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Developed within the frames of TEMPUS TNE\_QA:  
**PROMOTING QUALITY AND RECOGNITION OF  
TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION IN ARMENIA AND GEORGIA**

**Guidelines for developing policies,  
criteria and procedures for quality  
assurance of transnational higher  
education in Armenia and Georgia**

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## Executive Management Team address

Dear Reader,

*“Promoting Quality and Recognition of Transnational Education in Armenia and Georgia”* (TNE\_QA) is a four-year project (2013-2017) funded by the European Commission through the Tempus initiative.

French University in Armenia was privileged to coordinate the project driven by the notion of improving the capacity of Armenian and Georgian higher education systems to effectively deliver quality assurance of transnational providers - both at institutional and national level - through learning from European experience and guided by the *UNESCO/OECD Guidelines on Quality Assurance of Cross Border Higher Education*.



The highlight of the project is the *Guidelines for developing policies, criteria and procedures for quality assurance of transnational higher education in Armenia and Georgia* and it aims to guide the stakeholders in their efforts to enhance quality and promote regulation and recognition of transnational higher education provisions in Armenia and Georgia. It endeavors to share the experience to establish quality assurance mechanisms in line with UNESCO/OECD guidelines gained throughout the four years. It encourages policy-makers and stakeholders in higher education to further develop peer learning for the quality assurance of transnational provisions within post-soviet higher education context.

The project achievement would not have been possible without the kind support and help of institutions and colleagues involved in the project consortium. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all of them for their valuable inputs, wise guidance, whole-hearted cooperation and constructive criticism throughout the project life-time.

We would like to express our special gratitude to the leaders of the workpackages: Dr. Anca Greere (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK), Dr. Christophe Terrasse (European foundation for management development, Belgium), Ms. Michaela Martin (UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning, France), Ms. Maia Gelashvili (National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, Georgia) and Dr. Ruben Topchyan (Armenian National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation, Armenia) for their invaluable contribution to the project outcomes.

We thank the European Commission and particularly the EACEA for the opportunity to make this project happen. The assistance provided by the teams from EACEA, Armenian and Georgian National Erasmus+ offices have been fundamental for effective management and implementation of our project.

Arayik Navoyan, PhD  
TNE\_QA Project Coordinator, Vice-Rector of French University in Armenia

Dear Colleagues,

TNE\_QA is a joint endeavor of thought leaders in the Armenian, Georgian and European Union higher education to move the quality assurance of transnational education in the region to a new level of performance in line with the international trends and accepted standards. As a guide the team used the *UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education (2005)* aimed to establish a QA system for Armenia and Georgia in terms of safeguarding quality of higher education provisions when it comes to cross-border providers.



TNE\_QA is one of the major steps Armenia and Georgia have undertaken to ensure the quality of cross border provisions are in line with the national strategies and contribute to taking the higher education systems to new heights at the national, regional and international levels. The project contributed greatly to revisiting the current state of affairs of transnational providers in a post-Soviet context, in-depth assessment of the challenges, and evaluation of compatibility of the current system with the aspired one, identification of the major gaps and, ultimately, a set of recommendations to the Armenian and Georgian authorities on the next steps towards quality assurance of TNE provisions and recognition of the awarded qualifications.

The 4-year journey was full of learning into the current system of quality assurance in Armenia and Georgia, the UNESCO/OECD guidelines on cross border provisions and how to contextualize the latter considering the many cultural aspects and values both the countries cherish. It is the result of the hard work of the whole consortium to ensure the best comparable and, in the meantime, legitimate approach to make the two work.

It is our firm belief that the lessons learnt are invaluable, worthwhile, and useful for the academic community of Armenia and beyond. This is the contribution of the TNE\_QA consortium of major stakeholders in concern and we do hope it will feed into the new framework for QA of TNE promulgated by the Armenian and Georgian governments to ensure adequate quality assurance services for transnational providers with a major aim to safeguard the systems from bogus ones.

We extend our highest possible appreciation to the European Commission and its Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency for the invaluable contribution to the system sustainable development.

Susanna Karakhanyan, PhD  
(my signature here)  
Project Author and Member of the project EMT

## Tempus “Promoting Quality and Recognition of

### Transnational Education in Armenia and Georgia” (TNE\_QA) project consortium

<b>Armenia</b>	French University in Armenia
	Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University
	National Center for Professional Education QA Foundation
	Education Quality
	Ministry of Education and Science of Republic of Armenia
	American University of Armenia
<b>Belgium</b>	European Foundation for Management Development
<b>France</b>	Universite Jean Moulin Lyon 3
	Aix-Marseille University
	International Institute for Education Planning
<b>Georgia</b>	Caucasus University
	Akaki Tsereteli State University
	Batumi State Maritime Academy
	National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement
	International Institute for Education policy, planning
	Ministry of Education and Science in Georgia
<b>Germany</b>	Universitat Siegen
<b>United Kingdom</b>	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
	Bath Spa University

## Foreword

Transnational higher education revolves around a wide range of modalities that span from face-to-face (taking various forms such as students travelling abroad and campuses abroad) to distance learning (using a range of technologies and including e-learning). In 2005 UNESCO in cooperation with OECD produced and published *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education*. With due regard to the specific division of responsibilities in each country, the Guidelines recommend actions to six stakeholders - governments; higher education institutions/providers including academic staff; student bodies; quality assurance and accreditation bodies; academic recognition bodies, and professional bodies. The Guidelines widely promote careful consideration of the variety of the higher education provision, at different levels and the diversity of quality assurance provisions for transnational education.

Within the frames of TEMPUS TNE\_QA project (2013-2017), the consortium joined its efforts to study in-depth applicability of the guidelines in two post-Soviet countries: Armenia and Georgia. The results of the endeavor are expressed in the current guidelines for policies, criteria and procedures for quality assurance of transnational education in the two countries. The current guidelines, in addition to the UNESCO/OECD ones, recommend country specific actions to six stakeholders – governments, higher education institutions/providers including academic staff, student bodies, external quality assurance providers and accreditation bodies, academic recognition bodies, and professional bodies. The guidelines as well as all the tools and documents developed in the project are intended to help the governments, QA agencies, TNE providers and other stakeholders in improving their quality standards by sharing best practices. They are complementary to the UNESCO/OECD international guidelines and serve as a basis for this document by explicating what could be practically done at the national level.

In addition to the country and region specific guidelines for TNE provisions, criteria and procedures for internal and external quality assurance as well as criteria and procedure for recognition of transnational external quality assurance providers supplement this handbook. The criteria and procedures were developed as a result of the project and were piloted within the frames of the project to ensure legitimacy within specific contexts.

Considering similarities of the country contexts with Eastern European countries, the results could be applicable beyond the boundaries of the two countries and might be useful for educationalists, policy makers and higher education stakeholders at large.



## I. I. Introduction to the project and its methodology

In response to the market demands for a knowledgeable and competent workforce, expansion of diversity of providers in higher education was a result. Traditional place-bound education is no longer the only means to obtain qualifications and such types as distance learning and transnational education (TNE) are proliferating, in some regions more than others. Along with the trend a steady rise of concern regarding forms of regulation, quality control and consumer protection is registered. Regardless of the ways in which education is delivered, its quality assurance and maintenance of standards is of paramount concern among many national and international institutions, organizations and private sector companies, and students.

This trend in post-Soviet countries is tangible with establishment of branch campuses and expansion of transnational provisions. Along with widening opportunities for access to higher education and an opportunity to obtain the desired foreign degree without leaving the home country, disadvantages related to this form of HE provision are many, the risk of diploma mills being a major one. There are about 10 branch campuses of foreign institutions in Armenia and about 7 in Georgia. While being placed in the legal system of the host countries these universities are either quality assured by the QA providers from the home countries or quality assurance is not any of the priorities of such institutions. Such an attitude creates potential disadvantages for the higher education systems of the target countries like misalignment with the needs and cultural and linguistic sensitivities of the host country, under-qualified academic staff, deepening fragmentation of the higher education system, bogus diplomas to name but a few.

Considering the issues at hand a facilitative framework was developed within the frames of Tempus TNE\_QA project to promote regulation, quality assurance, and recognition of TNE in Armenia and Georgia. The project was launched in 2013 and the overall objective was to bridge that gap by supporting the establishment of internal (HEIs) and external (EQAs) quality assurance mechanisms for transnational providers in line with OECD/UNESCO guidelines to further enhance quality, and promote regulation and recognition of transnational education provisions in Armenia and Georgia. The specific objectives evolved around the following:

- Building on the capacity of the Armenian and Georgian HEIs and quality assurance agencies to effectively manage quality assurance of TNE
- Developing and integrating quality assurance mechanisms at the institutions that provide transnational education
- Developing and integrating quality assurance standards and procedures for external quality assurance systems to effectively manage the quality assurance procedures at universities providing TNE
- Ensuring regulation, quality assurance and recognition of TNE provisions in Armenia and Georgia.

The project methodology ranged from capacity building to development and pilot of EQA and IQA frameworks for transnational providers. After an extensive capacity building during WP 1 of the project the partner countries were enabled to actually take upon the responsibility for the policy and regulation development, while the European partners contributed to the process by providing insightful guidance, sharing their know-how and working along with the key implementers on the pilot of the results.

To ensure the developments are contextualized, serve the country needs and are aligned with the local policies, the project work group conducted fact-finding, based on which a TNE QA framework for both HEIs and QA agencies was developed. The fact-finding study evolved around investigations into the current practices and procedures underpinning the assessment of QA standards in home and host countries. A standard research methodology was designed to allow comparative analysis of standards and procedures currently in place in each partner country. The methods for investigation included but were not limited to a mix of desk research, interviews, observation and review of processes and procedures. The synopsis further revealed areas of good practice as well as issues and areas for further research.

As a result of the study the task force launched the process of developing the QA standards and procedures for HEIs and EQAs. The developed policies and procedures underwent a pilot testing with the support of the EU partners. The results culminated in a joint review report produced by the EQAs of Armenia and Georgia, which also provided a comprehensive list of recommendations, observations and areas of good practice and development.

The current guidelines present the recommendations that were outlined in the final report. The recommendations are proposed as in addition to the UNESCO/OECD guidelines and reflect the country specific needs.

## II. Policy on Transnational Higher Education Quality Assurance

### 1. Policy guidelines at the government level

#### ***UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Governments***

Governments can be influential, if not responsible, in promoting adequate quality assurance, accreditation and the recognition of qualifications. They undertake the role of policy co-ordination in most higher education systems. However, it is acknowledged throughout these Guidelines that in some countries, the authority for overseeing quality assurance lies with sub-national government bodies or with non-governmental organisations.

In this context, it is recommended that governments:

- a) Establish, or encourage the establishment of a comprehensive, fair and transparent system of registration or licensing for cross-border higher education providers wishing to operate in their territory.
- b) Establish, or encourage the establishment of a comprehensive capacity for reliable quality assurance and accreditation of cross-border higher education provision, recognising that quality assurance and accreditation of cross-border higher education provision involves both sending and receiving countries.
- c) Consult and coordinate amongst the various competent bodies for quality assurance and accreditation both nationally and internationally.
- d) Provide accurate, reliable and easily accessible information on the criteria and standards for registration, licensure, quality assurance and accreditation of cross-border higher education, their consequences on the funding of students, institutions or programmes, where applicable and their voluntary or mandatory nature.
- e) Consider becoming party to and contribute to the development and/or updating of the appropriate UNESCO regional conventions on recognition of qualifications and establish national information centres as stipulated by the conventions.
- f) Where appropriate develop or encourage bilateral or multilateral recognition agreements, facilitating the recognition or equivalence of each country's qualifications based on the procedures and criteria included in mutual agreements.
- g) Contribute to efforts to improve the accessibility at the international level of up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive information on recognised higher education institutions/providers.

### ***TNE\_QA Guidelines at the governmental level***

- I. The Ministries of Education of Armenia and Georgia should elaborate clear policies and regulations for transnational education providers operating in their country with a view to widen access to higher education provisions while ensuring quality and relevance of the provision.
- II. The legal frameworks of both Armenia and Georgia should define what transnational higher education provisions means within their particular context. Transnational provisions can mean both provisions of higher education services and their quality assurance. The following major expressions of TNE have been identified as a result of the project implementation:
  - a. Higher education institution level:
    - Main campuses established by foreign providers
    - Branch campuses
    - Intergovernmental institutions
    - Joint universities/colleges
    - Virtual institutions
  - b. Program level
    - Franchise
    - Joint degree
    - Stand-alone program offered by a foreign HEI
    - Distance education with local academic partner
    - Virtual programs/courses
    - Self-study distance education
  - c. External quality assurance level
    - Joint external quality assurance reviews with a foreign provider
    - Independent external review of HEIs and programs by a foreign QA provider
    - External quality assurance review by national EQA provider with the consideration of TNE peculiarities.
- III. In the case of collaborative arrangements there should be written and legally binding agreements or contracts setting out the rights and obligations of all partners;
- IV. The legal frameworks of both Armenia and Georgia should clearly define which TNE providers are allowed to enter the higher education market and clearly state all the policies and regulations the TNE provide should comply with to ensure the entry into the system as well as subsequent recognition of the qualification awarded.
- V. The legal framework should further define the policies and regulations regarding TNE in the following cases:
  - a. Independent TNE provision - when the sending country has primary responsibility for the curriculum, the qualification awarded and external quality assurance;
  - b. Collaborative TNE provision – when both the host and the sending countries share or have joint responsibility for the curriculum, qualifications award and external quality assurance;
  - c. Provision of a model system by local providers – when the model of education – curriculum and qualification award – are borrowed from a system by the local providers and the external quality assurance is done independently by an EQA provider of the borrowed system (e.g. AUA in Armenia).
- VI. The Ministries of Education should delegate the authority for quality assurance procedures development and implementation to respective QA bodies.

- VII. Considering the ultimate responsible for the quality of a higher education system is the government, the recommendation that results from the project propose a robust licensing, monitoring and accreditation system for the types of TNE providers identified and defined by the government. The identification and definition should lead to a clear classification of TNE at the national level resulting in a National TNE Classification Framework.
- VIII. The National TNE Classification Framework should provide a good background data for informative decision taking, identifying the developmental trends, challenges and opportunities within the HE systems. A clear regulatory framework should be developed around it by respective Ministries to ensure its objective and transparent operation.
- IX. The National TNE Classification Framework should allow for robust data collection on the TNE performance at the national level for both sending and hosting providers. The data collection should be hosted by a respective buffer body/QA agency, which should be identified and authorized by the Ministries of Education and accountable to the Ministry of Education of Armenia and Georgia.
- X. The clear identification and definition of the TNE providers – both sending and hosting – should allow the next phase of development at the national level. Both Armenia and Georgia are to clearly define their strategies on TNE at the national level.
- XI. The national legal systems should also clearly define procedures for award and acknowledgement of the award of qualifications offered by TNE providers. These procedures could include an a posteriori recognition of TNE providers that are quality assured by foreign QA agencies.
- XII. One of the mechanisms to confer recognition of TNE programs leading to a qualification award is to place them on a register of country approved programs and placement of the latter in the National Qualifications Framework. The link between QA decisions and NQF placement of TNE will need to be decided as well.

## 2. Policy guidelines at higher education institution level

### *UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Higher Education Institutions/Providers*

Commitment to quality by all higher education institutions/providers is essential. To this end, the active and constructive contributions of academic staff are indispensable. Higher education institutions are responsible for the quality as well as the social, cultural and linguistic relevance of education and the standards of qualifications provided in their name, no matter where or how it is delivered.

In this context, it is recommended that higher education institutions/providers delivering cross-border higher education:

- a) Ensure that the programmes they deliver across borders and in their home country are of comparable quality and that they also take into account the cultural and linguistic sensitivities of the receiving country. It is desirable that a commitment to this effect should be made public.
- b) Recognise that quality teaching and research is made possible by the quality of faculty and the quality of their working conditions that foster independent and critical inquiry. The UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel and other relevant instruments need to be taken into account by all institutions and providers to support good working conditions and terms of service, collegial governance and academic freedom.
- c) Develop, maintain or review current internal quality management systems so that they make full use of the competencies of stakeholders such as academic staff, administrators, students and graduates and take full responsibility for delivering higher education qualifications comparable in standard in their home country and across borders. Furthermore, when promoting their programmes to potential students through agents, they should take full responsibility to ensure that the information and guidance provided by their agents is accurate reliable and easily accessible.
- d) Consult competent quality assurance and accreditation bodies and respect the quality assurance and accreditation systems of the receiving country when delivering higher education across borders, including distance education.
- e) Share good practices by participating in sector organisations and inter-institutional networks at national and international levels.
- f) Develop and maintain networks and partnerships to facilitate the process of recognition by acknowledging each other's qualifications as equivalent or comparable.
- g) Where relevant, use codes of good practice such as the UNESCO/Council of Europe Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education and other relevant codes such as the Council of Europe/UNESCO *Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications*.
- h) Provide accurate, reliable and easily accessible information on the criteria and procedures of external and internal quality assurance and the academic and professional recognition of qualifications they deliver and provide complete descriptions of programmes and qualifications, preferably with descriptions of the knowledge, understanding and skills that a successful student should acquire. Higher education institutions/providers should collaborate especially with quality assurance and accreditation bodies and with student bodies to facilitate the dissemination of this information.
- i) Ensure the transparency of the financial status of the institution and/or educational programme offered.

## ***TNE\_QA Guidelines for Higher Education Institutions/Providers***

- I. The TNE providers should have clear internal quality assurance policies, procedures and mechanisms in place, and make them public. They should clearly explain their status with regard to possible external quality assurance providers as well as compliance with the national quality assurance framework;
- II. The IQA policies should ensure impartial information about the curricula development, its quality assurance and qualification award. Public information should be provided on the status of the degrees offered with the national qualification recognition bodies, and in particular on whether a programme offered by a TNE provider is recognized as part of the national higher education provision.
- III. The TNE providers should develop IQA criteria based on the principle of “justifiable difference”, that would allow to bring diversity and innovation to the local HE provision.
- IV. The IQA should clearly explain how the qualifications offered are placed on the NQF of the host and foreign country.
- V. The TNE providers should ensure awareness and knowledge of the culture and customs of both the awarding institutions and receiving country among the students and staff.
- VI. In case of offering a qualification through an agent (e.g. local institution), the TNE providers should be responsible for appointing a legal representative to act on their behalf. TNE providers using agents to offer their programs should conclude written and legally binding agreements or contracts with these, clearly stipulating their roles, responsibilities, delegated powers of action as well as monitoring, arbitration and termination provisions. These agreements or contracts should further be established with a view to avoiding conflicts of interests as well as the rights of students with regard to their studies.
- VII. Awarding institutions should be responsible for issuing the qualifications resulting from their transnational study programmes. They should provide clear and transparent information on the qualifications, in particular through the use of the Diploma Supplement, facilitating the assessment of the qualifications by competent recognition bodies, other higher education institutions, employers and others. This information should include the nature, duration, workload, location and language(s) of the study programme leading to the qualifications.
- VIII. The TNE provider should ensure qualifications issued through transnational educational programmes are undergoing the recognition procedure by the governmental authorities and are listed in the official registers of the receiving country.

### 3. Policy guidelines for the student bodies

#### ***UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Student Bodies***

As representatives of the direct recipients of cross-border higher education and as part of the higher education community, student bodies bear the responsibility of helping students and potential students to carefully scrutinise the information available and giving sufficient consideration in their decision making process.

In this context, it is recommended that the emergence of autonomous local, national and international student bodies be encouraged and that the student bodies:

- a) Be involved as active partners at international, national and institutional levels in the development, monitoring and maintenance of the quality provision of cross-border higher education and take the necessary steps to achieve this objective.
- b) Take active part in promoting quality provision, by increasing the awareness of the students of the potential risks such as misleading guidance and information, low-quality provision leading to qualifications of limited validity, and disreputable providers. They should also guide them to accurate and reliable information sources on cross-border higher education. This could be done by increasing the awareness of the existence of these Guidelines as well as taking an active part in their implementation.
- c) Encourage students and potential students to ask appropriate questions when enrolling in cross-border higher education programmes. A list of relevant questions could be established by student bodies, including foreign students where possible, in collaboration with bodies such as higher education institutions, quality assurance and accreditation bodies and academic recognition bodies. Such a list should include the following questions: whether the foreign institution/provider is recognised or accredited by a trustworthy body and whether the qualifications delivered by the foreign institution/provider are recognised in the students' home country for academic and/or professional purposes.



### ***TNE\_QA Guidelines for Student Bodies***

- I. In order to allow students to collectively express their voice, the TNE provider should establish a student body that will act as an advocate of TNE students and one of the main sources of impartial information for the TNE students. The representatives of the student body should be represented in the main decision making body of the TNE provider.
- II. The national student bodies, ANSA, Student Voice in Armenia and relevant institutions in Georgia, should establish a special committee within their operations handling the issues related to transnational education. There should be a constitutional amendment made in the statutory document regarding the role of the national student body in promoting transnational education of respective student bodies, approved by respective governmental authorities.
- III. The student bodies should be one of the reliable sources of information on the quality and validity of the transnational provisions. Thus, special mechanisms collecting data on the transnational providers from the perception of students enrolled in transnational provisions and awarded transnational qualifications should be established. Student bodies should be incited to prepare reports on the quality and validity of transnational providers from the perspective of the main consumers. These should be made publicly available on a regular basis.
- IV. The student bodies should set up guidelines and mechanisms for protecting the rights of the students enrolled in transnational education. The rights of students studying with TNE providers should be comparable to those students studying with public and private local HE providers.
- V. Student bodies should conduct regular awareness raising campaigns and orientations for transnational students on the prospects and benefits of different transnational providers.
- VI. The national student bodies should be involved in such decision taking bodies as qualification recognition, licensure and accreditation.

#### 4. Policy guidelines for the quality assurance bodies

##### ***UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Bodies***

In addition to internal quality management of institutions/providers, external quality assurance and accreditation systems have been adopted in more than 60 countries. Quality assurance and accreditation bodies are responsible for assessing the quality of higher education provision. The existing systems of quality assurance and accreditation often vary from country to country and sometimes within the countries themselves. Some have governmental bodies for quality assurance and accreditation, and others have non-governmental bodies. Furthermore, some differences exist in the terminologies used, the definition of “quality”, the purpose and function of the system including its link to the funding of students, institutions or programmes, the methodologies used in quality assurance and accreditation, the scope and function of the responsible body or unit, and the voluntary or compulsory nature of participation. While respecting this diversity, a co-ordinated effort among the bodies of both sending and receiving countries is needed at both the regional and global level, in order to tackle the challenges raised by the growth of cross-border provision of higher education, especially in its new forms.

In this context, it is recommended that quality assurance and accreditation bodies:

- a) Ensure that their quality assurance and accreditation arrangements include cross-border education provision in its various modes. This can mean giving attention to assessment guidelines, ensuring that standards and processes are transparent, consistent and appropriate to take account of the shape and scope of the national higher education system, and adaptability to changes and developments in cross-border provision.
- b) Sustain and strengthen the existing regional and international networks or establish regional networks in regions that do not already have one. These networks can serve as platforms to exchange information and good practice, disseminate knowledge, and increase the understanding of international developments and challenges as well as to improve the professional expertise of their staff and quality assessors. These networks could also be used to improve awareness of disreputable providers and dubious quality assurance and accreditation bodies, and to develop monitoring and reporting systems that can lead to their identification.
- c) Establish links to strengthen the collaboration between the bodies of the sending country and the receiving country and enhance the mutual understanding of different systems of quality assurance and accreditation. This may facilitate the process of assuring the quality of programmes delivered across borders and institutions operating across borders while respecting the quality assurance and accreditation systems of the receiving countries.
- d) Provide accurate and easily accessible information on the assessment standards, procedures, and effects of the quality assurance mechanisms on the funding of students, institutions or programmes where applicable as well as the results of the assessment. Quality assurance and accreditation bodies should collaborate with other actors, especially higher education institutions/providers, academic staff, student bodies and academic recognition bodies to facilitate the dissemination of such information.
- e) Apply the principles reflected in current international documents on cross-border higher education such as the UNESCO/Council of Europe Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education.
- f) Reach mutual recognition agreements with other bodies on the basis of trust in and understanding of each other’s professional practice, develop systems of internal quality assurance and regularly undergo external evaluations, making full use of the competencies of stakeholders. Where feasible, consider undertaking experiments in international evaluation or peer reviews of quality assurance and accreditation bodies.
- g) Consider adoption of procedures for the international composition of peer review panels, international benchmarking of standards, criteria and assessment procedures and undertake joint assessment projects to increase the comparability of evaluation activities of different quality assurance

## ***TNE\_QA Guidelines for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Bodies***

- I. Quality assurance of transnational provisions in Armenia and Georgia should be clearly described in national level policies and should be done at three distinctive levels:
  - a. Entry level: licensure
  - b. Implementation level: monitoring and data provision
  - c. Accountability purposes: accreditation of TNE provisions.
- II. The guiding principles for external quality assurance of transnational providers should be as follows:
  - a. Transparency and public information;
  - b. Consistency in evaluation;
  - c. Comparability of provisions;
  - d. Accuracy in data collection and analysis.
- III. The EQAs of Armenia and Georgia, ANQA and NCEQE, should have clear policies in place describing their role in accreditation and quality assurance of different types of transnational providers.
- IV. The EQAs should develop TNE QA criteria based on the principle of “justifiable difference”, that would allow to bring diversity and innovation to the local HE provision.
- V. In order to establish recognition of TNE providers and their programs, the policies should be accompanied by clearly outlined procedures at both institutional and program levels. They could cover the following mechanisms :
  - a. Joint reviews;
  - b. Mutual recognition;
  - c. Recognition of independent external review conducted by a foreign QA provider;
  - d. Independent reviews conducted by the national EQA provider.

For each of these mechanisms, the EQAA will have to spell out a respective procedure to be followed by the TNE provider.

- VI. The EQAAs should establish sub-committees to the national level Accreditation Commissions dealing with TNE. The representation on the sub-committee should ensure equal participation of TNE stakeholders.
- VII. The EQAAs should have clear collaboration mechanisms in place with the qualification awarding and recognition bodies and be represented on such committees at the national level.

- VIII. The EQAAs should have representation of the national student bodies dealing with TNE on the decision making body.
- IX. The EQAAs should collect respective data on TNE and produce reports on TNE provisions on a regular basis.
- X. The EQAAs should be part of national, regional and international networks of EQAAs and have clear collaboration mechanisms with respective EQAAs, regional and international networks of the TNE providers to allow free and transparent exchange of the necessary information on the TNE providers.

## 5. Policy guidelines for the Academic Recognition bodies

### ***UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Academic Recognition Bodies***

The UNESCO regional conventions on recognition of qualifications are important instruments facilitating the fair recognition of higher education qualifications, including the assessment of foreign qualifications resulting from cross-border mobility of students, skilled professionals and cross-border provision of higher education.

There is a need to build on existing initiatives with additional international action to facilitate fair processes of recognition of academic qualifications by making systems more transparent and comparable.

In this context, it is recommended that academic recognition bodies:

- a) Establish and maintain regional and international networks that can serve as platforms to exchange information and good practice, disseminate knowledge, increase the understanding of international developments and challenges and improve the professional expertise of their staff.
- b) Strengthen their co-operation with quality assurance and accreditation bodies to facilitate the process of determining whether a qualification meets basic quality standards, as well as to engage in cross-border cooperation and networking with quality assurance and accreditation bodies. This cooperation should be pursued both at regional and cross-regional level.
- c) Establish and maintain contacts with all stakeholders to share the information and improve the links between academic and professional qualification assessment methodologies.
- d) Where appropriate, address the professional recognition of qualifications in the labour market and provide necessary information on professional recognition, both to those who have a foreign qualification and to employers. Given the increasing scope of the international labour markets and growing professional mobility, collaboration and co-ordination with professional associations are recommended for this purpose.
- e) Use codes of practice such as the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications<sup>[13]</sup> and other relevant codes of practice to increase the public's confidence in their recognition procedures, and to reassure stakeholders that the processing of requests is conducted in a fair and consistent manner.
- f) Provide clear, accurate and accessible information on the criteria for the assessment of qualifications, including qualifications resulting from cross-border provision.

### ***TNE\_QA Guidelines for Academic Recognition Bodies***

- I. National authorities should identify which body is in charge of recognizing TNE awarded qualifications. This will be typically a national recognition body for foreign credential (national ENIC/NARIC structure).
- II. Clear policies and procedures for the recognition of the TNE awarded qualifications should be developed, adopted and made publicly available. They should follow the principles outlined in the regional convention for higher education recognition (in Europe the Lisbonconvention).
- III. Recognition should be aligned with the registration of TNE providers on the national qualification frameworks, if it exists and is operational. There should be a process at the national level allowing for placement of the TNE qualifications within the NQF of the country.

## 6. Policy guidelines for the professional bodies

### ***UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Professional Bodies***

Systems of professional recognition differ from country to country and from profession to profession. For example, in some cases, a recognised academic qualification could be sufficient for entry into professional practice, whereas in other cases, additional requirements are imposed on holders of academic qualifications in order to enter the profession. Given the increasing scope of international labour markets and growing professional mobility, the holders of academic qualifications, as well as employers and professional associations are facing many challenges. Increasing transparency – i.e., improving the availability and the quality of the information -- is critical for fair recognition processes.

In this context, it is recommended that professional bodies responsible for professional recognition:

- a) Develop information channels that are accessible both to national and foreign holders of qualifications to assist them in gaining professional recognition of their qualifications, and to employers who need advice on the professional recognition of foreign qualifications. Information should also be easily accessible to current and potential students.
- b) Establish and maintain contacts between the professional bodies of both sending and receiving countries, higher education institutions/providers, quality assurance and accreditation bodies, as well as academic recognition bodies to improve qualification assessment methodologies.
- c) Establish, develop and implement assessment criteria and procedures for comparing programmes and qualifications to facilitate the recognition of qualifications and to accommodate learning outcomes and competencies that are culturally appropriate in addition to input and process requirements.
- d) Improve the accessibility at the international level of up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive information on mutual recognition agreements for the professions and encourage the development of new agreements.

### ***TNE\_QA Guidelines for Professional Bodies***

- I. The professional bodies at stake should develop additional policies and procedures for licensure and recognition of the professionals holding a TNE awarded qualification<sup>1</sup> to allow the TNE graduates entry into professional practice.
- II. The professional bodies in Armenia and Georgia should establish collaborative ties with their counterparts in respective foreign countries (TNE provider country) to ensure alignment of the requirements to the professional practice.

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<sup>1</sup> In Armenia the professionals in the medical and legal field need to undergo a specific certification/licensure allowing entry into the workforce.



### III. Criteria for Quality Assurance of Transnational Education

#### 1. Criteria for internal quality assurance of transnational higher education providers

***UNESCO recommendation:* Develop, maintain or review current internal quality management systems so that they make full use of the competencies of stakeholders such as academic staff, administrators, students and graduates and take full responsibility for delivering higher education qualifications comparable in standard in their home country and across borders.**

#### Criteria

**NB: The list of criteria is intended as a guideline for TNE institutions engaging in quality assurance process, in order to review their situation, evaluate the progress and commit to further improvement. It is to be adapted to the mission and singularity of each institution.**

- The institution can demonstrate that Internal Quality Assurance systems are based on a comparable quality policy, in particular:
  - the institution should provide evidences that there is a compatibility with existing frameworks
  - the institution should also be able to provide evidence on plans, commitments and / or progresses towards comparable IQA systems.
- The Internal Quality Assurance system of the institution is consistent with the External Quality Assurance system and is compatible with the accreditation standards in the receiving country.
- The Internal Quality Assurance systems ensure comparable student recruitment processes (institutional level) and entry requirements (programme level) at home and host countries / institutions.
- The Internal Quality Assurance systems offer comparable engagement with key stakeholders,
  - in particular, Internal Quality Assurance systems ensure that the academic staff and the students are represented in decision-making processes in a comparable manner.
- The Internal Quality Assurance systems include competency assessment procedures to make sure that graduates are of comparable level.
- The Internal Quality Assurance systems provide comparable criteria and procedures for performance reviews of academic staff and administrators.
- The Internal Quality Assurance systems include comparable and explicit procedures for academic programme review.
- International Quality Assurance systems include comparable exam monitoring and fraud prevention and repression mechanisms.

## 2. Criteria for external quality assurance of transnational providers

### 2.1 TNE QA outcomes

*UNESCO recommendation: Consult competent quality assurance and accreditation bodies and respect the quality assurance and accreditation systems of the receiving country when delivering higher education across borders, including distance education.*

- Policies or regulation are enforced. They may include the consultation or reference to relevant accreditation/certification bodies information worldwide, and are aligned with accreditation standards in the receiving country.
- Results or review and audits by external quality organisations are made accessible with various levels of details for internal/ external audiences
- Responsibility is allocated to a job role to continuously monitor and report on updates to relevant committees, to oversee the implementation of the quality assurance processes and a budget is allocated to the tasks.

### 2.2 TNE QA Standards for Armenia

There are 10 domains of Institutional Accreditation in Armenia, which are as follows:

- Mission and Purpose
- Governance and Administration Academic Programme
- Students
- Faculty and Staff
- Research and Development
- Infrastructure and Resources
- Societal Responsibility
- External Relations and Internationalisation
- Internal Quality Assurance

In transnational provision it is important to ensure that TNE provision is developed, offered and quality is assured in consistency with national legislation and is guided by the principle of **comparability**. To support the comparability along with all the dimensions, supplementary to the State Accreditation Criteria and Standards, several elements are recommended to add: either as points for evaluation, or as required documents<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> This is a working document and changes may be incorporated at later time to increase clarity, readability and user easy

<b>ANQA CRITERIA</b>	<b>ANQA STANDARD</b>	<b>POINTS FOR EVALUATION</b>	<b>REQUIRED DOCUMENTS</b>
Mission and Purpose	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	<i>The institution demonstrates strategic commitment to TNE</i>	
		<i>The university activities/processes regarding home and host country thresholds are implemented according to the university mission.</i>	<i>Analysis of contradictions, obstacles regarding home and host country requirements and principles of Higher Education, licensing and accreditation requirements, deviation from which can interfere recognition</i>
		<i>What is the university model and its role in the host country?</i>  <i>The effectiveness of the model for the country/ adaptation of the model to the host country context.</i>	<i>Analysis of limitations/obligations of home institution/ country/model, that university faces while organizing the educational process, issues to be addressed</i>
	1.2. The TLI's mission, goals and objectives reflect the needs of the internal and external stakeholders.	<i>The institution explores the needs/ expectations of internal and external (local) stakeholders and satisfies the local labour market demands</i>	
	1.3. The institution has approved mechanisms and procedures to evaluate the achievement of its mission and purpose and to further improve them		
Governance and administration	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.		<i>An agreement or contract setting out the rights and obligations of all partners (the responsibilities of the host institution/country toward the home institution/country and the obligations of home institution/country toward the host</i>

			<i>institution/country)</i>
			<i>Information on licensing/ authorization/ accreditation of host institution</i>
	2.2. The TLI's system of governance provides students and teachers opportunity to participate in decision-making processes directed to them		
	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.		
	2.4. The TLI conducts environmental scanning and draws on reliable data during the decision-making process		
	2.5. The management of the policies and the processes draws on the quality management principle (plan-do-check-act).		
	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.		
	2.7. There are impartial mechanisms evaluating the quality of quantitative and qualitative information on the academic programmes and qualification awards		

Academic Programmes	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.	<i>The academic programmes take into account the cultural and linguistic sensitivities of host country.</i>	<i>Mapping of Academic programme ILOs to National Qualification framework</i>
		<i>Achievement of ILOs in home and host countries ensure the same progress and quality of graduates</i>	<i>A benchmarking of the ILOs towards home country</i>
	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.	<i>There is a policy on sharing experience to soften the differences in teaching and learning in two countries</i>	
		<i>The teaching materials are adapted to local and cultural sensitivities</i>	<i>The methodology used to ensure the adaptation of teaching materials to the local environment</i>
		<i>The teaching methodologies are adapted to local and cultural sensitivities</i>	<i>The methodology used to ensure the adaptation of teaching methodologies to the local environment</i>
			<i>Benchmarking of the teaching methodologies</i>
	3.3. The TLI has policy on students' assessment according to the learning outcomes and ensures academic integrity.	<i>The competency (knowledge, skill and ability) assessment system ensures the comparable level of graduates</i>	
		<i>The assessment system/approaches are comparable with justified differences</i>	
	3.4. The academic programmes of the TLI are contextually coherent with other relevant programmes and promote internationalization and mobility of students and staff.		

	3.5. The TLI has policy ensuring academic programme monitoring, effectiveness assessment and improvement.	<i>The academic programme approval, monitoring and review processes in home and host countries are comparable</i>	<i>Information on EQA of programmes (recognition status) publicly available</i>
		<i>The involvement of local stakeholders (including employers) in the design and delivery of programmes is secured</i>	
		<i>Degree-awarding bodies are proactive in promoting the academic and professional recognition of qualifications</i>	<i>Publicly available information about institutional commitment to student's granting of diploma / award / certificate</i>
		<i>Awarded qualifications are recognized in two countries</i>	<i>Agreement between both institutions to commit to exit strategy and resourcing, as well as to protect students if programme is to be closed unexpectedly; this might involve consideration of a number of options in the case of failure to see out the students degree and enable the award.</i>
		<i>There are internationally recognized mechanisms and tools to promote recognition of qualifications (e.g. diploma supplement, ECTS, three-cycle system...)</i>	<i>Information on the qualification provided and how it relates to national qualification framework publicly available.</i>
			<i>Information on which organization(s) or system(s) grants the qualification publicly available</i>
Students	4.1. The TLI has set mechanisms for promoting equitable recruitment,	<i>The student recruitment process is comparable even if the process is regulated at</i>	<i>Analysis of the limitations and contradictions of home and host country national entry</i>

	selection, and admission procedures.	<i>national level and regulations differ?</i>	<i>requirements</i>
		<i>Do national entry requirements conflict with the home country's entry requirements?</i>	
		<i>If yes, what is the mechanism to safeguard the students?</i>	
		<i>All phases of student "lifecycle" are covered in comparable/jointly regulated manner</i>	
4.2.	The TLI has policies and procedures for revealing student educational needs.		
4.3.	The TLI provides advising services, opportunities for extra-curricular activities supporting students' effective learning.	<i>Whenever needed, linguistic and cultural support is provided to students</i>	
4.4.	The TLI has set regulation and schedule for students to receive additional support and guidance from the administrative staff of the faculty		
4.5.	The TLI has student career support services.		
4.6.	The TLI promotes student involvement in its research activities		
4.7.	The TLI has responsible body for the students' rights protection.		
4.8.	The TLI has evaluation and quality assurance mechanisms of student educational, advisory and other services.		

Faculty and staff	5.1. The TLI has policies and procedures promoting recruitment of a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff capable of ensuring programme provisions.	<i>40% of academic credits are covered by the teaching staff from home country</i>	
		<i>Teaching staff of the host country are qualified enough to teach in the home country and/or have an experience of teaching abroad</i>	
	5.2. The teaching staff qualifications for each programme are comprehensively stated		
	5.3. The TLI has well established policies and procedures for the periodic evaluation of the teaching staff.		
	5.4. The TLI implements teacher professional development in accordance to the needs outlined during regular evaluations (both internal and external).	<i>There are comparable opportunities for professional development of the staff</i>	
	5.5. The TLI ensures the sustainability of the teaching staff according to academic programmes.		
	5.6. There are set policies and procedures for the staff promotion.		
	5.7. There is necessary technical and administrative staff to achieve the strategic goals.		
Research and Development	6.1. The TLI has a clear strategy for promoting its research interests and ambitions		
	6.2. The TLI has a long-term strategy as well as mid and short-term programmes that address its		



	research interests and ambitions.		
	6.3. The TLI ensures the implementation of research and development through sound policies and procedures		
	6.4. The TLI emphasizes the internationalization of its research.		<i>Joint research project</i>
			<i>Joint publications</i>
	6.5. The TLI has well established mechanisms for linking research with teaching.		
Infrastructure and Resources	7.1. The TLI has an appropriate learning environment for the implementation of academic programmes	<i>The working conditions and access to learning resources and teaching instruments for teaching and research are comparable.</i>	
	7.2. The TLI provides appropriate financial resources with necessary equipment and facilities as needed to achieve its mission and objectives.		
	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.		<i>TNE specific budget: breakdown according to the strategic lines</i>
	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.		
	7.5. The TLI has a sound policy and procedure to manage information and documentation.		

	7.6. The TLI creates safe and secure environment through health and safety mechanisms that also consider special needs of students.		
	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		
Societal Responsibility	8.1. The TLI has clear policy on institutional accountability.		
	8.2. The TLI ensures transparency of its procedures and processes and makes them publicly available.		
	8.3. The TLI has sustainable feedback mechanisms for establishing relations with society.		
	8.4. The TLI has mechanisms that ensure knowledge transfer to the society		
External Relations and Internationalisation	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.		
	9.2. The institution's external relations infrastructure ensures regulated process.		<p><i>Evidences of a membership of the institution or its staff and faculty in international networks:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>University networks (teaching, programme, scientific cooperation and research)</i></li> <li>• <i>Networks for students and teacher mobility</i></li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Professional networks (employability and qualification recognition)</i></li> </ul>
			<i>Evidences on the participation in international events and projects</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Number of successful projects</i></li> <li>• <i>Number of applications</i></li> <li>• <i>Statistics on staff and student mobility</i></li> <li>• <i>Impact analysis</i></li> <li>• <i>Follow-up activities</i></li> <li>• <i>Internal dissemination activities</i></li> </ul>
			<i>Mutual agreement of cooperation with the home institution on faculty qualification and teaching conditions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Memoranda of understanding for general cooperation</i></li> <li>• <i>Agreement for student and staff exchanges</i></li> <li>• <i>Agreement for the organisation of internships and job vacancies</i></li> </ul>
	9.3. The TLI promotes fruitful and effective collaboration with local and international counterparts.	<i>Regular and active participation in sector organisations and institutional networks is maintained</i>	
9.4. The TLI ensures internal stakeholders' appropriate level of a foreign language to enhance productivity of internationalization.			
Internal Quality Assurance	10. The TLI has internal quality assurance policies and procedures.		

	10.1. The TLI allocates sufficient time, material, human and financial resources to manage internal quality assurance processes.		
	10.2. The internal and external stakeholders are involved in quality assurance processes.		
	10.3. The internal quality assurance system is periodically reviewed.		
	10.4. The internal quality assurance system provides valid and sufficient background for the success of the external quality assurance processes.	<p><i>The IQA of the TLI refers to the EQA system and ensures alignment/compliance with the accreditation standards in the host country.</i></p> <p><i>How does the institution deal with the potential discrepancies?</i></p>	
	10.5. 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.		
		<p><i>The TLI consult competent quality assurance and accreditation bodies and respect the quality assurance and accreditation systems of the host country when delivering higher education across boarder</i></p>	<p><i>Evidences on compliance with national external quality assurance policy/regulations</i></p>

### 2.3 TNE QA Standards for Georgia

There are five accreditation standards overall and they cover both national and transnational provisions. The five standards are as follows:

1. Educational programme objectives, learning outcomes and their compliance with the programme
2. Teaching methodology and organization, adequate evaluation of programme mastering
3. Student achievements and individual work with them
4. Providing teaching resources
5. Teaching quality enhancement opportunities <sup>3</sup>

In case a HE programme is of a regulated profession such as medicine, law, teacher education, and maritime, sector benchmarks are utilized together with accreditation standards.

Further, in case of transnational provisions, several additional standards apply as well, which are complimentary to the main ones. The additional standards are as follows:

Description	Evaluation Criteria	Indicator/Evidence
Programmes delivered across border and in the home country take into account the cultural and linguistic sensitivities of the receiving country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teaching materials are adapted to local and cultural sensitivities;</li> <li>• The teaching methodologies are adapted to local and cultural sensitivities;</li> <li>• Linguistic and cultural support is provided to students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curricula and syllabi;</li> <li>• Methodology to adapt the teaching materials;</li> <li>• Teaching methodologies;</li> <li>• Student support services;</li> <li>• HEI survey results;</li> <li>• Interview results.</li> </ul>
Graduates of the programme should be of comparable level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Intended Learning Outcomes of the programme are measured at the end of the programme. The Assessment includes students in both home and host countries;</li> <li>• Assessment methods are similar to ensure comparability of the results.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment plans and reports;</li> <li>• Assessment results in aggregate and separately per institution to enable comparison;</li> <li>• Changes/improvements made based on the assessment results;</li> <li>• HEI survey results;</li> <li>• Interview results.</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> We are currently revising accreditation standards. This is an updated version of the standard which has been sent to Georgian HEIs, international experts and other stakeholders for consideration and feedback. We are holding a conference towards the end of the month where we will discuss feedback from stakeholders and agree on final version of the standards. Therefore, I do not think the standards in existing form are worth publishing as they will be modified based on stakeholders' feedback.

<p>Programme staff participates in sector organizations and inter-institutional networks (university networks, networks for student and teacher mobility, professional networks) at national and international levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a clear policy to select the networks to participate into. The participation is regularly reviewed to ensure its relevance;</li> <li>• There are mechanisms to ensure the dissemination of good practices;</li> <li>• Regular and active participation in sector organizations and institutional networks is maintained.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy on selecting networks;</li> <li>• Changes/improvements made due to participation in networks;</li> <li>• Mechanism for dissemination of good practices;</li> <li>• Interview results.</li> </ul>
<p>Accurate, reliable and easily accessible information on the criteria and procedures of external and internal quality assurance and the academic and professional recognition of qualifications, complete description of programmes and qualification, preferably with descriptions of the knowledge, understanding and skills that a successful student should acquire is provided.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The information on the External Quality Assurance of the programme is publicly available on the university's website;</li> <li>• Information on recognition status is publicly available on the website and relevant material is provided;</li> <li>• Information on the profile of the teachers and contact details is publicly available;</li> <li>• If possible, statistical indicators by programme on the selectivity at the entry, the study success' rate and the labor market's entry is made available;</li> <li>• Students participate in TNE programme committees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University website;</li> <li>• TNE programme committee;</li> <li>• Interview results.</li> </ul>
<p>TNE specific budget is provisioned.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TNE specific budget is provisioned;</li> <li>• There is a risk management policy in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TNE budget;</li> <li>• Risk management policy.</li> </ul>

	case of programme closure, which states how students will be able to graduate.	
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### 3. Criteria for recognition of transnational external quality assurance providers

#### 3.1 Armenia: criteria for recognition

According to the Statute on state accreditation of institutions and their academic programs in the Republic of Armenia (point 10), an education institution may apply to the organizations registered in European Quality Assurance Registrar for Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as EQAR) as well as the full members of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as ENQA) for the institutional accreditation.

Education institutions carrying out academic programs with the countries not included in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) or the branches of institutions from the above-mentioned countries may be accredited within RA territory by the recognized accrediting agencies the list of which is approved by the Head (hereinafter referred to as Minister) of the authorized body of state education management (hereinafter referred to as the Ministry). Within 30 calendar days an education institution is obliged to inform ANQA on the launch of the accreditation process by the foreign organizations.

Though the Statute on state accreditation of institutions and their programmes in RA states that the results of institutional accreditation are recognized and registered in the State Accreditation Registrar if the institution has informed ANQA on the launch of the accreditation process by the foreign organization, it is recommended to make amendments in the following manner:

The results of the institutional accreditation are recognized and registered in State Accreditation Registrar if:

- the assessment plan is established by the respective quality assurance agency after consultation with ANQA. It is communicated with ANQA, so that the compatibility with the requirements of the RA can be verified. This is to help to ensure that the outcomes of the review process meet the requirements of RA.
- certain elements are required of an accreditation for it to be acceptable to the ANQA Accreditation Commission:
  - Evidences that the quality assurance agency regularly performs activities focused on external quality assurance (hereinafter referred to as EQA),
  - An explanation of the organizational structure of the quality assurance agency that includes a copy of the current statutes of the quality assurance agency,
  - The review’s management and procedure must be transparent and therefore easily available to the examination by the ANQA Accreditation Commission,
  - Basic data regarding the organization and the methodology of the procedure,
  - The report produced must be detailed to provide satisfactory assurance to the ANQA Accreditation Commission of the robustness of the review,
  - CVs of expert panel and process coordinator

- The manner in which the quality assurance agency composes the assessment panels so that each assessment panel also comprises at least one student member.
- The manner in which the assessment panel should come to its assessment.
- The opportunity for the institution to formulate technical comments and substantive objections before the external assessment is finalized by the panel.

A positive decision means that the accreditation result is recognized and will be registered in the Accreditation State Register.

Institutional capacities of an education institution are considered to be accredited upon the registration in the State Accreditation Registrar.

### 3.2 Georgia: criteria for recognition

NCEQE automatically recognizes accreditation granted by the organizations listed in Chapter IV part 3 of this document. Additionally, the Center recognizes the accreditation granted by a foreign organization if the external evaluation mechanism of quality assurance of the organization fully covers accreditation standards and procedures existing at the national level and there is an international agreement regarding the recognition.

## IV. Procedure for Quality Assurance of Transnational Education

### 1 Armenia: procedure for TNE QA

In Armenia quality assurance is a mandatory process for all institutions irrespective of their legal and organizational form. To create a procedure where the TNE providers and academic programmes can be recognized by the State, the external quality assurance framework may envisage two options:

1. **Full accreditation**
2. **Comparability review.**

**1. Full Accreditation** is for TNE providers who are not accredited by a recognised agency in the home country and/or for the institutions who does not comply with the recognition criteria. It is a larger exercise based around all criteria.

Full accreditation can be undertaken according to the following options:

- a) National accreditation by a local agency (ANQA with the consideration of TNE specifications within the local framework),
- b) Joint accreditation.

a) National accreditation:

- The accreditation is carried out in accordance with the Armenian national regulations and QA framework, considering all the specifications of the UNESCO guidelines, home country specifications and limitations and TNE characteristics of the TLI,

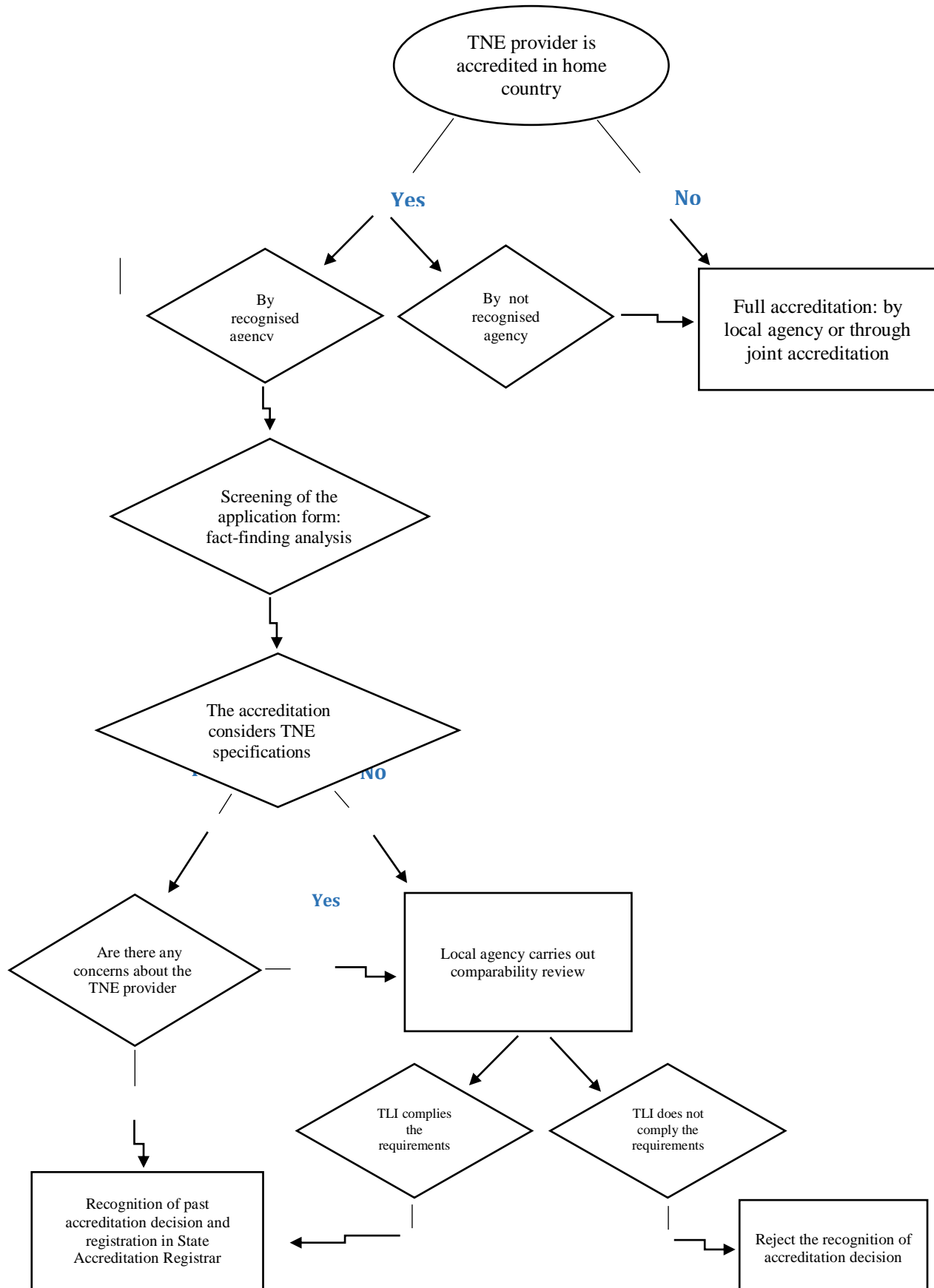


b) Joint accreditation:

- The accreditation is carried out by a local agency with an external quality assurance agency recognized in home country.
- The agencies working together agree on a assessment framework and procedure:
  - by taking one agency's framework and adding additional elements of the other agency,
  - by taking both agencies' framework and analyzing separately,
  - by agreeing on a new framework, which considers the process and procedures of both agencies;
- The agencies jointly appoint a panel of experts including experts from both countries, a student and an employer from local country, who will evaluate the institution from the perspectives of both contexts,
- As a result of self-assessment report and data and evidence obtained during the site-visit: one panel report or two agreed reports are prepared, which complies with the requirements of both agencies ,
- Decision is made by two agencies.

2. *Comparability Review* is for TNE providers who enjoy accreditation in their 'home' country, but the local sensitivities and TNE peculiarities have not been considered in the review. The purpose of comparability review is to confirm that the provision in Armenia is comparable to the accredited provision in the home country. The review could employ a sub-set of the criteria with the primary focus being on the areas of academic programmes, faculty and internal quality assurance.

The following framework is applied to choose among the procedural options:



## 2 Georgia: procedure for TNE QA

The same accreditation procedures will be applied when evaluating transnational HE programmes as for other HE programmes.

### **Principles of the processes**

The conduct of the accreditation processes is based on the following principles which derive from international good practice:

The processes aim at assessing the compliance of the programme with the accreditation standards by external experts

The processes are evidence-based and are carried out by independent experts

The information provided by the self-evaluation reports is assumed to be factually correct unless evidence points to the contrary

The processes are verification processes for information provided in the self-evaluation reports and other documentations by the applicant programme and the exploration of any matters that are omitted from that documentation.

### **The accreditation process step by step**

Submission of accreditation application

Recognition of educational institution as accreditation seeker

Creation of accreditation experts' panel

Preliminary review of accreditation self-evaluation report and corresponding documents by the accreditation experts' panel, and creating agenda for the site-visit

Accreditation site-visit

Elaboration of the draft evaluation report and submission to the NCEQE

Introducing draft evaluation report to the institution

Submission of argumentative position of the educational institution on the factual errors found in the draft evaluation report to the NCEQE

Development of the final version of the evaluation report by the panel of experts, and submission to the NCEQE

Introducing the final evaluation report to the educational institution

Submission of the accreditation self-assessment report, experts' evaluation report and argumentative position of the educational institutions to the members of the Accreditation Council

Oral hearing on accreditation, and decision-making by relevant Accreditation Council

Publication of the decision and the report by the NCEQE.

## Analyzing the self-evaluation report by expert panel

NCEQE sends the Self-Evaluation Report to the members of the expert panel. Prior to the site visit, the members of the expert panel are expected to:

Carefully study SER and documentation provided

Identify the main questions and areas of concern in each section of the self-evaluation report and use it to determine the main lines of enquiry for the site visit and for the evaluation report

Familiarise themselves with the publicly available information about the applicant institution, primarily its website and published documents

Draft site visit agenda

## The site visit

The site visit is the core step of the whole accreditation process. During the site visit expert's panel verifies the information provided by the HEI in the self-evaluation report and explores other matters which might be insufficiently presented in the documentation; this is done by means of interviews with the representatives of the programme under evaluation. The members of the expert panel should be aware that, after the site visit no open question shall remain.

Experience shows that the site visit and particularly the discussions with the members of the panel can also have a significant impact on the further development of the programme/institution Compliance of the institution with each accreditation **standard component** is assessed based on 3-level scale:

Complies with requirements

Partially complies with requirements<sup>4</sup>

Does not comply with requirements

Based on the assessment of each standard component **compliance of the institution with each accreditation standard is assessed** as:

**Complies with the standard requirements** - this assessment is made if:

every component of the standard complies with the requirements, or

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<sup>4</sup> A component of the standard is assessed as "partially compliant", if the applicant programme partially meets requirements of the component, and has developed an action plan with appropriate resources.

one of the components of the standard is partially complied with, while all other components comply with the requirements

***Partially complies with requirements*** - this assessment is made if more than one component of the standard partially comply with requirements

***Does not comply with requirements***<sup>5</sup> – this assessment is made if one of the components of the standard does not comply with requirements

### **The Accreditation Council Meeting**

Accreditation Council of higher education make decisions on granting accreditation based on the Self-evaluation report and other documentation provided by the institution, Expert panel evaluation report, argumentative position presented by the institution on the evaluation report, and oral hearing.

The session of the Committee is called by the Chair of the Committee, or the Director of the Centre. The meeting is also attended by the programme representatives and other stakeholders. Members of the panel of accreditation experts participate in oral hearing, while representatives of the Center and other entities are authorized to participate in the discussion, as agreed by the Chair. The Chair of the Committee is responsible for ensuring clearing important issues during the oral hearing.

Stakeholders participating in administrative procedures are entitled to place a motion for further investigation of the circumstances that are important to the consideration of the case. Oral hearing does not consider documents of the applicant programme prepared after the site visit. The committee makes one of the following decisions related to the programme:

- The programme is granted accreditation
- The programme is granted conditional accreditation (only in case of existing programmes)
- The programme is refused to be granted accreditation, if the programme cannot satisfy one of the accreditation standards
- Programme's accreditation is terminated

Conditional accreditation is granted for a term of two years. It cannot be granted twice in a row.

It is worth mentioning that according to accreditation procedures, HEIs may require that the Chair of the expert panel is an international expert. In that case, NCEQE will choose an international expert from its pool of international experts. This option can be especially useful for TNE providers.

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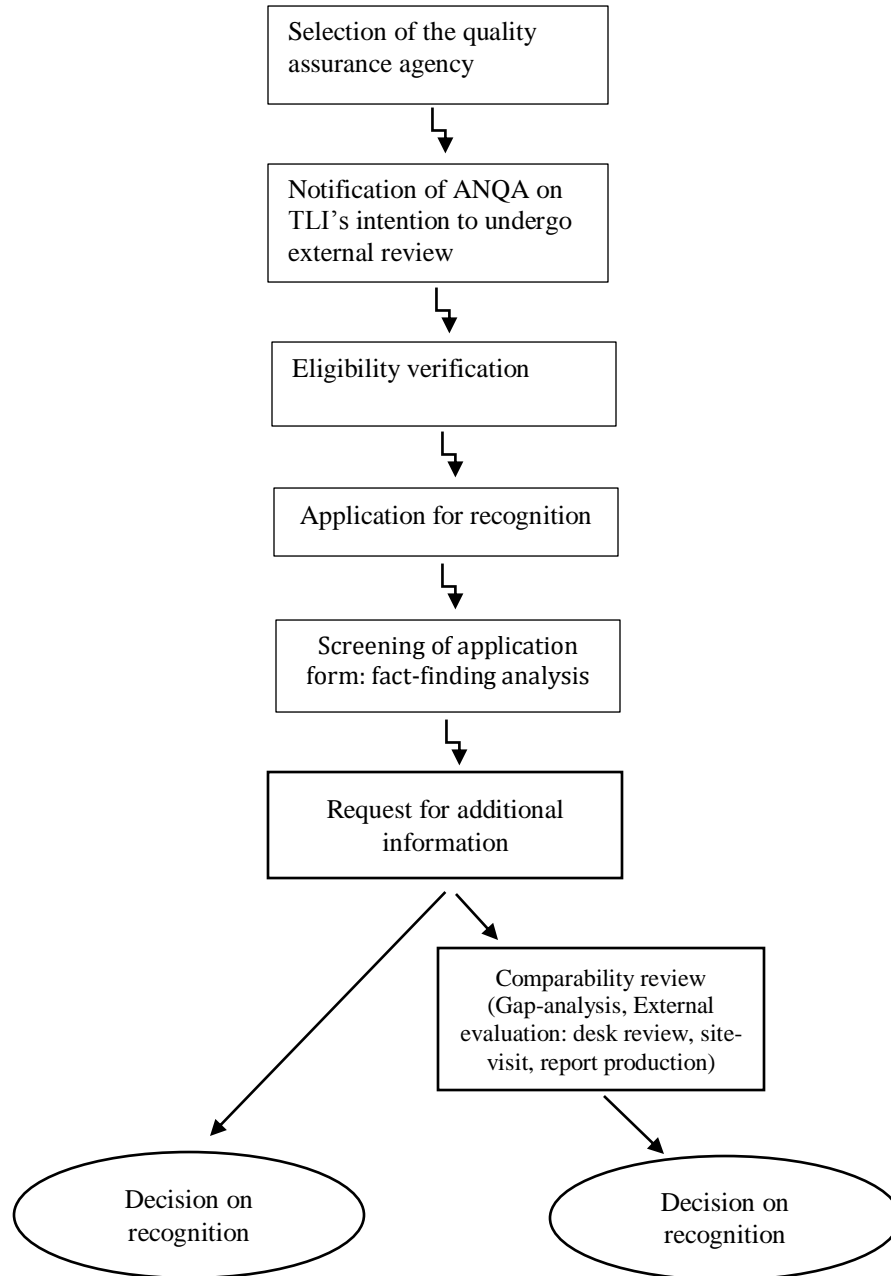
<sup>5</sup> Programme is not given accreditation if one or more component of the standard do not comply with requirements.

### 3 Procedure for recognition of transnational external quality assurance providers

#### 3.1 Armenia: recognition of transnational QA provider

As first step in the recognition process. ANQA verifies whether the planned accreditation adheres to all requirements.

The Recognition procedure contains the following steps:



### 3.2 Georgia: recognition of transnational QA providers

Article 28 of accreditation procedures stipulates that NCEQE recognizes accreditation granted by the members of European Network for Higher Education Quality Assurance in European Union member countries, organizations operating on the territory of the United States of America, which are entitled to accredit programmes by the law of the respective country, and also the Center recognizes the accreditation granted by a foreign organization if the external evaluation mechanism of quality assurance of the organization fully covers accreditation standards and procedures existing on national level and there is an international agreement regarding the recognition.

## 4 Procedure for academic recognition of awarded transnational qualifications

Recognition of awarded transnational qualifications should be done through a formal or legal procedure and specifications that a qualification must meet in order to be accepted as fulfilling the set standards. Thus, Armenian and Georgian governments should set a set of standards and procedure through which the recognition should take place.

4.1 Recognition of transnational qualification could be further specified to include

- transnational qualifications awarded in the host countries by foreign providers;
- transnational qualifications awarded through distance and e-learning by foreign HE providers;
- transnational qualifications awarded through joint efforts of more than one host and foreign provider.

4.2 To ensure academic recognition of transnational qualifications/credentials, a distinction between the following two approaches merits a mention:

- Comparability – a procedure determining the face value of qualifications by using a set format and criteria.
- Equivalency - a procedure to determine the extent to which qualifications are the same, also using a format and criteria, but in this case requiring a measure akin to international curriculum standards.

4.3 The authorities involved in recognition of transnational qualifications are the ENIC NARIC offices, external quality assurance agencies and the Ministries of Education in Armenia and Georgia. The responsible authorities should develop and adopt a set of standards for recognition of the above mentioned qualifications.

4.4 The procedures for recognition of a transnational qualification should be clearly defined and the roles of the different actors specified and made publicly available prior to the launch.

4.5 A registry of recognized HEIs and programs should be published and regularly updated by the respective responsible.

4.6 To ensure consistency and transparency in operations, the governments of Armenia and Georgia should set up a national committee for recognition of transnational and foreign qualifications