improve web site performance by providing information available in all languages
- Improve reports, making them more analytical

#### **External Relations and Internationalization**

- Develop and implement mechanisms to encourage administrative, teaching staff and students' participation in international cooperation projects
- Improve foreign language teaching technologies and introduce alternative mechanisms promoting the development of foreign language skills
- Develop ways of carrying out joint scientific research works with international structures

#### **Internal Quality Assurance System**

- Improve and diversify data collection mechanisms, facilitating the identification of problems in all sectors and the planning of improvements
- Conduct an analysis of the internal quality assurance system and ensure the active participation of students and professors in the quality processes by disseminating best practices
- Ensure the professional development of the employees of the quality assurance center
- Revise the Quality Manual and adapt it to the current situation of the Academy teaching staff

April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023

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**Hermine Grigoryan**  
Head of the expert panel



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

PAARA was evaluated by ANQA experts two years ago. Therefore, the attention is focused primarily on the assessment of actions aimed at eliminating the weaknesses identified during the last review. It should also be noted that it is such a short period of time, additionally affected by the pandemic shock, it is difficult for the Academy to implement all the recommendations formulated in the previous expert panel report, especially those related to structural issues of the Academy. In this report the following issues were addressed:

- Strategic challenges,
- Strategic risks and their perception by PAA of RA stakeholders,
- Research,
- Internationalization,
- Quality culture.

According to the Report of the revisor accreditation process /2019/, three criteria were considered insufficient /Research and Development, External relations and internationalization, Internal quality assurance system/. The expert analysis of the SER and other documents, as well as conversations with the leaders and stakeholders of the Academy confirm that in these areas, despite the progress recorded since 2022, the largest gap between PAARA and European universities is still visible in these areas.

**Strategic Challenges.** For any observer of the Academy, three distinctive features are apparent. The first is education for the needs of the public sector. Public sector is the largest employer of the Academy, but the relatively low salary in this sector result in more than half of the graduate's finding employment in the private sector, and a recent decline in interest in this type of study is evident. The decline in the number of students at the Academy - the number of students in 2021 is down 20% from the previous year - was widely considered by almost all expert panel members to be a major development challenge. Some APs have been closed, and in some, the number of students does not exceed 10. As a result, the deterioration of the university's financial situation is apparent. The budget surplus in 2021 was 25% lower than the corresponding one in 2019. The situation would be much worse if it were not for the developed offer of paid training courses used by more than 3600 observers. Taking up jobs in the private sector as well as poorly advanced scientific research raises the question of the future academic profile of the Academy. As a result of above these the Academy is beginning to resemble a teaching university training graduates for the needs of the entire economy.

There has not been a diligent analysis of these challenges and therefore no adequate countermeasures are proposed. There are no financing means distributed for the individual strategic goals and objectives. In the common opinion, demonstrated in the SWOT analysis and during the talks, the reasons for these negative phenomena are seen primarily in the decreasing population of young people graduating from high schools, competition from other universities, insufficient financing of universities by the government, and low salaries in public administration. The profile of the graduate has not been analyzed, also it is not known whether they are educated as future leaders, as suggested by the Academy's slogan, managers or public administration analysts. To increase the attractiveness of

the Academy, the possibility of launching interdisciplinary studies is not used, a more flexible policy of recruiting new students has not been introduced and there is little evidence of reliable identification of the needs of employers. The latter issue was signaled in the last expert panel report, but still no steps have been taken in this regard. For example, the opinions of alumni are not used, and surveys of employers' needs are limited in scope. The validity of the information obtained by surveying stakeholders is not analyzed. A mechanism for monitoring and evaluating academic programs has been implemented, but the impact of the results of this evaluation on changes in the program and curriculum is not very clear. It is somewhat surprising that there are no classes in Public Economics in public administration studies. In general, the dominant view among Academy leaders and managers is that of a short-term development perspective and that the reasons for failures are attributed to external factors. As an example, the following should be mentioned: At the meeting with the Academy Board, it was revealed that the main source of information for the decisions are the annual reports of the rector. In the SWOT analysis of scientific research, one of the weaknesses was identified as *“lack of regulation for publications in international peer-review journals”* (SER, pp. 84-85).

The second peculiarity of the Academy is expressed in the education of students at only two levels 7 and 8. Thus, master's students represent a different academic background acquired during previous studies and, as a rule, a lot of professional experience, since most of them are already working, often in public administration. The third peculiarity is the dominance of teachers employed as part-time workers and they work in different universities and institutions, and among them a large percentage of practitioners. Such a structure of the population of students and employees is, on the one hand, important, because it enriches the educational processes, and the practical knowledge of the issues of public administration - among the teachers there are former politicians and state officials of the highest level - makes the academic programs attractive. Excellent relations between students and teachers, constant dialogue, individual support and openness of teachers to students' needs, confirmed during the expert panel site-visit, is a good basis for high quality teaching and deserves commendation. On the other hand, this diversity creates huge challenges for integrating different teaching techniques into a uniform approach, as well as involving part-timers in the active implementation of strategic goals. For example, there is competence when the invited lecturers become involved in PAARA research activities having the identical goal in their home universities. The lack of a sound analysis of risks, the focus primarily on external threats are problems that require deeper reflection among Academy leaders and a more vigorous counteraction to the weaknesses that exist and the planning of improvements.

**Scientific Research.** In a university with master's and post graduate programs, scientific research is fundamental to the quality of education. Some action has been achieved in this area. Among other things, a draft of new research strategy for 2022-2026 is being developed, the number of publications has increased (one academic staff member), including those placed in peer-review journals of international range listed in the SCOPUS and Web of Science databases, international conferences have been organized, Academy staff have participated in the implementation of projects financed from national sources, and a Student Scientific Society has been established.

To an outside reviewer, it is surprising that despite the lean pool of its own research staff (35 people), the research being conducted covers, according to SER (p. 72), as many as 20 areas. At the same time, our interviewees were unable to identify the actual research prior directions supported by the university. Scientific achievements are not well promoted in the system of periodic evaluation of

teachers. The site visit showed articles posted in peer-review journals, but a closer look at this output indicates that this activity is limited to a small group of Academy teachers. The dominant group is either not academically active or publishes its work in local publishers. In the common opinion of academy representatives, the main barrier to underdeveloped research is limited financial resources. However, despite the surplus in the academy's budget, they have not been allocated to support scientific and research activity and more extensive implementation of internal grants.

There is practically no strictly scientific research project underway at the Academy that would bring together a broader group of researchers, from different scientific disciplines. The closure of one of the research laboratories in 2021 due to lack of funding confirms the passivity of researchers in applying for new grants. No university platform (e.g., in the form of a post graduate/doctorial school) has been created for post graduate students to exchange ideas, improve their research methodology, academic writing, research grant acquisition skills, etc.

To overcome these difficulties, cooperation with foreign partners is not used. The interviews show that among the teachers there is a large group of people with excellent command of English, actively cooperating with foreign universities, but this cooperation is the result of individual initiatives, and not the result of the system of promoting scientific research at the Academy.

One of the dangerous consequences of passivity in research is the limited involvement of students in scientific research projects. This begs the question of how much education is saturated with a research component and meets the requirements of levels 7 and 8 of the National Qualification Framework. Even a cursory review of diploma theses reveals a wide variation in their quality in this regard between graduates of different majors. There are theses in which it is difficult to see the scientific basis of the analysis of a given issue. This testifies to an overly liberal assessment of the quality of theses by attestation committee members. Promoting the idea of mentorship with the participation of experienced alumni, as reported to the expert panel by her SSC chairwoman, can foster an increase in the quality of student research and deserves to be commended.

**Internationalization.** Undoubtedly, many measures have been initiated to increase the degree of internationalization. First, the Academy's internationalization policy has been developed and approved, which provides, among other things, for the international accreditation of at least one academic program, and organizational structures have been established to support the internationalization policy. The number of partners, including those with a similar profile with whom cooperation agreements have been concluded, is increasing. Some classes are taught in English, to some extent the Academy participates in mobility programs, funds from foreign funds are allocated to improve the competence of teachers and the quality of teaching infrastructure, The number of professors participating in international educational projects and training has increased, international benchmarking is applied. It is necessary to appreciate these initiatives in view of the difficulties that have arisen for the policy of developing international cooperation, especially mobility programs, during the pandemic period.

In general, these efforts are mainly related to internationalization abroad, while there is no significant progress in internationalization at home. There are not many classes offered in foreign languages. Only a few visiting professors have taught in English. The lack of basic information about the Academy on websites in English and Russian makes it virtually invisible to potential students and lecturers from other countries.

The biggest omission is the lack of vigorous actions aimed at improving the language competences of students and teachers. The Academy does not collect information on how many teachers and students speak foreign languages and at what level. The effectiveness of language courses is not analyzed, and the number of hours of foreign language education has been reduced to one semester, despite one of the recommendations of a previous expert panel suggesting an increase in the time of learning a foreign language. During the meetings, many interviewees demonstrated good or even excellent proficiency in English, however, it is unclear to what extent this group (and participants in mobility programs) is being used to accelerate internationalization processes. This appears to be due to an insufficiently comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of PAARA's internationalization policy.

**Quality Culture.** Since the previous accreditation, considerable efforts have been made at the Academy to build an internal quality assurance system. A quality policy covering almost all areas of the academy beyond governance has been adopted, a Quality Assurance Center subordinated to the Rector has been established, as well as new procedures have been adopted. Stakeholder opinions on processes and operations are the basis for the development of reports documenting progress in quality. Individual organizational units conduct self-evaluations, and the results are compiled by the IQA and discussed at various levels of management.

Nevertheless, the quality loop has not been closed and PDCA cycle stages are unevenly developed. Therefore, the important recommendation of the previous expert panel has not been sufficiently implemented. While the planning phase was quite well developed, not all planned activities were implemented, and many activities have not passed the evaluation phase and the implementation of corrective and improvement processes. This applies even to monitoring and evaluating the quality of academic programs and teaching and learning. The distribution of responsibility has not been implemented, as well as the reliability of the information collected is not maintained (including the reasons for the low response rate in student surveys), so improvement proposals are not embedded in the analysis of the causes of failure. Another weakness is that stakeholders do not have full access to disaggregated information, e.g. on student survey results, which limits their identification of weaknesses in individual processes and participation in pro-quality activities. Relevant policies have not been defined in certain areas, e.g., human resources development, and in other areas there is no assessment of, for example, the university's management system, academic integrity. The circulation of internal information also seems to be failing, as evidenced by the different responses of students, teachers and managers when asked about full access to the results of student surveys.

Therefore, it is not surprising that most of the proposals for change formulated during the meetings were minor adjustments, rather than new solutions that significantly enrich the quality of operations and processes. During the site visit, it was apparent that the degree of implementation of the procedures stipulated in the IQA varies strongly from chair to chair. However, no mechanism has been developed to disseminate good practices to all organizational units.

The conversations conducted during the visit show a low level of awareness of the quality culture and rather poor knowledge of the internal quality assurance system. There is no evidence that IQA promotes pro-quality attitudes. The concept of quality culture has not been embedded in the context of the academic tradition of the Academy and its structural conditions. The panel of experts did not find much evidence that effective efforts were made to integrate the entire academic community, especially part-time workers and part-time students, around the goals and tasks defined in

the Vision, Mission and strategic programs. The conversations with stakeholder groups show that not everyone (including representatives of the management, teachers) got acquainted with the content of the SER, although access to it was ensured.

PAARA is being evaluated once again, but the level of self-assessment demonstrated in the SER should be considered insufficient. Among other things, due to factual errors (e.g., in income and expenditure data, the former was combined with cash resources), failure to use valuable information contained in numerous annexes, frequent formulation of opinions not backed by evidence. Interestingly, in several cases (study programs, research, internationalization), the actual advancement of strategy implementation based on information obtained from interviewees was much higher than presented in the SER. The asymmetry evident in the SWOT analysis of the SER is also glaring. The latter listed 98 strengths and only 25 weaknesses. The only weakness in quality assurance was found to be the lack of sufficient financial resources to manage internal quality assurance processes.

### **Recommendations.**

- Analyze the needs of public sector employers and the academic profile of the Academy and redefine the profile of graduates in the direction of emphasizing its central place in the system of educating personnel for public administration.
- Prepare a long-term development strategy with several scenarios and identified potential risks.
- Strengthen the participation of all stakeholders, especially external stakeholders, in designing, monitoring and evaluating study programmes, scientific research and Academy management.
- Consider launching interdisciplinary studies.
- Define research priorities by defining the areas of conducted research and giving them an application character to a greater extent.
- In cooperation with foreign partners and domestic universities, launch at least one research project bringing together researchers from various scientific disciplines.
- Entrust independent experts from outside the Academy to carry out quality analysis of sample of diploma theses. Similarly, analyze the content of curricula and syllabuses in terms of saturation with modern knowledge and content promoting internationalization.
- Enable graduates to recognize the achieved learning outcomes as equivalent to the state exam required to take up employment in public administration.
- Launch a platform for presenting the results of research conducted by students in the form of an annual conference.
- In human resources development policy, introduce incentives to intensify scientific research and publish its results in international peer-review journals.
- Analyze the effectiveness of the internationalization policy and strengthen cooperation with universities of a similar profile.
- Analyze the causes of insufficient knowledge of foreign languages, increase the effectiveness of their teaching and consider the possibility of confirming the language competences acquired at the Academy with certificates from renowned international organizations.

- Offer at least 1 study program taught in English and increase the number of classes taught in foreign languages.
- Consider the possibility of students participating in online classes at partner foreign universities.
- Actively involve foreign stakeholders in the formulation of strategic plans and the implementation of education and research processes as advisors and collaborators.
- Increase the visibility of PAARA, especially for foreign partners, by enriching the English and Russian versions of the website.
- Define the culture of quality and its characteristics specific to the Academy and develop a system for its promotion in the academic community.
- Perform an IQA analysis and strengthen the participation of students and teachers in the implementation of the quality improvement policy by implementing a mechanism for disseminating good practices.
- Appoint an academic ombudsman
- Revise the Quality Assurance Manual and adapt it to the current state of IQA.

## DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

### COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The external evaluation of the institutional capacities of Public Administration Academy of RA was carried out by the following expert panel:<sup>2</sup>.

**Hermine Grigoryan** - Vanadzor State University after H. Tumanyan, Dean of the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics, Associate Professor at the Chair of Mathematics

**Mieczyslaw Socha** – Professor at Warsaw University and State Management School, Doctor in Economics, member of the Financial Committee of the European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA), Poland, international expert, member;

**Gourgen Hovhannisyan** – PhD in Geography, Associate Professor, Head of the Educational and Methodological Department of BA Division, Yerevan State University, member

**Sona Makichyan** - Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Psychology and Sociology of Education for Science and International Cooperation of ASPU, Associate Professor of the Chair of Development and Educational Psychology, Candidate of Psychological Sciences, member of the expert group,

**Marine Karapetyan** – 2<sup>nd</sup> semester undergraduate student of Eurasia International University Faculty of Law, student member of the expert group.

The composition of the expert panel was agreed with the educational institution and approved by the decision of the ANQA director.

The works of the expert panel were coordinated by Varduhi Gyulazyan, ANQA Head of the Policy Development and Implementation Division.

The oral translation was provided by Vardanush Baghdasaryan,

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

### PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

#### Application for State Accreditation

To undergo state institutional accreditation, PAA of RA has applied to ANQA filling in the application form according to the set format together with the copies of the license and its appendices.

The ANQA Secretariat examined the information provided in the application and the accompanying documents.

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<sup>2</sup> Appendix 1 – CVs of the expert panel members

Following the decision on the application, a bilateral agreement was signed between the PAA of RA and ANQA. A work schedule has been drawn up and approved.

### **Self-assessment**

In accordance with the schedule set by ANQA, the institution submitted a self-assessment of the institutional capacity in Armenian, English and a package of attached documents.

The ANQA coordinator reviewed the report to verify its technical compliance with ANQA. There were some technical and substantive shortcomings, due to which the self-assessment was returned to the institution. Then, within the set timeframe, the Academy submitted a revised version of the self-assessment, which met the established common format, there were appropriate grounds and the attachments required by the format. Then, the self-assessment and the package of attached documents, the electronic questionnaire completed by the university were provided to the expert panel, the composition of which was agreed with the Academy in advance and approved by the order of the ANQA Director.

### **Preparatory Phase**

In order to prepare the expert panel for the work and to ensure the effectiveness of the processes, ANQA conducted four trainings on the following topics:

1. The main functions of expert panel members;
2. Preliminary assessment as a stage of preparation of the expert report, the main requirements for the report;
3. Methodology of document and resource examination;
4. Ethics and techniques of meetings and questions.

Examining the TLI's self-assessment and package of attached documents, the expert panel conducted a preliminary evaluation according to the format, preparing a list of required documents for further study, as well as a list of issues and questions, indicating the relevant departments or target groups. During the preliminary evaluation, expert panel members participated in online lesson observations at the university. Then, the expert panel summarized the results of the preliminary evaluation and made a plan-schedule for the expert visit<sup>3</sup>.

Guided by the ANQA Accreditation Manual, the schedule includes expert meetings with all groups, open and closed meetings, document reviews, etc.

### **Preliminary Visit**

On December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022, meeting with the managerial staff of Public Administration Academy of RA took place. During the meeting, the site visit schedule was discussed with the Academy, the list

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<sup>3</sup> APPENDIX 2: SCHEDULE OF EXPERT PANEL SITE-VISIT



of additional documents to be studied was presented, discussed, mutually agreed decisions were made on organizational, technical, informational issues, ethics norms and meeting participants' behavior. The conditions for focus group and expert panel meetings were discussed, and the rules for organizing hybrid meetings in an online environment (because of the pandemic) were clarified.

### **Site Visit**

The site visit took place from January 9 to 12, 2023. The site visit started with a closed meeting, which aimed to discuss the scope of the expert evaluation, the issues to be studied during the visit, the strengths and weaknesses of the TLI according to the criteria, the focus group procedure, as well as to clarify further steps.

The expert panel, ANQA coordinator and translator were present during the visit.

The site visit started with a meeting with the Academy rector and ended with a meeting with the PAA of RA managerial staff. The participants (teachers, students, heads of chairs, employers and alumni) of focus group meetings organized to clarify the questions were selected from the list provided in advance by the university. All scheduled meetings were held. During the planned visit, the expert panel also reviewed documents<sup>4</sup> and resources<sup>5</sup>.

During the closed meeting of the expert panel held at the end of each working day of the visit, interim results of the expert evaluation were presented, and at the end of the visit, the main results of the visit were summarized in a closed discussion.

The expert evaluation was carried out within the framework of the ANQA procedures and State Accreditation Criteria and Standards, which provide for a two-tier rating scale: **satisfactory and unsatisfactory**.

### **Expert Report**

The expert panel conducted the preliminary assessment based on the electronic questionnaire filled out by the university, the self-assessment submitted, the examination of the attached documents, the online lesson observations, as well as the site visit (as a result of regular discussions). Based on the observations made after the discussions, the expert panel and ANQA coordinator prepared the preliminary version of the expert report.

The international expert also prepared a separate opinion on the peer review. The documents were translated and provided to the expert panel. The peer-review opinion is fully included in the text of the report. After the approval of the expert panel members, the preliminary report was provided to PAA of RA on 24<sup>th</sup> of February, 2023.

Regarding the preliminary version of the report, the Academy presented its response to the ANQA on 13.03.2023. The ANQA provided observations of the Academy to expert panel. On

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<sup>4</sup> LIST OF THE DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

<sup>5</sup> RESOURCES REVIEWED BY THE EXPERT PANEL

30.03.2023, the ANQA organized a meeting of the institution and the expert panel, during which the submitted observations regarding the preliminary expert report were discussed.

Taking into account the observations of the Academy, the expert panel made the final version of the expert report.

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**Varduhi Gyulazyan**  
**Coordinator of the expert panel**

**10<sup>th</sup> of April, 2023**

## BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

**History:** In 2002 "School of Administration of the Republic of Armenia" was reorganized into the state non-profit organization "Academy of Public Administration of the Republic of Armenia" in the form of reorganization.

The general management of the Academy is carried out by the "Staff of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia" in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Armenia and the Charter of the Academy, on the basis of self-governance, combining the principles of sole management and collegiality, implementing the functions of the Council, the Scientific Council and the Rectorate. Throughout its activity, the Academy has played an important role in the establishment of the training system for civil servants and in the development of training programs.

**Education:** In 2023 the master programs are founded in the Academy. The Academy provides higher education at the 7th master's (master's diploma) and 8th candidate of sciences (candidate of sciences certificate) levels of the National qualification framework of RA.

**Research:** Research activity is one of the components of the Academy's mission, which is reflected in the Strategic plan for 2019-2024. At the same time, ensuring the unity of educational and scientific activities is considered in the strategic plan as a principle of the Academy's activity. The main strategic guidelines in the field of research in the Academy are outlined for 2019-2024. in the strategic plan as Goal 3 (Increasing the implementation of scientific research results and expanding the participation of beneficiaries in research).

**Internationalization:** The Academy's internationalization policy is based on the Academy's fundamental values and aims to implement them. Students and staff at the Academy are involved in international educational and grant projects.

The process of internationalization is carried out by the Center for International Cooperation and Development, whose activities extend to other departments of the Academy. their representatives participate in international meetings and events organized for the exchange of experience.

**Quality assurance.** The processes of internal quality assurance in the Academy are implemented since 2013. accepted by the policy of the Academy in the field of education quality.

With its strategy, the Academy aims to develop and strengthen the culture of implementation of internal quality processes introduced since 2011, to increase the efficiency of the internal quality assurance system structures, to have educational programs in line with the requirements of the National Quality Assurance System, to ensure their periodic review and to implement them with professional teaching staff. To carry out evaluations for all processes of the Academy and to develop structures for increasing their efficiency. Develop cooperation with internal and external stakeholders, highlight their problems, propose solutions for them.

**Source:** *the sources of evidence in the above areas are the documents provided by the TLI (e.g. self-assessment, strategic plan, schedule, department plans, concepts, etc).*

## I. MISSION AND PURPOSES

**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 Public Administration Academy of RA is defined in the Strategic Plan for 2019-2024, according to it, the mission of the Academy is the continuous improvement of the higher and additional educational programs that meet the requirements of preparing highly qualified management specialists for the public and private sectors, the implementation of scientific and applied research work, the implementation of consulting services, the provision of public administration with information and analytical materials, providing the public administration sector with information and analytical materials, as well as international scientific and educational cooperation in the public administration sector. It should be mentioned that, the Academy is guided by the slogan "Being student today to become a leader tomorrow ", on which the content of the Academic Programs implemented by the Institution is built, but it is not fixed anywhere.

There 6 strategic goals fixed in the Strategic plan of the Academy that aim at enhancing the quality of teaching, the integration of scientific and educational processes, the development of additional and continuous education, increasing management efficiency, financial stability, expanding international cooperation

There are 47 objectives and 99 activities planned for the achievement of each goal of the Strategic Plan. However, the expert panel site-visits and document observations revealed that the PDCA quality cycle is not closed for some of the objectives and activities and the most important is that the improvement is not certain, particularly the scientific research, the quality assurance and etc.

According to the Strategic Plan the important component of the mission of the Academy is to prepare master and post graduate students according to modern requirements to fill the leadership staff of public and private sector. The Academy implements Academic Programs in accordance with the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> level of National Qualification Framework of RA.

The mission of the Academy expresses the main goals and objectives of the Institution, however, the expert panel site-visit revealed that it needs to be clarified from the point of view of defining the characteristics of a graduate, so that it is visible to internal and external stakeholders.

#### **1.2 The mission statement, goals and objectives of the Institution reflect the needs of the internal and external stakeholders.**

According to the SER, the needs of the internal and external stakeholders were taken into account, discussions and meetings were organized, while defining the vision, mission and goals of the Academy Strategic plan for 2019-2024. The main mechanism for identifying the needs are surveys, in which the representativeness is not yet complete.

The Academy mentions steps in the report of 2022 - on the evaluation of the results of the PAA Strategic plan for 2019-2024 and Action plan. The steps are aimed at identifying the needs of internal

and external stakeholders, particularly in additional education, e.g. all efforts have been taken to develop courses /modules/ on defining and meeting the needs of the professional competences and professional knowledge of the civil servants. At the same time, in the report of 2022 there are objectives which the implemented actions for do not express the essence of the problem, in particular, the action of the objective 4.6 which is dedicated to the needs' assessment among the Academy teaching staff<sup>6</sup>.

The expert panel site visit revealed that there are no actions planned to involve the internal and external stakeholders in the implementation of the SP.

### **1.3 The Institution has set mechanisms and procedures to evaluate the achievement of its mission and purposes and further improve them.**

The Academy implemented the evaluation of the SP and the action plan for 2019-2024 in the form of reports for 2021 and 2022, where a list of accomplished, unaccomplished, and in-progress activities is given according to the institution's six main objectives. There are quantitative, descriptive data regarding the performed and not performed actions in the reports, however, the analytical part almost absent. The expertise revealed that it is not evaluated, for example, how the achievements can become continuous and in case of non-achieved actions, the real reasons and the main responsible parties are not mentioned.

The rector's annual reports can also be considered as a monitoring mechanism of the SP. Another monitoring mechanism of SP is the system of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for evaluation of the mission, the results of the implementation of the goals and objectives of the SP, the activities of the Academy. KIPs system includes data on the Academy's 2019-2022 enrollment and staff, human and material resources, scientific, financial and economic activities, external relations and international cooperation. The observation of the Key Performance Indicators /KPIs/ revealed that some of indicators, such as, the progress of the students, the involvement in degree-granting professional councils, ensuring transparency and accountability through the Academy's official website were not specified.

**Consideration:** The expert panel positively assesses the steps Academy management implemented aimed at strategic management, which in the near future can contribute to highlighting the institution's strengths, identifying shortcomings and planning solutions for them. The mission of the Academy, despite its rather extensive formulation, expresses the goals and objectives of the Academy. The expert panel highlights the clarifying the profile of the graduate and presenting it to the public, which will contribute to increase the visibility of the Institution.

The expert panel considers positive the fact that the data obtained from feedback events conducted with internal and external stakeholders of the Academy are used in future Strategic planning processes to improve additional education. At the same time, it should be noted that this positive experience can be an example in the reform process of the Institution and can be borrowed by other departments.

The expert panel positively assesses the development of the set of Key Performance Indicators for evaluating the results of the Strategic Plan by the Academy, considering it an important condition for evaluating and improving the implementation of the mission and goals. At the same time, the clarification of the KPIs will facilitate problem identification and continuous improvement.

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<sup>6</sup> The sentence was reformulated based on the institution's observations.

It should be noted that, the quality assurance system for evaluating the results of the mission and goals is still being developed, and the PDCA cycle for these processes is not closed, which hinders the strengthening of the quality culture.

**Summary:** Taking into account, that since 2021 the activities carried out by the Academy as a result of changes are aimed at the implementation of Strategic goals and mission, and the Institution clearly realizes the priorities of the objectives related to the implementation of its mission, the external stakeholders are actively involved in the implementation process of the mission and goals, the Academy developed KPIs, the expert panel finds that the Academy meets the requirements of Criterion 1.

**Conclusion:** The expert panel assesses the relevance of PAA of RA institutional competencies to the requirements of CRITERION 1 sufficient.

## 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 Charter of the Academy "The management of the Academy is carried out on the basis of self-governance, combining the principles of sole leadership and collegiality, with the implementation of the functions of the Academy Board, Scientific Council and Rector". The governance of the current activities of the Academy is carried out by the Rector, and the collegial management bodies are the Board of the Academy, the Scientific Council, and the Rectorate.

The highest governing body is the Board, it consists of 20 members and formed for 5-years. Half of the Council members - 10 are members of the authorized body, 5 of the other halves are teaching staff representatives, and 5 are student representatives. Among the functions of the Board is the approval of the Strategic plan and the annual budget, the election of the rector, the assessment of the annual report of the Rector on the activities of the university, etc.

The responsible persons for the implementation of the SP and the current governance of the Academy are the Rector and the Scientific Council. The Scientific Council of the Academy consists of 24 members and formed for 5 years. The head of the Council is the Rector of the Academy. The Scientific Council also includes the Vice-Rectors, the representative of the authorized body, the advisor to the Rector, the Scientific Secretary, the Head of the department for educational process organization, the Heads of other structural units, the Heads of the Chairs, professors and 6 students.

There are permanent and temporary committees attached to the Scientific Council, whose activities are regulated by the Charter of the Academy, relevant regulations of Scientific Council.

Before being discussed in the Scientific Council, educational methodological issues are first discussed in those committees, for example, in the committee of Academic programs that are to be monitored, etc.

The expert panel analyses revealed that new organizational structure was approved and the governance of the Academy is implemented according to the new organizational structure.

Not only the structure of the Academy was changed, but also the repeated functions of separate departments. The missing functions of the departments were clarified, the charter of the departments was revised, approved. The distribution of the responsibility, functions and authority was implemented among structural units of the Academy.

According to the organizational structure of the Academy presented with the SER 4 Chairs are directly under the authority of two vice-rectors – Vice-rector for Educational and Vice-rector for Scientific Affairs and External Relations. According to the Organizational Structure the departments – faculties are absent and their functions are implemented by the Educational department and the Chairs.

“The regulation of the Ethical norms of the Academy” was approved on 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2022 during the meeting of the Scientific Council. The principles of ethical behavior of the administrative and academic staff and students, rights and responsibilities and the main scope of disciplinary sanctions were defined in the regulation. An ethics committee was established.

The financial activities of the Academy include the directions of salary, scholarship payment, tuition reimbursement, providing students scholarship, maintenance and development of the Academy's resources, expenses contributing to educational-methodological activities. The expert panel analyses revealed that there are infrastructure and material resources in the Academy to accomplish the Strategic goals. The analyses of the financial distribution reveals that there are directions for which no finance provided, e.g., scientific and educational activities and the improvement of QA system.

## **2.2 The Institution’s system of governance gives an opportunity to students and the teaching staff to take part in decision making procedures.**

The Charter and the regulations of enable the internal stakeholders /teaching staff members, students/ of the Academy to participate at certain levels in decision-making processes related to them

The 25 percent of the number of the members of the Board and Scientific Council of the Academy are students’ representatives, who are nominated by the Student Council. The representatives of teaching staff are also involved in the Board and the Scientific Council of the Academy. At other levels, professors' participation in decision-making regarding the governance takes place through the chair, and students through the Student Council and partly through participation in surveys.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that another opportunity to communicate directly with Vice-rector of educational affairs according to the timetable through heads of the courses. For instance, the following issues were resolved as a result of those meetings: the organization of exams and the evening course, the diversification of teaching methodology, the increase of the duration of practice, etc..

## **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.**

The Academy defines as a long-term planning /for 5years/ its Strategic and Action Plan for 2019-2024, in which for the implementation of each strategic sub-goal, actions, responsible persons and indicators are indicated, which are not always clear and measurable). For example, in the sub-goal 3.1 of evaluating the research potential of the Academy, the scientific directions of the chair, the scientific publications of the chair, the professional councils and professions operating in the Academy are indicated as an indicator, while reports and minutes of discussions are used as a way of checking the indicator.

Based on the Action plan of the SP for 2019-2024 the departments of the Academy implement their mid-term and short-term planning. Thus, all the chairs of the Academy have their development plan for the next three years, the work of the Scientific council is carried out according to the annual work plans, the educational process is organized according to the annual schedule of the organization of the educational process, etc. The departments implement planning according to the SP and the action plan, as well as the improvement plan of the previous accreditation process. These are also the basis for the reports filled in in a certain format and presented to the IQA for the current semester. The IQA department submits the performance report to the Recor within 15 days. It should be noted that those reports mainly include quantitative analyses, the qualitative analyses are missing.

The Academy budget planning is implemented for the short-term period for one year by composition of outlay.

The expert panel revealed that the draft of the Strategic development plan of the Scientific research for 2022-2026 of the Academy.

Current monitoring mechanisms are the Rector's annual reports based on the reports submitted by the IQA department, reports on the performance of the SP presented at the end of the semester and annually, and the annual monitoring reports by the Chairs.

#### **2.4 The Institution carried out examination of facts affecting its activities and draws on reliable findings during the decision-making process.**

The mechanisms for examination of the internal factors of the Academy are surveys conducted among internal stakeholders, whose representativeness is not always maintained, the reports on the evaluation of results of the Strategic Plan for 2019-2024, that include quantitative analyses, as well as data collection based on the developed KPIs.

The expert panel observations revealed that, though the challenges facing the Academy /the decreased number of the students, reduced financial flow, declining interest towards the public sector/, there are no systematic and planned external impact studies and data collection.

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

The expert panel analyses revealed that the Academy defined the implementation of the PDCA cycle in different processes. Based on previous accreditation expert recommendations the planning process has been improved, all the departments are guided by developed plans and report according to planning.

After the previous accreditation process a number of regulatory documents have been developed, most of which are at the stage of implementation.



The document observations and the expert panel site-visit revealed that the PDCA cycle is closed for the additional education and practices.

## **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**

The main mechanism for the gathering information on the effectiveness of the various processes of the Academy are still surveys. Meeting-discussions are mainly conducted by the invited professors during the chair sessions.

The report of 2022 of the QA committee of the Scientific Council of the Academy on the Academic programs that are to be monitored is considered to be the mechanism for evaluation of the effectiveness of the Academic programs. The report includes the strong points and good practice of the evaluated 6 Academic programs, as well as the shortcomings and weak points discovered during the process.

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

The main means of disseminating the information and ensuring transparency on the academic programs implemented in the Academy and the corresponding qualifications awarded are the Academy's official website, social networks, booklets on Academic programs, and the student's guideline. It should be noted that the success stories of the graduates are regularly published on the website of the Academy.

However, it should be noted that the information presented on the website of the Academy on the Academic programs is not complete: curriculums, course packages are missing, there is only the subject list of the distance learning "Business Administration (MBA)" master's Academic program, without the corresponding credits and number of hours.

**Considerations:** The expert panel positively assesses the fact that, the Academy has carried out improvements in the management system based on the expert recommendations of the previous accreditation, which contributed to the regulation of administration, the clarification of the functions of different departments and the improvement of strategic management. It is positive, that PAA of RA seeks to implement a regulated decision-making process in accordance with established ethical rules. For this purpose and taking into account the recommendations of previous accreditation, the structural changes were conducted in this regard, in order to correctly distribute the authorization, functions and responsibility among the structural departments. In this regard, the job descriptions were revised and developed for all the positions.

The implementation and PDCA cycle is not yet implemented in the governance and administration system, which may risk the process of further reforms.

The expert panel positively assesses the active participation of the internal stakeholders in the decision-making process, which is carried out in accordance with the approved ethical rules. At the same time, the expert panel mentions that, more active involvement of external stakeholders in decision-making process, and their needs regularly identified and regulated will contribute to the study

of external factors and make decisions based on them. All the regulations and normative documents of the Academy, as well as the results of the expert panel site-visit form a persuasion that the governance system of the Academy enable students and professors fully participate in the decision-making process related to them. A number activities have been implemented in order to increase the active participation of the external stakeholders, however, the mechanisms are not yet regulated. Meanwhile, incomplete information on the labor market requirements can risk the implementation of the mission in order to prepare competitive graduates.

The expert panel positively assesses the efforts made by the Academy in order to develop a culture of strategic planning. The strategic plans of all the departments according to the SP will contribute the achievement of the defined priorities and during the process will help to define the problems and the solutions. It is positive that, the Academy implemented internal audit, which revealed the threats of the Academy. The expert panel mentions, that development of the SP based on the results of the internal audit will contribute the improvement of different processes.

It is positive, that the processes of the data collection are activated in the Academy, particularly, the study of external factors in cooperation with state bodies will help determine the description of the graduate of the Academy and the implementation of planning on the existing risks.

The expert panel positively assesses the fact, that the Academy actively uses its official website, social network, booklets filled with information related to individual professions, Youtube videos, in order to make the information on the quality of awarded qualifications available for the stakeholders. It is positive that the Academy regularly publishes the success stories of the graduates which contributes the role of the Institution.

**Summary:** Taking into account the facts, that the Academy has an optimized management system, administrative structures with effective functions, as well as the Academy management system ensures the regulated process of making participatory decisions in accordance with ethic rules, has sufficient structure, human, material and financial resources to accomplish the Strategic goals, the expert panel finds that PAA of RA meets the requirements of the Criteria 2.

**Conclusion:** The expert panel assesses the relevance of PAA of RA institutional competencies to the requirements of CRITERION 2 sufficient.

### III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

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

#### 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.**

According to the mission of the Academy – the institution offers Academic Programs defined by the 7th and 8th levels of the NQF (Master's and Postgraduate Education), in organization forms of - full-time, part-time and distance learning. The Academic Programs are in accordance with the mission in the sense that the Academy prepares specialists for public and private sectors.

The observations of the SER and the documents revealed that 12 Master degree full-time, part-time and distance Academic Programs by 4 chairs of the Institution are implemented for academic year of 2022-2023.

After the previous accreditation process the Academic Programs of the Institution were reviewed according to the newly developed documents: “The Policy of the Academic Programs Benchmarking”, “The Procedure of the Monitoring and review of the Academic Programs”, “The regulation of the organization of educational process with credit system”. The packages of the all Academic Programs have been renovated during the last 1-2 years. The APs were redeveloped based on the corresponding learning outcomes of the National and Sectorial Qualification Framework of RA. In particular, in the renovation processes of the “Public Administration” AP the approved sectorial qualification framework has a huge role, as a result the learning outcomes of the AP have been adapted to the requirements of the sectorial framework.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that the observation and opinions of the professors and the Chair persons, as well as the discussions with employees of the public and private sector representatives have been taken into account during the re-development of the APs.

The expert panel site-visit and document observations revealed that the responsible persons for the APs and the working groups of APs to be monitored have important role in the process of improvement and monitoring of APs.

The constant changes and the new conditions imposed by the labor-market are highlighted by the Academy, as a result new AP “Business Psychology” will be implemented in the Academy started from 2022-2023 Academic year.

The study of the APs of the Academy revealed that all the APs have curriculum with similar structure. It includes the name of the Subject, First/Last name of the Professor, the hours located for the lecture, practical, individual work, the final assessment forms, number of credits to be allocated. It should be noted all the subjects have standard hours for lectures and practical work: for full-time it is 16 hours and for part-time it is 6 hours. Although, different hours are planned for individual work among different subjects. The expert panel site-visit revealed that this circumstance is determined by the type and volume of planned independent works. The expert panel site-visit revealed that the checking process of the individual work is not regulated, not all the professors are checking the work, and in the case of checking, students are evaluated at different stages of the educational process. The expert panel site visit and the in-class observations by the panel revealed that the hours allocated to the professors is insufficient and they plan additional meetings to fill in the gap.

All the subjects of the observed APs have course descriptions. The expert panel site visit revealed that they are refreshed on regular bases and improved annually. Course descriptions that are kept in the Chairs include the description of the subject, the goals, objectives, learning outcomes, teaching methods, the content /themes/ of the subject, prerequisites for learning, the distribution of classroom and practical training hours allocated to the course by topics (Full-time, part-time, as well as distant learning), the bibliography.

Taking into account the recommendation of the previous accreditation, the comparative analyses of the APs were implemented: the experience of USA, RF and other CIS countries, as well as the advanced experience of about 30 universities of Western countries was observed and compared.

### **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-centred learning.**

In the 3 Academic Programs of the Academy – “Public Administration”, “Law”, “Psychology of Management” alongside with the described leaning outcomes there are also forms and methods of teaching, learning and assessment according to general, professional and narrow professional outcomes.

It should be mentioned, that out of the three presented APs, only the " Psychology of Management " Academic program has elective courses, which is an important prerequisite for student-centered learning.

The continuous improvement of the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning in accordance with the expected learning outcomes of the Academic programs of the Institution, as well as the need to conduct a policy promoting student-centered learning are fixed in the Strategic plan of the Academy for 2019-2024.

The in-class observations and the study of the tasks revealed that in addition to traditional methods, discussion of situations, court games, teamwork are also used. Developing the business plan, solving practical tasks, creating and solving simple and complex educational situational problems, watching educational films are used as learning methods.

An interdisciplinary approach to provide tasks is used within a number of subjects, for example, professors of the Chair of Psychology of Management closely cooperate with the Chair of Management to develop that lead to the same learning outcome.

Within the Academic program of “Law” trial games are organized inviting judges to participate and share with their experience.

The observation revealed that in the evaluated APs students are given tasks mostly related to the private sector

There are sufficient educational and technical base, vice-rector, appropriately equipped classrooms in the Academy for modern methods of teaching and learning.

The expert panel analyses revealed that based on the results collected from surveys, meetings-discussions, and in-class observations, professors regularly review the methods they use.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that, despite the limitation of the formation of Academic groups according to the Chart, in a number of cases the Academy allows the formation of groups, even if the number of students in them does not reach the fixed 10 (for example, only 2 students each in the French and Turkish language groups).

It should be mentioned, that place of the practice is connected to the Thesis of the student, in addition to developing professional abilities, necessary materials for the preparation of a thesis can be collected. Students are mainly involved in the selection of the topic of the thesis.

### **3.3 The Institution has policy on students’ assessment according to the learning outcomes and promotes academic integrity.**

In the Strategic Plan of the Academy for 2019-2024 the following sub-goal is mentioned “ensuring the connection between the achievement of the outcomes and the evaluation by introducing a comprehensive and objective evaluation system and structures”.

The assessment system of the students is regulated in the Academy by the regulation on the organization of the examinations for master students, assessment of the learning outcomes and appeal.

The following assessment methods are defined in the APs, oral or written exam combined with the situational tasks, test and/or oral or written exam, oral or written exam combined with situational tasks. The assessment system operating at the Academy can be found in the "Student's Guide", the electronic version of which is posted on the Institution's website.

The study of the SER, expert panel site-visit revealed that there is a multi-factor assessment system (attendance and current activity, individual work of students, mid-term examination and final exam). The knowledge and skills of the students are evaluated by the tests and oral examinations. Moreover, the oral exams are preferable. The objectivity of the oral examinations are ensured with the fact that all the examination are video-recorded mandatory.

The expert panel observations and site-visit revealed that the individual work provided by the curriculum is also assessed, but it should be noted that both the number of hours planned for individual work and the process of its evaluation are not regulated and depend on the lecturer

The professional meetings revealed that in the AP of Psychology of Management is highlighted the assessment of communication skills, therefore the individual work of this AP includes tasks that develop this ability.

The analytical skills are highlighted in all the APs, as well as the study and analyses of the literature in English.

The assessment of the practice is implemented by the reports. During the assessment of the practice of the AP Psychology of the Management the employer representatives are also invited, that listen to the reports of the students and participate in the discussions.

The final attestation is implemented according to the regulations of master's thesis defense, additional discussion and appeal procedures of the final attestation assessment at the academy. However, there are no standards in the Academy developed for the assessment of the master thesis.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that the anti-plagiarism program is used in the Academy and has been used in recent years before the defense of master's theses, but during the site-visit it was revealed that the program is still not fully operated.

The correct referencing methodology was clearly present in all master's theses observed. However, it was not clear how academic integrity was ensured in individual research work, essays, and etc..

### **3.4 The programmes of the Institution are contextually coherent with other relevant programs and promote mobility of students and staff.**

According to the expert recommendation of the previous accreditation process the Academy planned in its improvement SP to have Benchmarking Policy and on the way to the realization of which developed benchmarking (comparative analysis of best practice) and its implementation procedure. Based on this procedure the in the appendixes of the AP of Public Administration data on applied benchmarking are written (country, benchmarking university, website of benchmarking university, comparative analysis of Academic program structure, recommendations for benchmarking analysis). In the AP of Psychology of Management, the HEIs are mentioned that

were analyzed. However, in the AP of Law the part benchmarking was absent. At the same time, it should be highlighted that it wasn't clear which changes were made based on the benchmarking results.

In the implementation of full benchmarking, the role of the responsible person for the Academic program can be great, in case the Institution really regulates these functions, plans study workload for such activities.

The exchange of the students and professors of the Academy is possible to implement with the help of international projects, Erasmus+ projects and agreements with international universities.

The observation of the SER revealed that in the last three years, students and professors exchange programs have been actively implemented, between Academy and especially Romanian universities.

### **3.5 The Institution adopts policies in place ensuring academic programme monitoring, evaluation of effectiveness and enhancement.**

According to the SER of the Academy monitoring, evaluation and revision is mainly implemented based on the regulations “Regulations for monitoring the APs, periodic review and re-approval of APs”. It should be noted that the regulations are implemented since 2021.

The expert panel site visit and the study of the SER revealed that the chairs of the Academy carry out monitoring of the Academic program every year and submit a report to the Scientific Council of the Academy together with the report of the external consultant/expert. However, it should be mentioned that the financial resources are not allocated for the implementation of functions of the external consultant/expert<sup>7</sup>.

The Academy considers the participation of the internal stakeholders in the evaluation and the improvement process of the APs through the surveys conducted among them, the meetings and discussions of the Heads of the department with the graduates, the opportunity of free expression of students' opinions at different levels. The content of the APs underwent some changes based on the data obtained by the focus group discussions method conducted among students, as well as the opinions of the heads of the practice of the Academic program, that are usually present during the defense of the practice. The expert panel site-visit revealed that there are professors who implement the evaluation of the effectiveness of the subject by the end the course /example from Public Administration AP/.

The participation of the external stakeholders, employers is implemented by different formats, through involvement in the teaching process, involving as head of the practice or supervisor of the master thesis, involvement in the activities of final attestation committee. However, the site-visit revealed that the external stakeholders expect other analysis and other platforms.

As a result of the review of APs, the last semester has been fully provided to practice.

**Considerations:** The expert panel positively assesses the fact that after the previous accreditation of the Institution the Academic programs have been significantly revised in accordance with newly developed policies, procedures and regulations. The Academic Programs have been made more aligned to the mission, learning outcomes are in accordance with the requirements of NQF and sectorial framework, which has contributed to the development of more comprehensive AP packages. At the same time, the expert panel highlights the complete implementation of the benchmarking

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<sup>7</sup> The sentence was reformulated based on the institution's observations.

policy, which will enhance the localization of the best practice of the implementation of the similar APs and the insurance of the coherence of the Academic programs of the Academy. The fact that there are elective courses in the AP Psychology of Management is positive, implementing this approach in other APs will contribute to the development of student-centered learning.

It is positive that the opinions of internal and external stakeholders, external expert-consultants were taken into account in the process of improving and monitoring the APs. At the same time, the expert panel highlights creating and improving sustainable feedback mechanisms for employers and graduates, that will contribute to the continuous development of the APs.

The Academy highlights the constant changes taking place in the labor market and the new conditions presented by the market, and as a proof of this, the "Practical Psychology" Academic program, which is in demand, will be launched from the academic year 2022-2023. Regular and planned implementation of such analyzes will strengthen the link with the labor market.

It is positive, that teaching and assessment methods are used that promote the development of analytical and communication skills among students. At the same time, it should be mentioned that as a result of discussions with representatives of the public and private sectors, the formation of the graduate profile will contribute to the renewal of the tasks given to students and the achievement of the necessary skills. Then expert panel considers it important to regulate the evaluation of individual works and the mechanism of calculating the number of hours.

It is positive, that the recommendations of the previous accreditation were taken into account by the Academy and a huge comparative analysis was implemented to improve the APs. However, it should be mentioned that the results of this comparative analyses have not been implemented in all the APs, and benchmarking has not been implemented with all its components. In this regard, the Academy has a lot to do in near future.

It is positive that there is a multicomponent assessment system and a variety of assessment forms. At the same time, that strengthening of the research component in the assessment process will help students develop these abilities.

**Considerations:** Taking into account that the APs of the Academy are in accordance with the mission of the Institution, APs are aligned with the descriptives of the NQF and the QSF, the curriculums have been reviewed according to the expert recommendations, various methods of teaching, learning and assessment are used, monitoring of programs and discussions of their results are regularly carried out, the expert group considers that the Academy meets the requirements of the Criterion 3.

**Conclusion:** The expert panel assesses the relevance of PAA of RA institutional competencies to the requirements of CRITERION 3 sufficient.

## 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.**

The recruitment and the admission processes of students is implemented based on RA legislation and internal legal acts of the Academy. The admission is conducted on a competitive basis for full-time, part-time and distance learning formats on free and paid basis. The expert panel site-visit revealed that in order to ensure awareness among applicants, the Academy uses website, Facebook platform, where admission conditions and questionnaires are published, as well as "Open Doors" days are organized in the Academy. Students guide was developed that informs about the implemented APs. In order to define the effectiveness of the above-mentioned activities a survey was conducted by the IQA center. According to the results the students are mainly informed about the Institution before the admission from their friends, who are the graduates of the Academy, there are many cases they are also informed from the website. There are 40 tuition-free education places in the Academy, which are redistributed among APs according to the number of applicants. The decision was made by the Rectorate and approved by the Scientific Council. Students studying in free places are given a scholarship, which amounts to 48,600 AMD. The expert panel site-visit revealed that the Academy is also attractive for its teaching staff, as most applicants choose the Academy because of the highly qualified teaching staff.

However, the expert panel site-visit revealed that the number of applicants decreased during the last three years and the reasons were not analyzed by the Academy. The Academy takes steps to attract applicants by modern courses and by implementation of attractive APs.

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

The bases for the analyses of the students' educational needs are the Students' Guideline and a number of charters: the procedure for organizing and conducting surveys aimed at improving the educational process, the procedures for the reimbursement of tuition fees in the form of student benefits in the Academy, and the provision of state and intra-university scholarships.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that the students participate in the anonymous surveys conducted by the IQA of the Academy, and additionally express their suggestions. The study of the survey analyses revealed that students had suggestions regarding additional courses, the increase in the number of hours of professional subjects, as well as with the activity of the SC.

Meetings with the administrative staff of the Academy are also an effective way to raise the educational needs of the students, during which the issues that the students are concerned with discussed<sup>8</sup>.

#### **4.3 The Institution provides opportunities for extra-curricular activities and advising services aimed at supporting student effective learning**

To enhance the effective learning environment for students the Academy creates opportunities for organizing additional trainings. The expert panel site-visit revealed that a number of courses are organized, particularly "Involved Citizen" and "Anti-Corruption Academy" additional courses. The expert panel site-visit revealed that the feedback from the additional courses was positive. The training "Involved Citizen" was implemented under the joint initiative of the Academy, the USAID and the Armenian office of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). The "Involved Citizen"

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<sup>8</sup> The sentence was reformulated based on the institution's observations.



manual was also developed where the project of activities was presented by the students with examples and tasks. The observation of the course-guide and the guide of practical tasks of the course "Anti-Corruption Academy" revealed that the course was aimed at understanding the general concept of corruption, anti-corruption policy and monitoring of institutions, the impact of corruption in various institutions, etc.

The Academy also organizes seminars related to the achievement of various skills, among which are: "Marketing", "Top Marketing Issues", "Career Management/Planning", "Management Beyond Standards", etc.

However, the everyday communications among professors and students provide an opportunity to get the necessary recommendation. The professors take into account the fact that there are students in one group with different basic educational background and, if necessary, provide additional recommendation and guide the students to find the solutions for their problems.

#### **4.4 There are precise regulation and schedule set for students to turn to the administrative**

The student's guideline is the basis for the students to apply to the administrative staff members. According to the guideline the students are allowed to meet the Rector and Vice-rectors of the Academy at set times every month, to discuss and analyze the problems in the Academy and make suggestions for further improvement.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that students made suggestion to increase the number courses, to change the teaching methods, which received their solutions.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that students are in close contact with the Heads of the chairs.

It should be mentioned, that technical and substantive information is provided to the students on the first day of academic year, after which the contact with the student and the relevant department is maintained in case of unclear questions during the learning period.

#### **4.5 The Institution has student career support services**

The Career Center and the Chairs of the Academy implement the career-promoting activities for students. The Chairs have significant role in providing job guidance to the students. The professors' role in job guidance is also important, as they in public and private sector. The professors organize sessions with their own initiative inviting different speakers. Cooperation of the Academy with other institutions (state and private), where students can undergo internships, is also one of the means aimed at the development of students' careers.

The Career Center of the Academy implements activities aimed at developing the students career, conducting surveys and personal consultants. It should be mentioned that all the students are provided with the e-mail addresses through which the Career center spreads information about job announcements, seminar invitations among students.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that the Academy does not have a base of graduates. The connection with the graduates is carried out through chairs, which is not always regular and coordinated.

#### **4.6 The Institution promotes student involvement in research activities.**

The basis for involving students in research activities at the Academy are: the charter of the Academy's Students' Scientific Council, the procedure of master's thesis defense, and surveys regarding effectiveness of the previous two processes conducted among post-graduate students and applicants.

To enhance the active involvement of the students in the research activities the "Scientific Research Methodology" subject was involved in all the APs. This subject will be included in the AP "Law" from the second semester of Academic year 2022-2023.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that the topics of the thesis are elected by the first-year-students started from the second semester. Students can suggest other topics that are not presented by the Chair, providing proposition discuss it with the supervisor and the Head of the Chair.

The students have opportunity to publish articles in "Public Administration" scientific journal. It should be mentioned that 26 students published articles during 2019-2022 years. At the same time, the expert panel site-visit revealed that there are no other encouraging mechanisms to involve students in the scientific research activities.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that the SSC has a new staff. The SSC plans to activate students' involvement in the scientific activities, particularly it is planned to create methodological school: connect with those graduates of the Academy, who have achieved success in the scientific field, so that they provide advice to students while implementation of scientific works, publishing scientific articles.

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

The basis for the students' rights protection in the Academy is the Student's Guide, the Charter of the SC and the contract signed with students. The students' rights protection body is the Student Council, whose members and president were recently elected.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that each students-course have its representative /head of the Course/ in the SC, through him/her students raise their voice on various issues.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that there 18 members in the SC 5 of which are involved in the Board of the Academy. The staff of the SC is formed by voluntarily enrolled members, according to the SC Charter, 2-3 students from each specialty can be in the team.

SC developed work plan and plans to have budget.

The SC of the Academy actively participates in raising problems regarding the stakeholders, organizing events. The expert panel site-visit revealed that students, being involved in the Academy Board, Scientific Council, raise problems and pursuing the solution, for example, changing the topics of master's theses, the number of hours of internships, etc.

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

The evaluation of the quality of educational, consultancy and other services is implemented by the IQA of the Academy through conducted surveys. With the surveys the students evaluate the work of professors, the possibilities of the material and technical base and the efficiency of the organization of practices. The expert panel site-visit revealed that the steps aimed at identifying the needs of distance learning students are not systematic, the representativeness of the surveys and the discussion of the results are not ensured.

**Considerations:** The expert panel the mechanisms of the Academy of recruitment and admission process which ensure a high level of awareness among students considers positive. The activities of the heads of the Chairs are positive to increase the attractiveness of Academic programs and the development of new Academic programs that can provide a large flow of applicants. At the same time, the expert panel highlights the regular presentation of the success stories of the graduates defining the ideal type of a graduate and carrying out work to represent the Academy from this point of view, which will contribute to increasing the visibility and attractiveness of the institution.

The cooperation of the Academy with the public and private sectors is considered positive, which creates an opportunity for more frequent and longer internships for students, as well as getting job.

The expert panel considers positive the fact that students were aware of the important document - Students' Guideline. The students have opportunity to raise their educational and other needs and get solutions, which enhances the students' involvement in the improvement process of APs and educational environment.

The expert panel considers positive the cooperation of students with head of the Chairs and professors, which contributes to the continuous improvement of the quality of educational and other services. The Academy is open to discuss the problems raised by the students. Although, the professors do not have separate hours for consultation, students can get direct contact with professors, which promotes student progress

The expert panel highlights the fact that a number of events are organized for students regularly that contribute to professional and career development, promoting the achievement of soft skills among students.

The expert panel finds that the regulation of the feedback mechanisms, the creation of the graduate's base will contribute to the strengthening of the connection with the alumni, their involvement in the processes of identifying the needs of the Academy and continuous improvement. In general, having an alumni database can also be a valuable tool for providing career services to students, raising other financial resources, evaluating the impact of Academic programs, and attracting new students.

The expert panel positively assesses the activities of involvement of the students in scientific research, however, the incentive mechanisms are missing, which would contribute to the involvement of a larger number of students in these activities

The expert panel considers positive that there are Students' Council and Students' Scientific Council which contributes to the identification of students' needs, involvement in the educational and scientific life of the Academy. The expert panel finds that regular and systematic use of mechanisms aimed at identifying students' needs, the involvement of all students (including distance learners) in the inquiry processes will significantly increase the effectiveness of the implemented processes and improve the educational environment.

**Summary:** Taking into account that there are mechanisms and procedures for students' recruitment and admission, the efforts are made to involve applicant, there are mechanisms for identifying educational needs, as well as students are given the opportunity to participate in additional professional courses and receive appropriate consultations, there are services promoting students' career, the expert panel believes that the institution generally provides an effective

educational environment for students the expert panel considers, that the Academy meets the requirement of the Criteria 4.

**Conclusion:** The expert panel assesses the relevance of PAA of RA institutional competencies to the requirements of CRITERION 4 sufficient.

## V. FACULTY AND STAFF

**CRITERION: The Institution has a highly qualified teaching and support staffs to achieve the set goals for 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 for the provision of academic programs**

The Academy highlights in its mission “continuous improvement of higher education and additional educational programs that meet the requirements of preparing highly qualified managers for the public and private sectors”, the bases of which is teaching and support staff with the necessary qualifications.

The Academy is also aimed at developing human resources in the field of public administration, deepening the professional knowledge of personnel and improving their practical skills, as well as creating a favorable educational environment.

The objectives of the Goal 4 of the Academy SP for 2019-2024 are also aimed at the implementation of an effective human resources management system and the creation of their own personnel school: increasing management efficiency, improving corporate culture, developing collaborative environment and professional qualities of staff.

34 members of the teaching staff of the Academy are main /full-time/ workers, 148 members are invited professors /part-time/, 104 professors are involved in the training processes. The document observations revealed that in 2022, the ratio of the main and part-time staff of the Academy is as follows: 25 full-time (11,57%), 10 invited (full-time - 4,63%), 181 invited (employees paid per hour - 83,8%). In 2020 the number of trained professors at the Academy is 38. The majority of the teaching staff members are doctors of science, candidates or have practical work experience in the relevant field. Significant number of the teaching staff members are the graduates of the Academy.

According to the SER filling the vacancies of the Academy is carried out in accordance with the procedure established by the legislation of the Republic of Armenia and the Academy's charter and internal legal acts, in the form of direct appointment to the given position by the PAA, through an interview or through an open competitive selection procedure. The hiring process of the administrative, teaching and support staff of the Academy is carried out according to the internal disciplinary rules of the Academy based on the RA labor legislation, Head of the chairs are selected according to the order of the chairperson's selection procedure of the PAA of RA.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that the selection of members of the teaching and support staff is carried out mainly without a competitive procedure. The basis of the selection are the job descriptions, where the functions are clearly presented according to the areas of problems: organizational management work, organization of document work, financial and economic work, personnel work, implementation of professional activities, as well as the scope of competences necessary for work.

According to the SER the staff management and general department of the Academy maintains a unified database of employees and a human resource management system, where all information about the employee of the Academy is available. The expert panel site-visit revealed that, if necessary, representatives of the Teaching staff are selected from the database for the purpose of replacing the lecturer of any subject or adding a new lecturer. In some departments (in particular, Management Psychology, Languages and Information Technologies), the teaching staff is also hired through personal connections of the heads of the departments in the field.

### **5.2 The requirements for qualifications of teaching staff per academic program are comprehensively stated.**

In the appendixes of the APs of the Academy in the part “Resource Assurance” requirements for the professional qualities of the teaching staff based on the final results of the Academic program and the qualification provided are presented. In particular, professional education, research and analytical skills, practical experience, academic degree and title are emphasized. The expert panel site-visit revealed that persons having public positions, doctors of sciences, candidates, leading specialists in various fields of education and economy are invited as part-time lecturers by the Academy in order to ensure the high quality of teaching of implemented Academic programs. The expertise revealed that students highlight that one of the strengths of the Academy is the teaching staff with knowledge, industry experience and practical skills.

There are job descriptions for the teachings staff members, which were refreshed in 2022. The role of the positions, functions, responsibility, professional and additional knowledge, skills, the basic professional field are presented in the job-descriptions.

There information regarding the professor of the subject in all course guides, in particular, the education, work experience, the cycle of scientific interest.

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

The evaluation of the teaching staff of the Academy is implemented with the corresponding departments. The evaluation is implemented through the surveys aimed at improving the educational process. According to the SER, documents presented and the expert panel site-visit results the surveys are conducted on regular bases /each semester/. One of the directions of the surveys is the evaluation of quality and effectiveness of teaching. The results of multicomponent assessment are summarized in one general report. Based on the results the administrative staff makes decisions: the conclusion/termination of employment contracts, promotion, payment/incentive, etc.. The results of the evaluation should be available for the certain stakeholders /professors/ according to the order. The expert panel site-visit revealed that the results are mainly available for professors. The results are discussed in the chairs, corresponding suggestions and guarantees are developed to increase the

effectiveness of the teachings process. The evaluation results are presented as the arithmetic average of the evaluations calculated for each lecturer (course). The expertise revealed that the results of all the professors are above average. There are also examples when the contract was terminated based on the problems revealed as a result of surveys.

In-class observations are implemented in the Academy in order to improve the educational processes and the teaching staff, however, these procedures are not yet coordinated. The in-class observations are conducted among young professors, not only for evaluating of the professional and teaching methods, but also providing support. The results are discussed in the chairs, if necessary, the young professor gets methodological support. A project of checklist for the in-class observations is also developed, which is not yet implemented. There are 3 indicators of quality assessment in the checklist: knowledge regarding the material, the quality of the methodology of the class, providing with the educational-methodological and material technical resources.

#### **5.4 The Institution promotes professional development for the teaching staff in accordance to the needs outlined during regular evaluations (both internal and external).**

According to Strategic plan for 2019-2024, action plan, the concept of human resource management the Academy aims at creating favorable conditions for the continuous improvement of the teaching staff, as well as the development of those competencies that will contribute to the improvement of the teaching process in Academic programs and the creation of cooperative relationships.

According to the SER, the majority of the professors 75.7% participated in training during the last 3 years. At the same time, according to the results of the surveys conducted among teaching staff, 50.5% of the teaching staff needs training according to specific directions, 40.5% does not need training. According to the needs identified as a result of external and internal evaluations, the Academy has implemented a number of trainings: "Computer skills", "MOODLE platform work tools", "Time management and work prioritization". In 2022 within SMARTII project, in Catholic university of Portugal the trainings conducted under the title "English for special purposes and the European Credit Transfer System", based on which the Academy conducted a series of courses: "Academic Literacy", "Credit Accumulation and Transfer System", "Preparation of Effective/Successful Presentations". The teaching staff knows English to some extent, and the Academy has conducted trainings aimed at increasing the level of foreign language.

According to the documents attached to the SER during the first semester 2022, 38 representatives were involved in 36 - trainings, seminars, scientific-practical seminars, round table discussions, webinars, workshops. Taking into account the imperative of internationalization of the Academy, most of the trainings were carried out within the framework of international cooperation, grant projects. At the same time, the expert panel site-visit revealed that in 2023 the Academy prioritized professional training for professors, such trainings are currently few in number.

#### **5.5 The Institution ensures that there is a permanent staff for the stable provision of the academic programs.**

The Academy highlights creating opportunities for continuous development and ensuring sustainability for the teaching staff. The evidence of this fact is almost unchanged data on the main composition of the Academy's PD during the last 3 years (2019, 2020, 2021), which are presented in the SER. The expert panel site-visit revealed that as a result of radical decrease of the number of

students during the academic year 2022-2023 some professors have moved to paid per hour at the Academy. This condition has not changed the stability of the staff, cause the payment of the employees paid per hour is high.

According to the SER the 40.5% of the lecturers of the Academy works for 11 years.

As a result of the close cooperation between lecturers and students of the Academy, the implementation and encouragement of joint research, the staff of the Academy is replenished with young personnel, who are also graduates of the Academy

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

According to the SP for 2019-2024 and its action plan, also the improvement plan after the previous accreditation process of the Academy the Development Concept of human resource management system was developed and approved by the Academy, the 13<sup>th</sup> point of which reflects to the process of professional development of the staff. The trainings and qualification improvement of the human resources are highlighted in the Concept, the activities to be implemented and their evaluation of effectiveness as a result of needs assessment are highlighted as well. The development of the procedures of the competitive elections of the teaching staff, as well as the necessity of encouragement of the staff /except for the heads of the Chair/ is highlighted.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that the encouragement and promotion is implemented according to the mediation and guarantee of the head of the corresponding structural department. For example, in case of publishing article in international peer-reviewed journal, the lecturer can get a surcharge in the amount of 20% of the amount spent for the article. It should also be mentioned that the students of the Academy cooperate with the professors, implement joint research work, then defends PhD theses and goes to work at the Academy.

At the session of the Scientific Council of the Academy on October 28, 2021, the procedures "Qualification criteria and categories of scientific personnel in the Academy" and "Procedure for attestation of scientific workers of the Academy" were approved. According to the procedure "Qualification criteria and categories of scientific personnel in the Academy", the following categories are defined in the Academy: chief scientific worker, leading scientific worker, senior scientific worker, scientific worker and junior scientific worker. The requirements for the occupation of categories are also presented in the procedure.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that surcharges, incentive mechanisms are very often not systematic in the sense that the system is newly developed.

### **5.7 The Institution has necessary administrative and support staffs to achieve the strategic goals.**

The expertise revealed that the Academy has sufficient administrative and support staff to accomplish the strategic goals and objectives. All the departments, governing bodies implementing the defined goals have their regulations, working plans. The expertise revealed that new organizational structure of the Academy was approved. The charters of the units were revised, updated and approved, the repetitive functions of individual units, as well as the missing or needing to be clarified functions, the redistribution of powers, functions and responsibilities between the structural units of the Academy was carried out, which are reflected in the job-descriptions of the updated positions of the administrative and teaching staff. The expert panel site-visit revealed that both teaching staff and

students, as well as graduates are mainly satisfied with the work of the administrative and teaching staff.

**Considerations:** In order to implement Academic programs and achieve the goals of the Strategic plan in the Academy, there are teaching and support staff with the necessary qualifications, which contributes to the effective implementation of the APs. However, it should be mentioned that some functions of some of the activities mentioned in the faculty selection procedures are still in the planning phase of the PDCA cycle or are not fully implemented. The Academy implements necessary activities, that promote the improvement of the process.

It is positive that doctors of sciences, candidates, professional specialists with practical work experience in the public sector are involved in the Academic programs, which makes it possible to ensure the achievement of the final results of the programs. A significant number of the Academy's teaching and support staff also include graduates of the Academy, who contribute their knowledge, abilities and skills acquired in the practical field to the improvement of the Academy's educational processes. This condition is positive from the point of view of building practical skills among students, personnel and generation of the teaching staff. This process can also be positive in order to ensure the stability.

The expert panel considers positive the fact that the main requirements for teaching staff have been defined, the job descriptions of the administrative, teaching and support staff have been re-developed: which include now not only the role of the position, but also required basic knowledge, skills. This contributes involvement of the experienced professors of the field.

The expert panel considers positive the fact that a number of procedures has been developed in the Academy for the regular evaluation of the teaching staff, the results of which are discussed in corresponding departments and in some cases becoming the basis for the improvement. The regular assessments of the teaching staff and planning the activities for the professional progress will contribute to the continuous development.

However, there are also some issues regarding the evaluation of the efficiency of the surveys, for which the Academy still needs to develop certain mechanisms. The in-class observations are not implemented in coordinated manner, they are not planned which hinder the extraction and dissemination of good practice in the field of teaching. At the same time, the development of the checklists for the in-class observations is considered positive, which is not used yet, however, if applied, it will enable the coordination of this process.

The training process of the teaching staff is not planned and does not have certain frequency, the trainings are organized as needed and based on the imperative of the moment. The fact that the management staff realizes the need of the professional training for teaching staff, and plan the professional development opportunities for all the lecturers, which will contribute the involvement of all lecturers in the training process.

The cooperation of the Academy with the international organizations within the grant projects gave the opportunity for the teaching and support staff to participate in training programs of the international projects which enhanced the progress of the teaching staff.

The expert panel considers positive the fact that the Academy implements policy hiring its graduates and postgraduates in order to ensure the consistency of the teaching staff according to the APs. These processes contribute to the stability of the teaching staff and the implementation of the strategic goals.



The institution has sufficient administrative and support staff. The expert panel considers positive the fact that structural changes have been made in the Academy: functions and responsibilities among the departments were specified, redistributed and fixed, which are reflected in the job-descriptions of the revised positions of the administrative and teaching staff.

**Summary:** Taking into account, that there are teaching and support staff with necessary professional qualities to implement the strategic goals of the Academy, there is a policy for the selection of teaching and support staff members, evaluation of the teaching staff, and professional advancement policies with defined corresponding procedures, there are mechanisms providing the teaching staff and implementing the activities aimed at improvement of the lecturers, which derive from the mission of the Academy, the expert panel finds, that the expert panel considers that the PAA of RA meets the requirement of the Criteria 5.

**Conclusion:** The expert panel assesses the relevance of PAA of RA institutional competencies to the requirements of CRITERION 5 sufficient.

## VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

**CRITERION: The Institution 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 implementation of the scientific and applied research is the main component of the Academy mission expressed in the SP for 2019-2024. At the same time the assurance of the unity of educational and scientific activities in the SP of the Academy is highlighted as a principle of the process. According to this the 3<sup>rd</sup> main goal of the SP was defined as: “Improving the implementation of the results of scientific research and expanding the participation of stakeholders in research”. And in the action plan of the SP the implementation of this goal is detailed with certain events.

The Academy considers the sub-goals to be the main strategic guidelines for the implementation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> goal of the SP for 2019-2024 /“Improving the implementation of the results of scientific research and expanding the participation of stakeholders in research”/

- assessment of the academy's research potential,
- expansion of the academy's research capabilities,
- raising the level of public awareness about the research opportunities implemented in the academy,
- development of structures for the interconnection of research and educational processes,
- integration of research results into the educational programs of the Academy,

- expanding the participation of the stakeholders in research projects.

The Academy managed to develop a project “SP for the scientific activities” for 2022-2026, which was in the stage of development during the expert panel site-visit.

The expertise revealed that not all the planned activities were implemented, particularly, the assessment of the Academy's research potential, expansion of various stakeholders in research programs, and etc. are still in the stage of planning.

The Academy developed improvement plan with schedule of implementation according to the recommendations of the previous accreditation. The improvement plan consisted of 5 main outcomes with 14 mid-term outcomes. The implementation of the improvement plan was also incomplete, in particular, no structures were introduced to encourage the scientific research activities of the faculty members, the salary of professors was not differentiated according to the results of their scientific research activities, the participation of students in the activities of scientific research centers and laboratories was not ensured, the policy of commercialization of research results was not developed and implemented.

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

According to the SER the long-term interests and ambitions of the Academy are expressed in the SP for 2019-2024. Based on the SP an action plan was planned for 2019-2024, which was considered to be the basis for the development of the short-term action plans for making schedules for their implementation. The scientific research of the chairs of the Academy is implemented according the professional directions and at the end of every semester the reports are presented regarding the implemented activities.

According to the SER the effectiveness of implemented scientific research is evaluated and summarized in the reports on the evaluation of the results of the Strategic plan and the action for 2019-2024 at the end of the academic year.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that the frameworks/procedures for increasing the quality of the research, the integration of the scientific research and teaching processes, the encouraging of joint research activities among students and professors are still in the stage of proposals. The structures of attracting young scientists, encouraging them and increasing the attractiveness of the professional progress of the researcher are still at the level of proposals.

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

From the statistical data provided in the SER, it becomes clear that the theoretical weight of financial resources allocated to scientific research in the general budget of the Academy was sharply reduced in 2021 (9.6% in 2019, 8% in 2020, 4.1% in 2021). The same statistic data shows that despite this, the number of publications has increased.

The expertise revealed that the encouraging method in the Academy it is considered a means of encouragement that the employees of the Academy, PhD students, master's students can publish one free scientific article a year in the "Public Administration" scientific journal, and pay 50% of the prescribed fee for the second article.

The Academy planned, but not yet provided additional payments to the employees for publishing articles in the international scientific journals (SCOPUS, Web of Science).

In 2020 the Students' scientific council was created to increase the involvements of students in the scientific research and innovative projects. The main purpose of SSC is to contribute the scientific, research and creative development of students, PhD students, researcher. According to the SER scientific events were organized by the SCC during the last 2 years, including a conference. However, the materials of the conference have not been published, which did not allow to evaluate them qualitatively.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that despite the above-mentioned opportunities, the Academy does not provide research requirements to the teaching staff, and does not have a consistent mechanism for the encouragement for the research. The results of the research are not considered as financial resource for the Academy and is not involved in the commercialization of these results.

#### **6.4 The Institution emphasizes internationalization of its research.**

The Academy sees the importance of internationalization of its research activities in 2019-2024. In the strategic plan, the first sub-goal of the 6th goal "Expansion of the process of internationalization and international cooperation and increase in efficiency", that is, "Increasing participation in international educational and/or research programs".

In 2021, at the meeting of the Scientific Council, the internationalization concept of the Academy was approved, where the increase of the Academy's participation in international scientific research projects was defined. According to this concept, the Academy strives to encourage and contribute to the initiatives of the staff to train in foreign partner universities and to carry out joint research activities.

During the last 3 years 33 article were published in different professional journals. In the KIPs of the Academy the indicators on internationalization are also included (teaching staff involved in international projects (2022: 11), foreign business trips and seconded workers (2022: 5), visits, business trips from abroad to the Academy (2022: 4), number of students studying abroad (2022: 2)).

As a result of the structural changes of the Academy, the department of scientific activities was created, according to its charter, it is called to carry out the organization of scientific and scientific-technical activities<sup>9</sup>. The expert panel site-visit revealed that the department is not yet fully implementing its functions and its effectiveness can be assessed when the full cycle of works is completed.

#### **6.5 The Institution has well established mechanisms for linking research with teaching.**

In the 3 Academic programs presented by the Academy within the accreditation process there are multicomponent assessment, however, there are no assessment mechanisms for the research component. The expert panel site-visit revealed that the unified system and mechanisms for the assessment of the research component are still under discussion and may be introduced in the near future.

In the academy, the research component in master's theses and the individual-independent works carried out by students, which, although not regulated, are also considered research and are evaluated by the lecturer, are considered a mechanism for connecting research and educational

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<sup>9</sup> The sentence was reformulated based on the institution's observations.

processes. The observations of the diploma thesis revealed that there is a qualitative difference according to the APs. There are thesis in which it is difficult to see the scientific basis of the problem analyses the presented problem. This indicates an extremely liberal assessment of the quality of theses by the committees.

However, the result of the surveys from the SER revealed that according to the some part of the professors the scientific and research level of the master thesis is not high, the Academy is taking active steps in this direction, in particular, revision, modernization of the thesis topics, adaption of the topics of master's theses to market requirements, including topics proposed by employers, as well as the "Scientific Research Methodology" course is included in all academic programs<sup>10</sup>.

The expertise revealed that students also have the opportunity to be published in the scientific journal "Public Management" published in the Academy.

Student conferences are organized in the Academy, but they are not systematic and coordinated, and there are no mechanisms for encouraging students' research activities.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that there is a need to launch new research laboratories or reopen old ones in the Academy, as well as the research of professors is not included in the educational process.

**Considerations:** The expert panel considers positive the fact that PAA highlights the development of the scientific research in the Academy, have priorities and goals in this direction. At the same time, the expert panel highlights the evaluation of the scientific potential and investment of the identified potential to develop and activate the scientific research activities of the Academy.

The expert panel highlights the definition of the research directions, which will contribute to the students' and professors' involvement in the research activities.

It is positive that the Academy makes efforts to regulate the scientific research processes, defining measurable indicators and tracking them will contribute to the development and success achievement.

The lack of incentive mechanisms in scientific research currently hinders the involvement of many professors and students in scientific research activities. In this context, sustainable financial investments by the Academy for the development are important.

The expert panel is concerned that scientific achievements are not sufficiently promoted in the evaluation process of professors. The limited number of articles in international peer-reviewed journals, published by professors mainly in local journals still do not have a great impact and do not include the full observance of the directions set by the Academy. The expert panel highlights the practical usage of the scientific research projects, which will involve a larger number of researchers from different scientific field. The closure of one of the research laboratories in 2021 due to lack of funding confirms the passivity of researchers in receiving new grants.

It is an important circumstance that cooperation with foreign partners is not carried out to overcome these difficulties. The expert panel site-visit revealed that among the professors there is a large group of people with excellent knowledge of the English language, who actively cooperate with foreign universities, but this cooperation is the result of individual initiatives, and not the result of the promotion of scientific research of the Academy. In this direction, the Academy still has work to do in terms of giving institutional character to the individual teaching initiatives, involving a wider range,

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<sup>10</sup> The sentence was reformulated based on the institution's observations.

which will also lead to an increase in the research ranking of the Academy, commercialization of research, attracting additional financial resources.

One of the consequences of passivity in research is the limited involvement of students in research projects. Establishing a research component as an assessment criterion in master's theses will help students develop these abilities. Mentoring by experienced alumni presented by the Academy to the expert panel can promote the quality of student research.

The lack of motivational mechanisms also led to low participation of students in research works. The low level of interest of teaching staff and students in carrying out research activities endangers the formation and development of students' research abilities and skills, and can become a serious obstacle to the professional development of teaching staff. As a result, it will be difficult to modernize the programs and, most importantly, the mission of the Academy, to have graduates with research abilities, will not be realized.

**Summary:** Taking into account that there are no motivating mechanisms for the implementation of scientific research works, small funding planned for the effective implementation of these works, lack of infrastructures (research laboratories), internal grant mechanisms for the implementation of scientific research works, lack of clearly functioning stable mechanisms for the inclusion of research results in the educational process, the incomplete implementation of the plan for elimination of the deficiencies mentioned in the expert report of the previous institutional accreditation, lack of regulations aimed at regularity of research effectiveness, the expert panel concludes that PAA of RA does not meet the requirements of Criterion 6.

**Conclusion:** The expert panel assesses the relevance of PAA of RA institutional competencies to the requirements of CRITERION 6 insufficient.

## 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 current academic programmes.**

The Academy has two buildings 25 classrooms, 3 computer rooms, as well as equipment and electronic communication necessary for the organization of distance learning. Currently, the classes are organized in two shifts due to the schedule of working students.

The Academy's library has professional literature, computers for using electronic resources, and a reading room. Digitization of professional literature has been carried out in the library; students can order digitized electronic books online. The library stock is 17,371 items (12,866 in Armenian, 4,505 in other languages). However, the Academy is not joined to professional library networks.

On the territory of the Academy there is a gymnasium, a hall equipped with technical means for organizing scientific conferences and events, and a canteen, which was not working during the visit due to the lack of purchases. The territory of the academy is provided with Wi-Fi and Internet access.

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

The financial and economic management of the Academy is carried out according to the organizational and legal form of the institution, according to the model typical of the SNPO.

In the strategic plan for 2019-2024, the Academy defined the 5th goal of ensuring the stability of the financial system. The management of financial resources in the Academy is carried out on an annual basis, through the preparation of the budget estimate and the analysis of the actual performance of the budget. The Academy's annual budget estimate is discussed and approved by the Board.

According to the SER and attached documents the majority of financial incomes are student fees and students with reimbursement of the costs by the state (86.38% of the 2021 budget), and the main part of expenses is salaries (73.05% of the 2021 budget). In 2021, the costs of acquiring educational equipment and property made up 0.57% of the budget, library costs - 0.05%, but the budget did not include costs for quality assurance processes, professional development of professors and research incentives.

### **7.3 The Institution has policy on financial distribution and capacity to sustain and ensure the integrity and continuity of the programmes offered at the Institution.**

The 3 APs observed by the expert panel are mainly equipped with corresponding resource basis. Acting or previous grant projects provided an opportunity to replenish the material resources to a certain extent.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that the allocation of financial resources according to the APs is not implemented. The internal stakeholders of the Academy do not participate in the preparation of the financial budget, only the structural units submit information on the necessary products, services and works to the financial, economic and accounting department on an annual basis.

### **7.4 The Institution's resource base supports the implementation of Institution's academic programmes and strategic plan, which promotes sustainability and continuous improvement of quality.**

The expertise revealed that the resource basis of the Academy mainly provides an opportunity to implement educational processes, necessary equipment, electronic resources are available. Resource base of the Academy is periodically updated with the help of grant projects. Funds are not allocated for all objectives of the Strategic plan.

There are sufficient resources for implementation of the distance learning education.

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

The legal basis for the information and documentation processes in the Academy is the administrative regulation.

The automated e-Buh management system for educational processes has been implemented in the Academy as an important tool for simplifying the management and organization of the educational

process in the institution, increasing the level of efficiency, flexibility. The institution has an internal network that connects different departments, and the electronic management system "Mulberry" has been implemented, which enables to manage the flow of documents.

The chart, regulation, minutes of the scientific Council meetings, manuals, guidelines and reports are available the official web site of the Academy

#### **7.6 The Institution creates safe and secure environment through health and safety mechanisms taking into account the students with special needs.**

The building of the Academy is equipped with a fire alarm system, the building is monitored by a video surveillance system, and there is a guard service. There are conditions for quick and harmless evacuation of students and staff in emergency situations, in order to prepare staff and students to navigate in emergency situations, a state of emergency is regularly declared, during which employees and students are evacuated.

According to the SER the Academy was involved in the TEMPUS IV program "Access of people with special needs to society" (ASPIRE) within the framework of international cooperation ([https://paara.am/aspire\\_hy/](https://paara.am/aspire_hy/)). In addition to the development of Academic programs, the Academy has trained employees to work with people with special needs, as well as provided comfortable conditions for them to study and work. The resource observations revealed that, the main building of the Academy is adapted for people with mobility problems. The entrances to the main building of the Academy and the library are provided with ramps, a bathroom was built to meet the needs of people with limited abilities. Students with special needs study at the Academy.

The Academy is provided with first aid medicines, but there is no medical center in the Academy.

#### **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.**

Assessment of the applicability, availability and effectiveness of resources provided to students and teachers in the Academy is carried out through regularly conducted surveys on the satisfaction of the necessary resources and services, which is regulated. In the resource needs assessment surveys, the stakeholders mainly mention the following aspects to be improved: modernization of the library stock, strengthening of the Internet connection, renovation of the bathrooms.

**Considerations:** The expert panel considers positive the fact that the efforts of the Academy aimed at providing necessary resources for the implementation of the Strategic goals. It is positive that the Academy is ensured with the necessary resources to implement the APs, which contribute to the achievement of the AP learning outcomes.

The means aimed at the development of the library of the Academy, as well as the adaptation of the library service to the requirements of the internal stakeholders, are positively evaluated, as a result of which an increase in the number of readers was mentioned. Membership in library networks will be beneficial for the Academy, which will enable students and faculty members to be informed about the latest developments in various fields, and will also contribute to the application of modern knowledge in research and teaching processes.

The academy's budget is mainly formed from student fees, which can cause problems from the point of view of sustainability. It is also important to allocate funds for all strategic goals and faculty incentives, which will lead to the balanced development of all areas.

In the Academy, procedures and tools for managing information and documentation processes are implemented, and relevant work is being done to modernize them. At the same time, the expert panel considers it important to fully use the e-Buh system, which will contribute to the effective management of the educational process.

The academy has all basic safety conditions. It is positive that the work aimed at creating a favorable environment for people with special needs is in the center of attention of the Academy. A mechanism for assessing the applicability, availability and effectiveness of the resources provided in the institution is mainly considered to be the surveys, which are regulated and have a periodic nature. However, the low percentage of survey participants cannot give a clear picture of resource sufficiency and the processes needed for improvement.

**Summary:** Taking into account, that the Academy's resource base enables the achievement of the defined mission and goals, there is a procedure for managing information and documentation processes, the institution's educational environment security, health and safety services are sufficient, and the Academy monitors the satisfaction of internal stakeholders with resources and regularly improves them, the expert panel considers that the Academy meets the requirements of criterion 7.

**Conclusion:** The expert panel assesses the relevance of institutional competencies of the Academy to the requirements of CRITERION 7 sufficient.

## VIII. SOCIETAL 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 clear policy on accountability.

The accountability order of the Academy is defined by the Charter of the Academy. The collegial governing body of the Academy – the Board discusses and approves the annual report of the Rector.

The main and comprehensive document of the evaluation of Academy's activities are annual report of the Rector, that reflects to the activities implemented in every direction and the results of the processes of the Academy. The annual report of the Academy is formulated on the annual reports of the Academy departments. The expert panel site-visit revealed that the reports of the departments are presented both semi-annually and annually.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that semi-annual and annual reports are mainly executive in nature, do not contain analyzes of the current situation, although there were some exceptions in the case of the Center for International Cooperation and Development, the Departments of Management Psychology, Languages and Information Technology.



In order to ensure the accountability of the Academy's 2019-2024 development strategic plan, a format and a guide have been developed to fill in. In fact, the results of the actions plan of the SP is implemented: the evaluation is performed both on the implementation process of individual activities of the strategic plan, information on the implementation of the strategic plan for the development of the Academy, as well as information on the reasons for the non-implementation of various activities, with a clear reason.

The expertise revealed that, the reports on the action plan of the SP is presented 2 times a year – by the end of each semester.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that Heads of departments have a regular discussion with the rector, presenting the existing achievements and gaps.

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

The main tools for the transparency of procedures and processes in the academy, publicity and making information available to the public are the Academy's official website ([www.paara.am](http://www.paara.am)), Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/paara.am>), booklets about educational programs (<https://paara.am/home/dimord/new-programs/>), the "Public Administration" scientific periodical, the internal document circulation system: google education/Gsuite, "Universities of Armenia" directory for applicants, the RA PAA student's guide, mass media, Academy students' personal e-mails, etc.

The Academy allocated funds to create a new website. The expert panel also noted the fact that the official website of the Academy has a lack of documentation in English and Russian languages. During the meetings, the representatives of the Academy stated that there is a staff problem of translators, all news are quickly presented in three languages through the public relations responsible and the rules have not been translated yet, but they plan to carry out work in that direction. In this regard it was revealed by the Academy representatives that the web site has informative content, there are issues related to the technical problems. According to surveys conducted among lecturers, the teaching staff is mostly satisfied with the work of the website. The Academy also participated in the "Education and Career" expo 2022, during which educational programs, admission procedure and training programs were presented.

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

RA PAA has structural departments the activities of which aimed at providing feedback that contributes to the formation of public relations. According to the SER these departments are the Academy's Alumni Union and Career Center, Center for International Cooperation and Development, Department of Additional Education, Center for Quality Assurance, Chairs.

The expertise revealed that the alumni members are members of the Alumni Association and are sent job vacancies as well as some enquiries. Employer surveys, meetings with students, and electronic communication are among the feedback mechanisms contributing to the formation of relations with society in the Academy.

The surveys are conducted according to the "Procedure for organizing and conducting surveys aimed at improving the educational process". The achievements of the graduates of the School of Management and all years of the Academy are posted on the Academy's official website and Facebook page.

According to the SER of the Academy on the website of the Academy, in addition to the official e-mail, there is a feedback system where visitors can leave comments. The feedback system also works in the case of social platforms.

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

According to the Academy SP for 2019-2024 the Academy emphasizes the mechanisms of continuous, periodic training of employees of the public service system and other sectors, strengthening of professional knowledge and abilities, and the transfer of knowledge and values to the society. The Academy emphasizes the fact that throughout its activity it had an important role in the establishment of the training system of civil servants public workers, in the development of training programs. The academy organizes training courses for employees of various public sector structures. During the expert visit, it was found that only in 2022, the Academy implemented 41 training programs. In 2022, 3636 specialists were trained<sup>11</sup>.

The directions of the training programs are decided by the customer, which is defined by the contract. A separate contract is signed with the lecturer teaching the training program. The training in the Academy is carried out by highly qualified lecturers who have extensive experience of working and lecturing in political, administrative, autonomous, discretionary and public service positions in the bodies of the RA state administration system, as well as in universities. The trainings are implemented full time and online format. The Academy's Quality Assurance Department regularly conducts surveys among trainees, resulting in reports.

According to the expertise, under the leadership of the rector of the Academy, regular meetings are held with the head of the civil service office of the RA Prime Minister's Office, a number of contracts were signed with the RA President's Office, the RA Prime Minister's Office, a number of ministries and other structures.

The Academy is also a participant in various projects aimed at the development of communities ("In order to strengthen the capacities of communities by taking appropriate measures to climate change and integrating climate change adaptation into regional and community development strategies"), reducing corruption risks (Anti-Corruption Academy) and effective involvement in democratic processes. strengthening of democratic principles ("Engaged citizen").

According to the SER the Academy developed and presented to the staff of the RA Prime Minister the project of the professional development strategy of the RA civil servants.

**Considerations:** The expert panel positively assesses the fact that the Academy emphasizes the creation and transfer of knowledge to society in its mission. The Academy also has a clear system of accountability, which includes reports on the work done by all departments. The reports reflect all directions included in the Academy's Strategic Plan. Reports are also provided according to the program of activities of the Academy, which allows to record the main achievements and gaps and to plan further work.

It is positive that Academy has web site, the link with the society is ensured with it. The expert panel emphasizes the completion of information in English and Russian, which will contribute to the transparency and accessibility of the Institution's processes for international external stakeholders. The

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<sup>11</sup> The sentence was reformulated based on the institution's observations.

Academy is also available on social networks, which is important from the point of view of providing feedback

The expert panel positively assesses the fact that there is a system for providing feedback to society, but at the same time notes that it is necessary to provide more stable feedback mechanisms with graduates and employers, which will enable to improve the efficiency of all processes in the Academy.

The expert panel positively assesses the fact that process of training programs for civil servants implemented in the Academy, the training of civil servants, which are effective mechanisms for transferring knowledge to the general layers of society and contribute to close cooperation between the state, society and the Institution.

At the same time, the expert panel emphasizes a more planned and periodic connection between the Academy and state administration circles, which will contribute to the reflection of the requirements of the state system in Academic programs.

**Summary:** Taking into account, that the accountability system of the PAA of RA the system is thoroughly developed and improved, the functions and processes of the Institution are accessible and visible to the public, there are mechanisms for transferring knowledge and support to the public, the expert panel finds that the Academy meets the requirements of the criterion 8.

**Conclusion:** The expert panel assesses the relevance of the PAA of RA institutional competencies to the requirements of CRITERION 8 sufficient.

## 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 goals for internationalization of the Academy were defined from the time of its foundation, reflecting it in the Charter, particularly emphasizing the participation in international scientific and educational cooperation in the field of public administration, as well as distinguishing the forms of international cooperation. The same goal was defined in the mission of the Academy, as well as in the in the SP for 2019-2024 with 6<sup>th</sup> goal - "Expanding and increasing efficiency of the internationalization process and international cooperation" its sub-goals and in the Action plan.

In order to implement the recommendations of the previous accreditation and the goals of the SP for 2019-2024 the Concept of Internationalization was developed.

The expertise revealed that the report is presented regarding the activities implemented internationalization processes of the SP, in which the implemented activities are presented in details.

The expertise revealed that the Academy initiated and developed the AP "Business Administration" (MBA) in English according to the SP for 2019-2024. The expert panel site-visit revealed that the program is in the process of implementation of the program is still in progress, as the entire staff of the teaching staff included in the AP must take the TOEFL exam, as required by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

According to the SER during the last 3 years /2020-2022/ one lecturer and 4 students were included in the scientific- educational exchange program.

The expertise revealed that the number of administrative and teaching staff, students included in the programs are few.

### **9.2 The Institution's external relations infrastructure ensures regulated process.**

There is an institutional structure ensuring the internationalization in the Academy, which acts according to the statute approved by the rector's order N 355-A of October 10, 2022. The head of the center is accountant to the vice-rectors for the scientific affairs and external relations. The Center for International Cooperation and Development also has the positions of "chief specialist, public relations officer", "chief specialist", "leading specialist", whose job-descriptions have been reworked. Job-descriptions clearly outline job functions and requirements.

Within the framework of the functions of the Center for International Cooperation and Development, the head submits an annual report on the work carried out in the current year, which is reflected in the annual report of the Academy's activities.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that external relations and internationalization report reflected the work done according to the Academy's internationalization strategy. At the same time, the analyses on the effectiveness of the implemented activities particularly the data related to the result of the internationalization.

### **9.3 The Institution effectively collaborates with local and international counterparts.**

According to the SER the Academy cooperates with the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Management (IASIA), the Union of Schools and Institutes of Management of Central and Eastern European Countries (NISPAcee), the Union of European Training Organizations for Local Self-Government and Territorial Administration (ENTO), the European Council for Business Education (ECBE). The Academy is also included in the World Higher Education Database of the International Association of Universities (IAU WHED).

According to the SER the Academy actively cooperates with local state governing bodies, the scope of cooperation with international organizations has also been expanded, the Academy is included in grant programs, the administrative and teaching staff is included in mobility programs. According to the presented contract register, 13 cooperation contracts and memorandums have been signed since 2020. Exchange of experience, mobility of professors and students, joint use of electronic resources, joint conferences, research is also carried out by a number of foreign universities: Brasov Transylvania, Pitesti (Romania), Polish Social Sciences, Mikolas Romeris (Lithuania), Timisoara West (Romania)

within the framework of the agreements with Polytechnic University of Ancona (Italy) and Shanghai Institute of International Studies, Manara University, Syria.

According to the SER and the expert panel site-visit the Academy also cooperates effectively with the German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ). As a result of the latter, the Academy was included in the "Professional Civil Service and Technical and Vocational Education and Training in the Eastern Partnership Countries" program of the Eastern Partnership Regional Fund for Public Administration Reforms of GIZ. Representatives of the Academy also participated in the training courses organized within the framework of the project

In 2019-2021, the Academy signed cooperation agreements with 23 organizations of the private sector, on the basis of which management and research practices are organized. The Academy also actively cooperates with a number of local universities: V. Sargsyan Military University of the RA Ministry of Defense, Goris State University, Shirak State University, as well as Artsakh State University.

According to the SER, in 2020-2022, 27 of the Academy's main teaching staff members were involved in international projects, 12 (PD representatives and employees) went on a business trip, 14 came to the Academy from abroad, and 4 students were included in mobility programs.

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

In the SER, the Academy did not provide data on the number and percentage of teachers and administrative workers who have knowledge of foreign languages for the last 3 years. Data are presented only on students' knowledge of a foreign language (100 %). However, within the framework of the expert panel site-visit it was revealed that both the administrative and teaching staff, students and graduates have some knowledge of foreign languages (English and Russian). At the same time, site-visit revealed that the number of hours of foreign languages has been reduced: one semester for foreign language according to the AP curricula. It was also revealed that it is planned to create foreign language classes separately in order to develop linguistic environment. The expert panel site-visit revealed that the study of the literature in foreign language is encouraged by the teaching staff members, the professional texts are translated during the classes. The expert panel site-visit it was revealed that during the courses of the "Business Administration" (MBA) ISC, concrete situations (Case-studies) are discussed in English, which, according to the students, provides an opportunity to freely join and work in international organizations. On the initiative of the lecturer at the faculty of law, the course "Manifestations of the use of force in the 21st century" was held entirely in English.

The expert panel site-visit revealed that at the request of the students, Persian and French courses were also organized for groups of two students, in case that foreign language groups are formed in case of a larger number of students involved.

According to the self-analysis, submitted documents and the results of the site-visit, it was revealed that the Academy is a member of the consortium of the Support to innovative methodology, approaches and use of tools for teaching in English to improve the efficiency, sustainability and internationalization of education (SMARTI) project implemented within the framework of the Erasmus+ "Capacity Development of Higher Education" program of the European Union. whose duration is three years (2021-2024). In 2022, March 30, within the framework of the SMARTI project, 37 participants were included in the series of intra-university courses held at the Academy under the title "English for special purposes and the European Credit Transfer System", of which 14 were administrative, 13 were students, and 10 were students.

**Considerations:** The expert panel positively assesses the fact that the Academy is continuously develops its external relations enlarging the scope of the local and international organizations and universities. It is positive that the activities related to the development of external relation and internationalization are coordinated after the improvements of the previous accreditation recommendations. At the same time there is a need to strengthen cooperation with universities, that will contribute to the internationalization of the APs.

The Academy highlights the internationalization processes and the development of the internationalization is prioritized by the SP of the Academy, a number of documents are developed in this sphere, which contribute to the coordinated processes. The activities of the administrative departments aimed at the development of the internationalization and the external relations. At the same time, the expert panel highlights the evaluation of the results of the internationalization activities, that will help to target the scope of cooperation.

The expert panel positively assesses the fact that Academy has signed cooperation contracts with different international and local organizations, as a result of which the administrative, teaching staff members and students can participate in various trainings, grant projects and exchange programs. At the same time, the expert group emphasizes the implementation of activities aimed at increasing the number of teaching staff and student participation in mobility programs (including scientific research), increasing motivation, developing and implementing incentive mechanisms.

The expert panel positively highlights the fact that administrative, teaching staff and students mainly know a foreign language, at the same time, it emphasizes the development and implementation of alternative ways of developing a foreign language, creating a suitable language environment, which will make it possible to increase the level of foreign language proficiency and expand the degree of inclusion in international programs.

The expert panel notes that many collaborative directions are still in the planning and implementation phase, their results are not yet visible, which makes it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness and their impact on educational programs.

**Summary:** Taken into account that the Academy has carried out targeted activities to create an environment developing internationalization, policies and procedures are in place to encourage the establishment of external relations, there is a professional administrative staff with internationalization functions, the institution effectively cooperates with local and international structures, the Academy encourages the foreign language knowledge of internal stakeholders the expert panel finds that the Academy meets the requirement of the Criterion 9.

**Conclusion:** The expert panel assesses the relevance of the Academy institutional competencies to the requirements of CRITERION 9 sufficient.

## X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

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

### 10.1 The Institution has quality assurance policies and procedures.

The Internal Quality Assurance System has been founded in 2013 by the concept of quality assurance of the RA Academy of Public Administration. based on this concept, in 2022, the Academy published the Quality Assurance Manual.

The internal quality assurance is a primary goal of the SP for 2019-2024, and it is defined as follows: "Strengthening the culture of learning quality and making a credit system in accordance with the requirements of the Bologna Process in the higher education system." In 2020, the Academy's Standing Committee on Quality Assurance has been approved in the Academy's Scientific Council.

After the structural changes implemented in the Academy the IQA department is under the direct subordination of the rector, but the relations of the Standing Committee on Quality Assurance in the Academy are not clarified. According to the word order of the Academy's Standing Committee on Quality Assurance the IQA department participates in the development of the necessary materials for the meetings and provides them to the members of the committee, informs about the days of the meetings and the issues to be discussed, records the proceedings of the meetings and the decisions made.

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

The numbers of positions of the IQA departments have increased since 2021, now the department has 3.5 position – head of the department, two leading specialists, for whom the job descriptions are defined in the passports of positions.

According to the SER of the Academy provides with human and material resources for preparing, conducting, processing and summarizing the results of various studies among internal and external stakeholders.

The department has two offices, which are equipped with necessary material and technical resources to implement the processes normally. Other financial resources besides the salaries of the employees are not allocated for the IQA department.

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

According to the SER of the Academy the IQA department highlights the involvement of the stakeholders in the QA activities. the internal stakeholders are involved in the evaluation of the quality of educational processes by participating in regular surveys among students and teaching staff members, and the external stakeholders – the alumni involved in satisfaction surveys. Surveys among external stakeholders, employers, were conducted to determine the level of satisfaction of employers with graduates.

According to the reports of surveys conducted among the internal stakeholders of the Academy, the percentage of their participation is low, among professors in 2021 it was 30.3%, among graduates in 2020-2021 year - 39.2%, in 2021-2022 year - 40.75%. The expert panel site-visit revealed that questionnaires are often extensive and a single survey tries to cover several domains the survey are quit extensive and do not ensure the large participation of beneficiaries in the surveys. The objectives of the questionnaires are also not specified.

### **10.4 The internal quality assurance system is periodically reviewed.**

The Academy strives to implement quality assurance through a "planning-implementing-evaluating-improving" cycle. It should be noted that some of the actions planned for solving the problems raised during the previous accreditation were still in the planning and implementation phase.

According to the results of the surveys conducted among the students participated in the practice during the 2020-2021 academic year a number of issues were raised mainly regarding the organizational and methodological problems of the practices and conclusions and suggestions have been made. However, in 2021-2022 specific steps in the academic year are not documented as improvements<sup>12</sup>.

The revision usually is not approved by the results of the assessment and depend on the analyses of strength and weaknesses. According to the results of the survey, measures to ensure the improvement of the quality of education, in the 2022 schedule, the point 11<sup>th</sup> includes increasing the number of hours of the foreign language course, but the number of hours of foreign language was reduced in the Academic programs developed for 2022-2023 academic year, and it is studied for one semester.

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

The Academy prepared SER for the external evaluation process. The data collection mechanisms are considered the survey analyses, the analyses and reports of different departments. The expert panel site-visit revealed that the results of the surveys are not always analyzed, the problems are not always discussed and the improvement actions planned.

It should also be noted that the SER is not always contain analytical data, there are many repetitive information, and the SWOT analyses did not provide a clear picture of the institution's activities.

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

According to the self-analysis, the main platforms for providing information about the quality of the Academy are the official website of the Institution, mass media, social networks, meetings with students and teaching staff, as well as the transparency of the Academy's activities is directly related to accountability (annual reports of the Rector and departments).

The expert panel site-visit revealed that the analyses of the surveys are partly provided to the stakeholders, as a result of this the stakeholders do not have a clear idea of what changes were made in the academy based on their opinions. The recommendations in the 2022 report on the results of the survey of the Center for Quality Assurance of the Academy indicate a lack of awareness of the issues raised and changes to the recommendations, therefore the results of the analyzes are not used as a basis for making managerial decisions and do not lead to quality improvements.

**Considerations:** The expert panel positively assesses the efforts of the PAA of RA regarding the development of the QA. The management of the PAA highlights the diversification of data collection mechanisms and the decisions made based on the data. It is positive, that based on the recommendations of the previous accreditation as a result of the structural changes of the Academy the IQA department is now under the direct subordination of the Rector.

It is positive, that the Academy provides the material and human resources for the internal QA activities of the Academy, however, the IQA system needs improvement. Among the stakeholders,

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<sup>12</sup> The sentence was reformulated based on the institution's observations.



there are still different ideas about the quality culture and its impact. For a number of processes, improvements are not clearly visible at the end of the evaluation, which hinders the establishment of a culture of quality and the extraction and dissemination of best practices in the Academy.

In order to spread the quality culture the expert panel highlights the extensive, active and motivated involvement of the external and, particularly, internal stakeholders contributing to the resolution of existing problems among the stakeholders and the continuous development of various fields of the Academy. It is important to diversify the mechanisms and increase the objectivity of surveys, increase the number of their participation and target the purpose of questionnaires for the collection of information.

The SER of the Academy has not yet provided sufficient grounds for forming an objective understanding of the Academy's processes, weaknesses and strengths. The quality management cycle is not closed, and the phases of PDCA are not evenly developed. The Academy has implemented process planning, but not all planned processes have been implemented, and the programs have not yet gone through the stages of evaluation and improvement.

In the self-analysis carried out by the Academy, the valuable information was not analyzed, but was presented in the form of many appendices, there are formulations that are not supported by arguments. It should be noted that for some criteria (Academic Programs, Research, Internationalization) based on the information obtained from the expert panel site-visit meetings, the actual progress in the implementation of the strategy was much higher than presented in the Academy's SER.

**Consideration:** Taking into account, that there is no unified understanding on the QA system of the Academy, the mechanisms of data collection are not diversified, the quality culture is still in the development phase, there are no mechanisms for defining and spreading best practices, the improvements are not always specified and fixed of the evaluated activities, the expert panel finds that the Academy does not meet the requirements of the criterion 10.

**Conclusion:** The expert panel assesses the relevance of PAA of RA institutional competencies to the requirements of CRITERION 10 insufficient.

## EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERION	CONCLUSION
<i>I. Mission and Purposes</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>II. Governance and Administration</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>III. Academic Programs</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>IV. Students</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>V. Faculty and Staff</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>VI. Research and Development</i>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
<i>VII. Infrastructure and Resources</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>VIII. Societal Responsibility</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>IX. External Relations and Internationalization</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>X. Internal Quality Assurance System</i>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>

April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023

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Hermine Grigoryan  
Head of the expert panel

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1. CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

**Hermine Grigoryan** - in 1992 graduated from the Department of Physics and Mathematics, Vanadzor State Pedagogical Institute. She is a Candidate of Sciences in Physics and Mathematics (2008), an Associate Professor (2011). Since 1992 she has been teaching at Vanadzor State University (VSU). Since 2014 she has been the Dean of the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics, VSU. She teaches "Mathematical equations", "Differential equations", "Complex analysis", "Differential and integral calculus for functions of a single variable", "Differential and integral calculus for functions of multiple variables". Her scientific interests cover the questions of boundary value of anisotropic plates of variable thickness

**Mstislav Socha** - graduated from the University of Lodz (Poland) in 1969 receiving an MA degree in Economics, completing his PhD at Warsaw University of Economics in 1974. Mr. Socha became a Doctor of Science at the University of Warsaw in 2000. He is currently teaching at the University of Warsaw, at the Leon Kozminski Academy, at the Northern State University, at the European College, at the School of State Administration. He has been a member of the Advisory Board of the Polish Accreditation Committee since 2014 and since 2017 has been a member of the International Advisory Board of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee. Mr. Socha has been an expert in the Polish Accreditation Committee for higher education since 2002 and a member of the Financial Committee of the European Consortium Accreditation (ECA) of higher education since 2014. He has participated in numerous research programs, national and international courses and conferences. Socha is an author and co-author of over 120 scientific papers (books and articles) and more than 40 conference reports published in a number of local and foreign magazines

**Gurgen Hovhannisyan** - a specialist in Geography. He became a Candidate of Geographical Sciences in 2006, "The Problem of the Content of School Geography in the RA", and received an Academic Title of Associate Professor in 2007. The research covers the fields of education, educational management. During his career he has occupied the following positions: from 2006 up to now - Head of BA Division of YSU Educational Methodological Department, Scientific Secretary of the 005 Professional Council of Geography, Deputy Executive Secretary of YSU Admission Committee, Secretary of the Council of YSU Geography Faculty, Deputy Dean of YSU Geography Faculty, Lecturer of Diaspora Armenian teachers' training courses, Executive of cultural programs, leading Specialist in Human Resources in the Ministry on Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia, Scientific worker, Secretary at the Pedagogical Research Institute, Head of the Admissions Committee of the subject "Geography" of YSU distance learning, Head of the Committee of the subject "Geography" of the state phase of the school olympiad, Geography teacher. The areas of published articles are geography, content of school geography, structure, knowledge testing, methodology. He is a member of the Armenian Geographical Society. Mr. Hovhannisyan has passed ANQA trainings, has participated in institutional accreditation processes as a member of an expert panel and a team leader.

**Sona Makichyan** - graduated from the Armenian State Pedagogical University named after K. Abovyan in 2000, receiving the qualification of a teacher of pedagogy and psychology (with the right

to teach English). In 2004, he graduated from Yerevan State Pedagogical University named after K. Abovyan. Received the scientific degree of candidate of psychological sciences: "Social adaptation of orphans and children deprived of parental care and the psychological causes of its difficulties", in 2009, the scientific title of associate professor. From 2015 until now, she holds the position of Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Psychology and Sociology of Education for Science and International Cooperation. In 2015-2021, she was responsible for ensuring the quality of education at the Faculty of Psychology and Sociology of Education. Since 2014, she is an associate professor of the Chair of Development and Applied Psychology of the Armenian State Pedagogical University named after Kh. Abovyan.

**Marine Karapetyan** - 2019-2021 studied at Tumo Center for Creative Technologies. Now she is a student of the 2nd semester of the bachelor's degree at the Faculty of Law of Eurasia International University. Participated in the training course for student experts of the Student Voice of the National Academy of Sciences project.

## AGENDA

### of the Expert Panel's Site Visit for Institutional Accreditation of Public Administration Academy of RA

09.01.2023-12.01.2023

	09.01.2023	<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1.	Meeting with the Rector of PAARA	09:30	10:30	60 minutes
2.	Meeting with Vice-Rectors	10:40	11:40	60 minutes
3.	Meeting with the group responsible for the preparation of self-evaluation	11:50	12:40	50 minutes
4.	Lunch, internal discussions	12:50	13:50	60 minutes
5.	Meeting with alumni	14:00	15:00	60 minutes
6.	Meeting with employers	15:10	16:10	60 minutes
7.	Meeting with the representatives of PAARA Governing Board	16:20	17:10	50 minutes
8.	Review of documents and close meeting of the expert panel	17:20	18:20	60 minutes

	10.01.2023	<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1.	Meeting with heads of chairs	09:30	10:30	60 minutes
2.	Meeting with full-time and adjunct academic staff members (10-12 representatives)	10:40	11:40	60 minutes
3.	Meeting with the Master's full-time and part-time students (10-12 representatives)	11:50	12:50	60 minutes
4.	Lunch, internal discussions	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
5.	Observation of resources	14:10	15:30	80 minutes
6.	Meeting with the representatives of Students Council and Student Scientific Council (10-12 representatives)	15:45	16:30	45 minutes
7.	Review of documents and close meeting of the expert panel	16:45	18:45	120 minutes

11.01.2023				<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1.	Parallel meeting with the responsables for the AP “Psychology of Management”	Parallel meeting with the responsables for the AP “Law”	Parallel meeting with the responsables for the AP “Public management”	09:30	10:30	60 minutes
2.	Meeting with the teachers of the AP “Psychology of Management”	Meeting with the teachers of the AP “Law”	Meeting with the teachers of the AP “Public management”	10:40	11:40	60 minutes
3.	Meeting with the students of the AP “Psychology of Management”	Meeting with the students of the AP “Law”	Meeting with the students of the AP “Public management”	11:55	12:55	60 minutes
4.	Lunch, discussions of the expert panel			13:05	14:05	60 minutes
5.	Meeting with “Education Process Organization Department” “Additional education department”, “Economic activity and Infrastructure maintenance department”			14:15	15:15	60 minutes
6.	Meeting with “Human resource management and general department” “Financial and accounting department”, “International cooperation and development center”, “Scientific activity division”, “Information system service and development department”			15:25	16:45	70 minutes
7.	Review of documents and close meeting of the expert panel			17:00	19:00	120 minutes

12.01.2023		<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1.	Meeting with the representatives IQA department	09:30	10:30	60 minutes
2.	Open meeting	10:40	11:20	40 minutes
3.	Meeting with the representatives selected by the expert panel	11:30	12:30	60 minutes
4.	Lunch, discussions of the expert panel	12:40	13:40	60 minutes
5.	Review of documents and close meeting of the expert panel	13:50	17:00	190 minutes
6.	Meeting with the Rector and management staff of PAARA, sum-up of the site visit	17:10	17:40	30 minutes

### APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

N	Name of the Document	Criterion
1.	Analyses of the surveys conducted among external stakeholders	1
2.	Revised policy and procedures according to the stakeholders' needs	1
3.	Minutes, examples of the decisions made with the participation of students	2
4.	Minutes of the regular meetings among the leaders of the Academy and the students	2
5.	Development plans of the Chairs for the following 3 years	2
6.	Examples of the reports presented to the Rector by the IQA after each semester with the 15 days on all the activities implemented in the Academy	2
7.	Reports of the Departments for the last 3 years	2
8.	Base of the CVs of the graduates for the last 5 years	2
9.	The surveys and the analyses conducted among graduates	2
10.	Improvement Plan for the last 3 years	2
11.	Reports of the Attestation Committee for the last 3 years	2
12.	Filled in Bulletins examples /APP. 3.6, page 10, 10.4 point/	3
13.	Analyses, studies, minutes, facts used of the Lecturers, Chairs for the development of the APs	3
14.	The external evaluation of the APs /expert analyses/consideration/	3
15.	Annexes 3.12	3
16.	Regular trainings of the Professors with the purpose of using the most modern methods of teaching (not only remote organization of the course). Such examples of training.	3
17.	Diploma thesis examples for the last 3 years	3
18.	Appendixes 3.19-3.21	3
19.	Example of the monitored AP	3
20.	Admission test examples, questionnaire of the interview	4

21.	In order to improve the educational environment and the quality of education, giving importance to the opinion of external stakeholders, the Academy conducts a study and assessment of the needs and requirements of applicants.  Supporting documents.	4
22.	Surveys for the needs assessment of the students	4
23.	Timetable of the additional courses	4
24.	The career center regularly organizes seminars, courses, counseling meetings, provides individual counseling aimed at increasing the competitiveness of students and graduates in the labor market.  Topics of seminars, courses	4
25.	"Public Administration" scientific journal	4
26.	SSC reports	4
27.	Practice diaries completed	4
28.	Individual load sheet of lecturers	5
29.	Competition procedure for filling vacancies (there is a tender procedure for chairs)	5
30.	The ratio of the composition of the main and joint teaching staff	5
31.	Annexes 5.7-5.8	5
32.	In order to evaluate the teaching staff at the Academy, students are given a questionnaire every semester, where the teacher's professional abilities, level of preparation, special qualities of the teacher, methodological support of the course, level of accessibility, etc. are evaluated.	5
33.	2022 number of trained lecturers and courses	5
34.	Defined scientific directions of chairs	6
35.	Analyzes of structural and systemic factors impeding, proposals presented in this connection	6
36.	Annual work plans of chairs.	6
37.	Chair report	6
38.	Procedures regulating and promoting the performance of research work /3.2.2/	6
39.	Programs of short-term research activities (scientific thematic plans available)	6
40.	Established internationalization strategy	6
41.	List of priority routes for international cooperation	6

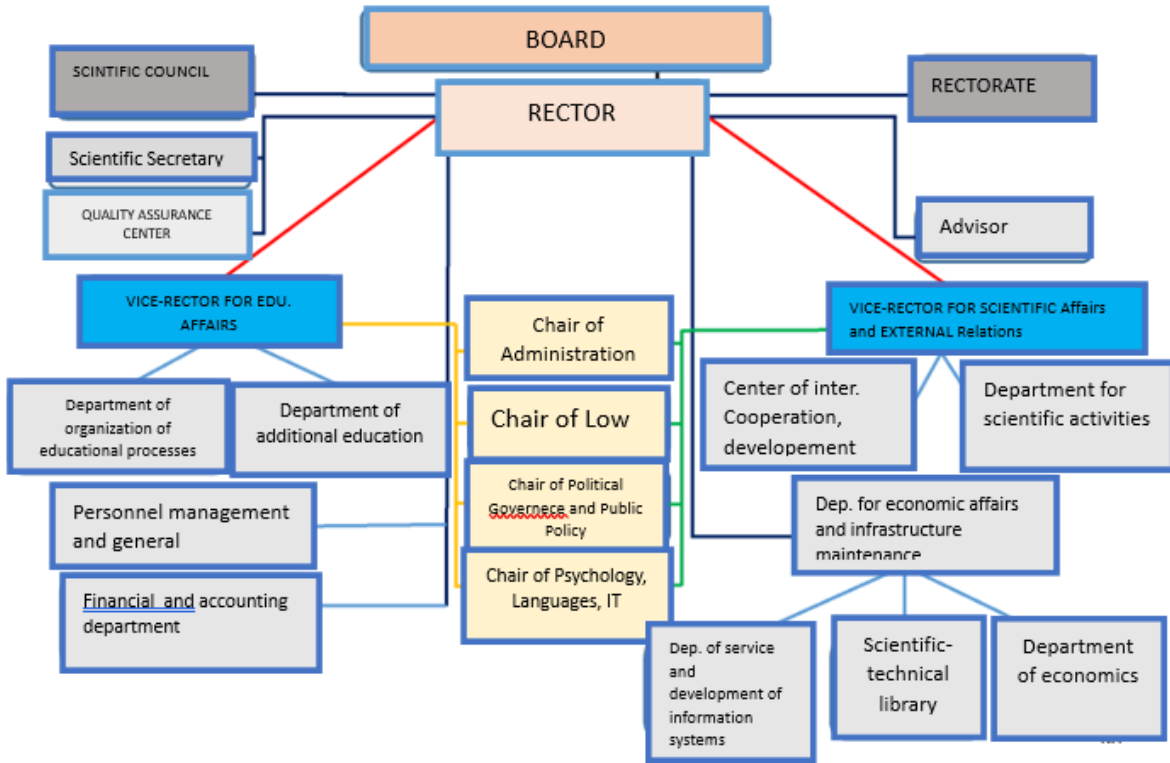


42.	Articles published in Scopus	6
43.	An example of a self-analysis performed by any chair	8
44.	Employer survey questionnaires, analysis	8
45.	Additional education, training programs, topics	8
46.	Benchmarking analyses	9
47.	Functions of the Standing Quality Assurance Committee and the Quality Assurance Center.	10
48.	Benchmarking was carried out with a developed plan (for example, strategic development plans of universities, annual reports of universities, annual reports of chairs, etc.)	10

## **APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED**

- Auditoriums
- Computer hall
- Library
- Archive
- SC Office
- Information center
- Sports hall
- Creative room
- Center for Quality Assurance
- Discussion hall
- Auditoriums intended for training.

## APPENDIX 5. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION



## **APPENDIX 6.LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**PAA RA** -Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia  
**ANQA** – Naional Center For Professional Education Quality Assurance  
**AP** – Academic Programs  
**HEI** – Higher Education Institution  
**QA** – Quality Assurance  
**NQF** - National Qulification Framework  
**SQF** - Sectorial Qualitfication Framework  
**SP** – **Strategic Plan**  
**SSC** - Students ‘Scientific Council  
**SC** - Students ‘Council