

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



National Center For Professional  
Education Quality Assurance  
Foundation

**EXPERT PANEL REPORT  
ON INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF  
NORTHERN UNIVERSITY**

**Yerevan - 2018**

## INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of Northern University (hereinafter NU) is carried out based on the application presented by the latter. The process of institutional accreditation is organized and coordinated by the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance, Foundation (ANQA).

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

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

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

To carry out an expertise of institutional capacities in line with the RA standards for state accreditation.

To carry out an evaluation for the improvement of institution’s quality and for its integration to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The report refers to the expertise of institutional capacities of the NU according to the state criteria and standards for accreditation as well as to the peer review from the perspective of European Standards and Criteria of QA.

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## SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

### EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

The expertise of the NU was carried out by an independent expert panel formed according to the requirements of ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel. The evaluation was carried out according to 10 criteria set by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N 959-Ն decree. While carrying out the expertise the expert panel took into consideration the fact “Northern University considers its mission to provide availability and transparency in education along with international advanced experience and best national traditions, implementation of education ensuring accessibility, availability, organization transparency and humanitarian values combining the best national traditions and international advanced experience-aimed at training specialists able to apply obtained knowledge for the following fields-enterprise economics and management, law, informatics, journalism, philology, psychology, education.”

Back in 2015 the NU underwent accreditation according to 10 criteria set by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N 959-Ն decree. As an outcome the NU was granted conditional accreditation of 2 years. The TLI has appealed the said decision and in 2016 an additional expertise was carried out by an independent expert panel as far as non-satisfactory criteria were concerned (APs, Research and Development, External Relations and Internationalization). The committee in charge of carrying out additional expertise left preliminary assessment unaltered.

The NU taking into account the recommendations provided has undertaken an array of improvement changes in various spheres.

Based on the outcomes of the previous accreditation procedure, the NU has changed its SP. With the ratification of the new SP the TLI has made the main directions of its operations more precise, referring to all aspects of TLI operations in the formulations of the SP; from material resources to societal responsibility. Praiseworthy is the fact that the TLI cooperates with its internal and external stakeholders with the aim of carrying out its strategic aims. Internal stakeholders have participated in the elaboration of the SP, and in the procedure of revealing the needs. However, the involvement of external stakeholders in the aforesaid procedures and the feedback with the latter is still loose. The expert panel states that the policy and the operations of the TLI mostly correspond to the mission adopted by the TLI.

The expert panel considers that notwithstanding the fact that started from 2016 certain steps aimed at reforms of its government system have been undertaken based on the recommendations provided throughout the previous accreditation procedure; a new Statute has been ratified, the SP has been reviewed, structural changes have occurred, the system of governance still needs further improvement and precision of functions of structural infrastructures. The model of ad hoc governance is still at use and there is no resource planning for the realization of strategic goals. Financial planning of the TLI is not yet carried out based on strategic priorities (the importance is highlighted in the QA criteria of QA Manual). The TLI also faces an issue of financial transparency. The issues in the sphere of governance have not enhanced the complete improvement of research and development.

The TLI carries out undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate APs in both part- and full-time modes of study. The TLI carries out 14 full-time undergraduate, 12 part-time, 10 graduate and 3 PhD APs throughout 11 specializations in 3 faculties. The choice of professional APs is in line with the TLI's mission from the perspective of preparing highly demanded professionals in the labour market, and are in line with state academic criteria. Based on the outcomes of the previous accreditation procedure, started from 2015 the TLI has carried out certain operations aimed at modernizing its APs and improving the weaknesses revealed in the APs. In particular, there is an outcome-oriented approach to the APs. The intended learning outcomes of three APs presented are mainly in line with the undergraduate and graduate levels of NQF. National and international benchmarking, and external evaluation have been carried out for undergraduate APs. The outcomes of the benchmarking and the external review witness that the APs are mainly in line with other similar APs and can enhance student and teacher mobility. The policy of assessing student knowledge undergoes constant improvement, a procedure of graduate theses defense has been elaborated. The meeting with students have highlighted that the TLI

undertakes certain steps aimed at implementing student-centred teaching, which is more actively undertaken by young teachers. The expert panel considers that the manual on AP elaboration and regulations developed by the TLI are important preconditions for regular quality improvement of APs.

Taking into consideration the aforesaid facts, the expert panel considers that the TLI has mainly taken into account the recommendations provided by previous accreditation procedure and has improved the APs. The APs are in line with the TLI mission, form an integral part of planning and can enhance teacher and student mobility. However, in the meantime the expert panel considers that there is still a need to augment the number of practical hours in APs. Moreover, a tighter cooperation with stakeholders is needed as far as AP elaboration and implementation are concerned.

The expert panel evaluates positively the fact that the TLI has elaborated and implemented a policy and procedures on teaching staff selection and assessment, the requirements to professional qualities of the teaching staff, job descriptions of certain teachers and administrative staff have been elaborated. Notwithstanding the fact that following the SER, teaching staff formation foresees competition-based and non-competition based procedures, it has been revealed throughout the site-visit that in the majority of cases it is the second option that is being implemented. The expert panel finds that the TLI has corresponding teaching staff with appropriate qualifications to carry out its APs, which allows to jump to the conclusion that the TLI takes into account professional qualities and spheres of professional functioning of the teaching staff, which will enhance the preparation of high-quality specialists. With the aim of ensuring the stability of teaching staff, the TLI has a set system of promotion/encouragement, and throughout the site-visit it became evident that the said mechanisms are widely used in practice, and the teachers are contented with the existing procedure.

The NU infrastructures and human resources are currently sufficient to carry out its academic process, its mission and strategic goals. The TLI has also undertaken certain steps aimed at implementing the recommendations provided throughout the previous accreditation procedure and has carried out surveys among its internal stakeholders as far as their satisfaction with resources is concerned, has undertaken certain steps aimed at saturating the resources (computers, projects and etc.). However, the expert panel considers that the library of the NU is still needs enrichment with professional literature.

With the aim of expanding the process of student recruitment the cooperation between the NU and secondary institutions, VET of the Republic still continues. The operations aimed at activating the dissemination of information on the TLI have been activated. An array of contracts with colleges and VETs have been signed which are aimed at student recruitment. Visits to schools and colleges have been carried out by certain employees of the TLI. The expert panel evaluates positively the fact that the TLI has mechanisms aimed at revealing the needs of the students and satisfying the latter, yet the expert panel considers that in certain cases the improvement of tools and methodology of conducting the said surveys, the implementation of an analytical approach to survey outcome in accountability reports will enhance a targeted revelation of needs, planning of operations aimed at improvement, achievement of trustworthy outcomes. The expert panel evaluates positively the fact that the TLI has a policy and mechanisms aimed at revealing social-economical needs of students and satisfying the former, which will increase the attractiveness of the TLI for the applicants. The TLI has certain functioning bodies which assist students and enhance the process of revealing their needs and finding solutions to the latter. Students have the right to participate in additional lessons and get consultations.

The TLI has elaborated 2013-2016 and 2016-2021 scientific-research and scientific-methodical plans reflecting its research interests. In 2013-2016 plan 29 scientific-research directions were singled out. In 2016-2021 plan there are 22 prime directions and 47 topics. Based on the outcomes of previous accreditation, the NU has undertaken certain steps aimed at developing the research field: activating the organization of conferences, setting a regulation on promoting those undertaking research works, enlarging the list of scientific-research works. Alongside the TLI has been granted permission to ratify PhD topics and carry out PhD exams C.00.03 from the Supreme Certifying Committee. However, the expert panel finds that the TLI still has many steps to undertake to satisfy the requirements of the criterion, and to improve the drawbacks and core

requirements; implementation of financial planning aimed at the development of scientific-research field, improvement of the policy and procedures aimed at linking research operations and academic process, activation of teacher and student involvement in research operations, implementation of joint projects and research at an international arena. Current publications are mainly preconditioned by individual preferences of teachers rather than the plans of the TLI. Notwithstanding the fact that the TLI has created a corresponding centre aimed at implementing prior research directions, ambitions, objectives and aims reflected in the statute of the centre, the absence of other positions except the one of the Centre Head, diverse and myriad research directions and topics highlighted in the plan can be risky from the perspective of their thorough implementation. The TLI does not carry out a precise policy on research operations promotion of learners, though students have participated in conferences on their own initiative.

Throughout the recent years the TLI has undertaken some works directed at internationalization and reinforcement of external relations, taking into account the recommendations provided throughout the previous accreditation. However, during the site-visit inclinations and steps aimed at internationalization were still in the initial stage of development. It is worth mentioning, that there is no financial planning directed at implementing the aims as highlighted in the SP, incoming and outgoing mobility of students is low and is not preconditioned by TLI encouragement and opportunities created. The level of English language acquisition among the students and the teaching staff is low, the same applies to the ability of teachers to teach in English. The website has but scarce information in English.

Throughout the recent years the implementation and development of QA system of the TLI has created favourable conditions for the formulation of quality culture, internal and external evaluations. The expert panel is of the opinion, that internal stakeholders are involved in the operations of the field, QA operations are periodically reviewed, and the PDCA cycle is at different levels for different operations. The TLI has a functioning system of IQA, which, however, is still in the process of being formed by continuously enhancing the ongoing development of TLI operations, the formation of quality culture and strives to ensure transparency of TLI operations. The expert panel considers praiseworthy the fact that the QA staff is very motivated and is well-aware of TLI issues.

#### **STRENGTHS OF THE INSTITUTION:**

1. Affordable academic services.
2. Improved SDP.
3. Reviewed APs, determined ILOs, continuous improvement of assessment system, alignment with other similar APs of the Republic.
4. Assistance and guidance rendered to students by the NU staff.
5. Sufficiency of teaching staff having necessary professional qualifications, student satisfaction with teaching staff.
6. Existence of conducive environment for teaching/learning.
7. Implementation of mechanisms for transfer of knowledge and values.
8. Documentation necessary for carrying out IQA regulated operations, regular review of QA procedures.
9. High motivation of QA Department, involvement of internal stakeholders in QA operations.

#### **WEAKNESSES OF THE INSTITUTION:**

1. Incompliance of the organigram and strategic goals.
2. Incompliance of financial planning and strategic goals.
3. Scarcity of assessment of the system of governance, analyses of environmental scanning.
4. Weak involvement of external stakeholders in academic processes.
5. Generic nature of teaching/learning methods in APs and their generic description not in line with ILOs.
6. Loose link of research operations and academic process, weak involvement of students in research-scientific operations, lack of a precise policy to promote their research operations.
7. The fact that one and the same teacher is in charge of delivering an array of core disciplines.

8. Lack of the policy to consider research outcomes as a means of income.
9. Scarcity of professional literature in the library.
10. Lack of analytical component in reports.
11. Scarcity of mobility among teachers and students, low level of foreign language attainment, scarcity of publications in international journals.

### **Main recommendations:**

#### **Mission and Purpose**

1. With the aim of assessing and monitoring the progress of the NU, to elaborate precise indicators aimed at qualitative and quantitative measurement of strategic goal implementation outcomes.
2. While implementing the SP, to ensure external stakeholders (especially employers) are actively involved and there is a feedback.

#### **Governance and administration**

1. To improve the organigram of the TLI by means of making the functions of all infrastructures more precise.
2. To elaborate and implement a precise system assessing the effectiveness of the TLI system of governance.
3. To review financial planning and the policy of resource allocation by enhancing the link between strategic goals and operations undertaken.
4. To elaborate a system of risk management, mechanism of assessing and reviewing the impact of external factors, monitoring strategic programme and plans.

#### **Academic Programmes**

1. To augment the number of practical hours in curriculum targeted at formulating skills among the students.
2. To improve the definition of ILOs in the APs, with the aim of making the latter in line with NQF and highlighting professional peculiarities even more.
3. To review course descriptions so as to involve only the ILOs that will be formulated within the framework of that particular discipline. Moreover, to modernize the list of literature involved in the said descriptions.
4. To improve student-centred approach of teaching. To make teaching methods more in line with ILOs acquisition. With the aim of making teaching in line with modern demands, to enrich the TLI with technical resources.
5. To undertake steps aimed at raising the objectivity of assessment and ensuring academic honesty.

#### **Students**

1. To activate services aimed at enhancing careers of alumni and create a data base.
2. To activate the involvement of students in research operations by means of precise policy of enhancement.

#### **Teaching and Support Staff**

1. To implement more actively the contest-base procedure of teacher selection.
2. To ensure the alumni of the NU are integrated as NU teaching staff.
3. To improve the division of teacher functions and responsibilities, by making categories more equitable.
4. To assist the organization of professional training for teachers.
5. To decrease (as far as it is possible) the practice of teaching an array of disciplines by one and the same teacher, as well as that of teaching students of different majors during one lesson.
6. With the aim of thorough implementation of academic processes, to considerably saturate chairs with support staff.

#### **Research and Development**

1. To recruit full-time employees (scientific employees) for the Center for Scientific Research, Innovation Programs and Postgraduate Professional Education.
2. While elaborating research directions of the NU to first and foremost base the latter on the fields of APs. To involve external stakeholders in the said procedure.

3. To carry out analyses, and quality assessment of research outcomes, and to plan the steps of improvement for the sake of closing the PDCA loop in that particular field.
4. To implement the process of commercializing research outcomes and to carry out steps aimed at turning research into a source of income.
5. To elaborate and implement sound mechanisms aimed at linking research operations and academic process by giving priority to publications the topics of which are in line with existing disciplines. Care should be taken to make these publications accessible for the students.
6. To implement a policy aimed at research internationalization.

#### **Infrastructures and Resources**

1. With the aim of ensuring financial independence of the NU, to undertake steps aimed at attracting stable sources of alternative financial flows.
2. From the perspective of ensuring transparency of financial resources, to involve internal stakeholders in the process of budget calculations having a clear policy on the said procedures.
3. To ensure the library of the NU has sufficient number of professional literature by revealing the needs of APs, teachers and students.
4. To improve the documentation procedures in the chairs by paying heed to the system of part-time mode of study.
5. Based on analyses of outcomes of student and teacher assessment of applicability, accessibility and effectiveness of resources, to elaborate a concrete programme of improvement procedures involving KPIs and to ensure the feedback.

#### **Societal Responsibility**

1. To have a concrete requirement of implementing an analytical element in accountability reports of all levels.
2. To ensure transparency and accessibility of information on the operations of the NU via its website.
3. To expand information in a foreign language posted on the website and aimed for foreign students.

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

1. To elaborate a unified programme of operations, based on agreements with local and international establishments. To single out precise directions of joint operations, to have a precise timetable.
2. With the aim of targeted development of external relations and internationalization to activate cooperation with local and international establishments and bodies.
3. To elaborate and implement sound and workable mechanisms of student involvement in the fields of external relations and internationalization.
4. To increase the effectiveness of English courses organized for the teaching staff by involving a greater number of participants and having a precisely elaborated programme and timetable. To carry out monitoring of training course.
5. To expand the opportunity to take additional English language courses for students.
6. To undertake certain means to attract foreign invited professors.
7. To activate incoming and outgoing mobility of students and teachers.

#### **Internal Quality Assurance**

8. To elaborate QA KPIs, to carry out regular evaluation of effectiveness of mechanisms and IQA system operations.
9. To elaborate and implement job descriptions for the QA department by highlighting the requirements to professional qualifications, responsibilities and functions.
10. To expand external stakeholder involvement in the NU IQA procedures.
11. To ensure the thorough implementation of the PDCA cycle in all fields of university functioning.
12. To allocate financial resources for the NU IQA management procedures, trying to attract other sources of financing.
13. To improve the methodology of current surveys and expand the choice of stakeholders with the aim of getting more trustworthy results.



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

### **OBSERVATIONS**

As regards the record/history of Northern University is it fair to say, that the institution until recently neither strived/ nor had the potential to be an internationally oriented university or the prerequisites to be an attractive partner for Higher Education Institutions in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) on an equal par. In terms of student composition and mobility patterns, it was established during the review visit that practically no foreign student's enrollment has taken place since the creation of Northern University in 1996 and that the number of Armenian students going abroad on various sort of exchange programs has been extremely limited/absent as of today. An exception to this rule to some degree could be recorded as regards the inflow of a small number of "Disaspora Armenians" (e.g. from Syria) who have been/are reintegrated in the Armenian Higher Education system while benefitting from reduced tuition fees at Northern University. If academic exchange took place at all, it was mainly due to the personal initiative of individuals but not as the result of a structured approach to internationalization.

Other components needed as condition sine qua non for an internationalization drive, such as the availability of teaching staff being fluent in/or at least regularly trained especially in English, are as of right now not at hand (it is duly noted that more capacities are at Northern Universities' disposition in the area of Russian language knowledge due to Armenia's history of being part of the Soviet Union in the past, but English is after all the lingua franca at least in the European Higher Education Area); regular contributions of international guest professors could also not been recorded. Practically all of the existing 11 study programs are thus taught almost exclusively in the Armenian language, only very few modules (language courses in the first and second year, one or two courses in the area of international law) are given in English.

Furthermore, the existence of basic university regulations and course descriptions being drafted and updated in the foreign language or an up to date website in English etc. are currently also simply not operational. The drive towards internationalization is thus in many ways still in early stages of development at the very moment that this review takes place. During the on-site visits however it also has become evident, that major changes are under way, not least to the fact that internationalization has been given a core priority in the latest Strategic Plan of Northern University.

### **The Prospects of Internationalization at Northern University**

In the new Strategic Plan presented by the University leadership for the time period between 2016 and 2021, internationalization (next to research orientation) has been singled out as a decisive development tool for Northern University.

This decision was supported by the most important fact that the Armenian ministry for Higher Education as of the year 2017 has granted the right to Northern University to establish and implement internationally oriented Master courses. As a result, the leadership of the university took the decision to in the future establish three Master programs (in informatics, law and economics), exclusively for foreign students. With this move it is hoped to generate more income in terms of tuition fees and to boost the renommée of the institution within the EHEA. These programs, according to information provided during the audit, were originally supposed to start as of October 1, 2017, but now will be postponed for the time being due a lack of foreign student intake and might start at the earliest in the winter semester of 2018. Vital preparations to underfeed/support this important endeavor only slowly begin to materialize/are in the early stages of preparation, as the following summary of information collected during the audit proves:

As the foreign student intake is concerned, the information has been given, that as of now the main target countries are Iran and India. At the same time it was reported that a recruitment drive thus far has been effectuated with very little success, primarily using "mouth to mouth"-propaganda, distributing printed advertisement material via local contacts in the respective countries. What is still lacking, is the necessity to build up more sustainable recruitment channels in the future.

While providing a completely separate educational offering for foreign students on the Master level, a critical challenge remains to also internationalize the existing educational offering at Northern University. As was documented in the SAR, that Northern University has implemented 8 collaborative contracts for students international exchange, most of them with HEI in Russia (e.g. with the Institute of Socio-Economic Development of Territories of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Stavropol Cooperative Institute, St. Petersburg of Economics and Perm State Humanitarian Pedagogical University). Again, while a start has been made, real student exchange does not take place at this stage.

As regards the recruitment of professors with sufficient English language capabilities/staff with a high proficiency in English, the peers learned in their conversations with Northern University leadership that in the interim up to 20 potential professors have been identified to take over the teaching load but no contracts concluded. In addition some 16 professors of Northern have undergone a certain amount of inner-university language training, but on request they said they would not feel ready to teach in English. The university therefore should continue to invest in the language development of its current staff.

Regarding sufficient advertising material, course description and vital regulations in English, progress has been made. There is an English advertising brochure available at this stage. With regard to the website it was reported that via an international grant project the website will be under reconstruction and also translation in the foreseeable future, which is one of the critical success factors in attracting foreign attendance.

A further step in the right direction towards internationalization has been the introduction of online education in Northern University. There is a World Bank project by the name of "Organization of distance learning combined with distant learning technologies" within the Education improvement program under way to establish distance education as a pilot project. The peers have been checking the facilities which are about to become operational.

Positive developments have also occurred in terms of participation in international program tenders as Northern University has been participating in a number of TMPUS projects, such as the so called VERITAS and the GOVERN-project, all of which have adjourned as of mid October 2017. Further measures encompass international scientific conferences and seminars.

The drive towards internationalization is administered by the External Relations Department (ERD), which has hired not long ago an engaged head and is very slowly building up staff capacity. A toolkit labeled "Assessment manual of a working plan directed toward the development and internationalization of ERD in the university" is in place.

In summary, the first important steps have now been implemented to advance internationalization at Northern University, while a lot needs to be done in the future to sustain this development.

**October 20, 2017**

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**Gayane Marmaryan**  
**Exppert Panel Chair**

## DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

### COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The external expertise of the SER and QA operations of the NU was carried out by the expert panel having the following composition:

- **Gayane Marmaryan:** Armenian State Agrarian University, Head of the Chair of Biochemistry, Microbiology and Virology, Doctor of Biology.
- **Irring Wasser:** Managing director of ASIIN, president of CEENQA.
- **Misak Markosyan:** PhD in Law, Head of the Department of Law and Criminality at the faculty of Law of Police Academy.
- **Mariam Momjyan:** PhD in Economics, lecturer at Russian-Armenian University.
- **Mariam Yevdokimova:** 4th-year student at ASPU.

The works of the expert panel were coordinated by Varduhi Gyulazyan – senior specialist of ANQA Institutional and Program Accreditation Division.

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

The composition of expert panel was agreed upon with the University and was appointed by ANQA director.

All the members of expert panel including the coordinators and the translator have signed impartiality and confidentiality agreement.

## PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

### **Application for State Accreditation**

The NU applied for institutional accreditation by submitting to ANQA the application form and the appendices.

The ANQA Secretariat checked the application package, the data presented in the application form, the appendices and the ANQA electronic questionnaire completed by the NU.

According to the decision on accepting the application request, a bipartite agreement was signed. The timetable of activities was prepared and approved.

Within the deadline set in the schedule, the NU presented the Armenian and English versions of its self-evaluation report according to the form set by ANQA and also the package of attached documents.

The self-evaluation was carried out by a team formed on the order of the NU rector.

### **Preparatory Phase**

ANQA coordinator observed the report with the aim of revealing its correspondence to the technical requirements of ANQA. Armenian and English versions of the SER and adjacent documents were accepted by the ANQA after the consent of the process coordinator.

Then ANQA secretariat sent the self-evaluation report to the expert panel (for preliminary assessment) the members of which were agreed upon with the institute and were confirmed by the director of ANQA.

Four training on the following topics were organized for the expert panel members (R. Topchyan, A. Makaryan) with the aim of preparing the latter and ensuring the effectiveness of the activities:

1. Main functions of expert panel.
2. Preliminary evaluation as preparatory phase of developing expert panel report, the main requirements of writing the report.
3. Methodology of observation of documents and resources.
4. Techniques and ethics of meetings and questions to be posed.

Having observed the self-evaluation and documents of the TLI, the expert panel conducted the initial evaluation. According to the format, the list of questions for different target groups and also the list of additional documents needed for observation have been prepared.

Within the scheduled time the expert panel summarized the results of the initial evaluation and formed a time schedule of the site-visit<sup>1</sup>. According to the ANQA manual on the expertise the intended meetings with all the target groups, close and open meetings, document and resource review, visits to different infrastructures and else were included in the time schedule.

### **Preliminary Visit**

On September 8, 2017 a preliminary visit was paid to the NU. Throughout the said visit the plan-schedule of the site-visit was agreed upon, the list of additional documents was presented, discussions and mutual decisions were reached referring to organizational, technical, informative questions of the site visit. Questions related to the conduct and the norms of ethics of meeting participants were also touched upon. The rooms prepared for focus groups and expert panel discussions were also discussed, the issues related to the equipment and facilities were clarified.

### **Site-visit**

The site visit of the expert panel took place from September 18-21, 2017. In line with the timetable, the operations of the expert panel initiated with a close meeting with Iring Wasser, the aim of which was to discuss and agree the assessment framework with external panel members, the issues to be clarified, strengths and weaknesses of the NU per criteria, the procedure of focus groups, and to make further steps more precise.

All expert panel members, including the ANQA coordinator and translator assisted all the meetings. The site visit initiated and culminated with the meeting with the Rector. Representatives from the teaching staff, students, deans, heads of chairs, employers and alumni were selected randomly from the list provided beforehand. All the meetings foreseen by the schedule, have been carried out. Throughout the site visit the expert panel had document review<sup>2</sup>, resource observation<sup>3</sup> and focus group meetings in different infrastructures of the NU.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix 2. Schedule of site visit

<sup>2</sup> APPENDIX 3: Site-visit timetable

<sup>3</sup> APPENDIX 4: List of reviewed documents

During close meetings of the panel at the end of each working day the interim results of peer review were discussed and at the end of the site visit the main outcomes of the site visit were summarized. The expert panel discussed the main outcomes and reached an agreement first on accreditation standards and criteria.

The assessment has been carried out within the framework of State Criteria and Standards of Accreditation and ANQA procedures. Following the ANQA procedures the assessment has two levels: 1. satisfactory (is in line with criteria requirements) 2. unsatisfactory (does not comply with the requirements of the criteria). It's noteworthy that the assessment of the NU SER was carried out following the standards set for each criterion, whereas the expert report is compiled per criterion.

#### **Expert Panel Report**

The expert panel has conducted preliminary evaluation according to the self-evaluation report of the NU, the documents attached to it and the observations during the site-visit as a result of regularly organized discussions. Based on the observations after the discussions the head of the panel and ANQA coordinator prepared the draft of expert panel report which was agreed upon with the panel members. The international expert has prepared a separate peer review. The peer review has been holistically included into the report.

The preliminary report was been handed over to the NU in 20.10.2017.

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**Varduhi Gyulazyan**  
**Signature of the coordinator**

**20 October, 2017**

## EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

### BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

**History:** Northern University was established in 1996, and from the very start it adopted a unique mission of carrying out and organizing the academic process of the youth repatriated from former Soviet Union republics in their motherland. The aim of the NU was to ensure the principles of science, law-obedience, humanitarianism, patriotism and justice. From the very start of its operations the NU has undertaken necessary steps to carry out its forward-looking and ambitious plan targeted at establishment and development of accessible, high quality and competitive conditions in the field. Back in 1998, the TLI was a pioneer in allocating free-of charge places with the aim of raising the quality of education and conditions of competitive education. Immediately afterwards, they have initiated the process of allocating scholarships for students with high attainment and those facing social hardships. From the very day of its establishment very active was academic-cultural routine of the TLI.

**Education:** The aim of the NU is to ensure education which will allow students to maximally show their potential and to carry out effective operations in the modern changing environment. To reach this aim, it is foreseen in their 2016-2020 SP that in new APs, the formation of competences which are demanded by the society and the labor market should be developed among their alumni. The TLI underlines the importance of teacher and support staff alignment with the NU mission, degrees awarded and ongoing procedures of teaching staff training which is aimed at teaching and learning improvement. Currently the TLI carries out 14 full-time undergraduate, 12 part-time, 10 graduate and 3 PhD APs throughout 11 specializations in 3 faculties.

**Research:** With the aim of raising the scientific potential of the TLI step by step it is foreseen to activate the operations of the Center for Scientific Research, Innovation Programs and Postgraduate Professional Education, to make NU research interests and ambitions precise for both the University and every single chair, to enrich the list of professions as far as postgraduate studies are concerned and to make academic criteria in line with Salzburg principles, to assist the expansion of research volume and teacher and student involvement in research projects, to activate cooperation and experience exchange in republican and foreign research establishments, enterprises and HEIs, to develop research skills of students, in the meantime involving graduate and postgraduate students in TLI research projects.

**Internationalization:** In its 2016-2020 SDP, the NU foresees the creation of a normative base aimed at internationalization, expansion of participation of both teachers and students in foreign language courses aimed at raising their mobility, development of cooperative links with foreign colleagues, continuation of effective cooperation with peer universities, enhancement of distribution of information on the NU both in and outside the RA, regulation, organization and assessment of scientific-academic operations carried out with foreign students.

**Quality Assurance:** With the aim of improving and continuously developing QA procedures, in its 2016-2020 SP the TLI has foreseen the following: ensuring accountability at all levels, transparency, continuity of operations undertaken as far as the QA is concerned, integration of quality cycle in all operations of the TLI, measurability, accessibility and implementation of QA operations.

While carrying out the expertise, the expert panel was led by the principle “fitness to purpose” and has regarded the above-given information as ambitions and aims of the NU.

**Source:** Documents handed over by the TLI have served as sources for observations drawn from the aforesaid fields (e.g. SER, SP, Timetable, Plans of Infrastructures, Concepts and etc.)

## CRITERION I. MISSION AND PURPOSE

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

### FINDINGS

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

The mission of the TLI is represented in its reviewed 2016-2020 Strategic Plan (hereinafter referred to as SP), which is the reviewed version of 2015-2019 SP. The mission of the Northern University (hereinafter referred to as NU) is "Northern University considers its mission to provide availability and transparency in education along with international advanced experience and best national traditions, implementation of education ensuring accessibility, availability, organization transparency and humanitarian values combining the best national traditions and international advanced experience-aimed at training specialists able to apply obtained knowledge for the following fields-enterprise economics and management, law, informatics, journalism, philology, psychology, education." The said mission is, in generic terms, in line with NQF.

The review of the previous 2013-2018 SP and the formulation of a new 2016-2020 one was preconditioned first by the outcomes of the previous accreditation procedure of the University and second by ratification of the new statute of the NU. Yet, no document reflecting the assessment outcomes of 2013-2018 SP can be traced.

By means of ratifying its reviewed SP, the NU has made the main directions of its operation more precise, referring to all the fields of university operations in their formulations: from material resources to societal responsibility. An operational plan, aimed at SP implementation, has been elaborated. The said documents reflect the steps to be undertaken, deadlines, people responsible, intended outcomes. This allows the NU to operate in a more targeted manner. In the meanwhile, it is worth highlighting that the goals and objectives are not singled out in the SP.

The mission of the TLI reflects the SP goals of the NU in generic terms. The latter are being detailed at an academic level by means of describing academic programme (hereinafter referred to as AP) goals and intended outcomes (hereinafter referred to as IO).

**1.2. TLI mission, aims and objectives reflect the needs of internal and external stakeholders.**

The TLI considers corresponding state bodies of the RA, interested parties from the field of education, employers, alumni, parents of students as external stakeholders. As far as internal stakeholders are concerned, this list includes students, scientific-pedagogical, administrative, support staff. The link with external stakeholders is still loose; this has been witnessed by internal stakeholders throughout expert panel visits. The mission of the NU reflects the needs of internal stakeholders, which have been revealed by means of involving internal stakeholders in discussions held in administrative collegial bodies of university as a whole, and different infrastructure in particular, surveys and focus groups. Operations of the Student Council enhance the process of revealing the needs of students. The said body regularly organizes discussions with the aim of collecting data on issues students are concerned with.

The NU undertakes certain steps aimed at activating the involvement of external stakeholders in the process of implementing the SP and fostering the ties with the latter.

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

The sole mechanism of assessing the outcomes of mission and SP implementation is the system of reporting (vice-rector on academic-scientific affairs, Department of External Relations, Faculties, chair heads and else), which is indicated in the SP.

The accountability reports are descriptive in nature and reflect works and operations undertaken. With the aim of assessing the implementation of the NU mission and the SP, the operational plan of 2016-2020 SP has a description of generic KPIs of every step. The progress the NU makes to achieve its strategic goals is assessed by its internal stakeholders by means of said KPIs.

With the aim of planning the operations and undertakings of university infrastructures throughout the whole academic year operational plans are elaborated. There are no mechanisms aimed at summarizing the outcomes of mission, SP and operational plan implementation, reviewing further

steps and improvement. From the perspective of SP implementation, the link of the NU budget and SP is quite loose, since there is no financial planning in line with SP goals.

### **CONSIDERATIONS**

Positive is the fact that the TLI has a mission reflecting its priorities. Moreover, the policy and operations undertaken are generally in line with the mission adopted by the NU. However, the fact that the goals and objectives of University operations are not separated in the SP and the Statute of the NU diminishes the link between University goals and objectives with operations undertaken, and subsequently decreases the targeted nature of the latter.

The expert panel evaluates positively the fact that the NU underlines the importance of cooperation with both internal and external stakeholders for the sake of SP implementation. Likewise, praiseworthy is the fact that internal stakeholders have had their participation in the process of SP elaboration and that of need revelation. However, the involvement of external stakeholders in the above-mentioned operations, as well as the feedback received from them still needs improvement, since otherwise erratic and unstable grounds of cooperation with external stakeholders will decrease the effectiveness of operations aimed at reflecting labour-market demands, reacting to the latter and improving the APs.

It's positive that the NU has a mechanism of evaluating the outcomes of NU mission and goals. Yet, accountability reports of infrastructures and divisions heads should not be the only means of assessment. Moreover, the informative nature of reports, the scarcity of their further analyses, and the lack of quantitative and qualitative assessment indicators of outcomes of infrastructure operations do not allow for assessing the effectiveness of operation of the University and its infrastructures, ground the effectiveness of using resources targeted at implementing the goals, which will hinder further improvement of the SP and will diminish the effectiveness of a long-term development.

**SUMMARY: Summary: Taking into consideration the fact that** the TLI has a formulated mission, goals in line with the latter, SP reflecting its priorities and an operational plan, the fact that the mission is, generally speaking, in line with the NQF, the NU underlines the importance of external stakeholder participation in the implementation of SPs, the operations of the NU are mainly in line with its mission, the expert panel concludes that **the NU complies with the requirements of Criterion 1.**

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

## **CRITERION II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

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

### **FINDINGS**

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

In line with the Charter of the NU "The governance of the University is carried out in accordance with the Constitution of the RA and the Charter of the University, based on autonomous governance".

The Rector is in charge of managing the ongoing operations of the NU. As far as the bodies of collegial governance are concerned, they are the General Assembly of Participants and the Scientific Council. Throughout the site-visit it became evident that it is the operational (situational) model that functions in the NU. Based on recommendations provided throughout the previous accreditation procedure, the NU has elaborated and implemented an array of documents targeted at improvement of administrative system of the NU. The said documents regulate the operations of structural divisions and other procedures. The new Charter of the NU was adopted back in 2016.

The study of the organigram of the NU and meetings throughout the site visit showed that the responsibilities and the scope of operations for certain positions are not differentiated. In particular, the implementation of scientific-research operations is determined as a priority in the SP. The person



in charge of scientific development is the Vice-rector on Education and Research Affairs, which combines the responsibilities of the person in charge of the Center for Scientific Research, Innovation Programs and Postgraduate Professional Education. The Vice-Rector does not have any human resources available. The operations are being carried out by the Methodist, who de facto is an employee in charge of running the electronic library and is factually under the supervision of the vice-rector.

As far as student internships are concerned, the functions of Academic Department, those of Alumni, Career and Internship Centre Heads, HR Department are not made precise especially when issues related to feedback and career are concerned.

Throughout the site-visit it became evident that internal stakeholders are contented with human and material resources aimed at carrying out academic and other objectives. However, there has not been any evaluation of the effectiveness of human, material or financial resource allocation in accordance with the NU structure and infrastructures.

The TLI organizes its operations based on the annual budget, however, the policy on financial allocation is not in line with strategic goals and objectives. In particular, it is among the TLI priorities to foster scientific-research operations and internationalization (including the organizations of courses in a foreign language), however, there is no financial planning targeting this priority. Financial reports have not undergone any audit. The Code of Ethics was elaborated back in 2016, hence, there is no impact assessment.

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

Within the framework of improving QA system, back in 2016 the NU elaborated and implemented certain documents. Their implementation is aimed not only at fostering quality culture at the NU, but also the involvement and participation of both internal and external stakeholders in decision-making operations of the TLI. Internal stakeholders are involved in the system of governance and participate in decision-making directed at them. In line with the Charter of the NU, the involvement of students (25%) and teaching staff in the Scientific Council allows for their direct participation in decision-making. Teacher participation in decision-making also occurs at chair and faculty levels. As far as student participation is concerned, they voice their concerns in Student Council, Student Committees, as well as through their participation in student surveys. The structure of mentors, aimed at revealing the needs of the students and ensuring their participation in decision-making, operates at the NU.

During the expert panel site-visit it became evident that notwithstanding the opportunities of internal stakeholders to participate in administrative decision-making, the level of voicing their concerns is still quite low. The NU has not yet carried out any analyses of effectiveness of student participation in decision-making.

## **2.3 The TLI develops and implements short, mid, and long term planning consistent with its mission and purposes and has clear monitoring and implementation mechanisms.**

2016-2020 SP and its operational plan are the long-term planning documents operating at the NU. The SP reflects the outcomes of planned operations, however, their KPIs are not measurable. With the aim of ensuring SP implementation, the NU elaborates a-year-long operational plans (the short-term operational plan for the SP was ratified on 29.06.2016). Based on the said document, the infrastructures of the NU elaborate their own operational plans. The TLI does not carry out any mid-term planning, risk assessment and based on the latter rectification of its long-term planning. Accountability reports are used as mechanisms aimed at implementing planned actions and their monitoring. Reports do but reflect data and facts and do not foresee evaluation of effectiveness. As far as financial planning in line with the NU mission and goals is concerned, the NU carries out solely a short-term (1 year) financial planning. The said planning reflects financial flows and expenditures per separate articles for the institution as a whole (and not per its structural infrastructures or fields of operation). There are no precise mechanisms for monitoring budget implementation and improvement.

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

Decision-making directed at management of the NU is mostly based on surveys and focus groups, oral discussions aimed at revealing the needs of stakeholders. The mechanisms, toolkit and timetable aimed at environmental scanning are not made precise. There are no functioning mechanisms of foreseeing external factors. Analyses of external environment; including assessment of social-economic impacts, SWOT analyses, evaluation of labour-market demands and other targeted factors are scarce.

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

The main guiding document of quality management system of the NU is the QA Manual. Operations aimed at governance and administration of the NU are targeted at continuity of academic services and improvement of quality of other operations, but the PDCA cycle is not yet closed. The operations of the system of governance are at different PDCA cycles. For instance, the SP has undergone the cycle of assessment, yet the Regulation on AP monitoring and review has recently been elaborated and its effectiveness is not yet assessed.

Planning of operations aimed at NU governance are carried out through operational plans. In order to monitor its implementation, data is collected by means of reports. Rare are examples when the information has been used for carrying out reforms in the system of governance.

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

With the aim of data-collection aimed at the effectiveness of APs, and other operations, the NU has elaborated questionnaires, carried out surveys among the students, employers and alumni, and based on the data gathered reports have been prepared. The system of data-collection is regulated as far as APs are concerned. The Regulation on AP monitoring and review was ratified in 14.09.2017. The grounds necessary for AP review have been highlighted in the said document.

From the perspective of other operations (resources, management of external relations) the system is not regulated. When needed, data on student mobility, attainment, resources, and students satisfaction with academic environment is collected. There are no elaborated mechanisms aimed at assessing data-collection, analyses and implementation.

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

Qualitative and quantitative information on APs is disseminated among the stakeholders by means of reports, guidelines and the manual. The main source of information, as far as the quality of degrees awarded is concerned, is the presidents of attestation committees. The NU has not handed over written documents on the conclusions of the latter. Instead, throughout the site-visit the employers who participated in the meetings, evaluated positively the quality of the NU alumni.

Certain quantitative and qualitative information of the quality of APs and degrees awarded can be mainly found in "Hyusisapayl" official newsletter, facebook page, website, as well as in accountability reports and guidelines. There are no elaborated mechanisms aimed at analysing the alignment of APs and degrees awarded, and the objectiveness of information published about their quality.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

It's positive that started from 2016, taking into consideration the recommendations received as an outcome of the previous accreditation procedure, certain works aimed at improvement of governing system (ratification of a new Charter, SP review, structural changes) have been undertaken. However, the system of governance still needs further improvement and precision of functions of infrastructures, since the used model of ad hoc governance and the non-precise planning of resources aimed at strategic goals implementation can be risky from the prospective of ensuring the continuity of services rendered to internal and external stakeholders and that of optimal resource allocation. Notwithstanding the fact that the system of governance of the NU allows for internal and external stakeholder participation in decision making, the involvement of insufficient number of external stakeholders in SP implementation does not ensure the transparency of decisions and objectivity.

Except for that, the incomplete information on labour market demands can render the implementation of the NU mission, foreseen by the SP of the TLI risky as far as the part related to preparing specialists for prospective fields is concerned.

There is no mid-term planning, and no factorial assessment of SP implementation risks is carried out, which limits the opportunities of the system of governance to react to external environmental changes in a flexible way and make necessary reform in the SP. The lack of precise and measurable outcomes of the SP risks the assessment of implementation of strategic goals and objectives and based on the latter the elaboration of developmental scenario. Except for this, the operations of financial planning are short-term and cover the university as a whole and not its infrastructures or strategic goals, which, in its turn, is a risky factor from the perspective of ensuring necessary amount of material and financial resources aimed at strategic goals, and also from the perspective of resource allocation effectiveness (especially when taking about research, organization of courses in a foreign language which do require precise resource planning: long-term, mid-term and short-term)

Notwithstanding the fact that surveys aimed at revealing the needs of stakeholders have their positive impact on the procedure of administrative decision-making, the non-precise character of mechanisms aimed at further utilization of data collected, the scarcity of environmental scanning, limit the degree of trustworthiness of data and the ability of efficiently and quickly address labour market changes.

An array of regulation and procedures, aimed at planning and assessment of operations and outcomes of the system of governance, have been elaborated, which, of course, has its positive impact on administration of academic and other services rendered. However, for myriad procedures the PDCA cycle is not yet closed. Moreover, the lack of a systematic approach to utilization of information collected on operations which have already undergone evaluation can hinder the overall picture of the effectiveness of elements of the system of governance.

Notwithstanding the fact that information is rendered accessible via the official newsletter, website and Facebook page, the elaboration of regulation on monitoring and review of APs is a prime undertaking to assess the effectiveness of APs. Yet, the lack of a unified approach to collect and analyse data on services rendered and other procedures decreases the objectiveness of procedure and the effectiveness of further improvements. The lack of systematic mechanisms aimed at assessing the effectiveness of operations, the correspondence of APs and degrees awarded, assessment of trustworthy data collection, analyses and publications can hinder the increase of credibility of the society towards the NU.

**SUMMARY:** Taking into consideration the fact that the NU faces an issue of optimal resource allocation based on its ad-hoc model of governance, the operations of managerial bodies and the system of planning are not thoroughly in line with the realization of strategic goals, participation of external stakeholders in operations of governance is weak, there is no mid-term planning, the mechanisms of risk assessment, and the effectiveness of management system have not undergone any analyses, analyses of environmental scanning are scarce, the PDCA cycle of quality management is not closed, the expert panel find that the NU does not comply with the requirements of Criterion 2.

**CONCLUSION:** The correspondence of NU institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 2 is **unsatisfactory**.

### CRITERION III. ADACEMIC PROGRAMS

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

#### FINDINGS

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

In its SP, the TLI has foreseen the following steps aimed at improving the filed: to determine the ILOs in line with its mission, NQF, labor market demands, to review assessment system, modernize curricula, to enhance individual and practical components, to align teaching/learning methods (hereinafter referred to as TLM) to ILOs of APs, to collect and analyze the feedback of internal and external stakeholders as far as their satisfaction level with APs is concerned.

The TLI carried undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate APs in both part- and full-time modes of study. The TLI carries out 14 full-time undergraduate, 12 part-time, 10 graduate and 3 PhD APs throughout 11 specializations in 3 faculties.

In line with the TLI mission, the spheres of APs have been selected taking into account specializations that are demanded in the labor market.

Until 2014 the TLI didn't have AP specifications and was guided by state academic criteria. Reviewed APs were ratified in 2016. The ILOs (per knowledge, competences and skills) of three APs presented by the TLI are mostly in line with undergraduate and graduate levels of the NQF as far as their content is concerned. Comparative analyses of TLI and NQF specifications demonstrated that ILOs are formulated in line with NQF levels. In the AP of "Jurisprudence", the ILOs are in line with 2016 NQF, yet in some cases (Pedagogy and Methodology) to the one of 2011 (both undergraduate and graduate).

The TLI does not yet have a tool to align the ILOs of APs and NQF, yet while describing the ILOs in specifications of APs, certain formulations are given, which are in line with descriptions of NQF levels. Skills and competences highlighted in undergraduate APs often repeat one another, are mostly generic as far as separate courses are concerned, do not reflect the specificities of the said courses. Often it is not precise within the scope of which discipline this or that skill and competence are formulated. In certain cases (Pedagogy and Methodology), the ILOs do not thoroughly reflect specificities of specializations (will digest knowledge enhancing holistic development, will be able to implement knowledge enhancing holistic development in professional field).

After the previous accreditation the TLI has undertaken steps to modernize the APs and make them in line with labor market demands.

The examination of curricula demonstrates that that theoretical hours outnumber those of practical ones. For instance within the scope of General Psychology, the said proportion is 86/12, in case of philosophy-56/12, anatomy, age physiology-38/10 (Pedagogy and Methodology), Banking and Valuables-68/10, Economy of Enterprises-98/22, International Economic Relations-88/14 (Economy and Management of Enterprises) and else. Throughout the site visit the students voiced their concern related to augmenting the hours allocated to practical works and internships, since the latter formulate competences.

Course descriptions of the discipline "Criminal Law" are formulated per semester. Formulated aims and objectives refer to the whole bulk as such and are not discriminated against every semester. Often the list of literature is not up-to-date.

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

Started from 2014, the TLI has undertaken steps aimed at modernizing teaching methods. In particular, course descriptions have been elaborated for all courses. The latter include goals of the discipline, ILOs, teaching, learning and assessment methods. TLM found in APs are generic. This holds true both for method selection within the framework of different disciplines, and the one to foster knowledge and competences within the scope of a separate course.

The TLI undertakes steps aimed at improving methods in particular by means of examining student opinion as far as teaching methods are concerned. The outcomes of the survey have been discussed throughout the meeting of QA Department and have been summarized in 2016 report of the said department. The outcomes of the previous survey come to prove, that teaching methods still face improvement from the prospective of activating student team work and developing cooperation.

During the site-visit throughout the meetings with students it became evident that both student-centered teaching methods (in the majority of cases done so by young teachers), interactive methods (e.g. mock courts and else), and traditional lectures are present. Students are generally contented with teaching methods, yet they highlight the need to enlarge the practice of student-centered teaching/learning. Also, students indicated that it was necessary to continuously saturate the TLI with IT with the aim of aligning academic process with up-to-date demands.

In comparison with undergraduate APs, certain improvement of TLMs can be traced in graduate programmes: methods are generally more precise and differentiated per ILOs.

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

The policy of checking and assessing student knowledge is carried out following the regulations on "Student Knowledge Assessment at the Northern University" and the manual on "Organization of credit based academic process and assessing student knowledge". A 100-scale system of assessment functions for both full- and part-time students. The minimum threshold is 41. A letter scale also operates (A, B etc.). The note for internships is also accumulated from different factors (100-scale system). As is stated in the manual, the TLI has adopted the policy of mid-term exams, mid-term oral testing and assessment, summative tests and assessment.

The TLI has a policy on graduate theses defense with appropriate technical requirements.

Throughout the site-visit it became evident that students are informed about assessment criteria and forms either at the very start of the course when the teacher hands over some documents/materials to them, or via the manual "Organization of credit based academic process and assessing student knowledge", and/or course descriptions. As was revealed during the site-visit, students are given an opportunity to appeal their mark in an oral form.

Exams at graduate, undergraduate, part- and full-time modes of study are mainly conducted in oral form.

The assessment system of the TLI is mostly in the acting (improvement) cycle of the PDCA. The TLI has elaborated a draft of the Regulation on Assessment and Appeals. Academic-methodical Committee of the QA Department has discussed the drawbacks of the current system /in particular, improvement is foreseen from the prospective of implementing a multi-factor criteria of assessment/, and the steps of improvement (2017).

No precise policy and procedures aimed at academic honesty function of the TLI.

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

The TLI has undertaken certain steps aimed at rendering its APs in line with other APs of renowned HEIs. With the aim of regulating the process it has elaborated "A Manual of AP development and review", which includes the concept of *benchmarking*, the aims and principles of its realization, as well as the Regulation on "AP monitoring and review".

With the aim of implementing the elaborated policy, as well as rectifying imperfections revealed throughout the previous accreditation procedure and implementing received recommendations, benchmarking and external review of undergraduate APs have been carried out. Benchmarking has been carried out at an international level: "Jurisprudence" (one-time, non-cooperative benchmarking with Law School of George Washington University, Copenhagen University, Berkley Law School, Harvard Law School, Cornet Law School), and "Enterprise Economics and Management" (Moscow State University after Lomonosov, Saint-Petersburg State University).

The external review of "Pedagogy and Methodology" AP, is being carried out at present by Shirak State University, State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan, Yerevan N 17 kindergarten. The external review of "Enterprise Economics and Management" AP is carried out by Armenian State University of Economics, Yerevan State University, University of External Economic Relations.

As an outcome of external reviews certain precise observations and recommendation have been received. The positive feedback is the token of the fact that an AP (Pedagogy and Methodology) is in line with other similar APs. As an outcome of benchmarking of "Jurisprudence" AP, the TLI has highlighted its current opportunities, positive sides, threats and observations, per precise spheres highlighted in benchmarking. As an outcome of benchmarking of "Enterprise Economics and Management", the TLI has undertaken a SWOT analyses, the results of which ensure its alignment with other renowned APs.

As an outcome of benchmarking and external review, the TLI has not planned concrete directions of improvement.

Notwithstanding the fact that there is a benchmarking and external review, internal stakeholder mobility is still scare.

### **3.5. The TLI has policy ensuring academic programme monitoring, effectiveness assessment and improvement.**

With the aim of monitoring its APs, the TLI has elaborated a manual on “AP development and review” and a regulation on “AP monitoring and review” which has recently been put into practice. Surveys (among teaching staff, employers and alumni) are an important mechanism of AP monitoring, and revealing the needs of stakeholders. The said surveys are aimed at evaluating satisfaction level with the quality of APs. Student, employer focus group discussions are another important mechanisms. Reports of final attestation committee, feedback on internships are considered as a mechanism of external stakeholder involvement when it comes to AP monitoring and improvement.

### **CONSIDERATIONS**

The expert panel evaluates positively the fact that the APs of the TLI are in line with the mission and correspond to state academic criteria, professions are demanded in the labour market, which is an important principle which is reflected both by the mission and the SP from the prospective of implementing the AP goals.

The lack of the tool to align ILOs of APs and NQF can result in a non-precise reflection of specificities of professions in ILOs.

Generic formulations of skills and competences both at AP and discipline level (some courses), can endanger the correct selection of effective methodology of teaching. The expert panel finds that the improvement of ILO formulations from the prospective of laying more accent of specialization specificities will enhance the formulation of specific concepts; moreover this will make APs more attractive for applicants enhancing the comprehension of academic achievements; the ones the alumni will have as an outcome. The scarcity of practical hours in curricula is a serious hindrance for preparing alumni with corresponding competences and practical skills.

Praiseworthy is the fact that the TLI uses mechanisms to reveal imperfections of TLMs, some steps are undertaken to modernize the said methods. However, the expert panel considers that non-precise definitions of methods both for AP and discipline ILOs can hinder the process of formulating ILOs and student-centered teaching.

The TLI has a policy on assessment, which is being regularly reviewed foreseeing continuous improvement. Anyway, the expert panel is of the opinion, that the practice of conducting the majority of exams in an oral form and the lack of a policy aimed at academic honesty is risky from the prospective of assessment subjectivism and transparency. The expert panel is positive about the fact that the TLI has implemented a system of appeals as an outcome of previous recommendations.

Positive is also the fact that with the aim of improving its APs the TLI has taken into consideration the recommendations provided throughout the precious accreditation procedure: implementation of AP monitoring and assessment tools, elaboration of a methodology for benchmarking, involvement of internal and external stakeholders in evaluation procedures. Yet, the fact that external stakeholders are not thoroughly involved in AP improvement procedures can hinder the process of modernizing APs in line with labour market demands and including new disciplines into the curricula which will enhance the formation of competences necessary to organize and manage operations in the field of production.

Of interest is the fact that APs of the TLI are mostly in line with other similar APs, which is being grounded by external reviews and analyses of benchmarking outcomes. This provides ground for the expert panel to think that these APs can enhance student and teacher mobility.

The expert panel finds that the manual and regulations elaborated by the TLI are important preconditions for regular improvement of APs.

**SUMMARY: Taking into consideration the fact that** the TLI APs are in line with the mission, are in line with state academic criteria, are formulated with corresponding ILOs in line with the RA NQF, also the fact that the TLI has a policy of student assessment, which undergoes regular review, the TLI underlines the importance of alignment of its APs (as far as content is concerned) with other APs of renowned universities, has a ratified regulation on AP development and monitoring, the APs have undergone external review and benchmarking, works have been undertaken to carry our recommendations highlighted throughout the previous accreditation process, the expert panel considers that the TLI **corresponds to the requirements of Criterion 3**, yet, in the meanwhile, the panel highlights that the system of ensuring academic honesty need improvement, moreover, the load of hours allocated to practical works needs to be augmented.

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

## **CRITERION IV. STUDENTS**

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

### **FINDINGS**

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

With the aim of expanding the procedure of student recruitment, in its 2016-2020 SP the NU foresees continuing the cooperation between the university and secondary schools and VETs of the RA, and activating the operations aimed at disseminating information about the University.

The admission of students is carried out in accordance with the RA legislation, internal normative acts, the regulation on Admitting Graduates from VETs, regulations on Admission to Part-Time, Graduate and PhD studies. The admission of students to part-time and so-called full-time - part-time modes of study is organized through interviews: both paid and free of charge places are available.

The admission to graduates studies is carried out through an interview for those continuing with their major, and through an exam if applicants are changing their major.

Dissemination of information about admissions is mainly carried out by means of social media; namely facebook, as well as the official newsletter of the NU and by means of promo leaflets. No information on admission is disseminated through the website of the university.

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

The NU has certain mechanisms aimed at revealing the needs of the students: the involvement of the latter in scientific councils, faculty councils, student committees adjacent to the QA Department, surveys conducted among the students (satisfaction with resources, revealing their needs, information on additional and consultation operations).

Elaborated questionnaires do not reflect the whole spectrum of student needs. The surveys aimed at resources only partially reflect the state of resources enhancing the development of current academic and professional capacities (computer labs, internet coverage, IT, other didactic materials).

“Student Manual” can be considered as a tool relevant to student needs. The latter is aimed at familiarizing students with their own rights and forming an overall idea about the APs.

Aimed at satisfying their needs (information on the structure of the NU and academic procedures, sufficiency of resources), the students have an opportunity to apply to course consultants, chair heads and deans.

With the aim of relieving social-economic burden, the NU has elaborated regulations on free-of-charge admission, tuition fee reduction, and scholarships awarded.

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

Additional consultations carried out at the NU are bound by necessary legal grounds. In this respect, back in 2016 the Regulation on Additional and Consultation Services was ratified by the Scientific Council. Moreover, functions of course consultants and the criteria of assessing the effectiveness of their operations have been documented.

Throughout the site visit it became evident that the NU gives opportunities to part-time students to take courses together with full-timers if the former wish to.

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

There is no elaborated regulation for applying to the administrative staff (for student), yet different regulations (Assurance of Academic Honesty, Credit-Based Learning, Internal Disciplinary regulations, Charter of the Students Council) have articles clarifying the steps to be undertaken when applying to the administrative staff.

With the aim of getting assistance, the students can apply to the administrative staff through Student Council. Throughout the meeting with the students it became evident that students do not have an opportunity to apply to administration any time they want to voice their concerns. However, in the meantime, students are not deprived of voicing their concerns at different levels: consultants, chair heads, deans, rectorate, Scientific Council.

Throughout the meeting with the students it became evident that student satisfaction with administrative staff (from the prospective of getting assistance and guidance) is high; for instance, clarifications of steps and conditions for being awarded individual scholarships and tuition fee reductions.

#### **4.5 The TLI has student career support services.**

Alumni and Career Centre of the NU is responsible for rendering services enhancing career development. The objectives and the scope of responsibilities of the said Centre are regulated by the Statute. The prime objective of the Centre is to enhance the competitiveness of its students and alumni in the labour market, foster the perennial link and cooperation between the NU and alumni, regulate NU-employer cooperation. In line with the SER 70% of students are aware of Career Centre, 55% of them have at some point in time made use of its services., and 45% of them are satisfied.

Certain operations aimed at fostering career prospects of the students are also being organized via the Legal Clinic and PR Department. The operations undertaken are targeted at forming practical skills among the students, raising their awareness as far as labour market needs are concerned.

Throughout the site visit the expert panel noted that with the aim of rendering services fostering students' career, back in 2015-2016 academic year the NU organized certain meetings (as far as such APs as Pedagogy and Methodology, Economy of Enterprises and Management, Law are concerned) with employers (ARDSHINBANK CJSC, Tashir Capital, directors of schools, teachers).

With the aim of raising the awareness of students as far as the labour market is concerned, the Career Centre and certain chairs (mathematics, IT, Economy and Management) organized meeting-seminar (GNS-ALPHA CJC, Union of Young Businessmen of Armenia, Methodical Centre of Professional Orientation SNBO). Throughout the site-visit it became evident that the Career Centre has not yet elaborated a database with the following information: students in search of work, vacancies in the labour market, alumni employed thanks to the efforts of the Career Centre, and the ones in search of employment.

#### **4.6 The TLI promotes student involvement in its research activities**

The 2016-2021 SP of the NU foresees assisting the expansion of undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate students in research projects, development of research skills of students. Involvement of students in research-scientific operations of the NU is carries out through Student Scientific Union. The operations of the said Union are being regulated with its Statute.

Notwithstanding the fact that the NU organizes certain student conferences with the assistance of Students Scientific Union (with the participation of students from other universities as well), throughout the site visit it became evident that students are still passive as far as their involvement in scientific-research operations is concerned.

In line with the SER, the involvement of graduate students in scientific-research operations throughout the last 5 years accounts for 3-7.5%. There are almost no student publications (1). The NU students do not participate in conferences organized in CIS countries within the framework of existing cooperation.

Research operations are mostly undertaken at a graduate and postgraduate levels, as an element of APs.

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

Student Council is the body in charge of students' rights protection, discussing the issues they are concerned with, and representing their interests. The functions of the said infrastructure are regulated by its Statute, ratified back in 2015. The prime aim of the Students Council is the implementation of the rights and legal interests of the students and their protection.

Throughout expert panel meetings it became evident that there have been no cases of written appeals presented on the part of the students; however, the issues emerging as a result of violating students' rights in the majority of cases receive their solution by corresponding bodies.



Student rights and responsibilities, the main guarantees of protecting their rights are regulated by an array of other regulatory documents, such as the one on internal discipline, academic integrity, free of charge education, reduction of tuition fees, scholarships.

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

The NU has an array of mechanisms aimed at assessing academic, consultation and other services rendered and as well as insuring their quality: students surveys (assessment of teachers by the students), alumni surveys aimed at revealing satisfaction level with their education, focus group discussions, reports on survey outcomes. For instance, according to the report dating back to April 1, 2016, a focus group discussion has been conducted with the students. The topic of the said focus group was “Additional and Consultation Operations Aimed at Revealing the Needs of the Students”. Certain follow-ups have been undertaken based on the outcomes of the said meeting, in particular, it has been uncovered that students need additional consultation.

The Student Committee adjacent to the QA Department carries out its operations aimed at assessing academic services rendered to students and QA issues. In accordance with article 9.3 of the QA Department Statute, “...student committee evaluates how aware students are as far as their rights and responsibilities are concerned. They organize student discussions as far as barriers hindering the quality of education are concerned handing over corresponding suggestions to the QA Department. They also render their assistance as far as operations aimed at QA mechanisms and procedures are concerned, participates in monitoring operations related to the QA.

Organization of meetings with employers is also a means of evaluating the quality of services rendered to students, yet, the effectiveness of the latter from the perspective of career development of students and alumni has not yet been carried out.

#### **CONSIDERATIONS**

The expert panel evaluates positively the fact that the NU has mechanisms of student recruitment and admission, which are being regulated by an RA constitution and internal normative acts, yet, the decreasing number of students (1205 students back on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017, and 1912 in 2016), the overweight of those dismissed as compared to the ones readmitted is risky in economic terms for the University and will hinder the expansion of students community as foreseen by the priorities of the SP.

The NU has a policy, mechanisms, elaborated tools for revealing student needs; however, the expert panel is inclined to believe that in certain instances the improvement of tools, surveys and methodology, the implementation of an analytical approach in survey outcome reports will enhance a more targeted approach in needs revelation, operation planning aimed at improvement, acquisition of trustworthy results. The expert panel evaluates positively the fact that the TLI has a policy and mechanisms aimed at revealing social-economic needs of students, which will raise the attractiveness of the university for applicants.

The expert panel evaluates positively the implementation of a system of mentors and a mechanism aimed at revealing student needs, rendering consultations, guidance and assistance. Praiseworthy is also the existence of a students' manual, which can enhance high degree of student awareness.

Low involvement of students in research operations, scarcity of student publications will hinder the formation of their research capacities.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Alumni, Career and Internships Centre is one of those infrastructures the operations of which are directed at fostering and developing the ties between internal and external stakeholders (employers, alumni), enhancement of students career, the scarcity of information on the operations of the said Centre on the official website, the non-existence of a holistic database of alumni may weaken NU-employer cooperation, and hinder the implementation of operations aimed at students and alumni career enhancement.

**SUMMARY:** Taking into consideration the fact that the NU has workable mechanisms of students recruitment and admission, the NU has adopted a policy of analysing and improving not only academic but also social-economic needs, has elaborated a manual, provided an opportunity for conducting supplementary and consultation operations, which are regulated by legal acts, the satisfaction of students with rendered assistance and guidance is high, the NU has a body responsible

for students' rights protection, the expert panel finds that the NU complies with the requirements of Criterion, in the meanwhile highlighting that it is necessary to activate student involvement in scientific-research operation, the services enhancing the career of the students, foundation of data base and fostering the links with employers.

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

## **CRITERION V. TEACHING AND SUPPORT STAFF**

**CRITERION: The Institution has a highly qualified teaching and support staffs to achieve the set goals for academic programs and institution's mission.**

### **FINDINGS**

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

In its short-term programme of SP the NU foresees developing standards and procedures of teacher recruitment in line with the intended outcomes of APs, creating a system of assessing professional qualities of the teaching staff and that of ranking, to attract young professionals into the organization and implementation of academic procedures, to elaborate job descriptions, and a system of regular bonuses.

With the aim of carrying out the selection of the teaching staff, back in 2016 the NU has elaborated and ratified (in the Scientific Council) a procedure of "Competitive Selection of the Teaching Staff and their Recruitment" which reflects the criteria of recruitment (both for full-time and part-time teachers), the regulation on teaching staff composition and corresponding categories. Notwithstanding the fact that teaching staff composition (according to the SER) foresees both competitive and non-competitive procedures, and recruitment on contractual basis, throughout the site visit it became evident, that the second mechanism is used more frequently.

77 teachers are currently employed by the NU (as of 01.09.2017). Out of this number 57% are full-time. 58% of full and part-time teaching staff have scientific degrees and awards; including candidates of sciences: 53%, doctors: approximately 5%, associate professors: around 30%, professors: 4%. It's worth mentioning that throughout 2012-2017 one can notice and increase in the number of teachers having scientific degrees (4.5% increase).

The mechanism of recruiting support staff can be found in the "Regulation on Categories and the Procedure of Recruitment" ratified in 2016 Scientific Council. Following the said regulation, the procedure of support staff recruitment does not undergo competition, and is carried out on the order of the rector following the suggestion of infrastructure heads. Dean office operators, librarians and else are considered as support staff. The University still lacks criteria on support staff selection.

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

The NU has elaborated criteria on teacher recruitment, and while recruiting teaching staff for an AP the qualification, scientific degrees and awards, professional and pedagogical skills, which are also reflected in some APs (Pedagogy and Methodology, Economy and Management of Entrepreneurship) are taken into account. Yet, as far as the AP of "Law" is concerned, the requirements to teaching staff are quite generic, and per se do not reflect the peculiarities of the profession. The NU has elaborated job descriptions of a teacher, assistant, associate professor, professor.

Throughout the site visit it became evident that the NU teaching staff is comprised of the alumni of Yerevan State University (34%), Yerevan State Pedagogical University (18%), Armenian State University of Economics (8%), Yerevan State University of Languages and Social Sciences (7.8%) and else. In the meanwhile, only 7.8% of teachers are the alumni of the NU.

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

The NU has an array of regulations aimed at teaching staff evaluation: attestation, student evaluations, encouragement (such nominations as *The Best Teacher, The Best Chair, The Best*

*Researcher*). The format of teaching staff attestation was reviewed and re-elaborated back in 2014 (QA Manual). Surveys are considered as evaluation mechanisms (teacher evaluations by governing bodies, students, peer evaluation), lesson observations by chair heads. For instance, in the second semester of 2015-2016 academic year, according to the evaluation of part-time students, the average score of teachers was 3.5 out of 5.

During the site-visit it became evident that lesson observations are carried out at least once per year. There is no unified format of peer lesson observations.

Survey outcomes are aimed at eliminating the drawbacks, and as has been highlighted by QA Centre employees, the outcomes of the said surveys have impact on the workload of teachers and in certain cases also on their selection and the process of reviewing their contracts. Throughout the site-visit it became evident that students are contented with the professional qualities of the teaching staff. There has been no systematic analyses of the effectiveness of mechanisms of teacher evaluation. The reports handed over by the chairs and faculties are mostly factual and statistical in nature, and lack analytical approach.

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

Back in 2010 the NU developed a regulation on Teaching Staff Training, which foresees training of teachers once every 3-5 year with the following three directions: foreign languages, computers literacy skills, academic reforms. Notwithstanding the fact that the NU undertakes certain steps aimed at improving the level of foreign language acquisition among teaching staff, making use of their own resources (Chair of Roman-Germanic Languages and Russian Philology) as well as the services rendered by Lezuneru Tun Ltd, during the site-visit it became evident, that the effectiveness of said courses is still low and staff is not prepared to teach in English. When it comes to courses in English to be taught to foreign students, this will mostly be carried out using the potential of invited professors.

As has been revealed throughout the site visit, the NU still lacks a policy aimed at improvement of professional qualities of teaching staff, the events were but scarce and were mainly carried out on personal initiative of teachers.

Though teacher exchange within the framework of grant projects (Erasmus-Mundus, Tempus-Govern, Tempus-Veritas) is foreseen as teacher training activity, the number of such cases is still limited. Moreover, there is no analyses on the effectiveness of local adaptation of international experience.

#### **5.5. The TLI ensures the sustainability of the teaching staff according to academic programmes.**

57% of the teaching staff is full-time, and has professional qualifications in line with the AP. Teacher/student ratio is 1/15 (as to 01.09.2017). The average age is 49. 25% of the said amount are teachers who are less than 35 years of age.

With the aim of ensuring sustainability of teaching staff, the NU has a regulation on encouragement, and as was revealed by the panel, latter is being widely utilized and teachers are contented with the said procedure.

Quite often one and the same professor teaches a number of disciplines (up to 8). Moreover, frequent are cases when students from different APs sit the same lecture (foreign languages, Foundation of Law), which the panel considers worrisome.

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

The NU has procedures aimed at teaching staff promotion. In 2016 the Scientific Council ratified the procedure on "Contest-based selection and recruitment of teaching staff". The said document includes criteria on selection and recruitment, the procedure of teaching staff composition, and their functions. Alongside, the regulation on "Training Teaching Staff", aimed at increasing their professional qualities was also ratified. In 2016 the regulation on promotion was also ratified. The said document is aimed at motivating academic services and research-scientific operations and foresees moral and monetary encouragement.

The NU regularly grants opportunities to teacher to have free-of-charge publications in scientific journals.

Throughout the site-visit it became evident that young specialists were very contented with the assistance and consultation their senior colleagues render to them.

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

Rights and responsibilities of teaching and administrative staff are regulated by the Charter and internal regulations of the NU. Administrative-economic and support staff of the NU (as to 01.09.2017) is comprised of 47 employees, put of the said number 33 are administrative, 8 economical and 6 support staff. All infrastructures of the NU have corresponding positions, yet, following what has been witnessed by internal stakeholders, from the perspective of thorough organization of academic operations, and there is still a need to augment the number of support staff. The NU has job descriptions for certain administrative positions (Vice-rector on Academic Reforms, Head and Senior Specialist of External Relations Department, QA Department, HR head).

Surveys and evaluations of deans' office operations are viewed as workable means of improving the quality of administrative and support staff operations.

#### **CONSIDERATIONS**

The expert panel evaluates positively the fact that the NU has a policy on teaching staff recruitment. However, the implementation of competition-based recruitment procedure will enhance the regulated procedure of staff recruitment. The lack of requirements to appointing support staff can result in an incomplete realization of the academic process.

While recruiting teaching staff, the NU bases its decision of professional qualifications, scientific degree and awards, professional and pedagogical skills of teacher, yet the expert panel finds that inconsistent distribution of teaching staff functions per category (lectures at undergraduate and graduate levels, graduate theses, supervision of postgraduate theses, organization of mid-term and summative exams in certain cases are indicated in the functions of a professor and a teacher, in some other instances within the scope of functions of a professor and an assistance), can impact the quality of academic services and hinder the process of acquiring the ILOs of APs. The non-implementation of ratified job description and non-competition based teacher recruitment can impact the transparency of administrative decision-making and the quality of academic services rendered to students.

The fact that the NU has undertaken steps aimed at evaluating the operations of the teaching staff; determined certain regulations, elaborated tools, allows for concluding that the NU underlines the importance of quality improvement of academic services.

Yet, the panel is of opinion that implementation of analytical approach in reports, judgements as to eliminating inconsistencies and drawbacks will enhance the quality of teaching staff.

Notwithstanding the fact that the NU carries out certain operations aimed at teacher training, low effectiveness level of foreign language courses, scarcity of events targeted at professional training and participation in international exchange programmes can hinder continuous development and mobility.

The panel finds that the NU has necessary teaching staff (with corresponding qualifications) for the implementation of its APs, which is the token of the fact that professional qualifications of teachers are taken into consideration. This will enhance the preparation of qualified specialists of the field. The fact that one and the same teacher conducts a number of disciplines (even if they are in line with his/her professional field), and that students with different majors are taught certain disciplines together is worrisome, since this can impact the quality and effectiveness of teaching thus endangering sustainability of teaching staff.

Of interest is the fact that the mechanisms of ensuring teacher promotion also enhance teacher motivation.

The NU has necessary administrative staff for the realization of its strategic goals. The scarcity of support staff, even in the scenario when teaching staff has an excellent performance, can result in an incomplete realization of academic services.

**SUMMARY:** Taking into consideration the fact that the NU has regulations on teaching staff selection and recruitment, regulations on evaluation, requirements to teaching staff qualifications are per se stated, job descriptions of teachers and certain administrative employees have been elaborated, the NU has necessary number of teaching staff with qualifications in line with its APs, the expert panel

finds that the NU has necessary number of teaching staff with corresponding qualifications for attaining its mission and implementing SP goals.

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

## CRITERION VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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

### FINDINGS

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

In its 2016-2020 Strategic Development Plan (hereinafter referred to as SDP), the NU has foreseen the following steps related to the sphere of its operations: to activate the operations of the Center for Scientific Research, Innovation Programs and Postgraduate Professional Education, to make precise research interests and ambitions at a chair and university level, to expand the list of post-graduate professions, to support the increase in the level of research, involve teachers, students, activate their research collaboration at a national and international levels.

The NU has also formulated a 2013-2016 and 2016-2020 prospective plan of its scientific-research and scientific-methodical operations expressing its research interests. The 2013-2016 programme foresees 26 scientific-research directions that of 2016-2021 singles out 22 priorities and 47 topics.

Out of the above-mentioned 22 priorities, three have been given a special importance by the NU taking into account their innovative nature: modern intellectual systems, the main objectives of social-economic progress of Armenia, and the elaboration of a humanistic paradigm of the new millennium. Some portion of topics presented in the prospective plan has but superficial nature and the KPIs of the latter are presented in the forms of discussions in the Chairs (for instance, the report on scientific-research operations of the Chair on Pedagogy and Psychology).

The NU research-scientific operations are being coordinated by the Centre for Scientific Research, Innovation Programs and Postgraduate Professional Education of the NU. In line with the regulation of the said Centre, very heavy and ambitious goals and functions are put forward. However, de facto the staff of the said Centre is comprised but of a Head, whose operations are being rendered assistance to by the methodist. Moreover, the Centre Head combines these responsibilities with those of a Vice-Rector. The representatives of the NU admit the fact that resources available in the Centre are not sufficient to effectively carry out all objectives put forward to the Centre. They do find it necessary to recruit full-staff workers, a scientific worker in particular.

Except for the operations of the Centre, the issues related to the evaluation of the progress of research-scientific works are being discussed in the Scientific Council of the NU. Organization of conferences, publications of the teaching staff, as well as organization of postgraduate studies are considered by the NU as main modes of research operations. Needless to say, publications are mostly on the initiative of the teachers and reflect their own interests and are not the outcomes of planned actions of the NU. The people responsible for scientific fields of the NU do confess that the topics included in elaborated programmes have been elaborated first and foremost taking into consideration the interests of the staff.

Throughout the meetings with the stakeholders it became evident that they are not involved in the process of determining research priorities of the NU.

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

The NU has elaborated a document called "Prospective programme on research-scientific and scientific-methodical operations of Northern University for 3 academic years: 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016". However, all operations related to the field of research are still in *planning* cycle. There is no outcome analyses of research operations carried out previously. Except for that, the said document lacks precise mechanisms, aimed at fostering cooperation between research-scientific operation and production.

The NU has elaborated and ratified a long-term (2016-2020) prospective plan highlighting its interest in research-scientific and scientific-methodical operations. The programme classifies planning of research-scientific and scientific-methodical operations, it has stated priority directions, topics, people responsible and deadlines. No pan-university short-term planning of its research operations has been conducted hence far.

The KPIs of 2013-2016 prospective programme are either not measurable or not there at all, directions and topics are not separated, the majority of topics have been selected based on personal interests of those realizing them. The KPIs of a long-term prospective programme on scientific-methodical operations are more measurable.

Research is not considered as a source of income at the NU. The people responsible for the field find that the NU has not yet arrived to the level of development as to be able to commercialize its research outcomes.

In “Research and scientific-research potential” section of the NU SP, the priority research directions are not clarified, which considerably debilitates the link between the NU SP and certain directions of research.

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

The NU has corresponding legal grounds to ensure research operations and their development; there are an array of corresponding regulations, 2016-2020 SP on development, regulation of the Center for Scientific Research, Innovation Programs and Postgraduate Professional Education, regulation on postgraduate admission, Regulation of PhD studies, regulation on free-researcher, the scale on annual rating of a researcher, regulation on publishing the outcomes of research operations.

In 2013 and 2016 the NU has been granted the right to launch three postgraduate APs (Ը.00.03-Finances, Accountancy, Ժ.01.01 – Armenian Classical Literature, ԺԲ.00.04 –Court Law). The Supreme Certifying Commission has granted the NU the right to ratify topics on Ը.00.03 “Finance and Accountancy” postgraduate study. At the same time the NU lacks a postgraduate degree awarding council.

There is no line for financing scientific-research operations of the NU in its budget calculations. In 2016 factual budget of the NU there is a formulation “Expenditures targeted at Science and Research (Including expenditures for training)”, which account for only 0.85%.

Organization of conferences, realization of postgraduate studies (following the three directions), publication of academic literature are viewed as indicators of research implementation and development. The articles published in conference proceedings face a need of unifying their format (often there are no data on the authors: the institution they represent, their scientific degree, in certain cases the list of literature is inserted at the end of the page and sometimes at the end of the article, there is no preamble, research materials and methods are not indicated, the part of discussions and conclusions is missing).

The NU does not carry out precise policy of enhancing and developing research operations of the learners. Throughout the meeting with the representatives of scientific union the learners highlighted that the NU does not have a policy enhancing research operations of the students, and the students who participate in conferences, do so on their own personal initiative based on their own interests and not on the initiative on the university. Additionally, throughout the meeting with the students it was revealed that students are not aware of the existence of a Student Scientific Union and think of it as being the same as the Student Council.

Yet, certain research operations are carried out at the level of student conferences. In particular, back in 2015 (April 29) a conference titled “The Issues Related to Getting Over the Genocide with Students’ Eyes” was organized, where 14 students with their supervisors were participating. Another event was organized in 2017 “Modern Issues of RA and NKR development”, with the participation of 5 students.

In graduate thesis requirements, it is not stated that the thesis must have certain empirical basis. Studies of graduate theses showed that the majority of the latter did not have any research component, they had but mostly theoretical formulations, yet, their defense has been given green light to, and a positive evaluation has been provided by the reviewer.

It can be stated that as far as reports on research operations are concerned, those of the chairs are but merely statistical in nature; mostly information on the number of publications (yet no detailed

coverage of the information). A detailed information can be traced solely in the report of the Chair of Psychology and Pedagogy.

#### **6.4 The TLI emphasizes the internationalization of its research.**

The NU undertakes certain steps aimed at organizing international conferences, aimed at having publications in CIS and foreign journals, yet, in accordance with the info provided by the University, out of 193 scientific articles only 24 were published in CIS and foreign journals back in 2013-2016. Out of the said number only 17 have been published in CIS (8.8% of published articles), and 7% in foreign journals (3.6% of the total number). When taking the number of teaching staff (80 teacher back in 2016), it can be stated that as far as internationalization of research outcomes are concerned they are quite scarce. The NU still undertakes the first steps in this respect, and hence, throughout the recent 5 years it is really very difficult to trace any increase as far as internationalization of research is concerned.

In accordance with the data presented in the form of a table in the SER of the NU, throughout 2014-2016 the number of teacher publications in CIS and foreign journals was diminishing (publications in CIS journals 7, 4, 0 respectively, those in foreign journals 3, 2, 0 respectively). Back in 2016 no article has been published in either CIS or foreign journals.

Throughout 2012-2016 the NU organized 5 international conferences. At the same time, only 31% of speakers were representatives of foreign universities.

Except for that, in some cases the label *international conference* sounds quite ambitious given the fact that out of 28 scientific articles only one is from CIS countries (conference proceedings and materials to be found on the website: conference devoted to 1050 anniversary of founding Sanahin University (2016)).

Certain preconditions for internationalizing the research operations of the University are being provided by signing cooperation agreement with certain foreign universities. Yet, the NU does not carry out any analyses to understand to what extent the said agreements have contributed to the internationalization of research, which the tangible outcomes in that field are (joint scientific research or other outcomes). Notwithstanding the fact that the SP on development of the NU foresees expanding international cooperation in the field of research, no joint research programmes have been carried out with other universities hence far.

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

In the SER of the NU a more expansive involvement of teacher research outcomes in the academic process, provision of up-to-date research through discussions in the Scientific Councils, raising the responsibility of teachers, dissemination of research outcomes of teachers by means of books and manuals are viewed as mechanisms aimed at linking research and academic process.

As far as dissemination of research operations of teachers is concerned, it can be stated that throughout the site-visit except for conference proceedings stored in the library, no course book, academic or methodical manual authored by the teachers has been presented to the expert panel. Based on this evidence, it can be deduced, that even if there are certain books and manuals published to be used in the academic process, the latter are not accessible to students.

The loose link between research and academic process can also be grounded by the fact that in almost all course description handed over to expert panel no publications of the NU teaching staff have been listed (except for certain course descriptions of "Economy and Management of Enterprises" AP).

It can be stated that the TLI has not carried out any analyses of effectiveness of research operations from the perspective of the link with the academic process.

### **CONSIDERATIONS**

Notwithstanding the fact that the NU has launched a Centre aimed at carrying out its priority directions, ambitious goals and objectives reflected in the regulation of the said centre, the absence of other employees except for the head of the Centre, myriad directions and topics highlighted in the prospective programme can be risky from the perspective of their thorough implementation. Ratification of an array of topics and directions, especially given the fact of scarce human resources, can result in debilitation of scientific labour force and to irrational allocation from economic perspective. In addition, separate research directions and topic represent the interests of teaching

staff, which often are not in line with the direction of current APs; this can have a negative impact on the link between research operations and academic process.

Worrisome is the fact that external stakeholders of the NU are not involved in the process of determining research priorities.

The lack of analyses in the field of research dating back to 2013-2016 does not allow to make judgments about their effectiveness, which can hinder the further development of research operations. The incomplete or non-precise formulation of core KPIs can decrease the monitoring of research outcomes and quality.

Praiseworthy is the fact, that the NU has adopted certain policy on research operations and their development (elaborated regulation, rating scale of a researcher, certain KPIs), yet, the weak analyses of research work outcomes, incomplete implementation of tools, lack of assessment of indicator effectiveness can result in slowing down operations aimed at improvement of research operations.

Research outcomes are not commercialized, research is not a source of income. There is no research financial allocation in calculations of the budget, which can be risky for implementing the goals foreseen by the SP.

The TLI does not have a precise mechanism of enhancing research operations of students, notwithstanding the fact that students participate in conferences on their own initiative.

The decrease in the number of articles published in CIS and foreign journals is worrisome and can hinder internationalization of research.

In the meanwhile, mechanism aimed at linking research operations and academic process need improvement. The mechanisms indicated in the NU SER (broader involvement of teachers in research operations, provision of up-to-date research through discussions in the Scientific Councils, raising the responsibility of teachers) cannot be viewed as linking research operations and academic process, they are just generic preconditions for activating operations.

Publication of research outcomes of teachers in the form of manuals and books is presented as the only means of linking research operations with academic process.

The loose link between research and academic process can also be grounded by the fact that in almost all course description handed over to expert panel no publications of the NU teaching staff have been listed (except for certain course descriptions of "Economy and Management of Enterprises" AP).

The NU has not carried out analyses of research operation effectiveness from the perspective of its linkage with the academic process. As an outcome, the lack of sound mechanisms linking research outcomes and academic process can result in non-targeted usage of research outcomes.

**SUMMARY:** Taking into consideration the fact that in NU programme packages there are research topics not in line with the APs of the TLI but rather in accordance with personal interests of teachers, the realization of ambitious goals and functions of the Center for Scientific Research, Innovation Programs and Postgraduate Professional education does not seem realistic given the fact of scarce human and financial resources, research is not viewed as an income source, there is no financial allocation to research in the NU budget, the NU does not carry out any precise policy on enhancing research operations of students and their development, internationalization of research is on quite erratic basis, as well as the fact that there are no effective mechanisms aimed at linking research operations with the academic process, the expert panel concludes that the NU does not comply with the requirements of Criterion 6.

**CONCLUSION:** The correspondence of the NU institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 6 is **unsatisfactory**.

## CRITERION VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RECOURSES

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

### FINDINGS

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



The TLI in its “Infrastructure and Resources” section of the SP has planned to develop auditoria, to enhance university infrastructures, to elaborate mechanisms of assessing the effectiveness, accessibility and application of resources for students and teachers, to saturate the electronic data base of the library, to intensify the modernization of academic literature.

The venue of the NU is quite conducive since it is located in the vicinity of other TLIs.

The venue of the NU is 3511m<sup>2</sup>, out of which 2950 m<sup>2</sup> are auditoria, 135 m<sup>2</sup> laboratories, 150m<sup>2</sup> offices, 85m<sup>2</sup> is allocated to libraries and reading hall.

Communal resources of the NU are in decent state.

While observing the NU resources the panel has come up with the below-given observations.

The NU has a library, which at the moment of site visit accounted for 10.000 books. There is a scarcity of professional literature in Armenian language, moreover, huge is the number of books which are available only with one sample (at the moment of site visit the maximum number of books available was 3-5). The NU is not subscribed to any professional journal. Throughout the meetings with the teachers and the students, the majority highlighted the scarcity of professional literature.

There is an electronic library, which is saturated with 7 computers, with Armenian and Russian sources of literature and 20-25 books per faculty disciplines. There is no opportunity to access electronic database from the website of the NU. It is not linked to the intranet.

The NU has 4 auditoria with projectors. In the meanwhile, it became evident throughout the meeting with the teachers and the students, that often the size of the said auditoria (too small) or the fact that they are always occupied poses problems from the perspective conducting lessons there.

There is a canteen and copying services, where paid serves are rendered.

The NU has a sport hall, which has training equipment. The said hall has a section for fitness classes and cloakrooms. However, the small size of the NU does not allow for organizing sport events: tennis, table tennis, mini-football, football, volleyball and etc, or to carry out other elements making an inseparable part of physical training courses; e.g. running. As an outcome these are carried out in the sport halls of other institutions (in the majority of cases in the sport school after S. Shahinyan).

The NU has a laboratory of criminology which allows for acquisition of minimal skills and competences among the students.

The NU building has a wifi coverage.

There are two computers labs, 1 linguaphone room with 19 computers, programming lab with 11 computers, lab with 8 computers, law clinic, “Vernatun” Centre of Tumanyanology.

Throughout the meeting with the teachers and students of the Faculty of Law it was revealed that Mock Courts are being organized, yet there is no academic court room aimed for that purpose.

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

Financial resources are mainly accumulated from tuition fees (91.5%). Throughout the recent years grant projects form a small portion of the budget.

Except for fees, canteen, the admission fee, the fees for resitting the exams and the amount of money paid for diplomas (account for 2.3% of incomes), as well as the amount of money paid for staff costs and business trips within the framework of different grant projects still do not constitute a huge portion.

53.6% of expenditures is accounted for salaries, 34.7% is spent on renting the venue. Expenditures directed at saturating material-technical base and scientific-research operations account for 1.66% of expenditures. It can be stated that financial sources making up the NU budget are limited and additional resources are necessary for effective and thorough implementation of NU mission and goals.

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

The NU does not possess any policy of financial resource allocation. As far as legal grounds of financial operations are concerned, the latter are carried out based on the RA Law on Accountancy, the Charter of the NU and other normative acts regulating the field.

The allocation of financial resources is carried out on the bases of financial calculations, and the allocation of financial outcomes (income or loss) is carried out on the decision of the General Assembly of the Participants.

The NU stakeholders are not directly involved in the elaboration of initial calculations of the budget.

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

The planning of necessary resources for carrying out academic operations and ensuring quality of education is carried out by means of revealing operations foreseen by the SP, as well as based on the needs of infrastructures, revealed throughout the elaboration of their operational plans at the beginning of the academic year.

The needs of students and teachers on necessary resources for the QA of academic procedures are revealed through surveys and focus-groups (QA Department).

Based on the survey outcomes reports are being compiled, stating the topic of the survey, aim, the format, group, number of participants, analysis of the outcome of every question in the form of a diagram, suggestions of those surveyed, as well as conclusions drawn. Analyses of focus groups are also drawn, including conclusions per questions and general ones.

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

Information and documentation procedures of the NU are regulated by two documents. The bottom-up mechanism of disseminating information and that of top-down when it comes to accountability.

Within the framework of Tempus GOVERN project, the NU foresees implementing "The TLY Governance System" programme package. For this purpose, in 2017 a tripartite agreement, aimed at implementation of the said programme has been signed.

The NU has an intranet, which allows for efficient dissemination of information between different infrastructures. The website of the NU, the journal "Northern University" enhance dissemination.

At the same time, from the prospective of efficient administration of document flow, the NU needs a Methodist or a secretary. The Chairs lack a holistic regulation on peer lesson-observations. Also, the NU lacks a systematic approach on mid-term works in part-time modes of study, as well as that of separating the documentation of final attestation exams /part-time, full-time/.

Certain legal acts and other documents are posted on the website. From the perspective of making the internal normative acts and other legal document accessible to external stakeholders in a timely manner, the information posted on the website of the NU still needs improvement and faces the need of regular refreshment.

Library resources are not presented on the website; instead there are references to other popular links.

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

With the aim of providing for safety environment, there is an elaborated plan of civic protection. The curricula of the NU have a compulsory disciplined called "Civic Defense" and "First Aid during Emergency Situations".

The NU has an anti-fire system, they have fire-distinguishers in each floor, evacuation schemes are there.

The NU has a 24-hour guard system, there is no camera surveillance, since the expertise has revealed that low ceilings and the small coverage of cameras make it useless.

With the aim of rendering medical services, a Medical Centre is operating at the NU from 9:00 till 17:30. The staff of the said centre is comprised of one doctor and a nurse. The Centre has the minimum necessary amount of drugs and has a register. The expenditures aimed at healthcare services, throughout the last years, have accounted for 0.12-0.18% of financial allocations. Throughout the site-visit no complains have been heard on the operations of the Medical Centre.

Throughout the meeting with students, teachers and administrative staff it became evident that the NU is very carrying towards students having special needs; in particular those having visual and auditory disorders (handing in lectures with bigger fonts, creating opportunities to video-record the lesson). The vice-president of the NU Student Scientific Council is a student who has issues with his vision.

Yet, infrastructural resources of the NU are not adjusted for those having musculoskeletal disorders and moving in a wheelchair, irrespective of the fact that throughout the site visit no such students were detected.

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

Surveys are considered as mechanisms revealing the effectiveness of resource accessibility, applicability and effectiveness. Though the NU carries out surveys among the students trying to reveal their needs as far as resources are concerned, no operations aimed at improvement have been presented. In line with analyses carried out as an outcome of the said surveys, satisfaction with resources has been rated at 3.5 out of 5 possible maximum (more than the half).

It became evident as an outcome of the meeting with students and teachers that after the surveys they witnessed a positive change, especially as far as the improvement of WCs is concerned. Following what has been learnt from the employees, the direct link with the administration of the NU greatly enhances the revelation of their needs as far as resources are concerned. This is being carried out weekly rectorate meeting (almost every week).

#### **CONSIDERATIONS**

The expert panel finds that in generic terms material and human resource sufficiency, the HR management, the venue of the building create necessary and sufficient conditions for carrying out the mission and strategic goals of the University.

Taking into consideration the flow of income sources, the decrease of student numbers, budget calculations and the fact that the lion share of incomes is being allocated to salaries and rent fees, the expert panel finds that the NU financial operations currently cannot effectively and thoroughly guarantee the planning of financial allocations in line with the APs.

The NU does not have a special court-auditorium meant for conducting its mock courts, which hinders the process of forming rhetorical skills among the students. These skills have been given special heed to by external stakeholders; in particular by employers of the NU. The existence of such an auditorium, the possibility to video-record the mock-court and the opportunity to later watch them, will allow to reveal the strengths and the weaknesses of students and will increase the psychological readiness of students in court rooms.

Positive is the fact that the NU has enough number of procedures for managing information and document flow. Moreover, the expert panel could track the fact that the NU has foreseen certain steps and operations aimed at improving and modernizing the said procedures /the implementation of the programme package “Management System of the TLI” within the framework of the TEMPUS GOVERN Project.

It's worth mentioning that in certain chairs there is a need to systematize the documentation procedure which will considerably enhance the quality of documentation and effective search of necessary information.

The services targeted at ensuring the safety of the venue, provision of health and safety conditions are effective. At the same time, the fact that no steps are undertaken aimed at creating favourable conditions for students having skeletomuscular disorders can result in decrease in the number of such students.

**SUMMARY: Taking into consideration the fact that** the NU, generally speaking, has necessary academic environment aimed at implementing its APs, the resource base of the NU allows for implementation of its APs and the realization of its strategic plan, the NU has procedures aimed at administering information and document flow with evident steps aimed at its improvement and modernizations, the services aimed at NU environment safety, and those targeted at preservation of health and safety are effective, the expert panel finds that the NU corresponds to the requirements of Criterion N 7. In the meanwhile, the expert panel would like to highlight that financial planning needs to be made transparent and in line with the SP priorities; moreover, the number of specialized literature must be augmented.

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

## CRITERION VIII. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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

### FINDINGS

#### **8.1. The Institution has clear policy on accountability.**

The Academy has an internal system of accountability and in line with the said system the questions on the agenda pass through chairs, faculty councils, vice-rector, Scientific Council, Rector, Governing Board.

The Rector presents his annual accountability report to the Governing Board of the Academy. Also, to the RA Ministry of Education and Science as far as academic and scientific operations of the Academy are concerned. The said reports are also published on the website of the Academy. This is a positive mechanism from the perspective of ensuring accountability and transparency.

Information about certain events and undertakings that have already been organized or else are in the process of organization by certain infrastructures of the Academy can also be found of the website of the Academy and the facebook page.

A system of publicity and information dissemination has been elaborated by the Academy, yet the latter does not include detailed description of functions.

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

Information about the Academy, regulations, procedures, manuals and other regulatory documents are published on the official website of the Academy. The Academy considers myriad exhibitions by students and teachers as a means of accountability as well. The latter are being organized in the exhibition hall of the YSAFA and that of the Painters' House of the RA. Open defense of undergraduate (BA) and graduate (MA) graduation papers is another way of accountability, since a great number of spectators are assisting the defense, employers are being invited. Materials on defense are being posted on the website and the facebook page of the Academy.

The YSAFA has published a manual which includes operations of the Academy and specializations with their succinct descriptions.

Throughout the site visit the expert panel discovered, that YSAFA, together with two other TLIs (Yerevan State Institute of Theatre and Cinematography, Komitas State Conservatory of Yerevan) has organized an array of events with a participation of a great number of students. The said events have been aimed at presenting and propagating the development of art in Armenia. The Academy has actively participated in myriad other national and public events which have won acclaim; however, no information about the latter have been included into the SER.

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

The feedback on the part of the society as far as YSAFA operations are concerned is mainly ensured through the website and facebook page. The feedback of the society is assembled by the person in charge of public relations and is handed down to the heads of infrastructures concerned.

Throughout the site visit the expert panel revealed that visitors take leave notes in corresponding registers and express their ideas about personal and collective exhibitions of both teachers and students. Except for that, with the aim of involving foreign students, continuous link with Embassies of foreign countries in Armenia is being ensured.

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

YSAFA renders additional paid academic services to the society by means of conducting preparatory and other classes.

Throughout the site visit the expert panel revealed that YSAFA students regularly participate in archeological excavations conducted in Armenia and hence have their investment in the process of protecting cultural values. Moreover, YSAFA students participate in the process of decorating the building of Yerevan, in particular with mosaic. The students have also expressed their positive attitude towards these works.

## **CONSIDERATIONS:**

The precise mechanism of accountability of the Academy enhances the quality of accountability process and renders Academy operations transparent.

The Academy has certain mechanisms by means of which it ensures the transparency of its procedures and operations (website, Facebook page, manuals and etc.). From this perspective, the Academy must maximally enhance information dissemination among internal and external stakeholders. One weakness to highlight is the fact that the website does not yet ensure detailed information (notwithstanding the fact that the Academy has necessary specialists of the field). This fact has repeatedly been voiced by the academic staff and student representatives throughout meetings with the expert panel. Society does not make use of the opportunity to pose their questions and get replies through the website.

Positively evaluating the fact that the Academy has services rendered to the society (works undertaken with the applicants, exhibitions of teachers' and students' works, archeological excavations, participations in the decorating the building of Yerevan, societal events), it still must be stated that the Academy needs to elaborate precise mechanisms which would allow for evaluating and systematizing services rendered.

**SUMMARY:** Taking into consideration the fact that the Academy has an accountability system, which mainly reveals the issues of the YSAFA, the information to society is generally accessible, and there are mechanisms of knowledge transfer to society, the expert panel finds that the YSAFA is sufficiently accountable to the society.

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

## **CRITERION IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION**

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

### **FINDINGS**

#### **8.1 The TLI has clear policy on institutional accountability.**

The NU in its 2016-2020 SP has adopted an aim to ensure accountability, feedback mechanisms, implementation of social and profession adapting programs and additional educational curricula for students and alumni, consultation aimed at defending labour rights, development of cooperation among the TLI and organizations of the field.

With the aim of systemizing accountability operations, the NU ratified the "Programme of Administrative and Teaching Staff accountability" (2016), established the mechanism of organizing the said procedure; i.e. a unified approach to planning, monitoring and accountability of operations. The NU has bottom-up and top-down approaches of accountability. The accountability reports of infrastructures, faculties and chairs are being summarized in the annual report of the rector, which is being presented in the Scientific Council of the NU and that of the Assembly of Participants.

As far as external stakeholders are concerned, the report handed over to the RA Ministry of Education and Science is considered to be the accountability mechanism. Information on services rendered is disseminated by means of both their own and mass media channels.

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

With the aim of rendering its procedures and operations accessible to the society, the NU has launched a corresponding infrastructure: Department of Media and Public Relations. Moreover, the NU makes use of an array of platforms: official newsletter, website, facebook page, republican journals, TV channels; however, the official website of the NU (as of 21.09.2017) does not give a thorough understanding about core operations of the NU (accountability reports are missing, there is no information about student admission, competitions for teaching staff, core decisions and orders,

statutes of infrastructures and departments, tuition fee reduction systems, analyses of surveys and etc), certain sections lack information in either Russian or English, as far as accountability reports are concerned, only those of certain infrastructures are posted. Throughout the site visit it became evident that information on undergraduate and graduate admission, reduction of tuition fees are published in the official newsletter of the NU.

For attracting applicants, the NU publishes leaflets (in English, Russian, Persian and Georgian) and posters.

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

There are certain mechanisms aimed at ensuring feedback with the society: NU-employer-student meetings, cooperation with republican and other structures (Lezuneri Tun, Union of Syrian-Armenians, Union of Employers, Office of Environmental Programmes, Schools, banks). Employer-student meetings are aimed at revealing labour market needs and presenting corresponding suggestion and consultation in this respect with the aim of preparing more competitive specialists in the field. The NU possesses the issues voiced by employers (ARDSHINBANK CJSC, Tashir Capital, Directors of Schools N 23, 27, teachers, representatives of legal field). These issues are mainly related to acquisition of skills and competences among the graduates. As a suggestion, the employers have underlined the importance of increasing the number of practical courses, improvement of teaching methods aimed at developing student competences, implementation of e-materials related to their profession, increasing the duration of internships, making *Rhetoric* into a compulsory discipline and etc.

The NU ensures links with other TLIs as well (Shirak State University, Armenian State Pedagogical University) as far as AP monitoring and assessment is concerned. Throughout the site-visit it became evident that the link of the NU with the employers is still loose, since, as has been highlighted by internal stakeholders, employer motivation is still weak.

The NU considers its facebook page as a flexible means of ensuring feedback (2015-2016 report of the Department of Media and Public Relations).

With the aim ensuring feedback with the society, the NU has elaborated questionnaires to conduct a survey among alumni and employers. As has been revealed throughout the site-visit these surveys have already been conducted. The outcomes are still in the cycle of assessment.

The expert panel has noted that the website of the NU lacks a corresponding section where people could otherwise leave their comments and suggestions.

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

The NU has mechanisms of rendering additional academic and consultation services and knowledge (value) transfer to society. The NU carries out knowledge transfer both among its internal and external stakeholders. The Department of Media and Public Relations (which is presented as an editorial, which can cause confusion among external stakeholders), carries out consultations for students of corresponding AP (Journalism). Legal Clinic forms an inseparable part of the Faculty of Law. The former is a non-profit infrastructure carrying our academic and consultation services. The said structure renders free of charge consultations both to its internal stakeholders, as well as to wider public who face difficult social conditions; moreover, they transfer practical knowledge to students.

Courses on computer literacy, foreign languages and accountability, carried out by the Centre on Additional Education, as well as training organized for college teachers within the framework of cooperation are considered as mechanisms of knowledge transfer to society. With the aim of transferring values to society and disseminating information about the most important historical and national events, the NU organizes diverse events. The NU has not assessed the effectiveness of services rendered to society, except for summarizing the operations carried out by the Law clinic.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

The expert panel evaluates positively the fact that the NU has an accountability programme, bottom-up and top-down reporting, which is regular in nature, and is being summarized in the annual report of the rector, since this enhances the development of systematic and regulated approach to accountability. Yet, the panel thinks that said reports often are factual in nature and do but report certain statistical data, they lack conclusions, suggestions on eliminating the drawbacks revealed,

analytical approach, which can hinder the process of revealing weaknesses, as well as further improvement and development procedures.

The absence of rector's annual reported on the website, the low level of NU operational transparency can hinder the interest of external stakeholders towards the NU, diminish accessibility of operations to society, and the opportunity to attract applicants.

Positive is the fact that the NU has certain platforms aimed at ensuring feedback, there are certain mechanisms, however, the lack of a corresponding section on the website where all those interested could otherwise have left their comments decreases the opportunities of voicing the needs of internal and especially external stakeholders.

**SUMMARY: Taking into consideration the fact that** the NU operates in accordance with the accountability programme, there are platforms for rendering its current operations accessible to the society, there are mechanisms for ensuring transfer of knowledge and values to society, the NU is accountable to its internal stakeholders and to the state for its education and used resources, the panel finds that the **NU complies with the requirements of Criterion 8.**

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

## CRITERION X. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

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

### FINDINGS

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

In its 2016-2020 SDP, the NU foresees the creation of a normative base aimed at internationalization, expansion of participation of both teachers and students in foreign language courses, enhancement of awareness of both employees and learners as far as the APs are concerned, development of cooperative links with foreign colleagues, continuation of effective cooperation with peer universities, enhancement of distribution of information on the NU both in and outside the RA, regulation, organization and assessment of scientific-academic operations carried out with foreign students. Notwithstanding the fact that the NU SP reflects internationalization as a priority, as far as the budget is concerned, no allocations are being made in this respect.

The mission adopted by the NU reflects the strategic field aimed at internationalization.

In 2016, the NU ratified the 2016-2020 SP on policy aimed at developing external relations and internationalization. The main directions of the policy on international relations and internationalization highlighted in the aforesaid document are in line with operations highlighted in the NU SDP. The description of operations to be undertaken, the deadlines, outcomes and people responsible are included in the SP on developing external relations and internationalization.

Information on the NU aimed at foreign students is very scarce on the website. Many segments of the website lack information in either Russian or English with only corresponding titles or subtitles visualized.

With the aim of founding conducive environment to experience exchange and internationalization, started from 2012 the TLI has been involved in some grant projects (ERASMUS-MUNDUS, TEMPUS-VERITAS, TEMPUS-GOVERN). Information about the said projects can be found in the official newsletter of the NU which ensures the awareness and interest of internal stakeholders as far as the aforesaid projects are concerned.

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

The NU has a separate infrastructure in charge of carrying out its operations in the said field; Department of External Relations with its own statute ratified back in 2016. The aim of the said

Department is to enhance integration of the NU in international scientific-academic procedures and programmes, formation and expansion of cooperation with foreign scientific-academic establishments and bodies.

The said Department is being managed by the head of the Department, the operations are being coordinated by the Vice-rector on Education Reforms. Back in 2016 job descriptions, rights and responsibilities of the head of the Department and those of a leading specialist were elaborated.

As opposed to the past, started from 2015-2016 the NU has undertaken certain steps of improvement as far as the planning and accountability of the Department of External Relations are concerned. Except for annual reports, the Department also had an accountability report of its 2016-2017 operational plan. The said report includes concrete KPIs of all 9 operations and their alignment with the SP. 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 accountability reports include not only the works undertaken but also the formats of assessing the KPIs of operational plans (presented as an appendix).

As is highlighted in the annual accountability report of the Department of External Relations, the Department uses certain toolkit aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of its operations (data on exchange and mobility projects, questionnaire of surveys conducted among foreign students aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of operations directed at them, format of assessing the performance of operational plans aimed at enriching and internationalization of external relations).

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

The TLI has signed an array of contracts with local (Ardshinbank, Office in charge of environmental programmes, College of Light Industry, Lezuneru Tun (House of Languages), as well as with establishment and bodies of CIS countries (Institute of Socio-Economic Development of Territories of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg Economic University, Stavropol Institute of Cooperation). At a local level, the scope of cooperation with the NU allows for internship opportunities.

At the same time, no plans aimed at carrying out certain events within the framework of said cooperation is carried out.

The NU has certain experience of internationalization within TEMPUS VERITAS and GOVERN projects. Within the same scope certain resources have been got; in particular, the laboratory of postgraduate studies. Notwithstanding the fact that an array of manuals have been elaborated within the framework of said grant projects (manuals for teachers and students, those aimed at assessment), there is still need for teacher and student mobility and necessity for activating international joint research projects. This has been as well highlighted by employees of the Department of External Relations throughout the meetings with the expert panel.

By means of international grant projects, the NU tries to ensure teacher and student mobility. Back in 2013 the first case of mobility was launched (within the scope of ERASMUS-MUNDUS programme); a student of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literature was granted a scholarship and had an opportunity to study in Adam Mickiewicz University for one academic year. In 2013-2014 two student from the said university studied in the Faculty of Journalism (graduate studies) of the NU. Within the scope of ERASMUS-MUNDUS EMINENCE project back in 2013 the person responsible for External Relations Department was granted a scholarship and participated in an experience exchange programme in Malmö University of Sweden. Within the scope of the same projects the NU had the opportunity to welcome a delegation from Adam Mickiewicz University, and a senior professor from Malmö University of Sweden. Within the scope of a grant project on "Implementation of QA internal system or its further development" in 2013, three employees from the QA Department have been sent to Sweden.

With the aim of developing and internationalizing its external relations, the YLI has carried out its operations in 2015-2017 academic years. The evidence can be found in EMINENCE project of ERASMUS+, when back in 2015 a teacher from the Faculty of "IT" visited Malmö University of Sweden, the fact that a student from Adam Mickiewicz University was granted an opportunity to continue his/her studies at the NU, visits of two NU teachers to 4 European countries within the scope of TEMPUS-VERITAS project. In 2017 the University became a member of a consortium within a new project of ERASMUS +.

Throughout the site-visit it became evident that there are no foreign students, as well as no flying professors. The only exception is students from diaspora (e.g. Syria), which have been involved into



Armenian higher education area due to reduction fees available at the NU. Except for current grant projects, there is no teacher mobility initiated by the NU.

With the aim of disseminating information about the NU, the TLI uses the mode of oral communication, as well as dissemination of advertisement leaflets exercising their local ties. There are not yet any more stable means of recruitment.

Throughout the site-visit it became evident that the means enhancing the involvement of students in the sphere of external relations and internationalization are not yet thorough.

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

With the aim of ensuring the level of foreign language acquisition among its teachers, the NU organizes training courses of foreign languages. Yet, small number of participants have been involved. The frequency and effectiveness of said courses is low. According to the data presented to the expert panel (taken from the register), 11 teachers participated, out of which 5 have been absent constantly absent.

Those who have not participated in the said courses, have been granted an opportunity to take English Language courses with discounts at "Lezunerer Tun".

According to the SER, 50-60% of students and 80-90% of teachers have foreign language acquisition level. Yet, throughout the site-visit it became evident that foreign language communicative competence and most importantly the one of teaching in a foreign language is weak.

The TLI has undertaken certain steps aimed at organizing education in English. In this respect certain agreements have been reached with teachers from other universities. This information has been disseminated in Georgia and Iran by means of leaflets and announcements.

#### **CONSIDERATIONS**

Positive is the fact that the SDP has certain articles about external relations and internationalization. Except for that, by means of legal acts, the legal status, objectives and functions of the Department of External Relations have been regulated. It can be stated that the operations of the said Department are regulated.

At the same time the expert panel considers it worrisome that during financial planning no allocations to internationalization are foreseen which will hinder the realization of internationalization goals and the further development of the TLI in this direction.

The mission adopted by the NU, the goals reflected in the Charter of the Department of External Relations reflect the strategic field of internationalization. It is praiseworthy, that the University, being a private one, has been involved in an array of grant projects, which provides grounds to think that the endeavour of the NU targeted at creating an environment conducive to internationalization has resulted in certain positive achievement.

Yet, the transparency of operations of the NU targeted at internationalization is still weak. The incomplete information on the university website, including the one about the operations of the Department of External Relations and Internationalization (current operations, teacher/student incoming and outgoing mobility, and selection criteria of those participating in mobility), the scarcity of information in English and Russian can hinder the awareness about the university at national and international levels and dissemination of information.

The lack of a unified policy elaborated based on the agreements signed can hinder the practical applicability of agreements.

The incomplete nature of mechanisms aimed at involving students in external relations and internationalization can hinder integration of students at an international scale and student mobility. Notwithstanding the fact that the NU, generally speaking, provides opportunities to internal stakeholders to participate in courses aimed at raising the level of foreign language acquisition, the effectiveness of said courses is not visible. The heavy workload of trainees, the organization of courses without a precise timetable can decrease the effectiveness of operations, which, in its turn, will impact the level of internationalization.

The expert panel considers the low level of teacher and student mobility, the lack of joint international research and research projects worrisome.

**SUMMARY: Taking into consideration the fact** the NU does not have any financial planning as far as the realization of its goals in internationalization are concerned, outgoing and incoming mobility of both students and teachers is very low and is not preconditioned by the enhancement of the NU, there are no joint international research projects, the level of foreign language acquisition among both the teachers and the students, as well as the capacity of teachers to teach in English is low, the fact that the NU lacks a holistic policy based on signed agreements, the information in foreign language on the website is quite scarce, the expert panel finds that the **NU does not comply with the requirements of Criterion 9.**

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

## CRITERION X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

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

### FINDINGS

#### **10.1. The TLI has internal quality assurance policies and procedures.**

With the aim of improving and continuously developing QA procedures, in its 2016-2020 SP the TLI has foreseen the following: ensuring accountability at all levels, transparency, continuity of operations undertaken as far as the QA is concerned, integration of quality cycle in all operations of the TLI, measurability, accessibility and implementation of QA operations.

In 2014 a QA manual was elaborated. The said manual has the system of academic QA, with a determined concept /mapping, toolkit/, statute of QA infrastructure, which has the mission of the department, objectives and goals. It aims at presenting QA priority spheres to internal and external stakeholders (APs, research potential, external relations), academic QA mechanisms. Surveys, benchmarking and external evaluations are viewed as QA mechanisms (AP, QA manual).

The QA Department organizes its operations based on its operational plans and summarizes its undertaking in a report.

Notwithstanding the fact that that certain procedures are accessible to stakeholders via the website (policy, charter, SER), the transparency of TLI operations still needs improvement; in particular, it lacks operational plans, accountability reports, QA manual, information on ongoing operations.

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

With the aim of ensuring the management of IQA operations, in 2010 the TLI founded the QA Department, which was finally formulated in 2012, rectified its operations by a statute, which was reviewed in 2016. The scope of responsibilities highlighted in the statute allow the QA Department to carry out the principle of PDCA cycle. At present the infrastructure is under the Vice-Rector on Academic Reforms. The aim of the said body is to ensure implementation of TLI mission and SP, increase management effectiveness, improvement of academic quality, and increase in TLI competitiveness.

With the aim of managing IQA operations, the QA has been allocated human resources. At the time of the site visit two employees; Department head and a specialist, have undergone corresponding training. As was revealed throughout the site visit, a post of a senior specialist is also foreseen in line with the statute. Three committees (on voluntarily basis) function inside the Department: academic-methodical, technical, student.

Requirement to the position of Department Head are provided in the job description, ratified in 2016. Allocation of responsibilities and functions of the specialist are not determined by the statute, job descriptions are not yet elaborated.

The operations of the QA Department are mainly financed by the TLI, as well as from other sources in line with RA legislation, as stated in the statute. The Department does not have a separate budget. In the document of financial planning handed over by the TLI (budget calculations 2015-2016, expenditure articles 2013-2016), no allocations to QA operations are foreseen.

The QA Department has an office, conference room with necessary material-technical base and furniture.

Grant projects have also enhanced the formation of material resources of IQA procedures: Competitive Fund of Innovations, GOVERN, VERITAS projects of TEMPUS (PhD study auditoria and else).

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

The TLI organizes internal and external stakeholder involvement (teachers, students, administrative staff) in QA operations via three committees, where chairs, administrative infrastructures and students are involved.

Throughout the site-visit the expert panel has been given the minutes of Academic-methodical, technical and student Committees of the QA, where the following questions have been discussed: student evaluation of teachers and analyses of outcomes, alignment of a new charter with internal normative acts, discussion of an accountability system, revelation of imperfections in the current assessment system and steps for improvement, AP monitoring and curricula review (Academic-methodical, technical committee), resource efficiency, satisfaction with TLMs, awareness of credit system (student committee) and else.

Throughout the meetings during the site-visit the QA Department employees finger-pointed all prime issues which face continuous improvement: fostering QA operations in auditoria, organization of training, improvement of assessment, teaching methods, continuous development of legal-normative documents. The expert panel could trace high motivation and devotion of the QA staff to their work. Internal stakeholders are involved in QA operations, yet, that of external stakeholders is mainly expressed through external review of APs.

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

The strategy of implementing QA concept is the following: regular and continuous improvement of IQA, provision of stakeholder involvement in operations, evaluation of all operations from the prospective of quality assurance.

Throughout the site-visit it became evident that at different spheres of the TLI, IQA operations are at different cycles of the PDCA. In particular:

- PRDCA loop is closed as far as these operations are concerned: 2016-2020 SP, legal-normative documents: exemplary statutes of the TLI, QA Department, faculties, definition of AP ILOs, and in certain cases investment of certain improvement elements (in the "Jurisprudence" AP, the discipline Rhetoric has turned into an obligatory one)
- PD and C cycles: students assessment system (an improvement is foreseen from the prospective of involving diversity as assessment criteria), QA manual, QA system (benchmarking), some APs ("Pedagogy and Methodology: non-sufficient hours allocated to practical operations").
- P and D cycles: elaboration of certain legal-normative documents: AP monitoring and review regulation, job descriptions, policy on financial resource allocations, regulations on academic honesty, student need revelation, regulations on additional and consultation works, accountability provision, formation of a distance education laboratory.
- P and partially D: provision of transparency of operations referring to QA, training of teaching staff, involvement of teachers, students in international, academic-scientific grant projects.
- P cycle: elaboration of a ranking system of teacher qualities, evaluation of signed agreements, refreshing information in foreign language on the website, evaluation of effectiveness of QA operations.

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

The TLI ensures certain grounds for operations of QA external review. For this, data has been collected, survey conducted, self-evaluation has been carried out per accreditation format, reports have been handed over to the ANQA re the action plans to rectify the problematic issues revealed throughout the previous accreditation procedure.

The TLI has also ensured grounds for external review carried out within the framework of grant projects (TEMPUS-VERITAS, TEMPUS-GOVERN).

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

Notwithstanding the fact that the TLI has undertaken steps aimed at ensuring transparency and accountability of information on QA of university operations, steps aimed at raising the awareness of external stakeholders are still scarce from the prospective of rendering analyses on QA operations transparent (except for the SER).

The TLI official website, facebook page, the journal is viewed as a platform for disseminating information about the quality of TLI operations.

Praiseworthy is the fact that the TLI has posted some information on its procedures, policy on QA internal system of the TLI: SP, statutes of infrastructures, SER (2014), regulation on knowledge assessment, guideline on credit system teaching/learning, journals of different conferences, yet, it does not thoroughly reflect the operations undertaken by the TLI.

On erratic grounds is the transparency of accountability (only 2011-2012 accountability reports of some chairs are accessible). One of the core components ensuring the transparency of the system-rector's report, is missing.

#### **CONSIDERATIONS**

Expert panel evaluates positively the fact that at the level of documents, the TLI has corresponding grounds witnessing its operations: the TLI has a QA policy and procedures, which will ensure the regulated nature of the procedure and formation of quality culture. Yet, the fact that the TLI lacks indicators of quality progress, no evaluation of mechanism effectiveness is carried out can hinder the process of effective evaluation of QA procedures.

Notwithstanding the fact that job description of the QA Department head has been elaborated, the fact that those of a specialist and senior specialist are missing, can result in a vagueness as far as the scope of their operations, rights and responsibilities are concerned.

Positive is the fact that the TLI allocates material and human resources for managing IQA operations. Yet the fact that no financial planning is carried out, and allocations are mostly made from TLI means, can hinder further QA operations from the perspective of their further development.

The expert panel considers that internal stakeholders are actively involved in QA operations, yet the involvement of external stakeholders is not sufficient. The TLI has not yet examined the level of their awareness as far as QA operations are concerned, which can hinder the process of preparing more competitive specialists in the labour market. Notwithstanding the fact that the TLI has an experience of reviewing QA operations, quality culture is not thoroughly formed, the PDCA loop is not closed for an array of procedures and in this respect the TLI still has things to undertake. Yet, the steps already undertaken provide grounds for the expert panel to ascertain that at different levels different operations are at different cycles. IQA components are periodically reviewed, which would enhance continuous improvement of all operations of the TLI.

It's of interest that the TLI QA system ensures grounds for carrying out external review, yet increase in the number of those surveyed and involvement of more targeted questions in questionnaires (with the aim of data collection) would enhance a more reliable and objective data collection.

The TLI undertakes steps to ensure publicity of its operations, yet the information provided by the IQA on the official website of the TLI does not allow for thorough transparency and accountability for external stakeholders, which can be risky from the prospective of their awareness and attractively for applicants.

**SUMMARY: Taking into consideration the fact that** with the aim of ensuring the establishment of IQA system the TLI has created an infrastructure with its own statute, concept, there is enough documentation to carry out its regulated procedures, the infrastructure organizes its operations in line with operational plans and summarizes them in reports, the QA manual has been elaborated and the latter has been presented for an external review, the TLI allocates financial resources for managing QA operations, internal stakeholders are involved in the operations of the field, IQA operations are periodically reviewed and are at different PDCA cycles, QA Department staff is

motivated, the expert panel considers that **the Northern University complies with the requirements of Criterion N 10**, yet, in the meanwhile highlighting that the TLI has certain undertaking from the prospective of operation analyses, assessment of effectiveness, quality culture formation and closing the PDCA loop.

**CONCLUSION:** The correspondence of NUinstitutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 10 is **satisfactory**.

## EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

<b>CRITERION</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>
<i>I. Mission and Goals</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>II. Governance and Administration</i>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
<i>III. Academic Programs</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>IV. Students</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>V. Teaching and Support Staffs</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>VI. Research and Development</i>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
<i>VII. Infrastructure and Resources</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>VIII. Social Responsibility</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>IX. External Relations and Internationalization</i>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
<i>X. Internl Quality Assurane System</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>

**20 October, 2017**

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**Gayane Marmaryan**  
**Expert Panel Chair**

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1.CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

**Gayane Marmaryan:** in 1995 graduated from Armenian Academy of Agriculture. Throughout 1995-1998 she undertook her PhD studies in the same Academy (Specialization: Biochemistry). She is a doctor of Biological Sciences, associate professor of biology. From 1998 till present she has been teaching in the Chair of Biochemistry of Armenian State Agrarian University. Started from 1995 she has been undertaking scientific operations in different regions (marzes) of the RA. She is a member of postgraduate degree awarding committee of Biochemistry. Within the framework of grant projects she has undergone training in the USA, Greece, Spain, Romania, the Netherlands.

She is an author of 55 scientific works: 42 scientific articles, 1 monograph /Germany/, 9 methodical works, 1 manual, is a co-author of two books. The scope of her research relates to the biochemical examination of the organism of small minded animals. Currently she is the Head of the Chair of Biochemistry, at Armenian State Agrarian University.

**Irring Wasser:** in 1986 graduated from Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration at the University of Konstanz, Germany, and the Université des Sciences Sociales in Grenoble, France. In 1988 he was awarded a graduate degree (Master of Arts) in International Politics at the Virginia State University in Blacks-burg, Virginia, USA. In 1994 Ph.D. in American Studies at the John F. Kennedy-Institute of the University of Berlin and the Georgetown University in Washington D.C., USA. From 2009 is Prof. h.c. Kazakh National Agrarian University. From 2011 is Audit Director at the Australian Universities Quality Agency AUQA. From 2001 to date is the managing director of Accreditation Agency for Degree Programmes in Engineering, Informatics, Natural Sciences and Mathematics (ASIIN e. V., Germany).

**Misak Markosyan:** In 2006 graduated from the Police Academy (Faculty of Law) as a specialist. In 2011 finished his postgraduate studies being awarded a PhD in Law. He is an author of 34 scientific articles. From 2001 has been working as a lecturer of the Chair of Criminal Law and Criminology of Police Academy of the RA. From 2012 till present he has been chairing of the same unit.

**Mariam Momjyan:** In 2004 graduated from Yerevan State Institute of Economics, the Faculty of General Economy (specialization: Economy and Management of Enterprises). Until 2008 used to be part-time PhD student in the Chair of Microeconomics and Organization of Entrepreneurial Operations of Yerevan State University of Economics. In the same year she was awarded postgraduate degree in economics. From 2013 she has been a lecturer of HRM at Armenian-Russian (Slavonic) University, she is a specialist of staff management. From 2011 she is a senior specialist in in the public services regulatory commission of the republic of Armenia.

**Mariam Yevdokimova:** From 2014 she has been studying in State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan, in the Department of Pedagogy and Sociology. In 2016 she finished the training course organized by the ANQA within the framework of Student Voice project. In the same year she participated in peer-review process within the framework of TEMPUS ALIGN Project as a student-expert.

## APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT

18.09.2017-21.09.2017

<b>18.09.2017</b>		<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1.	Expert panel close meeting	9:00	13:00	240 minutes
2.	Break, expert panel discussions	13:00	13:45	45 minutes
3.	Meeting the rector	14:15	14:45	30 minutes
4.	Meeting vice-rectors	14:55	15:50	55 minutes
5.	Meeting the work group in charge of SER	16:00	16:50	50 minutes
6.	Meeting with the deans	17:00	18:00	60 minutes
7.	Expert panel close meeting	18:00	18:30	30 minutes
<b>19.09.2017</b>		<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1.	Meeting chair heads (including chairs in charge of implementing the three APs presented in the SER)	9:00	10:00	60 minutes
2.	Meeting the teaching staff (including 3 APs): 10-12 people	10:10	11:10	60 minutes
3.	Resources (auditoria, laboratories, cabinets, library, sport hall, medical centre, canteen)	11:20	12:30	60 minutes
4.	Break, expert panel discussions	12:40	13:40	60 minutes
5.	Meeting alumni (8-10 representatives)	13:50	14:50	60 minutes
6.	Meeting employers (8-10 representatives)	15:00	16:00	60 minutes
7.	Document review	16:00	17:00	60 minutes
8.	Expert panel close meeting	17:00	18:30	90 minutes
<b>20.09.2017</b>		<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1.	Meeting Student Council members and Student Scientific Union representatives	9:00	10:00	60 minutes
2.	Meeting undergraduate (BA) students (full-time and part-time modes of study, 10-12 representatives)	10:10	11:10	60 minutes
3.	Meeting graduate (MA) students (full-time and part-time modes of study, 10-12 representatives)	11:20	12:20	60 minutes
4.	Lesson observations	12:30	13:30	60 minutes
5.	Break, expert panel discussions	13:40	14:40	60 minutes
6.	Meeting in infrastructures (Department of External Relations, Scientific Research, Centre of Innovative Programmes and Post-graduate Education, Career and Alumni Centre, HR Department, Accountant)	14:50	15:50	90 minutes
7.	Expert panel open meeting	16:00	16:40	40 minutes
8.	Expert panel close meeting	16:50	18:50	120 minutes
<b>21.09.2017</b>		<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1.	Visits to chair and documents review	9:00	10:00	60 minutes
2.	Meeting QA staff	10:10	11:10	60 minutes
3.	Meeting in infrastructures (Academic Department, PR Department)	11:20	12:20	60 minutes
4.	Visits to deans' offices, document review	12:30	13:30	60 minutes
5.	Break, expert panel discussions	13:40	14:40	60 minutes
6.	Expert panel closed meeting and document review	14:50	17:50	120 minutes
7.	Meeting with TLI administration	17:50	18:20	30 minutes



### APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

N	Documents	Criteria
1	Minutes of Scientific and Faculty Councils	1
2	2011-2015 SP	1
3	The former Statute of the TLI	1
4	Regulations on Attestation	1
5	Analyses handed over by the Career and Alumni Centre (based on the outcomes of alumni surveys)	1
6	Old organigram	2
7	Statute of the faculty	2
8	Legal act regulating attestation of all employees	2
9	Participants of the General Meeting	2
10	Operational Plans of infrastructures, elaborated uniform format	2
11	Accountability report on 2016 SP implementation	2
12	Job descriptions	2
13	Publications in periodicals on APs and qualifications	2
14	Procedure on AP monitoring and review	3
15	«Pedagogy and methodology» AP, foreseen for graduate studies	3
16	A document verifying the implementation of tools aimed at determining the effectiveness of AP monitoring, assessment and review mechanisms.	3
17	Outcomes of course paper evaluations	4
18	Categories of teachers and assistants	5
19	Data/tendencies of teachers having scientific degree throughout the last 5 years	5
20	The list of support staff, categorization of laboratories (if available)	5
21	Official newsletter of the TLI	5
22	Regulation on employee dismissal	5
23	Sample of contracts	5
24	Job descriptions per categories of teaching and support staff	5
25	Regulation on assessment of teachers by students	5
26	Filled in samples of student and governing body assessment of teachers	5
27	Filled in sample of teacher peer assessment	5
28	Filled-in formats of teacher assessment	5
29	Training registers of teaching staff, documents verifying the training.	5
30	Training timetable per precise time frame, lessons and target groups	5
31	Data on staff inflow and outflow within the last 3 years	5
32	Official documents reflecting the shift in salaries of teaching staff	5
33	Orders on encouragement, promotion	5
34	Orders on encouraging starting teachers	5
35	The list of administrative, administrative-economic and support staff, with a clear distinction of assistants and categories	5
36	List of staff	5
37	KPIs of 2013-2016 research-scientific topics, their analyses and effectiveness	6
38	Elaborated booklet «Assistance to Student»	6
39	Minutes of chair meetings as far as questions about publishing scientific works are concerned	6
40	KPIs of research-scientific and scientific-methodical operations of 2013-2016 plan	6

41	Short-term plans (1 year) of research-scientific operations	6
42	Regulation on publishing the outcomes of research operations at the NU	6
44	Annual report of Center for Scientific Research, Innovation Programs and Postgraduate Professional Education.	6
45	Individual plans of teachers	6
46	Financial allocations /throughout the last three years/ aimed at saturating the library	7
47	The plan of the building	7
48	Budget allocation per strategic directions	7
49	Register of students to the Medical Centre	7
50	Official newsletter of the University within the last year	8
51	Information leaflet of the University /in two languages/	8
52	Samples of advertisement leaflets about the University	8
53	Leaflets about the University /if they are available/	8
54	Cooperation agreement signed with Russian universities back in 2015-2016 academic years	8
55	Legal act regulating operations of the legal clinic	8
56	Data on Teacher and students mobility	9
57	Cooperation with TLIs and organizations f CIS countries and those of Europe	9
58	Accountability reports of pervious years of the Department of External Relations, operational plans	9
59	SP of the Department of External relations	9
60	Dissemination of information an analyses on operations and projects of the Department of External Relations in 2016-2017 periodicals	9
61	Training and accountability reports	9
62	Flyers in a foreign language	9
63	A questionnaire evaluating the effectiveness of operations undertaken with foreign students	9
64	The list of foreign languages courses means for employees and the timetable	9
65	QA Department accountability reports and operational plan	10
66	Job descriptions of senior specialist and specialist of the department	10
67	Outcomes of three committees of the department. Documents reflecting the course of operation of the latter	10
68	Annual SERs, per accreditation standards and criteria	10
69	Graduation works, theses of different specialties and of different years	3
70	List of participants of the General Assembly	2
71	All licenses of APs	3
72	Regulation of Job Description evaluation /if there is any/	5
73	Data on students /There were certain discrepancies in documents/	4
74	Data of dismissed and readmitted, grounds	4
75	Student/teacher ratio	5
76	Average ago of teachers	5
77	Information of staff flow throughout the last 3 years	8
78	List of teaching staff /age, education and disciplines taught/	5
79	Contract on rent	2
80	Operational plan of the QA Department of the last two years and accountability reports.	10

## **APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED**

- 1.** Auditoriums
- 2.** Deans' offices (Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economy, Management and Informatics, Faculty of Philology and Pedagogy)
- 3.** Chairs (Chair of Jurisprudence and Social Sciences, Chair of Economy and Management, Chair of Mathematics, Informatics, and Computer Engineering, Chair of Armenian Language, Literature and Journalism, Chair of Pedagogy and Psychology, Chair of Romano Germanic and Russian Philology)
- 4.** Infrastructures (Academic Department, Department of External Relations, Department of Media and PR, General department)
- 5.** Laboratories
- 6.** Legal Clinic
- 7.** Sport Hall
- 8.** Conference Hall
- 9.** Computer Labs
- 10.** Canteen
- 11.** Medical Centre
- 12.** Library
- 13.** Reading Hall

## APPENDIX 5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

