

**NATIONAL CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE,
FOUNDATION**



National Center For Professional
Education Quality Assurance
Foundation

**EXPERT PANEL REPORT
ON INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
YEREVAN AGRARIAN UNIVERSITY**

Yerevan - 2014

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of Yerevan Agrarian University (YAU) was made possible through a grant project under the auspices of the World Bank and the Unit of Implementation of Academic Programs of the RA Ministry of Education and Science. The accreditation process is being organized and coordinated by the National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA).

In its operations the ANQA has been guided by June 30, 2011 RA Government Decree N 978-N on approval of the Statute on State Accreditation of Tertiary Level Institutions and Academic Programmes in the Republic of Armenia and June 30, 2011, N 959-N Decision on approval of the RA Educational Accreditation Criteria.

The expertise has been carried out by the independent expert panel comprised of four local and one foreign expert from the Netherlands and formed in compliance with the requirements set forth by the “Statute on Expert Panel Formation” of the National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation.

Institutional accreditation is aimed not only at external evaluation of quality assurance but also at continuous amelioration of institution management and quality of academic programs. Hence, local and foreign experts have been asked to perform two tasks:

1. to carry out evaluation of institutional capacities in compliance with state criteria for accreditation.
2. to carry out an expert evaluation from the perspective of reaching international standards and integrating into European Higher Education Area.

This reports refers to the expertise of institutional competences of the YAU in compliance with state criteria and standards for accreditation and to peer review in compliance with European standards and guidelines for quality assurance.

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SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO ACREDITATION CRITERIA

The evaluation of YAU has been carried out by an independent expert panel formed in compliance with the requirements set forth by the “Statute on Expert Panel Formation” of the National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation. The evaluation has been realized in compliance with 10 criteria of institutional accreditation approved by 959-N Decree of the RA Government, 30 June 2011.

While carrying out the evaluation, the expert panel has taken into consideration the fact that the University is aimed at preparing specialists on Bachelor’s and Master’s levels who will match with the needs of the Armenian labor market, and will be endowed with necessary knowledge and relevant skills to the benefit of the development of agricultural field of the Republic of Armenia

At present the University is licensed to offer education in 5 specializations: 1. Technology of bread, confectionery and macaroni production, 2. Veterinarian sanitary examination, 3. Law, 4. Finance, 5. Design. Academic programs are partially in compliance with the University’s mission. There is no unified approach as to the academic programs, in particular to the elaboration and implementation of curricula as well as selection of teaching and learning methods. The University has adopted a student-oriented approach of learning, however, the transition to the latter is not yet over. It’s worth mentioning that the University mainly implements classical, teacher-oriented methods of teaching and learning for the achievement of intended learning outcomes, which do not thoroughly promote student-oriented education. The learning outcomes are described in all academic programs, however, the link of the latter with the evaluation system as well as how effective teaching and learning methods are from the point of view of achieving learning outcomes is not precisely evident. Though the majority of teachers and students of YAU is contented with the current evaluation system, the lack of student evaluation in compliance with learning outcomes and the lack of precision of mechanisms aimed at fighting plagiarism cannot guarantee the objectiveness of evaluation and promote the formation of honest academic environment. The University finds it important to review academic programs and syllabi, however, the YAU has not established or realized any procedure related to the improvement of academic programs and it lacks the policies of monitoring, evaluation of effectiveness and improvement of academic programs, except for lesson observations.

The YAU lacks any mechanism for interrelating research and educational processes. The University lacks a comprehensive policy, which will include research and scientific thinking into academic programs.

The recruitment of academic staff is mainly realized through interviews. The current academic staff works on contractual basis, both full time and part time. At present the YAU lacks accurately formulated requirements for the professional qualities of the staff of academic programs. The expert panel finds it worrisome that there is only a small number of teachers who have qualifications corresponding to and in compliance with the specializations offered by the university. Furthermore, often one and the same teacher conducts a couple of courses (3-9), which, has negative impact on the quality of the classes and the academic program. The assessment of YAU academic staff is realized through lesson observations and surveys among students. Except for English language, no training aimed at developing and modernizing the professional competences of the academic staff

have been undertaken so far. In general the staff occasionally may participate in training organized by other universities or organizations.

It seems that the conditions of the building (auditoriums) are only marginally sufficient for conducting theoretical and certain practical classes, however, the auditoriums lack audiovisual equipments, and there is no internet available for the students. The same cannot be stated about YAU laboratories, because the equipment are rather old and cannot sufficiently contribute to achieving intended learning outcomes. The library and centre of informatics should be important elements in the process of creating a research environment and culture, however, the resource allocation for these facilities is quite low at YAU.

The lack of detailed policies for allocation of financial resources to enact and continuously assure the University's mission and goals, as well as to guarantee the quality of academic programs reduces the effectiveness of financial resources. These resources are not used in a targeted and guided way.

The university has criteria for recruiting, selecting and admitting the students, however, the transparency of these is not guaranteed. The results of the survey mentioned in the self-evaluation report, according to which 48,75% of the students finds the admission to the university not transparent, are also worrisome. The students are not involved in the research, notwithstanding the fact that in the list of specializations offered by the university there are those with agricultural directions.

No service aimed at students with special needs is offered by the university.

The administration of the university underlines the importance of creating an environment that will encourage experience, exchange, development and internationalization; however, it is not clear at all how the university is going to assure a corresponding environment. There are no joint academic and research programs in the university. The university is planning to elaborate a strategy of internationalization. With the aim of organizing the academic, scientific and scientific-pedagogical internships of the students the university has signed agreements with a number of laboratories and organizations. Several agreements have been signed with international organizations, however, nothing has been undertaken to materialize these agreements so far. The low proficiency level of foreign languages among the teachers and the students is also worrisome, since this is a serious hindrance for the internationalization of the research and academic programs of the university as well as of the cooperation with and mobility to foreign organizations.

The university has regulations for its administrative bodies and documents describing the operations of these bodies. However, the evaluation of the governing system is not part of the quality assurance system. The lack of any mechanism for implementing and monitoring of the planning puts the effectiveness of governing system at risk. The scarce number of examples of data collection, analyses and based on the latter decision-making about the effectiveness of specializations and academic operations in the university, as well as the lack of mechanisms for monitoring these operations cast a doubt on the effectiveness of governance, since without the aforesaid data it is impossible to evaluate the academic operations of the university, the achievement of the outcomes of academic programs, the effectiveness of teaching methods, and the quality of managerial decisions.

The quality of education and quality assurance is being given some attention at all levels of the university, though at present it seems rather a result of external requirements. In order to assure high quality education, at present the YAU is implementing a system of internal quality assurance though at the moment this is in an early stage of formation. Human, material and financial resources have been allocated for the organization of the quality

assurance procedures. Some processes have been established, however, it is not clear whether this internal quality assurance will be sufficient and effective for the whole of the university's functioning. It's evident that a quality culture has not thoroughly been formulated and that the PDCA cycle is not yet being closed.

STRENGTHS OF THE INSTITUTION:

- The involvement of students in all levels of governance is praise-worthy. The students are informed and have influence in decision-making.
- The teachers are motivated and devoted. The satisfaction of students with the teachers is overall quite high. The expert panel has noted that the staff is in close cooperation and that emerging problems are solved cooperatively.
- The administration is in direct contact with internal stakeholders. The administration of the University seems well-aware of internal processes.
- The academic staff is interested in the progress of the students. Consultations are being provided in an informal manner.
- The first steps aimed at underlining the importance of research have been undertaken; namely by prioritizing it in the Strategic Plan.
- The contracts signed with national libraries of Armenia can be considered a good start for providing access for both students and teachers to up-to-date libraries.
- The existence of agreements with local organizations and laboratories is praise-worthy, since the latter are the first step towards the organization of internships and development of practical competences of the students.
- The initiation of foreign languages training for the academic staff is an important step towards development of internationalization of the university.
- The newly-created system of quality assurance has achieved some results, which can serve as a base for future improvements. Progress has been made within a short period of time.

WEAKNESSES OF THE INSTITUTION:

- The participation of teachers and students in decision-making is not sufficiently systematic. The involvement of external stakeholders needs improvement.
- The link between learning outcomes, teaching methods and the assessment system is not sufficiently strong.
- The University in principle has adopted a student-oriented approach to education, an important token of modernizing education. However, the transition has not yet been completed.
- The number of specialists having qualifications corresponding and in compliance with the specializations offered by the University is rather small.
- The University does not yet thoroughly ascertain that research is an important asset for contributing to student learning.
- The laboratory equipments of the YAU are quite old and cannot sufficiently contribute to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.
- The auditoriums are not equipped with audiovisual equipment, there is no wifi connection in the university available for students.
- The University lacks the appropriate facilities for students with special needs.
- The YAU web-site does not contain thorough information about the activities and daily life of the institution.
- The University lacks an electronic system for evaluation data-collection.
- The quite low level of English proficiency of staff and students is a serious drawback in the process of internationalization.
- There were no grounds for the realization of joint academic and research programmes.

- A quality culture has not yet sufficiently been formed. The PDCA cycle has not yet been closed and the outcomes of the conducted assessments are incomplete.
- The level of involvements of internal and external stakeholders in quality assurance processes is quite low.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The YAU should review and revise its mission to ensure alignment between mission, operations, academic programs and intended learning outcomes.
- The involvement of external stakeholders (labour market and alumni) in the processes of institutional governance needs amelioration.
- The staff of the University should include skillful personnel with competencies corresponding to the professional criteria of the position.
- The university should define precisely the functions and responsibilities of each subdivision/department and the staff competences needed to fulfill these functions and responsibilities.
- The academic programs should be reviewed and revised (the descriptions of qualifications, the precise definition of intended learning outcomes) to ensure alignment with the mission of the university, promote student oriented teaching, and taking into account the needs of stakeholders and the demands of the labour market.
- A policy and practical procedures to ensure that teaching and learning methods will conform with the intended learning outcomes should be elaborated by the University.
- Raising the effectiveness of services for promoting student and alumni careers is an urgent step to be undertaken by the university.
- The preparation of students for research activities must be the inseparable part of all academic programs.
- The University should review and revise its policy of teacher recruitment. In particular, greater attention should be paid to the requirements of professional and academic qualities of the academic staff. Professional training of teachers should be organized urgently.
- The University must allocate substantial resources for scientific operations and must endow the academic staff with the opportunity to be involved into research activities. It is of utmost importance to take research accomplishments into consideration in teacher performance appraisal and during promotion procedures. A research element should be implemented into academic programs.
- to The university should set up a digitized system controlling and monitoring the data collection procedure.
- It is encouraged to ameliorate infrastructural resources specifically technical laboratory provisions and supplying the library with professional literature, journals and electronic resources.
- In order to make its operations transparent for internal and external stakeholders, the university should strive for elaboration of mechanisms assuring the feedback which will promote strong ties with the society.
- To elaborate policy and procedures towards exchange of experience, development and creation of an environment that will encourage internationalization.
- Representatives from teachers and students should be involved in international research programs and grant projects for promoting the mobility of students and teachers should be initiated.
- The expert panel advises to close the PDCA cycle at all institutional levels. The elaboration of a quality assurance manual is an important step to set for the university.

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

The following observations and recommendations are provided concerning the possibility of the University to get integrated into the European Higher Education Area.

Observations

1. The operations of the YAU are not directly linked with the mission of the University, since out of 5 specialties, three (Law, Finance and Design) do not have an agricultural orientation.
2. The mission of the University is rather general, it lacks strategic priorities and mechanisms aimed at measuring achievement of purposes. The mission and the operations aimed at its realization are mostly oriented towards internal stakeholders and do not reflect the needs of external stakeholders, the demands of the market and international developments.
3. The system of governance of the University is not flexible and financial means are insufficient to become an international competitive player.
4. The fact that financial resources are not allocated in accordance with Academic Programs is a serious hindrance from the perspective of academic programs being competitive on an international scale. Educational services offered at present do not correspond to international standards. The Academic programs do not promote international mobility.
5. Programs are rather traditional in terms of teacher- and subject-oriented. A greater emphasis is put on theoretical disciplines than on formulation of skills and professional conduct. If the University is aimed at making the programs up-to-date it must adopt more student-oriented approaches.
6. The links between intended learning outcomes and the system of evaluation is not precise; in particular, the assessment of skills and professional conduct needs further amelioration.
7. The internal system of information provision about the quality of academic programs is rather entangled.
8. The lack of precise mechanisms aimed at revealing the academic needs of the students and amelioration of academic procedures hampers the possibility of evaluating the operations of the university.
9. The skills and competences of the staff are from the perspective of integration into the European Higher Education Area not sufficient.
10. Data collection is mainly realized paper-based, which makes the process of data-analyses difficult and the effectiveness limited.
11. The feedback mechanisms aimed at establishing links with society are incomplete and need amelioration.
12. The newly-formulated system of quality assurance has achieved some results. Internal stakeholders are mainly included into the processes of QA, whereas the involvement of external stakeholders needs amelioration.

Recommendations

1. It is strongly encouraged to visit other agricultural universities in Europe to get ideas on what international standards are for such a university.
2. The University should make its internal system more distinctive and accordingly more effective. The university can choose a version of an organizational structure that is more systematic but will not be bureaucratic and which will continue to be based on a collegial academic culture.

3. Without substantial financial and human resources, thinking about governance structure is hardly worthwhile. It needs radical improvement.
4. The University needs academic planning processes to include the proclaimed approach of the university aimed at achieving learning outcomes as well as implementation of up-to-date teaching and learning methods. The expert panel recommends to elaborate an academic concept that will touch upon research and will be aimed at education and training of educators. The point of the up-to-date academic concept might include:
 - A syllabus that will have an international benchmarking and that will include previously determined intended learning outcomes.
 - Student-oriented learning with interactive participation of students and learning in small groups.
 - Learning based on particular situations/tasks.
 - A strong correlation of research and education from the very first year of the Bachelor's Degree program.
5. The expert panel recommends realizing international benchmarking on the institutional level. To foster international relationship the university might consider offering (part of) its programs in English.
6. It is encouraged to attract international students by offering competitive academic programs in English.
7. Strengthening the staff in terms of international orientation. English language proficiency and level of expertise (PhD's) is a prerequisite to become a player in the European Higher Education Area. Cooperation with other Armenian institutions might be a profitable avenue to move towards this goal. For a European standing development of a scheme for teaching qualifications of the staff should be developed.
8. For a university a very minimum of 20% of the time of staff should be devoted to research. Without a research task a university cannot function in the European Higher Education Area.
9. Developing the infrastructure to a much higher level is a sine qua non for offering a quality education. The university must enrich its laboratories with up-to-date equipments and the auditoriums with audiovisual technologies.
10. The university should build a much stronger network with the employers and the (local) community to fulfill a responsible role in offering services to the society. From an international perspective, having an institutional advisory board is a prerequisite.
11. Firm relations with employers, secondary schools and the government need to be developed and institutionalized. The expert panel would like to encourage the university to elaborate a concept of strategic cooperation with external stakeholders and society. Likewise, the university should ameliorate its mechanisms for revealing the needs of stakeholders. A strong cooperation with other universities of Armenian with the aim of experience exchange will be favorable for the realization of above-mentioned goals.
12. The university needs to participate in professional development programs nationally and internationally to develop a view on and the skills for professional quality assurance. It should develop its benchmarking for the goals it wants to achieve by studying intensively international standards for quality of education and quality assurance.

July 11, 2014

Aghavni Hakobyan
Chair of expert panel

Ani Mkrtchyan
Coordinator of expert panel

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The external evaluation of the YAU self-evaluation and the implementation of quality assurance processes were conducted by the following expert panel (see Annex 1 for the curricula vitae)¹.

1. **Aghavni Hakobyan**, Chief specialist of Foreign Relations Division, Armenian State University of Economics, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor.
2. **Theo Wubbels**, Professor of Education, Admissions Dean Utrecht University.
3. **Garegin Hambardzumyan**, Associate professor at the Chair of Physiology, Yerevan State Medical University after M. Heratsi, PhD in Veterinary.
4. **Gayane Marmaryan**, Associate professor at the Chair of Biochemistry, Armenian State Agrarian University, PhD in Biology.
5. **Luiza Abrahamyan**, student of the Faculty of Management of Economy and International Economic Relations, Armenian State University of Economics

The panel activities were coordinated by Ani Mkrtchyan, Specialist of ANQA Division of Policy Elaboration and Implementation, Responsible of Internal Quality Assurance at ANQA.

The translation was provided by Zaruhi Soghomonyan, Head of the Chair of Foreign Languages at French University of Armenia.

The composition of the panel was agreed upon with the university and appointed by the decree of the ANQA Director.

All panel members, including coordinator and the translator, signed a statement of independence and confidentiality.

¹ ANNEX 1: curriculum vitae of the panel members

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

The Application for State Accreditation

Yerevan Agrarian University applied for pilot institutional accreditation to ANQA by filling in the application form and presenting the copies of the license and respective appendices.

The ANQA Secretariat examined the data presented in the application form, the appendices and the ANQA electronic questionnaire completed by the university.

After the decision on accepting the application a tripartite agreement was signed between ANQA, the Centre for Education Projects of the MES and Yerevan Agrarian University. The timetable of actions was prepared and approved.

The English and Armenian versions of self-evaluation report (SER) were submitted to ANQA within the settled timetable and in accordance with the format.

The SER of the university was carried out by a special group appointed by the rector.

Preparatory Phase

The ANQA coordinator conducted a technical review against the ANQA requirements. Afterwards, the Secretariat sent the SER to the expert panel, the composition of which was beforehand accorded with the university and approved on the order of the ANQA director.

Examining the SER and attached documents a preliminary report, including the list of issues to be further explored during the site-visit, as well as the target groups to be met were set.

Within the set period of time the expert panel concluded the results of preliminary report and set the time-table of site visits². Guided by the “ANQA Accreditation Manual” meetings with all the groups previewed by the experts, open and close meetings, examination of documents, site-visits to subdivisions of the institution and else have been included into the agenda.

Preliminary Visit

The preparatory visit took place a week prior to site visit. The head of the expert panel, the ANQA director and the coordinator of expert evaluation procedure paid a visit to the university. During the preparatory visit arrangements were made as to the agenda of site visits, the list of issues to be further explored, about organizational, technical, informative issues, questions related to the conduct of participants and norms of ethics. The auditoriums aimed for focus group discussions and those for expert panel discussions were observed.

Site-visit

The expert panel visited the YAU from May 12 to May 16, 2014. In accordance with the timetable, the site visits started and ended with close meetings, the aim of which was to discuss and accord the framework of expert evaluation, the issues to be examined throughout the visit, the procedure of meetings in focus groups, to make further steps more precise with Theo Wubbels, the international expert.

The visits were paid by the entire expert panel, the ANQA coordinator and the translator. The site visits started and ended with meetings, held with the university rector and founders. The panel members selected all the target groups to have meetings with on a random basis. All the meetings foreseen by the agenda were conducted. Throughout the site visit the expert panel conducted document review³, resource observation⁴ and target group meetings in different infrastructures.

² ANNEX 2: Agenda

³ APPENDIX 3: List of document reviewed

Mid-term results of evaluation were discussed during the closed meetings at the end of each day. During the final closed session the panel discussed the integral findings of site visit.

The pilot evaluation has been carried out within the framework of state criteria for accreditation and the ANQA procedures, which foresees a two-point scale: **positive or negative**. The evaluation of the SER in line with this scale has been realized in accordance with standards determined per each criterion whereas the expert report via criteria.

Expert Panel Report

The initial report endorsed by all panel members was based on the SER of the university, the review of attached documents and observations during site visits (on the results of periodically organized discussions). On the basis of observations emerging after discussions, the head of the panel and the coordinator prepared the initial expert report, which was endorsed by the experts.

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

HISTORY: The Yerevan Agrarian University (YAU) is a private institution of higher education. It functions from 1992. It was founded on the basis of Yerevan Institute of Cattle-Breeding–Veterinary. Until 2006 it had the name of “Institute of Applied Biotechnology”, however, following the decision of the council starting from 2006 it was renamed into Yerevan Agrarian University.

The strategy of the university was adopted in 2007 and reviewed in 2013. The strategy of the YAU is **“To prepare specialists on Bachelor’s and Master’s levels who will correspond to the needs of Armenian labour market, will be endowed with necessary knowledge and relevant skills to the benefit of the development of agricultural field of the Republic of Armenia.”**

EDUCATION: In the 2013-2018 strategic plan the university adopted the following goals aimed at ameliorating academic process:

1. Elaboration and implementation of quality assurance policies in the education process.
2. Thorough transition to student-oriented learning.
3. Preparation of specialists in line with demands of the labour market and aims of academic programs.

In accordance with the license delivered to the YAU by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenian (hereinafter MES) (17.01.2013) the university has the right to deliver education on the Bachelor’s Degree with the following specializations: 1. Technology of bread, confectionery and macaroni production, 2. Veterinarian sanitary examination, 3. Law, 4. Finance, 5. Design. Out of the aforesaid, the first 4 are also carried out in MA Degree. A two-cycle system of qualifications is operating at the university: Bachelor’s and Master’s. At present there are 235 full-time and 668 part-time students in BA and 6 full-time students in MA.

At present the university employs 47 teachers, out of which 30 are full-time, 17 part-time. 50% of the academic staff of the university has PhD, two of which are professors. 18 employees are involved in administration.

In order to achieve the aim of developing the academic staff the university foresees undertaking the following steps:

1. To formulate committees aimed at implementing and monitoring professional development.
2. To elaborate a policy and procedures aimed at developing staff potential.
3. Allocation of technical infrastructure for the organization of the academic process.
4. Guarantee practical and up-to-date direction of staff training.
5. Implementation and guaranty of procedures for feedback between teachers and students.

RESEARCH: The following goals aimed at developing and modernizing scientific operations have been set in the 2013-2018 strategic plan of the university.

1. Development of educational and scientific-technical competence in agricultural fields.
2. Elaboration of procedures for the implementation of research and creation of a collection of scientific-methodological activities.

INTERNATIONALIZATION: The following steps aimed at internationalization of the YAU and the development of external relations are anticipated by the 2013-2018 strategic plan:

1. To elaborate policies and procedures aimed at establishing external links, which will be directed towards the creation of favorable conditions for the internationalization of YAU students and teachers.
2. To develop the YAU societal cooperation.
3. To ameliorate the provision of information about the YAU.
4. To develop the system of external accountability and to assure the transparency of intrainstitutional processes for external stakeholders.
5. To elaborate mechanisms aiming at examining the public opinion about the YAU in order to make its operation in compliance with current societal demands.

QUALITY ASSURANCE: In the 2011-2012 academic year a Centre for Quality Assurance and Internal Audit was founded at the university. The following main goals, aimed at amelioration of quality assurance procedures and policies are anticipated in the strategic plan:

1. To elaborate the policy and corresponding procedures for quality assurance and to make a manual on quality assurance.
2. To make quality assurance a culture for all infrastructures of the university.
3. To review and ameliorate the mechanisms aimed at participation of internal and external stakeholders in internal quality assurance operations (to expand their involvement).
4. To elaborate mechanisms aimed at providing objective information and transparency for internal and external stakeholders on evaluation mechanisms.
5. To coordinate and regulate the policy and procedures aimed at data collection, which will ensure the data base necessary for external evaluation and quality assurance.

CRITERION 1. MISSIONS AND PURPOSE

Criterion: The institution's policy and operations are in accordance with the mission of the institution which is consistent with the Armenian National Qualification Framework.

FINDINGS:

- 1.1. On March 7, 2007 the Rector of Yerevan Agrarian University (hereafter YAU) adopted the mission of YAU and the timetable of strategic goals resulting from the mission. In 2013 the YAU 2013-2018 Strategic Plan was approved, which includes the new mission, strategic goals and objectives. The YAU mission is aimed at preparing specialists on Bachelor's and Master's levels who will match the needs of the Armenian labour market, will be equipped with the necessary knowledge and relevant skills to the benefit of the development of the agricultural field of the Republic of Armenia (hereafter RA). However, the operations of YAU aren't directly consistent with the institution's mission, since out of five specializations, three (Law, Finance and Design) do not have an agricultural orientation, although in some academic programs one or two small references to the agricultural field have been included. It's worth mentioning that the institution's mission is rather general, it lacks the mechanisms of measuring the priorities and goals included in the strategic plan, and moreover, the purposes need specification. There is no distinct action plan, where it would have to be stated how much means annually are foreseen for the realization of the distinct purposes.
- 1.2. Underlining the importance of revealing and examining the needs of internal and external stakeholders, the university is planning to elaborate and implement the necessary mechanisms and procedures for revealing the needs. The expert panel observed enough involvement of internal stakeholders in the process of elaborating strategic goals, whereas external stakeholders have not been involved in the process of elaborating and reviewing the strategy and the needs of the latter are not reflected in the institution's strategy.
- 1.3. A policy aimed at implementing the mission and aims, at evaluating and improving the achievements of the University has been elaborated, which, however, is quite general and needs further specification and improvement. Moreover, the effectiveness of the policy is not yet examined. The expert panel noticed that currently planning to monitor the strategic aims of the university has started. However, there are not yet any general and effective mechanisms for evaluation and improvement.

CONSIDERATIONS

The offering of academic services by the University must be consistent with its mission. However, the operations of YAU aren't directly consistent with institution's mission, since out of five specializations, three (Law, Finance and Design) do not have an agricultural orientation, though in some academic programs one or two aspects of the agricultural field have been included. The partial discrepancy between the academic programs and the mission of the university puts the realization of the mission at risk. The University must determine what specialists with what qualifications it wants to educate and accordingly, the profile of the university will have to be determined. The expert panel appreciates that the university wants to prepare specialists in accordance with the needs of the labour market, however, the lack of the examination of the latter and of procedures for revealing the needs of external stakeholders endangers the realization of the targets set by the

mission. Though the university tries to reveal and discuss the needs of internal stakeholders, the mechanisms for involving external stakeholders, both labour market and alumni, need improvement. The lack of a general approach and precise mechanisms for evaluation of the effectiveness of the mission and goals endangers the transparency of university operations. The expert panel finds it necessary to elaborate and implement criteria for evaluating the achievements of strategic goals in the strategic plan. This way the plan will become more effective and consequent steps in implementing the purposes will become possible and visible for YAU.

SUMMARY: Considering all evidence, the expert panel finds that YAU meets the requirements of Criterion N 1, however, there are a few criticisms. In general terms, the YAU has a mission, which is general and needs specification on the level of results. The expert panel has found enough evidence for the involvement of internal stakeholders, however, the involvement of external stakeholders seems to be limited. The communication with external stakeholders is mainly carried out informally. The lack of mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of its mission and purpose put pressure on the transparency of the operations of the university.

CONCLUSION: The correspondence of YAU institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion I is **satisfactory**.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To specify the mission of the university on the level of outcomes and by conforming the operations to the mission (or to rename the university).
2. To implement detailed mechanisms for revealing and analyzing the needs of internal and external stakeholders.
3. To develop criteria for evaluating the achievement of strategic purposes in the strategic plan.
4. To implement mechanisms and procedures for evaluating and elaborating the results of the implementation of mission and the purposes.

CRITERION II: GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Criterion: The institution's system of governance, administrative bodies and their operations are effective and are directed toward the accomplishment of its mission and purposes ensuring ethical norms of governance.

FINDINGS:

- 2.1. The university has regulations for its administrative bodies and documents describing the operations of these bodies. In accordance with the new regulation adopted in 2013, the administrative bodies of YAU are: the General Meeting, Scientific Council and Rector. The central university governance is based on a combination of the principles of autonomy, and individual and collegial governance. The operations of administrative bodies are structured and authorization is allocated not only on the level of procedures but also by statutes adopted by the Scientific Council. Though the university's system of governance is being altered periodically and new subdivisions

and bodies are being created, there is a lack of detailed links between the system of governance and the mission and strategic goals. The university has laid down an ethical code. In decision-making generally formal procedures are absent; the practice of solving problems on the level of the Rector is more at use. Surviving by means of relatively low student fees, the University encounters difficulties in finding material and financial resources for the realization of academic and other purposes. What concerns human resources, the portrait is the following: in the administrative apparatus for some positions one and the same person is in charge of several responsibilities, and there is no assisting staff.

- 2.2. The students and the teachers are free in expressing their thoughts and are constantly integrated in almost all bodies of governance, the General Meeting being an exception. The teachers and the students have an opportunity to directly participate in decision-making on issues related to them. In addition to formal mechanisms, some informal mechanisms are also at use, which allow to raise the questions related to academic staff and the students directly to the administration and to get solutions.
- 2.3. Planning is realized at two levels: strategic planning and planning of the actual educational process. For the realization of purposes emerging from the mission, the university has elaborated short-term, mid-term and long-term operational plans, which have been ratified by the Rector in 2007. However, the implemented outcomes of the latter are not evaluated. At present the university lacks specific mechanisms for realization and monitoring of the short-term, mid-term and long-term planning of the university's mission and purposes.
- 2.4. The examination of factors influencing the operation of the university is not yet being realized in a systematic way. The main mechanisms, revealing the factors influencing the general and academic operations of YAU, that are at use are surveys, which do not have a periodic nature and need amelioration from the perspective of their trustworthiness. The analyses of data-collecting and decision-making based on the aforesaid data is limited. An example of the aforesaid examination are the surveys organized for the self-evaluation and the analyses of the results.
- 2.5. The mechanisms for realizing the policies and procedures are not yet systematic in the YAU. The governance of quality assurance which is realized in compliance with the PDCA principle is mainly in the stage of planning, systematic realization, evaluation and amelioration of further steps are missing.
- 2.6. No mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of academic programs and other procedures have been elaborated by the YAU. Likewise, there are no documents referring to the aforesaid mechanisms that are in the process of elaboration. The chairs and faculties do not realize any functions in the process of evaluating the effectiveness of academic programs or specializations and other procedures.
- 2.7. The YAU does not carry out any evaluation of quantitative and qualitative information about the programs and awarded degrees. The university lacks mechanisms for evaluating up to date, objective and unbiased quantitative and qualitative information on programs and degrees awarded.

CONSIDERATIONS:

The expert panel appreciates the presence of a structure of governing bodies and the existence of the map portraying the allocation of bodies involved in the organizational structure, however, this structure is somewhat declarative, since the decision-making process is not regulated formally. The lack of mechanisms for all types of planning and monitoring endangers the effectiveness of the system of governance. The expert panel appreciates the fact that the university involves the students and teachers in all bodies of governance and provides opportunities for expressing their thoughts freely. At present the main tool that is used for revealing the factors influencing the general and educational operation of the YAU are surveys, however, their aims, frequency, methodology, as well as the group of participants do not allow to consider the surveys an effective tool for revealing the needs of internal stakeholders. The governance system is not thoroughly established from the perspective of quality assurance, since the governance procedures are not administratively elaborated. The PDCA cycle is not yet closed, however, the importance given to the principle of quality assurance by the administration of the university provides grounds to hope that corresponding steps towards the implementation of the aforesaid principle will be realized. The scarce number of examples of data collection, analyses and based on the latter decision-making about the effectiveness of specializations and academic operations in the university, as well as the lack of formal procedures cast doubt on the effectiveness of governance, since without the aforesaid data it is impossible to evaluate the academic operations of the university, the achievement of the outcomes of academic programs, the effectiveness of teaching methods, and the substantiality of managerial decisions. The lack of mechanisms for evaluating the up to date, objective and unbiased quantitative and qualitative information on academic programs and degrees awarded witnesses the incompleteness of quality assurance procedures.

SUMMARY: Considering all evidence, the expert panel finds that the YAU does not meet the requirements of Criterion N 2 taking into account the fact that the decision-making process is not regulated formally, the administration of the system of governance is not realized based on the principle of the PDCA cycle of quality assurance, the main mechanisms used for revealing the factors influencing the academic operations of the university are surveys which do not bear a systematic nature and the effectiveness of the latter is not evaluated.

CONCLUSION: The correspondence of YAU institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 2 is **unsatisfactory**.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To simplify the organizational structure of the university. To choose a version of an organizational structure that is more systematic but will not be bureaucratic and which will continue to be based on a collegial academic culture.
2. To adapt a system of governance, so as to increase the involvement of the staff in the processes of elaborating, implementing and reviewing academic policies.
3. To elaborate passports of positions for the administration, by precisely describing authorizations, main obligations, as well as the competence requirements.
4. To formally regulate decision-making procedures.
5. To elaborate and implement precise mechanisms of short-term, mid-term and long-term planning, realization and monitoring.
6. To implement precise mechanisms for revealing the factors influencing the general and academic operations of the university.

7. To close the PDCA cycle in all levels of governance, in order to effectively reach the purposes of the strategic plan.
8. To elaborate and implement precise mechanisms of data-collection, analyses and evaluation of effectiveness specializations and academic processes.
9. To involve external experts into the examination of the factors influencing its operations, which will allow to get a more precise and thorough portrait of strong and weak sides of the university's operations.

CRITERION III: ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

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

FINDINGS:

- 3.1. In accordance with the license delivered to the YAU by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia (hereinafter MES) (17.01.2013) the university has the right to deliver education on the Bachelor's Degree with the following specializations: 1. Technology of bread, confectionery and macaroni production, 2. Veterinarian sanitary examination, 3. Law, 4. Finance, 5. Design. Out of the aforesaid, the first 4 are also carried out in MA Degree. At present the university is being led by State Academic Standards adopted by the MES, which were elaborated by other Armenian universities almost without any localization and without taking into account the mission and the specificities of academic content of the YAU. The academic programs are only partially in accordance with the mission, since the mission previews that the university must prepare specialists for the sphere of agriculture, whereas three specializations (finance, law and design) delivered by the university do not have an agricultural direction (the involvement of one course related to the sphere of agriculture into the curriculum, does not provide sufficient basis for preparing specialists in the field). The university lacks any universal approach for elaborating and implementing academic programs, and the curricula. After transformation to the two-cycle bachelor master education system and to the European Credit Transfer System, no substantial or contextual changes have been undertaken in the academic programs.
- 3.2. Though the expected learning outcomes are described in all academic programs, the teaching and learning methods are not in concord with the intended academic outcomes. Varied teaching and learning methods (lectures, practical and laboratory activities, internship, seminars, analyses of literature, papers, individual work, group work, individual observations and else) are at use. There is no explicit rationale for the selection of teaching and learning methods to use and the University lacks detailed mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of the selection and implementation of these methods. As stated in the SER the university lacks detailed policies and procedures for selecting teaching and learning methods and the ones in use do not thoroughly contribute to realizing student-oriented learning. However, the university is aware of the importance of policies and procedures for selecting teaching/learning methods and foresees their elaboration and implementation.
- 3.3. A credit system for checking and evaluating the knowledge and competence of students has been implemented in the YAU. A ranking system of 100 points, corresponding letter equivalents and official numerical equivalents of notes are being

used for monitoring and evaluating the knowledge and competence of the students. Though the learning outcomes are described in all academic programs, the link of the latter with the evaluation system as well as the effectiveness of teaching and learning methods in the process of achieving the learning outcomes is not very visible. In order to provide academic honesty, a policy for fighting plagiarism has been elaborated by the YAU in 2013. The policy foresees elaboration of legal acts and methodological documents and other undertakings, to be conducted among the teachers and the students. However, the effectiveness of the latter is not yet evaluated. Mid-term exams are mostly conducted in written form, whereas final exams are orally. No student has been excluded because of academic incompletion.

3.4. The education at the university is being delivered by State Academic Standards, which were elaborated by other universities (for instance, Armenian National Agrarian University (ANAU), Armenian State University of Economics (ASUE)) and were adopted by the MES, however, the university lacks a detailed policy for benchmarking the academic programs. Though elective courses are foreseen in the curricula, none of the students participating in the meetings has ever followed an elective course. At present there are no agreements regulating the exchange and mobility of students and teachers of the YAU with other institutions. Likewise, the university lacks policies and procedures assuring the mobility of teachers and students. From the SER and expert panel visits it became apparent that until present no international mobility of university's teachers and students has taken place. One of the reasons hindering the mobility of teachers and students is the low level of foreign language proficiency.

3.5. The university underlines the importance of reviewing academic programs and syllabi. No operations, aimed at ameliorating academic programs have been undertaken by the YAU, moreover, the university lacks a policy for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and ameliorating the academic programs.

CONSIDERATIONS:

The expert panel appreciates the fact that the YAU has undertaken several initiatives for ameliorating the quality of education; mainly the implementation of the two-cycle bachelor master education system. However, the discrepancy between current academic programs and the mission, as well as the lack of necessary means and methods of teaching and learning endangers the quality of academic services provided by the YAU. The university still has a lot of challenges for determining detailed intended learning outcomes of academic programs. The general description of the latter and lack of mapping of the intended learning outcomes, hinders systematized operations.

The lack of a policy for selecting teaching and learning methods hinders the implementation of a student-oriented system of education. The lack of a policy for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and for ameliorating the academic programs, puts further development of academic programs at risk.

Though the majority of teachers and students is contented with the present system of evaluation,

the lack of student evaluation in compliance with learning outcomes and the lack of precision of mechanisms aimed at fighting plagiarism cannot guarantee the objectiveness of evaluation and promote the formation of honest academic environment.

It is worth mentioning, that the organization of solely oral examinations, endangers the transparency of the evaluation system.

The expert panel finds that the lack of detailed mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of academic programs significantly endangers the quality of their implementation and at the same time makes the academic process vulnerable and not aligned with current (inter)national benchmarks.

SUMMARY: Considering all evidence, the expert panel finds that the academic programs are only partially in concord with the mission of the university, the learning outcomes described in the academic programs and the system of student evaluation are not congruent, and the evaluation system does not provide opportunities for evaluating the achievement of learning outcomes. The university has adopted a student-oriented approach to learning and yet the transition to the latter is not yet complete. There are no mechanisms for promoting the mobility of students and teachers. Therefore the expert panel evaluates the criterion as negative.

CONCLUSION: The correspondence of YAU institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 3 is **unsatisfactory**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To review and revise the academic programs (include the descriptions of qualifications, to precisely determine learning outcomes) conforming them with the mission of the university and taking into account the needs of stakeholders.
2. To elaborate and implement a policy of selecting and evaluating the methods of learning and teaching.
3. To ameliorate the system of evaluating the knowledge of the students such that it promotes the acquisition of intended learning outcomes.
4. To implement interactive and student-oriented methods of teaching specifically in teaching the courses having a more applied nature.
5. To ameliorate the mechanisms for fighting plagiarism at the academic level by sound definitions and by instructing students on academic honesty and on what plagiarism is and technically by using certain computer programs detecting plagiarism (within the limits of opportunities).
6. To implement a purposeful benchmarking with similar programs of other institutions nationally and internationally.
7. To elaborate and implement policies and procedures aimed at monitoring, evaluating the effectiveness and ameliorating the academic programs.

CRITERION IV: STUDENTS

Criterion: The university provides certain assistance to the students for providing the effectiveness of educational environment.

FINDINGS:

- 4.1. The Regulation on Students Admission, which regulates the procedures of students' recruitment, selection and admission is functioning at the YAU. The selection and admission of full-time students is being realized on the basis of centralized exams whereas that of part-time students by an interview. The admission procedure is organized and implemented by the admission committee of the university with the rector, vice-rector, the responsible secretary appointed by the rector and members constituting the committee. It's of interest to note, that the number of part-time

students considerably exceeds that of full-time ones. Career orientation and the operations aimed at providing information about academic opportunities of the university are realized without set policies and in a non-systematic manner.

- 4.2. The university lacks a detailed and systematic mechanism for revealing the needs of the students. The questions raised by the students and students council are discussed with the administration of the university. Within the framework of preparing the self-evaluation report the university has organized surveys, aiming at revealing the needs of the students.
- 4.3. Consultations are mainly being organized for final and individual activities. The university lacks a timetable for conducting extra-curricular student consultations, which are foreseen by the 2013-2018 strategic plan of the YAU. At present no extra-curricular student consultations are being conducted at the YAU, though both the students and the teachers stated the necessity of having such classes especially for foreign languages. The teachers, heads of chairs, members of student council, administration of the university, and deans act as consultants. The students wishing to receive consultation or assistance can apply any time. The university lacks the institute of curators/ supervisors and mentors.
- 4.4. There is no detailed procedure and timetable for addressing the administration in order to provide assistance and orientation to the students. Likewise, the university lacks a methodology for conducting final and individual activities. The orientation and assistance of the students is being realized in a non-systematic way. However, the students are satisfied having the opportunity to simply address governing bodies in order to get orientation and assistance and to get their problems solved. In accordance with the data presented in the self-evaluation report, the majority of students is contented with the provided assistance.
- 4.5. In 2013 a career centre was launched at the university, however, the documents regulating its operations are still in the process of elaboration. The Regulation on Career Centre has been adopted, where clauses on an employment centre and its operations are included. The aims related to the aforesaid centre are included in 2013-2018 strategic plan. However, because of the career centre being a newly-created one, the majority of the students either does not have any information about it or does not make use of its services. The centre does not yet play an important role in the process of orienting and assisting the students. The centre does not realize activities for providing of information to the students, involving external stakeholders, or examining the labour market. The database of students and alumni is still in the process of formation. The career centre of the university is not yet integrated into the university life. There are no other services promoting the career of the students at the YAU.
- 4.6. No research is being realized by the students, regardless the fact that among the specialization delivered by the university there are such which have applied and agricultural directions and the university delivers education at the MA level as well. Likewise, the university lacks precise policy aimed at promoting the involvement of students in research activities. Students undertake course and diploma papers for some courses, however, they are not of experimental nature and mainly have a paper-like nature.

- 4.7. The Student Council (SC) of the YAU is the body that is in charge of protection of students' rights. The SC acts in accordance with its regulation and is aimed at protecting the rights of the students and developing their educational, scientific, creative, moral and spiritual values. In one of the objectives of 2013-2018 strategic plan of the YAU it is foreseen to enlarge the activities of the SC aimed at protecting the rights of the students. It became apparent from the examination of the expert panel that the activities realized by the SC are more oriented at organizing events than revealing the needs of the students and protecting their rights. The students are informed about their rights orally. During the meetings, the students pointed out that in case any problem emerged the SC and the administration of the university provided an immediate solution to it.
- 4.8. At present the university lacks policies, procedures and mechanisms aimed at assuring the quality and evaluating the educational consultancy services and other services of assistance provided to the students by the university, however, according to the newly-elaborated strategic plan, corresponding mechanisms will be elaborated and implemented. The main tool for revealing the needs of the students is the survey that was conducted within the framework of self-evaluation report.

CONSIDERATIONS

The YAU students receive some assistance from the university. However, the lack of corresponding policies and procedures, which will allow to monitor the processes and evaluate their effectiveness hinders the transformation of the educational environment into an effective one. The expert panel finds it worrisome that there are almost no students who have been admitted to the university through an integrated testing system, and many who now study full-time first have been admitted through an interview into part-time studies and then were relocated to the full-time system. The results of the survey mentioned in the self-evaluation report, according to which 48,75% of the students find that the admission to the university is not transparent, are also worrisome. However, the university does not undertake any concrete steps in that direction and it is not quite clear what the impact is of the aforementioned survey results on the amelioration of the policy adopted by the university. In this respect, the university has lots of challenges; serious steps must be undertaken in order to make the policy of admission more transparent, honest, valid and reliable.

The effectiveness of the academic environment depends among others on the extent the needs of the students are satisfied, however, the university examines these rarely. The lack of extended mechanisms for revealing the academic needs of the students and ameliorating the academic process hinders the opportunities for evaluating the operation of the university. The survey conducted within the framework of self-evaluation report nor the issues that have been raised informally by the SC cannot be trusted to have revealed sufficiently the needs of the students, especially taking into account the fact that the SC is not rather integrated into the life of the students.

Though the university does not have any formal system for organizing extra-curricular activities and providing consultations, the expert panel evaluates positively the student-teacher communication that is being carried out in an informal way. At the same time, the lack of curator/ supervisor and mentor institutions hinders effective learning of the students.

The orientation and assistance of the students is realized in a non-systematic way. However, the expert panel appreciates the fact that the students can directly apply to the administration for receiving assistance, orientation and corresponding solutions.

The creation of the career and alumni centre is an important step from the perspective of assisting the students to enter the labour market and to prepare them for it. It also

provides good opportunities for the university to evaluate the effectiveness of organizing internships, as well as to evaluate to what extent the latter promote the achievement of learning outcomes. Notwithstanding the fact that the centre has been functioning for a couple of months, no operations aimed at providing assistance to the students have been realized, which could have been a big incentive for the further promotion of labour market activities and orientation.

The lack of research in the academic process limits the critical thinking and the formation of research competences among the students.

Praiseworthy is the existence of the SC in the university. The SC is the only body in charge of the protection of students' rights. However, the operations of the SC are primarily limited to organizing events. The expert panel finds that the SC is not sufficiently integrated into the student life, which, in its turn, decreases the effectiveness of its functioning and hinders the realization of its aims. The expert panel states that the lack of mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of academic consultation and other services provided by the university as well as those for quality assurance are a serious hindrance from the perspective of the effectiveness of student-university relations.

SUMMARY: Considering all evidence, the expert panel finds that the YAU does not meet the requirements of Criterion 4, since the assistance provided for ensuring the effectiveness of academic environment still needs enough amelioration. The expert panel finds that the policy of student admission, the mechanisms used for revealing the academic needs of the students and the provided assistance is incomplete and needs further clarification and regulation.

CONCLUSION: The correspondence of YAU institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 4 is **unsatisfactory**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To review the policy of recruiting, selecting and admitting the students aiming at guaranteeing the transparency and honesty of the operation.
2. To regulate and to make the process of revealing the academic needs of the students more systematic.
3. To implement policies and procedures for revealing the academic needs of the students.
4. To elaborate concrete mechanisms and tools for revealing the academic needs of the students.
5. To elaborate procedures for providing extra-curricular activities and consultations.
6. To elaborate a regulation and timetable of applying to the administration.
7. To make the functions of career centre concrete and to integrate it in the academic processes through activating of the operations of career centre, and enlarging the scope of its functions directing it towards the employment of students and ensuring the stable feedback with the alumni.
8. To organize operations for involving the students in research activities with the aim of formation their knowledge, skills and competences.
9. To raise the effectiveness of SC activities, specifically for ameliorating the relations between the SC and the students and for protecting students' rights.
10. To elaborate and implement mechanisms for evaluating academic, consultation and other services as well as its quality assurance.

CRITERION V: FACULTY AND STAFF

Criterion: The institution provides for a high quality faculty and staff to achieve the set goals for academic programs and institution's mission.

FINDINGS:

- 5.1. A regulation on recruiting and maintaining staff with necessary professional qualifications was elaborated by the YAU in 2013. According to the aforesaid regulation the vacancies of scientific-methodological, supporting, administrative positions can be made up both by means of a job advertisement and without it (by directly appointing the employee). During site visits it became apparent that the recruitment of the staff is mainly realized through an interview. Announcements of vacancies by means of mass media haven't been realized. The acting staff is on contractual basis full-time and part-time. The YAU employs 47 teachers, out of which 30 are full-time and 17 part-time teachers. 40% of permanent staff and 70% of part-time staff has a PhD. The YAU lacks policies and procedures aimed at recruiting assisting staff. At present the university lacks corresponding mechanisms aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of the policy of recruiting and firing the staff.
- 5.2. At present the YAU lacks detailed formulated demands for the professional qualifications of the staff. There is only a small number of teachers who have qualifications corresponding to and in compliance with the specializations offered by the university. Furthermore, often one and the same teacher conducts a couple of courses (3-9), which, negatively impacts the quality of the classes and the academic program. There are passports of position with descriptions of responsibilities of management and organization of work, the functions, rights and responsibilities, however, they do not reflect the requirements of the academic programs. The university lacks mechanisms stimulating the involvement of young teachers in the education process, moreover it lacks a mentoring system for young teachers.
- 5.3. The evaluation of the staff of the YAU is being realized by means of lesson observations and surveys conducted among the students, however, the latter do not have a periodical nature. It's worth mentioning, that the tool used in conducting surveys among the students has not been reviewed from 2012, moreover, the methodology, procedures and criteria of surveys are not evaluated and ameliorated periodically. The effectiveness of conducting surveys is not examined as well.
- 5.4. Until 2013 no infrastructure for training the staff was functioning at the YAU. In 2013 within the Centre of Quality Assurance and Internal Audit, a Sub-department of Training and Qualification was founded. Classes of foreign language acquisition and IT skills have been organized by the aforesaid sub-division, however, the number of participants has been rather limited and the effectiveness of the lessons has not been evaluated. The problem of ameliorating the acquisition of foreign languages is still present. No classes or specialized trainings for staff to develop/modernize professional competences have been organized yet. The staff only occasionally participates in classes organized by other HEIs and organizations. The university has not conducted a systematic needs analysis and the only steps undertaken in this direction was the survey realized within the framework of self-evaluation. In the 2014-2015 academic year, the YAU is planning to organize training for implementing interactive methods of teaching. It's worth mentioning, that the operations of the sub-division in charge of

training is still in the stage of planning. The policy of the university aimed at developing professional competences of the staff is still in construction.

- 5.5. Because of lack of financial resources the university cannot afford hiring the necessary number of teachers having high qualifications. Because of the lack of a research section, the YAU staff was not involved into research activities and hence, there is no correlation between scientific and academic operations. The university still lacks procedures for promoting mobility and internationalization of staff. The YAU recently has published a collection of articles presented by its staff.
- 5.6. At present the university lacks policies and procedures for guaranteeing the necessary professional development of the staff. Based on the studies of the Centre for QA and Internal Audit it is foreseen to elaborate a policy. At present some mechanisms aimed at encouraging the staff are at use: bonuses, letters of acknowledgment.
- 5.7. The administration of the university is made up of 18 employees whose obligations and responsibilities are determined in the contracts. The YAU does not have supporting staff necessary for the realization of the strategic purposes. It's not clear what requirements are put forward for qualifications, attestation, evaluation of the professional knowledge, and evaluation of the effectiveness of operations of administrative and supporting staff.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel finds that the policies and procedures of staff selection are incomplete. The regulations are rather general and the criteria presented for professional qualifications are not clear-cut. It is not clear how the recruited staff stimulates the realization of the mission. The lack of policy of selecting necessary supporting staff meant for achieving the mission of the university and implementing the aims of academic programs endangers the operations of the institute having an agrarian mission.

Taking into consideration the fact that the majority of teachers, including the young teach 3-9 courses, the experts conclude that the requirements for professional staff qualifications do not align with the requirements for the academic program. It is not possible for a teacher to oversee 9 courses and it is worrisome that certain teachers teach disciplines which do not correspond to their professional qualifications or basic education. This situation makes the teaching process vulnerable and greatly hinders the preparation of qualified specialists in the field of agriculture. From this perspective the effectiveness of educational process is quite troublesome.

The expert panel appreciates the fact that certain mechanisms for teacher evaluation are at use, however, the university does not have detailed policies and procedures for teacher evaluation and the tools are not enough to ascertain the achieve the aspired aims. The expert panel finds that the results of the surveys can be used in a more effective way to ameliorate the quality of teaching and professional skills of the staff on the individual level. The expert panel finds that the realized training and the events directed towards the implementation of the European Credit Transfer System have been insufficient. The fact that the university has not systematically revealed professional needs of the staff and correspondingly has not undertaken professional training hinders the continuous development and mobility of the staff. The foreign language proficiency also hinders the mobility of the staff.

Though the YAU mentions the existence of the policy ensuring the stability of the staff, taking into account the workload of teachers (given the number of courses taught) as well

as the scarceness of training and qualifications, the expert panel finds that the university cannot ensure stability of the staff, which in its turn endangers the quality of academic services provided by the university.

The expert panel appreciates the fact that the YAU plans to elaborate procedures aimed at professional development of the staff, however, the lack of the aforesaid procedures can promote the outflow of the staff and hinder the development of the potential of the staff.

Though the responsibilities of administration are documented, the lack of mechanisms for evaluating their professionalism, competences and operations hinders the realization of strategic aims.

SUMMARY: Considering all evidence, the expert panel finds that the provision of teaching and supporting staff and their professional qualifications for realizing the aims of the academic programs and for fulfilling the mission of the university are not sufficient, and the expert panel finds that the YAU does not meet the requirements of Criterion 5.

CONCLUSION: The correspondence of YAU institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 5 is **unsatisfactory**.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To elaborate concrete recruitment criteria to be imposed on different categories of teacher positions.
2. To determine detailed professional qualifications necessary for the teaching staff in accordance with academic program requirements.
3. To ameliorate the mechanisms for evaluating the teaching staff.
4. To examine the effectiveness of surveys and to implement the results of the latter to direct and personalize the programs of qualification and competence improvement courses.
5. To ameliorate the system of consultation for young teachers.
6. To ameliorate the level of foreign language proficiency of the teaching staff.
7. To realize training of the teaching staff around such important issues as are: alignment of teaching/learning methods and the system of evaluation, organization of student-oriented teaching, alignment of intended academic outcomes of the course with the aims of the program and the system of evaluation.
8. To align staff professional development courses with the requirements of the academic programs.
9. To implement a policy and procedures for ensuring professional development of teaching staff.
10. To elaborate professional standards and mechanisms of amelioration for professional development of administrative and supporting staff.

CRITERION VI: RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Criterion: The university provides the realization of research activities and the interdependence of research and education.

FINDINGS:

- 6.1.** At present the university does not have a strategy for development of interests and ambitions in the sphere of research, and until 2013 no research activities have been undertaken in the university. The realization of research activities is considered only in

the context of MA education, however, in the BA degree as well, the university must underline the importance of student research activities, the realization of corresponding research activities by the staff, the link of results of scientific activities with the courses taught, as well as the consideration of the professional and scientific interests and ambitions of the staff while recruiting. In the 2013-2018 strategic plan of the university it is foreseen that scientific centres must be launched for implementing in the university scientific and technical achievements, which is planned to contribute to the realization of research in the sphere of agriculture.

6.2. At present the university is in the process of elaborating the requirements for methodology of research, however, a strategy in the sphere of research, short-term and long-term programs of interests and ambitions are missing. Throughout the operation of the university research has never been considered as a pivotal direction and a priority which has had its influence on the current situation. The university has not invested either human or financial resources in stimulating research activities. Also, the budget of the university does not clearly reflect financial means allocated to research stimulation.

6.3. At present the university does not have a concrete policy and procedures for the implementation and development of research. According to the strategic plan these are due to be created until 2018 at the same time creating favorable conditions for research activities, by allocating a special budget for research. It is worth mentioning, that the university has undertaken the publication of a collection of articles of its staff which is the first such undertaking of the university.

6.4. The university underlines the importance of internationalization of research activities, however, nothing has been undertaken in this direction so far; the appropriate mechanisms and steps ensuring internationalization are missing. There is not a single agreement aimed at internationalizing the research. The level of knowledge of foreign languages among the staff hinders the internationalization of research. The institutional capabilities of the university (equipments, laboratories) as well do not provide opportunities for the realization of research activities.

6.5. There are no mechanisms for integrating research and educational programs and processes. They are absent even on the level of planning.

CONSIDERATIONS

The absence of research has a strong negative influence on learning and teaching. The university must elaborate a research strategy, determine concrete purposes, interrelating the purposes with one another and allocate corresponding financial and material resources.

If no research is being realized, the steps undertaken for ameliorating academic programs will not be effective. The mobility of students and teachers on an international scale greatly depends on the internationalization of research, however, the absence of the latter is apparent at the YAU. The expert panel appreciates the publication of collection of articles of the staff, which is the first such undertaking of the university. Likewise, the expert panel encourages the initiative of the university to launch scientific centres for implementing scientific and technical achievements, which are planned to contribute to the realization of research in the sphere of agriculture.

SUMMARY: Considering all evidence, the expert panel finds that there is no research at the university and the expert panel finds that the YAU does not meet the requirements Criterion 6.

CONCLUSION: The correspondence of YAU institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 6 is **unsatisfactory**.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To elaborate a strategy reflecting the ambitions and interests of the university in the sphere of research by actively involving the staff and the students into scientific operations.
2. To elaborate mechanisms and tools aimed at implementing the research strategy and monitoring the quality.
3. To elaborate mid-term and short-term programs based on the strategy reflecting research ambitions and interests of the university.
4. To undertake steps towards internationalization of planned research activities (including amelioration of the level of foreign language proficiency among the staff and the students).
5. To include a greater number of teachers having a PhD into educational process.
6. To elaborate policy, procedures and mechanisms aimed at integrating research with academic processes.

CRITERION VII: INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

Criterion: The institution has necessary resources for creating a learning environment and for effective implementation of stated mission and objectives.

FINDINGS:

7.1. The University conducts its academic activities in a rented building. All the administrative and academic institutions organize their activities in the YAU building, in particular the cabinets of Economics, the Armenian Language and Literature, Clothing, Design, Design and Computer as well as Physics, Chemistry and Technology Labs. However, the equipments in the labs are very old. For that very reason nowadays the University, on contract basis, collaborates with different labs of other institutions (The Institute of Physiology of the National Academy of Sciences of RA, Laboratory Narek, etc.) to conduct laboratory exercises of certain subjects. The campus lacks available and free wifi. According to the Faculty and the students, the University resources, in general, meet the educational demands, but the infrastructural base needs to be improved and replenished. The University's library literature is too old and it lacks a library replenishment policy. However, the University has contracts with the National Library of Armenia and with the Fundamental Scientific Library of National Academy of Sciences of Armenia.

7.2. The source of YAU revenue is the students' tuition fees and the expenditure is allocated on the following: office and the utility expenses, other administrative expenses, goods and rent, amortization, advertisement, salary and taxes. The University does not have an adopted financial policy. It lacks a financial resources distribution policy and an assessment of the effectiveness of budget allocation for academic

programs. For the implementation of its strategic objectives the University allocates 10% of its annual budget. The University lacks clear-cut mechanism for assessment of the effectiveness of financial resources allocation. According to the strategic plan by 2018 it is planned to improve the infrastructural base (laboratory equipment, new technologies, and research papers' database). Nowadays the University allocates its financial resources in case of emergent pressing needs and on priorities (salary, repair work, purchases for education improvement, etc.).

- 7.3. The YAU 2013-2018 strategic plan includes financial planning, cost prediction and implementation of the corresponding strategic direction. The financial resources allocation depends on what remains after the University maintenance expenditure and the necessary expenditure for ensuring its activity as an institution. Financial resources are not separately allocated for the implementation and the continuity of the academic programs.
- 7.4. The YAU resource base provides only for partial implementation of the academic programs, because the two agricultural academic programs require considerable resources to conduct lab classes and build up professional competences and skills among the students.
- 7.5. The document-flow in YAU is carried out in accordance with the relevant regulations. The current regulation of information and document-flow management covers the incoming and outgoing documents' format and circulation, but does not refer to in-office documents' flow. The University lacks the information and documentation processes regulating policies and procedures. The University lacks process effectiveness inspection tools, which are in the process of discussion and establishment. A computer network mechanism has been installed at YAU, which partially regulates the provision of information.
- 7.6. YAU has a health center, which is under the supervision of the Vice Rector. However, during the visit, it turned out that the center did not have a health worker. Security cameras have been installed in all the floors of the University which significantly promote the security. According to the survey conducted among the staff and the students, the security and the health services meet all the demands for the university to function, but they need to be improved and modernized. During the site visit it turned out that the sanitary condition of the University was sufficient. The University lacks the appropriate facilities for students with special needs. Additional emergency exits are also missing.
- 7.7. YAU hasn't yet introduced tools assessing the applicability, availability and the effectiveness of the provided resources with the exception of social surveys conducted in the frames of the self-evaluation. Assessing its effectiveness, the University plans to implement programs for regulating the learning processes as well as to conduct analyses of the results of the learning processes. According to the students and the Faculty the resources are provided in case of need.

CONSIDERATIONS

It seems that the University is concerned with providing the necessary resources for the academic projects. The expert panel finds the building conditions (auditoriums) of the university marginally sufficient for conducting theoretical and some practical classes, though the auditoriums are not equipped with audiovisual equipments, there is no wifi

connection available for students, and the present equipments of the auditoriums are quite old and cannot contribute appropriately to the learning outcomes. The University's present laboratory conditions, literature fund and academic materials cannot fully ensure the necessary learning environment for the implementation of the academic programs. Library and an information center are very important for creating a research environment and culture, and their resource base is very poor at the University. The absence of a clear-cut policy of financial resource allocation for the University's mission and objectives, as well as for the implementation of academic programs and ensuring their continuity, affects the effectiveness of the use of financial resources. It is worth mentioning that the fact that the property is rented may put the programs implementation stability and continuity under suspicion.

Many issues are solved in the form of a meeting at the University without any official documentation (application, report, circular, etc.). On the one hand, this makes the discussion process quicker, but on the other hand, it does not contribute to the formalization of the raised issues. The University has not conducted an effectiveness analysis of the document-flow management policy and procedures.

The University has the personnel and tools for ensuring the appropriate sanitary level. Although the safety cameras installed in the university contribute to its safety, the absence of a worker in the health center, and the absence of additional emergency exits in the building are impediments for providing emergency assistance in emergency situations. Alongside, it should be noted that the University does not provide any service to students with special needs.

At YAU surveys are considered to be mechanisms for assessing usefulness, availability and effectiveness and efficiency of the resources provided to the students, but their results do not reflect the real image of resource availability, effectiveness and efficiency. The information on availability assessment is missing, and stakeholders are not aware of the decisions based on the results.

SUMMARY: Considering all evidence, the expert panel finds that the University's resource base and the mechanisms for allocating the university's financial expenditure and for assessing their effectiveness and efficiency are not sufficient to prepare professionals in the field of agriculture and to achieve the intended learning outcomes, The expert group therefore finds that YAU does not meet the requirements of Criterion 7.

CONCLUSION: The correspondence of YAU institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 8 is **unsatisfactory**.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To seek external funding sources to fully implement the objectives of the academic programs (consultations, other services, etc.).
2. To improve the facilities, infrastructure and laboratory equipment to ensure the necessary learning environment for the implementation of the academic programs.
3. To make a detailed annual outlay of budget revenues and expenditures. This will significantly increase the effectiveness and efficiency and the appropriateness of expenditure in a fiscal year.
4. To develop mechanisms to identify needs for the implementation of the educational programs objectives.
5. To develop and implement a policy for efficient and effective allocation of financial resources.

6. To develop a clear-cut mechanism for assessing the effectiveness of budget expenditure.
7. To develop clear-cut policies and procedures to manage the information provision and documentation processes.
8. To install in an electronic system of administrative documentation, in line with a policy and procedures for information management.
9. To analyze to what extent the present resources ensure the necessary environment to implement the educational activities emerging from the objectives of the strategic plan.
10. To assess the applicability, availability and effectiveness and efficiency of the resources provided to students and to the Faculty.

CRITERION VIII: SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Criterion: The institution is accountable to the government and the society for the education it offers, the research it carries out and the resources it uses.

FINDINGS:

- 8.1. The reporting system at YAU is implemented through the Rector's annual reports, and through annual reports of infrastructural units. The University lacks the assessment indexes for effectiveness and efficiency of reporting mechanisms. However, the University's strategic plan foresees to develop the external reporting system and to ensure the transparency of internal activities to its stakeholders by 2016.
- 8.2. To make its procedures and operations more transparent to the public the YAU has included a bullet point in its Strategic Plan to improve the provision of information through the newly launched web site. However, the new website of YAU <http://www.yau.am/>, which partially covers some operations, does not give a full image of the University activities. To attract applicants, the University organizes student visits to schools, disseminates posters, CDs, booklets, though the latter lack accurate information and need to be reviewed (in particular, there are photos in the booklets that do not reflect the real image of the University). The University provides public services on a voluntary and charity basis, where students take part in (annual New Year visits to nursing homes, tree planting, assistance to farmers during the harvest time, etc.).
- 8.3. The University lacks stable feedback mechanisms which would contribute to the formation of public relations. The YAU highlights the importance of such communication and certain activities are carried out in an informal manner, like discussions with employers, providers of internships. However, external stakeholders are not involved in assessment processes of the efficiency and effectiveness of academic programs. The University, through its new Career Center and Alumni Union, plans to investigate and introduce a strong basis for such assessments.
- 8.4. Within the framework of the agreement signed with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA), the YAU has undertaken the training of 10 unemployed as a confectioner and in the end has assisted two of them in finding a job. The institute offers consultation services in the sphere of law, however, until now, no one has applied. No other mechanisms for realizing additional educational and consultation

services, as well as transmitting knowledge (values) to the society are at use at the university.

CONSIDERATIONS

The system of accountability at the YAU is not complete, although it reflects the annual accountability of the Rector and of some infrastructures, but it lacks a systematic nature. Moreover, the effectiveness of mechanisms for accountability has not yet been examined. The expert panel finds partial guarantee for transparency and availability of procedures and operations of the university to the public is. The newly-created web-site is being viewed by the university as a mechanism for assuring transparency of operations, however, the web-site does not yet give an overall idea about the operations of the university and does not yet ensure complete availability of procedures and operations to the public. From the perspective of social responsibility, one of the most important functions of the university are feedback mechanisms to the public, which can be realized by means of systems of accountability and transfer of values. Though a non-formal feedback from stakeholders is provided at the university, there is no systematic analyses of the effectiveness of these approaches and it has not been fully examined as to what extent these promote the establishment of firm and effective links with the public. The university links the establishment of firm connections with the public with the newly-formed Career Centre, however, the operations of the latter are not yet effective, since it lacks corresponding data bases, and extended cooperation with external stakeholders and the majority of the students does not yet know about the existence of the centre.

SUMMARY: Considering all evidence, the expert panel evaluates Criterion as satisfactory, taking into account the efforts of the university directed towards implementation of an accountability system and assurance of transparency of its operations. It's praiseworthy that the university has reviewed the web-site, however, from the informative point of view the latter needs enrichment and refreshment. The expert panel hopes that the newly-created Career Centre will promote the establishment of firm links with the public.

CONCLUSION: The correspondence of YAU institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 8 is **satisfactory**.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of the internal accountability system and to implement a system of external accountability.
2. To ensure the transparency of intrainstitutional operations for external stakeholders.
3. To enrich the web-site and to make it more relevant.
4. To elaborate policies, procedures and mechanisms for feedback to the society that will promote the establishment of links with the society.
5. To analyze the effectiveness of current mechanisms assuring the feedback of stakeholders.
6. To implement mechanisms for transmitting knowledge of the agrarian field to the society.

CRITERION IX: EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

Criterion: By means of external relations the university encourages experience exchange and development thus promoting the internationalization of the institution.

FINDINGS:

- 9.1. The university underlines the importance of creating an environment that will encourage experience exchange, development and internationalization. Moreover, in the 2013-2018 strategic plan the issues of internationalization are dealt with, however, the university still lacks the concrete strategy for developing internationalization, as well as elaborated policies and procedures directed towards the establishment of external relations. The university does not conduct joint academic or research programs. The university plans to elaborate a strategy on internationalization.
- 9.2. A separate infrastructure responsible for external relations and internationalization has not been developed in the university as such and there are no regulated procedures for assuring external relations and internationalization, notwithstanding the fact, that the representatives of the university underline the importance of implementing international experience and exchange.
- 9.3. With the aim of organizing educational, research and scientific-pedagogical internship of the students, the university has signed agreements with a number of laboratories and organizations. The university has made slight progress in organizing laboratory classes and carrying out the internships. Agreements have been signed with the following bodies: Youth Union of CIS Countries, University of Synergia of Moscow and the University of Economics, Finance and International Trade of Kazakhstan. Within the framework of these agreements cooperation in the field of education, organization of student and staff exchange programs are anticipated. However, no operations have so far been realized within the framework of aforesaid signed agreements, notwithstanding the fact that agreements have been signed in 2011 and 2012.
- 9.4. Learning of foreign languages is included in the curricula, however, as the students witness, the hours set in the current programs do not guarantee an appropriate level of foreign language proficiency among the students and the necessary skills for mastering the specialized foreign language. By no means all the members of the staff and administration have a sufficient command of English. Courses for foreign language have been organized in the university, however, their duration of 15 days appeared insufficient and only a small number of teachers participated. The low level of foreign language proficiency both among the students and the staff is a serious hindrance for mobility.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel appreciates the fact that the administration of the university underlines the importance of creating an environment that will encourage experience exchange, development and internationalization, however, it is not quite clear how the university is going to establish the corresponding environment. The expert panel finds it urgent to elaborate a strategy on internationalization, which will take into account the present potential of the university and will underline the priorities of development. The provision of corresponding financial and human resources for the organization and development of

internationalization has to be given utmost importance. Internationalization will be greatly promoted by the creation of a corresponding infrastructure. The expert panel finds that the absence of the infrastructure responsible for external relations hinders the realization of mobility, internationalization of research activities, undertaking of joint programs and projects. The lack of the aforesaid infrastructure endangers the realization of the aims of the strategic plan as well as the effective implementation of the policy in the proposed direction. The expert panel evaluates positively the cooperation with local institutions, since the university has accomplished some success concerning laboratory classes and internships. However, the same cannot be said about international cooperations. Though the university has agreement with a number of institutions abroad, nothing has been realized within the framework of these agreements. Moreover, the reasons for their malfunction have never been examined and the current hindrances and problems have not been discussed. The low level of foreign language proficiency among the teachers and the students is also a serious hindrance for the internationalization of the operations of the institution. The low proficiency level of foreign languages also has a negative influence on the operations of the university and on the effective realization of academic programs.

SUMMARY: Taking into consideration the fact that that the university lacks a systematic approach directed towards for, policies and procedures encouraging the establishment of external relations, the expert panel finds that the YAU does not meet the requirements of Criterion 9.

CONCLUSION: The correspondence of YAU institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 9 is **unsatisfactory**.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To elaborate policy and procedures towards exchange of experience, development and creation of an environment that will encourage internationalization.
2. With the aim of internationalization to create an appropriate infrastructure and to appoint a person responsible the operations and functions regarding internationalization.
3. To activate external relations with local HEIs, signed international agreements, as well as to sign new realistic agreements.
4. To review the curricula:
 - The syllabi of teaching foreign languages by underlining the learning of a foreign language
 - Methods of teaching, by underlining the importance of formation of necessary competences for LSP (foreign language for specific purposes).
5. To review the program of foreign language courses that are being organized for the staff and administration and to involve larger numbers of participants.

CRITERION X: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Criterion: The institution has a system of internal quality assurance, which promotes the continuous amelioration of all operations of the university and the establishment of a quality culture.

FINDINGS:

- 10.1. The university has a Centre for Quality Assurance (QA) and Internal Audit and it has elaborated the regulation of the centre and a series of other documents. At present surveys and regular discussions are regarded as the only mechanisms of quality assurance. In the process of ameliorating the academic programs the QA Centre has but a non-formal participation through discussions with the heads of chairs. The effectiveness of QA mechanisms is not yet evaluated. The manual for QA is foreseen to be elaborated until 2015.
- 10.2. For administration of internal quality assurance the YAU provides human, material and financial resources and it has a founded centre with corresponding employees and technology. The operations of the aforesaid centre are considered necessary and important by the university, however, their effectiveness is not yet evaluated. The responsibility of the employees of the centre in operations of quality assurance is not precise. The employees are satisfied with current resources.
- 10.3. The university underlines the importance of involvement of students and other stakeholders in the operations of quality assurance. Internal stakeholders are partially (within the framework of self-evaluation) involved in the operations of quality assurance, however, the same cannot be stated about the involvement of external stakeholders. The effectiveness of involvement of internal stakeholders is not yet examined.
- 10.4. No reviewing of the system of internal quality assurance has been undertaken in the university so far. The system of Internal Quality Assurance is still in the process of formulation. The Centre of Quality Assurance and Internal Audit is a newly-created one. At present the current information only includes the results of the survey conducted within the framework of self-evaluation. The PDCA cycle is not yet closed and implemented operations do not have a continuous nature. The university foresees undertaking a benchmarking of policies and procedures of quality assurance.
- 10.5. The university has tried implementing an internal system of quality assurance with its procedures and mechanisms, however, the current system with its current functions does not provide the necessary data and grounding for the operations of external evaluation.
- 10.6. Some information on the operations of the university is being provided by the newly-created web-site, however, the data of the site do not provide any materials about the quality of operations of the university. The internal system of quality assurance does not provide transparency for external stakeholders so far. The accountability about the operations of quality assurance of the academic programs and the institution are not yet available for the public.

CONSIDERATION

The YAU has a policy of internal quality assurance, however, the latter is quite general and needs specification on the level of operations. The latter does not provide opportunities for checking the quality of teaching, the qualities of the staff and that of academic programs. The expert panel has noted that though the university provides human resources for the administration of the operations of internal quality assurance, their responsibilities and functions are not precisely determined. Procedures are mostly only enforced when the necessity arises and in a non-formal manner, which can be a serious hindrance to effective

functioning of the quality assurance and its further development. The expert panel finds it necessary to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of the operations of the internal quality assurance system.

From time to time some tools for quality assurance have been used (e.g. surveys among the students) and corresponding data for external quality assurance have been collected, however, this has been undertaken mostly within the framework of preparing the self-evaluation report and even these data do not provide a sufficient base for external quality assurance. The importance that the YAU gives to the operations of quality assurance, the regulation of procedures, the involvement of internal stakeholders into the aforesaid procedures provides grounds to anticipate the formation of an extended quality assurance system in the near future. The involvement of external stakeholders (mainly the involvement of the YAU alumni operating in the labour market) in the operations of quality assurance of the university will promote the amelioration of the functions of the centre. However, the non-periodical nature of quality assurance processes, the small degree of involvement of external stakeholders in the aforementioned processes, the absence of information administration (including quantitative and qualitative data on academic programs and else) will hinder the continuous amelioration of the operations of the university. The operations of QA Centre have started in line with the process of accreditation. Though some progress can be traced within a short period of time, the centre does not have enough experience and the necessary data about the operations in order to be able to review the system. It's worth mentioning that the quality culture is not thoroughly formulated and the PDCA cycle is not yet closed. It is mainly in the "plan" stage, partially in the "do" stage, in rare cases in the "check" one, whereas the "act" stage is missing in the majority of cases.

The expert panel appreciates the intention of the university to create a quality assurance system, however, the current system does not provide enough grounds for external evaluation. Meanwhile, the tools that are at use need amelioration (surveys do not bear a systematic nature, polls are not an appropriate tool, the outcomes are not precisely determined, the number of people surveyed is not enough for considering the results valid). The operations of the Centre for Quality Assurance and Internal Audit cannot be considered to be enough transparent especially for external stakeholders. This can be demonstrated by the lack of information about quality in the official web-site of the university, which will be a hindrance for recruiting students.

SUMMARY: Taking into consideration the fact that a quality culture is not yet formulated in the university, and the PDCA cycle of quality assurance is not yet closed and the fact that the university still has many things to do in this direction, the expert panel finds that the YAU does not satisfy the requirements of Criterion 10.

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

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To review the policy of internal quality assurance of the YAU by making it more concrete on the level of operations,
2. To ameliorate QA mechanisms by reviewing the tools.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of operation of the Centre of QA (to elaborate a scheme/methodology of data collection, what questionnaires need to be elaborated, who they will be directed to, what is the frequency of conducting surveys...).
4. To elaborate a thorough manual of quality assurance.

5. To involve stakeholders (especially external ones) into QA processes.
6. To evaluate the effectiveness of involvement of stakeholders in QA processes.
7. To carry out monitoring of QA procedures.
8. To close the PDCA cycle in all levels of governance of the YAU.

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

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

July 11, 2014

Aghavni Hakobyan
Chair of Expert Panel

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

AGHAVNI HAKOBYAN: In 2001 graduated from “GLADZOR” University of Management, the Faculty of Finance and Credit. Throughout 2001-2005 she used to be a PhD student at the Institute of Economics after M. Kotanyan of the National Academy of Science of RA. Within the same year she defended her scientific thesis “Modern Priorities of Defending Economic Competition on the Example of the RA”. She is a PhD in economics. During 2007-2013 she worked at GLADZOR University as a Head of Academic Administration Department, assistant professor in the Chair of General Economics. From 2013 present she works at Yerevan State University of Economics as a chief specialist of Foreign Relations Division, assistant professor in the Chair of Theory of Economics.

GAYANE MARMARYAN: In 1995 she graduated from the Armenian Academy of Agriculture and was granted a diploma with honours. Throughout 1995-1998 she completed her PhD studies at the National Academy of Science of RA with specialization in “Biochemistry”. In 2000 she defended her PhD thesis on “Biochemical Indices of Blood and Skin of Semi-Coarse and Semi-Fine Woolled Sheep Bred in Armenia. She is a PhD in biochemistry. In 2004 she was awarded the academic rank of associate professor by the Scientific Council of the National Academy of the RA. From 1998 present she has been teaching in the Chair of Biochemistry of Armenian National Agrarian University. From 1995 present she carries out scientific and production works in different regions of Armenia.

GAREGIN HAMBARDZUMYAN: In 1999 he graduated from the Faculty of Veterinary Medical Science of Armenian Academy of Agriculture. Throughout 1999-2002 he was a PhD student in the Chair of Veterinary Sanitary, Expertise and Zoohygiene. He is a PhD in Veterinary Sciences. In 2003-2011 he used to work in Armenian National Agrarian University as a teacher, from 2011 as a leading specialist in educational reforms and implementation of credit system. From 2011 present he works in Yerevan State Medical University as an associate professor in the Chair of Physiology.

THEO WUBBELS: In 1974 he graduated from the University of Utrecht, the Faculty of Physics. He became a PhD in 1984. Throughout 1973-19778 he had been working at Montessori High School as a teacher of physics and later as a headmaster. Throughout 1979-1985 he had been working at the University of Utrecht as a teacher-assistant. In 1990 he was granted the title of assistant professor. From 2001 present he teaches at the University of Utrecht. From 2005 present he is a vice-dean at the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences and from 2011 he is a Dean of Admission.

LUIZA ABRAHAMYAN: A student of the Faculty of Regulation of Economy and International Economic Relations, Armenian State University of Economics. She is a member of Social Committee of Armenian National Students Association, an author and coordinator of a program “Equality for Divergence: Social equality in higher education

APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT

12.05.2014 p.		Start	End	Duration
1	Meeting with rector	9:15	9:30	15 minutes
2	Closed panel meeting including consulting documents on display (acquaintance, discussion of self-assessment report, preparation of interviews, reading of documents, assessment achieved learning outcomes)	9:30	12:30	180 minutes
3	Lunch and closed panel meeting	12:30	13:30	60 minutes
4	Meeting with rector	13:45	14:30	45 minutes
5	Meeting with vice- rector	14:45	15:30	45 minutes
6	Meeting with self-assessment implementation team	15:45	16:30	45 minutes
7	Closed panel meeting	16:45	18:00	75 minutes
13.05.2014 p		Start	End	Duration
1	Closed panel meeting	9:00	9:30	30 minutes
2	Meeting with educational management (deans, the head of the educational affairs)	9:30	10:15	45 minutes
3	Meeting with heads of chairs	10:30	11:30	60 minutes
4	Meeting with teaching staff	11:30	12:30	60 minutes
5	Lunch and closed panel meeting	12:30	13:30	60 minutes
6	Meeting with employers	13:30	14:45	75 minutes
7	Meeting with alumni	15:00	16:00	60 minutes
8	Closed panel meeting	16:15	18:00	105 minutes
14.05.2014 p		Start	End	Duration
1	Closed panel meeting	9:00	9:30	30 minutes
2	Meeting with representatives of Student Council	9:30	10:15	45 minutes
3	Meeting with students (Bachelor, Master)	10:30	11:30	60 minutes
4	Meeting with quality assurance staff	11:45	12:45	60 minutes
5	Lunch and closed panel meeting	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
6	Meeting with the heads of divisions (design cabinet, IT center, external relations office, career center...)	14:15	15:00	45 minutes
7	Resources review (auditoriums, laboratories, cabinets, library, sport club, medical service...)	15:15	16:30	75 minutes
8	Closed panel meeting	16:30	18:00	90 minutes
15.05.2014p.		Start	End	Duration
1	Closed panel meeting	9:00	9:15	15 minutes
2	Open meeting/ consultation session with expert panel	9:15	10:00	45 minutes
3	Class observation	10:00	11:10	70 minutes
4	Resources review (visit to the organizations that internships are organized)	11:10	13:00	110 minutes
5	Lunch and closed panel meeting	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
6	Study of documents and review of resources	14:00	14:30	30 minutes
7	Closed panel meeting	14:30	18:00	210 minutes
16.05.2014 p.		Start	End	Duration
1	Closed panel meeting	9:30	11:30	120 minutes
2	Extra meeting with people chosen by the expert panel	11:30	12:30	60 minutes
3	Meeting with rector	12:30	13:00	30 minutes

APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

N	Name of the document	C/S
1	Staff of the Academic Council	2.1
2	The list of staff and their responsibilities	2.1
3	Staff of management body	2.1
4	Regulation of Academic Council	2.1
5	The staff of university administration (rector's office) and work-plan	2.1
6	Management body decision plan	2.2
7	Any protocol on decision discussions in the chairs	2.2
8	Any protocols of Academic Council meetings	2.2
9	Document regulating the info bank of vacancies	2.3
10	Analyses of problems raised by chairs and faculties	2.3
11	Protocols on lesson-observation and corresponding discussions	2.4
12	Curriculum: 1. Biotechnology of bread, confectionery and macaroni production 2. Finance 3. Veterinary sanitary and examination 4. Design 5. Law	3.1
13	Academic programs of full-time and distance courses 1. Biotechnology of bread, confectionery and macaroni production 2. Finance 3. Veterinary sanitary and examination 4. Design 5. Law	3.1
14	Course programs` 1. Veterinary sanitary and examination 2. Physiology 3. Biochemistry and clinical biochemistry 4. Biotechnology of bread, confectionery and macaroni production 5. Technology of preserving and reprocessing of plant cultivation 6. Standardization, certification and examination of branch production	3.1
15	Diploma supplement implemented by UNESCO CEPES	3.1
16	Any diary of undertaken traineeships	3.2
17	Student handbook	3.2
18	Appeal procedures and orders (of marks)	3.3
19	Individual works of students; papers, course papers (2 per each specialization one excellent and one fail), group works	3.3
20	Graduation works of students: theses, diploma papers (3 per each specialization marked excellent, satisfactory and fail)	3.3
21	One sample per order on students transferred from state HEIs or reinstated	3.4
22	Documents witnessing the mobility of teachers (order)	3.4
23	The list of students transferred to other HEI-s from YAU within the last 5 years, with names of HEI-s mentioned.	4.1
24	The list of students transferred to YAU from other HEI-s within the last 5 years, with names of HEI-s mentioned.	4.1
25	Ministry of Education and Science permission for organizing admission based on interviews	4.1
26	Regulations on making up absentees	4.3
27	Topics of course and graduation papers in accordance with specializations (for	4.6

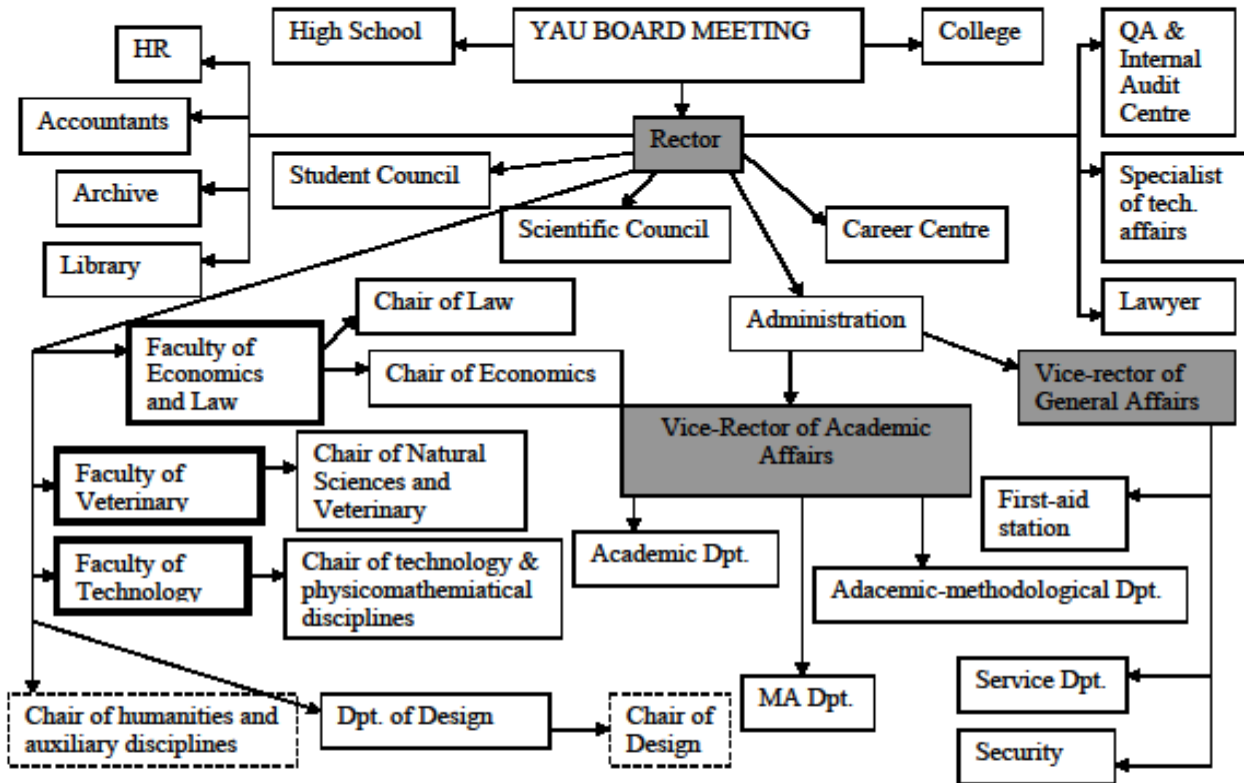
	recent 3 years)	
28	Document/manual on students' rights and obligations	4.7
29	Regulation on recruiting academic staff	5.1
30	Contract sample to be signed with teachers	5.1
31	Position passport of staff and administration	5.1
32	Basic education of teachers and the list of disciplines taught	5.2
33	Templates of teacher evaluation by students	5.2
34	Chair, faculty meeting protocols on results of teacher evaluation and discussions of lesson-observations	5.3
35	List of articles published by teachers	6.4
36	Out of 2130 books available at the library what is the ratio of educational and scientific ones; does the library receive scientific journals, if yes of what kind?	7.1
37	Tools aimed at implementing educational aims and assessing achievements	7.7
38	Example of faculty, chair annual reports	8.1
39	Strategic plan of events aimed at internationalization	9.1
40	2012-2013 annual report of Quality Assurance and Internal Audit Centre	10.2

APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED

1. Auditoriums
2. Laboratories
3. Cabinets of physics, chemistry, design
4. Deans offices
5. Chairs
6. Computer laboratories
7. Library
8. Student council
9. Quality Assurance Unit
10. Career Centre
11. Sports hall
12. Medical services

APPENDIX 5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

ANNEX 5
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF YAU



APPENDIX 6. LIST OF THE ABBREVIATIONS

1. **ANQA**-National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance, Foundation
2. **ANQF**- Armenian National Qualification Framework
3. **ECTS**-European Credit Transfer System
4. **ESG**_ Standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in European Higher Education Area
5. **KPI**- Key Performance Indicators
6. **PDCA**- Plan Do Check Act
7. **QA**- Quality Assurance
8. **QAC**-Quality Assurance Centre
9. **RA**- Republic of Armenia
10. **SER**-Self-evaluation report
11. **SP**- Strategic Plan
12. **SC**_ Students council
13. **YAU**- Yerevan Agricultural University