

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



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT  
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF  
YEREVAN STATE UNIVERSITY**

**Yerevan – 2021**

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## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

State University (YSU) was established in the days of the first Republic of Armenia by order of the Council of Ministers issued on May 16, 1919. At the beginning there was only one faculty, that of History and Linguistics, 262 students and 32 lecturers. YSU Ijevan branch was established in 1994. The branch has 4 faculties with about 1600 students. By Decision N1222 of the RA government from December 15 of 2001, YSU was reorganized into “Yerevan State University” state non-profit organization and by Decision 1408-N of November 27, 2014 — into “Yerevan State University” foundation. The University has 19 faculties, 2 institutes and 3 scientific-educational centers implementing academic programs. The university has 8 campuses and 1 branch. At the university study 14,048 students (11126 BA students, 2505 MA students and 417 postgraduate students), 3061 of which are part-time students (part-time in the Soviet, not in the US mode). Since its establishment YSU has had over 145 thousand alumni.

YSU implements 53 Bachelor’s and 122 Master’s programs, as well as 140 Doctoral programs. The YSU staff comprises about 2800 employees, 1116 of which are the permanent teaching staff (169 professors, 468 associate professors, 479 assistant professors and lecturers). 23 members of the RA National Academy of Sciences are also involved in the scientific-educational activities of the university.

### PREVIOUS ACCREDITATION AND EVALUATION

Back in 2015, YSU underwent the first institutional accreditation process as a joint procedure with expert panel members from the Netherlands, Flanders and Armenia. The outcome of the first review was that YSU was granted accreditation for 6 years. Based on the recommendations provided in the expert report, YSU developed a follow up plan. ANQA carried out mid-term monitoring of the follow-up plan in 2017 and 2020.

### EXTERNAL REVIEW AND SELF-EVALUATION

The second institutional accreditation of YSU is carried out based on the application presented by the institution. 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-Ն 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 independent expert panel formed according to the demands of ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel. The expert panel consisted of three local and two international experts (one from France and one from Belgium).

Within the stipulated time frame, on September 15, 2020, YSU presented the self-evaluation report on institutional capacity in Armenian and in English according to the form set by ANQA, and the package of attached documents.

The self-evaluation of the YSU was carried out by a team formed for that purpose by the order of the YSU Rector. The team included representatives from the administrative, academic, teaching staffs and students of the YSU.

The ANQA Coordinator examined the Report to verify its technical compliance with ANQA requirements. The self-evaluation report submitted by YSU complied with the established common format, had corresponding documents and the appendices required by the format. Afterwards, the self-evaluation report and the package of attached documents, as well as the electronic questionnaire completed by YSU were provided to the expert panel, the composition of which was previously agreed upon with YSU and was approved by the decree of the ANQA Director.

## **SUMMARY OF EVALUATION**

The expertise of YSU 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 1.

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

YSU is the premier educational institution of the Republic of Armenia, has traditions and a reputation that enable its resilience both in terms of teaching and research and in the ability to attract good students. The university has both local and international recognition that can be leveraged in ensuring both faculty and student mobility. YSU has facilities that in principle allow further operation and development.

YSU has full-time and adjunct faculty that are widely known and actively participate in a wide range of local discourses encompassing a wide range of social, cultural and scientific policies. This helps the visibility and attractiveness of the university both in terms of the students and scientific collaboration, as well as updating educational degrees and curricula in the spirit of the times.

As many universities around the world, YSU has made a lot of improvements during the pandemic in terms of digitization, wider articulation of learning objectives, incorporation of new teaching and learning modes that show the institution's resilience and ability to change.

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

While the university proved its resilience, there are issues with general governance of the institution at all levels. There is no clarity in YSU's ambitions of scientific achievements in particular in terms of peers and aspirations. Without clear strategic aims and thinking, it will be hard to steer the university to a particular target as it may become elusive.

The university needs to address its governance in greater detail. It should start with making the board fully functional in terms of guiding and decision-making, and the management in making decision-making processes more transparent and evidence-based. YSU should have a better and clearer strategy that would clearly articulate not only forthcoming benefits, but also such “unpopular” aspects of the strategy as the implied layoffs, retirements, implied cost increases and structural realignments. Together with the quite aspirational and often specific targets, the university also needs to have a Business Development Plan that will match the aspirations with resources across all the levels of the institution and set up relevant KPIs.

The university should pay more attention to and work to ensure the most systematic manner with external stakeholders--ranging from the employers to alumni. This type of input will make evaluations and quality assurance more focused on learning objectives rather than on ensuring smooth mechanics of it.

## **SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS ACCORDING TO THE SPECIFIC CRITERIA:**

### **Mission and Purposes**

#### **Summary:**

- YSU has a mission, strategic directions and objectives that are ultimately in line with the NQF. More quantified goals and separately articulated vision can enhance the process significantly, as they will help both to clarify targets and make communications more effective. This is important especially for communicating and engaging external stakeholders on a more systematic basis.

#### **Recommendations:**

- The range of activities and initiatives YSU pretends to cover are too broad. We urge the University to work on the details of the Mission, make the links of the goals and targets more explicitly tied to the Mission, have a separate vision statement for the strategic timing period, as well as clarify in more detail what their aspiration of being a research university means. More transparency on the typology of research (fundamental, incremental, applied) in the three cycles, and the minimum required link between teaching and research in all programs is needed.
- The University should make a clear distinction between short-term, mid-term and long-term objectives of YSU, in separate forms and documents. The SDP for a period of five years now looks too ambitious. Budgeting on a longer term should come under the item Business Development Plan, which makes a forecast of required budgets to finance education & research activities for the years ahead, based on various scenarios of diversified income and varying numbers of students. The identified mid- & long- term goals need concrete operational objectives to attain these goals, and monitoring processes need to be in place.

### **Governance and Administration**

#### **Summary:**

- Given the externally-imposed serious governance crisis of the last three years, we judge YSU's system of governance, administrative structures and activities not as much against the comprehensive set of the best experience, but against the ability to survive in turmoil and make a tangible leap forward in online environment and enhance quality assurance during the pandemic. At the same time, governance may be inadequate to address the ambitions and challenges YSU faces.

#### **Recommendations:**

- YSU needs major improvements in governance and management. In particular, there is a need for continuous effort for coordination and cohesion of strategic plans, self-reviews and educational programs. To properly address the transformative challenges it faces, the university needs to engage in a longer (10-year long) planning exercise that will also outline the hard choices and give an estimate of needed financial and other resources. The university should have a clear Strategic Development Model which makes a prognosis of required budgets to finance education & research activities for the years ahead, based on various scenarios of diversified income and varying numbers of students. Without such a plan, the university cannot manage all the risks that demographics and markets impose upon the university.
- As mentioned in the recommendations of criterion 1, the University should make a clear distinction between short-term, mid-term and long-term objectives of YSU, in separate forms and documents and have a Business Development Plan.
- To this end, the university should consider establishing a centralized support unit that will periodically guide the process and monitor and evaluate the progress against the targets and plans, as well as regulate the whole process of strategy setting and execution. We urge the university to discuss at the Board level the EU-funded Report on Functional Review of the Yerevan State University during the longer-term strategy elaboration process. It is important for the university to develop a system of periodically collecting and processing information from the external stakeholders and feed this analysis into evidence-based policy making. To ensure the system is working, the university needs to establish Key Performance Indicators and prioritize reporting and decision-making along

these indicators. With such indicators in place, they can be used to enhance internal and external communication of the progress of the university towards its goals.

## **Academic programs**

### **Summary:**

- While the sub-criterion for the mobility is not fully functional that is partly due to legal regulations in the country, and there are no modern-age technological tools to fight plagiarism, the panel believes that policies and procedures in place ensure academic program delivery aligned with ANQF. At the same time, these policies and procedures should be constantly monitored and improved through evidence-based decision-making.

### **Recommendations:**

- The institution has to put learning objectives in the center and not only build, but also to monitor and evaluate all the programs based on their ability to deliver learning objectives. To do so, there should be Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in place that will specify their performance of the programs with regard to employment, skill development, market requirements, etc. To ensure these KPIs are met, there should be well-developed comprehensive policies and procedures in place that will specify in detail how the information and insights from key stakeholders (particularly, external stakeholders) is collected, processed and communicated.
- It is also important to have a longer period for program reviews to ensure more strategic and comprehensive review. It can be also useful if the University collaborates with other universities or internally develops anti-plagiarism software that will check against larger databases, as this is becoming a very wide-spread tool in the world.

## **Students**

### **Summary:**

- Although student opinion is sought and taken into account, there are issues with representativeness and lack of deeper analysis of this data, and while students utilize their rights, often they are limited in scale and scope and often boil down to grade appeals only.

### **Recommendations:**

- Student rights and duties should be presented in a positive way-not in terms of impending punishment, but in terms of creating a fair and productive learning environment. The involvement of students in research should be granted ECTS--i.e., academic recognition. A student ombudsperson could be appointed with the necessity to make an annual report on his or her operations to the governance bodies. YSU should promote alumni--private companies' interactions for a better employability of the graduates.

## **Faculty and staff**

### **Summary:**

- It is clear that the university has at its disposal a sufficient mass of competent teaching staff to achieve the objectives of the programs they offer, but it needs to enhance its efforts to 'modernize' the way it manages its human resources, by stimulating competitiveness and flexibility among its staff.

### **Recommendations:**

- The pedagogical and professional requirements for teaching staff still need to be attuned to the specific professional content of the different academic programs, so as to attain the intended results of these programs.
- We further recommend to:
- Have uniform and university-wide mechanisms for the selection and appointment of staff, with open calls that also include competent staff outside the university.

- Devise and implement professional development programs for all support staff, equivalent to those of the teaching staff.
- Elaborate and implement a strategy (with clear baseline and milestones) of gradually reducing the average age of the faculty, without harming the educational quality in the process.
- Adequately address the challenges of faculty and staff development, and have full-fledged HR services supporting this process.
- Foster international mobility of faculty and staff to enhance their skills and credentials.

## **Research and Development**

### **Summary:**

- There is a well-established tradition of doing research, and the expectation of research performance is embedded in the university experience. At the same time, there is no vice-rector formally in charge of research, and with many plans for university-funded research and a new infrastructure to support it, all of these plans are still work in progress.

### **Recommendations:**

- Clear cut mid-term and long-term strategies for research should be defined at the central level and then described and applied at the lower levels.
- Central organization of YSU should give a clear impact of the internationalization of the research by encouraging its own labs to interact not only with foreigner universities but also with research institutes from abroad.
- The university is encouraged to contemplate the creation of Doctoral Schools for institutionalizing research in priority directions.

## **Infrastructure and Resources**

### **Summary:**

- Taking into account the existence of resources necessary for the effective fulfilment of mission and goals-infrastructure, library electronic resources, efforts to enrich and recruit technical and technological resources, the practice of interconnected budgeting with the strategic priorities, digitalization of documentation system, assurance of secure and safe environment, the expert panel finds that YSU meets the requirements of Criterion 7.

### **Recommendations:**

- There seems to be enough cash flows for the University to operate, but it is impossible to judge whether there is strategy or resources to support the strategic plan. The University needs to set aside resources for strategic development and clearly state the relevant costs to make informed and evidence-based decisions possible. Without that, it may always get along and operate on day-today basis, while jeopardizing long-term strategic development. There is a need to clearly link university resources to the strategy through explicit governance processes.

## **Societal Responsibility**

### **Summary:**

- We can state that there is a sustained effort to be accountable to the society, but the effort can be more focused and more comprehensive in scope.

### **Recommendations:**

- Engage in more proactive media campaigns explicating and explaining YSU activities and priorities.
- To enhance transparency and support the internationalization of the university, there is a need to translate and post essential documents in English on their website.
- Contemplate widening the scope of operations of YSU in the regions of Armenia, as in the case of Ijevan is, to have better outreach and impact.

## **External Relations and Internationalization**

**Summary:**

- With most of the activities being supply-driven and no evidence of prioritization of program development through local or international cooperation, at the same time there is active use of Erasmus+ or similar programs, and there is a good potential for developing policy-driven international cooperation.

**Recommendations:**

- To increase the number of non-Armenian speaking students, more courses in other languages (however mainly in English) should be proposed.
- There should be a sustained effort to increase the number of protocols with foreign universities that result in actual exchange of students and faculty.
- To enhance the cooperation between the international office and faculties, in order to make more active faculty exchanges and attract foreign students for larger term engagement.
- There should be more intense cooperation with exchange agencies (e.g., Erasmus+ Office) and recognition bodies, such as ERIC/NARIC.
- To have a policy-driven internationalization effort that is not routine operation, the university needs to develop a white paper discussing YSU capacities and possibilities of cooperation (particularly assessing it on program level) with exact metrics such as joint programs, student mobility numbers, etc.
- There should be handbooks of mobility and student services for foreigners, such as help with dwellings, etc.

**Internal Quality Assurance System****Summary:**

- The Self Evaluation report is very well done, and the amount of collected data and input from the working group is impressive. There are a large number of Indicators that give a picture of the status. On the other hand, a lot of practices are incomplete and there is no systematic processing and interpretation of the data gained during the QA cycle.

**Recommendations:**

- IQA mechanisms and tools should be implemented on the level where they produce the greatest effect (central or faculty, individual teaching unit level).
- IQA mechanisms should be employed against the Learning Objectives at program and course level, with specific mechanisms tracking the progress of the students in that dimension.
- The scope of the QA unit is too wide, it should be more focused and more independent of everyday management activities.
- The QA unit is encouraged to amend their instruments and upgrade their tools, engaging in more quantitative analysis.
- We recommend to enable collection and storage of data in a manner that avails itself to qualitative, cross-program purposes.

**Date: 28.10.2021**

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**Vache Gabrielyan, head of the expert panel**

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

## **Observations:**

First of all, we would like to point out the great quality of the “in situ” visit of the Yerevan State University (YSU) during one week, in terms of availability of the various stakeholders (employees, Rector and vice-rectors, students, Alumni, representatives of the different groups...) as well as in terms of open discussion. Every subject was discussed without any taboo from our part as well as from the members of YSU. This helped enlighten points that needed to be clearer. From the analyzed documents and after the visit, it appears that YSU have made these last days tremendous efforts for answering the points raised during the previous visiting committee 5 years ago. This has to be pointed out and acknowledged as it needs many resources to achieve resolving these points.

This institutional review of YSU is for the participating international peer reviewers and their Armenian colleagues an opportunity to also reflect, from both a European policy and benchmarking perspective on the progress made by the university towards an autonomous research & teaching institution, in accordance with their position and ambitions in the EHEA.

To fulfil this ambition the panel sees a need for modernization of the structures and procedures, and an enhancement of the innovation aspect in the offering of its programs. This way the university's impact towards a wide range of stakeholders and society at large could be improved.

We would thus like to emphasize a few points that could represent opportunities for YSU in the future and could help increase YSU's quality and attractiveness. Based on that we first list some observations and points of attention, followed by concrete recommendations on how to adjust its activities and processes accordingly.

## **Academic programs**

While the university enjoys a high status as a prominent teaching and research institution, which gives it a distinguished profile among its international counterparts in the EHEA and beyond this, it does not seem to fully exploit this in its activities and communications to the outside world.

YSU has gone through the process of aligning their programs to the ANQF. However, the level of development of the L.O. for the individual courses is not fully demonstrated. Neither are stakeholders mentioned as having contributed or having been consulted.

## **Recommendations:**

- The university's experience with Professional Qualifications frameworks in Social Sciences and Natural Sciences may be helpful to align the teaching and related research to the job profiles expected by the labor market. Developing these relationships (with different sectors of employment) will stimulate the interest of the world of work to be involved in higher education processes.
- Recognition at faculty and program level is a keystone for international exchange of students. It seems thus crucial to develop joint programs, with national and foreign partner universities based on benchmarking, small-scale introduction of micro-credentials, and full implementation of ECTS.
- Entrepreneurship courses in the regular programs, and in the offer of the Department for Teaching Development, available for both students and teachers should be encouraged.
- Marketing & Communications at YSU are mainly through its well-documented website, in Armenian, English and Russian languages. However, it is not clear how this communication is translated on the level of programs and faculties.

## **Teaching and learning environment**

YSU has made substantial progress towards creating a student-centered learning environment, but the process will have to be stepped up, in view of the growing digitalization and on-line provision, especially in the current pandemic.

**Recommendations:**

- Teaching and learning should be more focused on innovation and its societal impact.

**Societal impact:**

The university's societal impact covers both national and regional levels: the presence of YSU in the capital of Armenia, and in one of the outer regions of the country strengthens its profile as a nation-wide university.

**Recommendation:**

- The development of the university's regional branch in Ijevan should be part of the university's overall strategy. It strengthens the university's potential for regional engagement.

**Quality Assurance**

The university demonstrates clearly its awareness that quality assurance is a keystone for its internal development, with sound structures and processes built on the various governance levels. However, it does not fully manage to see this as a foundation for the public acknowledgment. YSU hence fails to make a direct link with external QA, for the purpose of checking the robustness of its IQA system.

**Recommendations:**

- The way to facilitate an external look is among others via an effective stakeholder involvement, in all QA processes. Involvement of external stakeholders like employers, is by nature a two-way process. This requires awareness raising on both sides, and an understanding of the role of one another. More proactive initiatives may be necessary, involving graduates and alumni.
- IQA practices have to be regularly tested on their efficiency and cost-effectiveness, and if needed revamped.

**Digitalization**

The importance of digitalization and on-line education has become even more evident with the outbreak of the COVID pandemic. Physical attendance of classes and lab exercises became restricted and online and blended learning have become the norm. While a lot of efforts have been made to create the required tools for teaching and communication, the pedagogical methodology will have to follow.

**Recommendation:**

- Develop specific methodology of on-line teaching and learning, based on benchmarking.

**International Relations:**

YSU invests in the culture and foreign language learning of its students and staff, through the programs offered in the Faculty of European Languages and Communication.

It could however make better use of the presence of native language and culture teachers for encouraging students and staff, in the international exchange, in both ways (European and Armenian sides).

**Recommendations:**

- Work with preferential international partners on the recommendation of the faculty deans and chairs, so that there is an embedding of internationalization on the faculty and program level.

- Cross-disciplinary actions involving both the discipline-specific study fields and the Faculty of Languages of Communication may facilitate the internationalization process.
- The existing scientific cooperation with international partners, involving both academics and students in a variety of disciplines, may be a stepping stone in joint program development.
- More stimuli are needed to improve the language skills of students and teaching staff willing to engage in an exchange program.
- To facilitate international exchange more information in a non-Armenian language on the courses offered at YSU, including the offer of courses provided in English.
- Branding YSU as a center of expertise in Armenian Studies for the worldwide diaspora.

## **Research**

Research is a fundamental point for any University. Even though YSU primary role is to educate students for the national and/or international job market, research is a crucial point for attracting the best students', hiring potential international academics, increasing YSU national and international visibility, establishing exchanges with private companies, making patentable discoveries...

To increase the research potential of YSU, several actions could be proposed:

- To establish independent doctoral schools from the departments as it is suggested in the Bologna process. The way to enroll in a PhD program is definitively well defined. However, there is no clear delimitation between the master levels and the PhD programs. Establishing doctoral schools taking care of the full PhD formation, classes, and research... could allow developing a real attractiveness of the PhD and a higher employability of the Doctors.
- To guarantee a decent salary to the PhD students in accordance with their academic level. Recruitment of PhD students means to have the most motivated people and not students that were unable to join the job market. A reasonable salary seems thus mandatory to increase this attractiveness.
- To officially recognize research fellowships in institutional labs or in private companies by attributing university credit. This could help increase student's motivation for research.
- A full vice-rector only in charge of research should be appointed. This would be a strong sign indicating that YSU is developing a significant interest for academic, translational and/or private research.

**Stefan Delplace, Honorary Secretary General of EURASHE**

**Jean-Marc Lobaccaro, Dean Faculty of Biology in charge of Research, France.**

# EVALUATION PROCESS AND ORGANIZATION

## COMPOSITION OF THE EXPERT PANEL

The external expertise of the institutional capacities of YSU was carried out by the expert panel having the following composition:

1. **Vache Gabrielyan:** Dean of the College of Business and Economics of the American University of Armenia, head of the expert panel.
2. **Srbuhi Gevorgyan:** Vice-Rector of Academic Affairs of the Armenian State Pedagogical University after Khachatur Abovyan, expert panel member.
3. **Stephen Delplace:** Honorary Secretary General of EURASHE (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education, Belgium, expert panel member.
4. **Jean-Marc Lobaccaro:** vice Dean Faculty of Biology, in charge of the Research. UCA, France, expert panel member.
5. **Vache Gharibyan:** PhD student of the Department of General Pharmaceutical Chemistry, Armenian-Russian University, student expert.

The composition of the expert panel was agreed upon with the University.

The works of the expert panel were coordinated by Varduhi Gyulazyan, the head of ANQA Institutional and Program Accreditation Division.

The translation was provided by Vardanush Baghdasaryan, lecturer at Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences.

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

## PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

### **Application for state accreditation**

YSU applied for institutional accreditation by submitting to ANQA the application form and the copies of the license and the appendices.

The ANQA Secretariat checked the application package, the data presented in the application form, and the appendixes.

According to the decision on accepting the application request, a bipartite agreement was signed between ANQA and YSU. The schedule of activities was drawn up and approved, which was changed twice due to the COVID-19 epidemic, as well as a state of emergency and later martial law declared in the Republic of Armenia. Within the deadline set in the schedule, YSU presented the Armenian and English versions of its self-evaluation report according to the form set by ANQA, and the package of attached documents.

### **Preparatory phase**

Having observed the self-evaluation and the package of accompanying documents of the TLI, the expert panel conducted the desk-review. According to the format, the list of the issues and questions for different target groups or units and the list of additional documents needed for observation have been prepared.

During the desk-review, the expert panel participated in the final attestation exams and thesis defenses.

Within the scheduled time, the expert panel summarized the results of the desk-review and formed a time schedule of the site-visit. 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 units and other work were included in the time schedule.

After identifying the main issues and the documents to be investigated, the expert panel highlighted the issues to be discussed at the meetings. At regular meetings, the questions on each standard were discussed,

and the package of documents on the preliminary visit of the expert panel was prepared. The package included the time-schedule of the site visit, the questions to be investigated and explained for different target groups and the list of additional documents needed for observation during the site visit. From the lists provided by the TLI, the representatives of the teaching staff and students, graduates, and employers were selected to participate in the meetings.

### **Preparatory visit**

On June 10, 2021, a preliminary visit was paid to YSU. Throughout the site-visit the plan-schedule of the site-visit was agreed upon, the list of additional documents to be investigated 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 touched upon as well. The rooms prepared for focus groups and expert panel discussions were discussed, the issues related to the equipment and facilities were clarified. During the preliminary meeting the local expert panel members conducted the resource observation. YSU has prepared video materials for the information about the infrastructures of YSU which were provided to international experts.

### **Site-visit**

The site visit of the expert panel took place from June 14 to 18, 2021.

The international panel members joined the site visit via ZOOM. All the expert panel members, including the ANQA coordinator, the translator and the record keeper attended the meetings.

The site visit initiated and culminated with meetings with the YSU Rector. All the meetings foreseen by the schedule have been carried out including the open meeting in which the representatives from the teaching staff and students took part. Throughout the site visit, the expert panel had document review and focus group meetings.

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 assessment has been carried out within the framework of State Criteria and Standards of Accreditation and ANQA procedures, following which the assessment has two levels: satisfactory and unsatisfactory.

### **Expert panel report**

The expert panel prepared the draft of the report. The international experts have prepared a separate peer review, which was included into the report. The preliminary English report was handed over to YSU on 31.08.2021.

Reviewing the draft version of the report, YSU did not present any objection and the expert panel made the final version of the report which was approved on 28.10.2021.

**Date: 28.10.2021**

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**Varduhi Gyulazyan, the coordinator of the expert panel**

# EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

## I. MISSION AND PURPOSES

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

### Findings

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

The University has a mission that expresses its goals and objectives and according to it "YSU activities are directed towards implementation of academic programs in Armenian Studies, Nature Studies, Social-economic Sciences, Humanities and in different cultural directions as well as to conduct basic and applied scientific research".

For 2016-2020 YSU has developed a strategic plan with 9 strategic goals directed to the education quality assurance at YSU, conduction of high quality research and innovations, development of service to society, improvement of quality human resources, creation and improvement of quality infrastructure, provision of quality services, diversification and enlargement of admission, enhancement of financial stability and effectiveness of management, reinforcement of strategic management and promotion of internationalization of YSU activities. YSU provides education according to the 3 levels of NQF (bachelor, master, PhD). At the same time other structures are operating within the structure of YSU according to other levels of NQF, but reporting about its activities is not presented.

For the fulfilment of each strategic goal there are envisaged objectives with respective actions as well as with some indicators. All the faculties, institutes implementing academic programs and centers theoretically should derive their strategic plans from the YSU strategic plan that in turn should be derived from the mission. However more detailed exposition on the alignment of YSU mission and NQF were not available for the expert panel.

While the University's mission represents the TLI's purposes and goals in accordance with the NQF, it could be further elaborated. The explicit statement in the new strategic plan for the University to strive for social impact is laudable, but it should be laid down in more detail to trickle-down to each employee and stakeholder.

There seems to be also a need for clarification of the university's vision. While the university's ambition to become a top research university is well-founded by the history and the role of the university in the country in the last century, the concept is not well-defined and may create different aspirations and different claims to resources that will be difficult to accommodate. Since there are not yet government definitions of what a research university is (like in some countries) and there is tangible prospect to get such enabling funding from the Government in the foreseeable future, the University should make sense of what such an aspiration means within the context of current market demand and student body and define what the aspired level of research describing the university is, or what a proper benchmark would constitute.

Social direction of the strategic plan is praiseworthy however it should also be mentioned that later on it should be clarified per level of each stakeholder.

The University also should redefine its responsibility as the primary public university in the country with regard to providing education for sectors that have no current demand, but are essential for the development of the society and carry special public value. This educational mission can be specified in terms of the minimum size of the cohorts in low-demand specialties, the duration and depth of research agenda supporting such studies, etc.

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

The University has envisaged and implemented steps towards enhancement of effectiveness of the activities of internal and external stakeholders and generally can express their needs.

During the meetings with internal stakeholders, it became clear that before developing the strategic plan, a survey was conducted but the link between the survey results and strategic goals and objectives is not clear and in fact it also presumably reflects the needs of stakeholders.

Without totally excluding the reflection of those needs in the Strategic plan, it is desirable to make the link between the needs assessment results and strategic goals more visible for all the stakeholders and responsible persons for QA that can become an additional motivating factor.

The involvement of internal stakeholders is ensured in all collegial bodies of University management and the management of its structural units, and in different committees and working groups, while the same cannot be stated about external stakeholders (there is a lack of analytics about practicality of acquired skills, job placement metrics, etc.). External engagement is not done through a systematic process. However, information on the analysis of their effective activities is missing. The University understands the imperfection of needs assessment mechanisms and plans to take steps towards overcoming the mentioned weakness.

The mission statement duly reflects the needs of the stakeholders, but the goals and objectives need to be further clarified, especially with regard to external stakeholders.

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

YSU is duly preparing annual reports about the accomplishment of the targets set in strategic plans. Since often these plans are not calibrated in detail with the mission and goals of the University, it would be beneficial if in the reporting and planning formats the University produces its reports, the achievements are made explicitly visible not only against the Strategic Plan goals, but also according to the mission.

The University has its mechanisms for assessing strategic goals, however we could not find evidence that those mechanisms are approved. It is desirable to apply concrete indicators for such an assessment or to clearly define in the report the factors that prevented reaching particular objectives. This will later help to take measures to overcome the hindrances.

According to the University, insufficient involvement of external stakeholders, in particular the employers, was considered as a threat to its education process. It was argued that insufficient initiative from the external stakeholders hinders the effectiveness of university-employer cooperation. We believe that a schematic and accessible presentation style of reports and their regular and continuous discussion with external stakeholders will enhance the quality of the accountability of the University and can promote and improve proactiveness and involvement of external stakeholders.

### **Considerations**

By and large, the University's mission represents its purposes and goals in accordance with the NQF. It could be further elaborated, though, to achieve better coherence between the mission and the goals.

The Mission developed by YSU, the existence of its main goals and their reflection in the Charter as well as in the Strategic plan are praiseworthy. The University has developed 9 strategic goals where the component of quality is clearly highlighted (quality education, quality HR, etc.). However, there is a need to clarify quality criteria for different directions and it will give an opportunity to clearly evaluate achievements of the University in terms of both relevance of the goals and comparison of leading practice.

In spite of the fact that the University regularly involves stakeholders into the development of the Strategic plan, the link between the surveys conducted among the external stakeholders and strategic goals is weak. The University as well is not satisfied with the content and intensity of external stakeholder engagement, desiring more targeted and specific feedback particularly from the employers. On the other hand, regular and targeted information about the achievements of the University can significantly counter this lack of initiative.

Therefore, the process of involving especially external stakeholders of the university needs a comprehensive assessment and improvement. There is a need for improvement also in the alignment of the Strategic plan and process of financial planning.

According to our observations, the process of alignment of NQF and the mission is also generalized and its improvement can significantly enhance also the quality of academic programs as strategic goals will be more targeted to the implementation of the mission to ensure the quality of educational services.

**Summary:** YSU has a mission, strategic directions and objectives that are ultimately in line with the NQF. More quantified goals and separately articulated vision can enhance the process significantly, as they will help both to clarify targets and make communications more effective. This is important especially for communicating and engaging external stakeholders on a more systematic basis.

**Conclusion:** Satisfactory.

**Recommendations:** The range of activities and initiatives YSU pretends to cover are too broad. We urge the University to work on the details of the Mission, make the links of the goals and targets more explicitly tied to the Mission, have a separate vision statement for the strategic timing period, as well as clarify in more detail what their aspiration of being a research university means. More transparency on the typology of research (fundamental, incremental, applied) in the three cycles, and the minimum required link between teaching and research in all programs is needed.

The University should make a clear distinction between short-term, mid-term and long-term objectives of YSU, in separate forms and documents. The SDP for a period of five years now looks too ambitious. Budgeting on a longer term should come under the item Business Development Plan, which makes a forecast of required budgets to finance education & research activities for the years ahead, based on various scenarios of diversified income and varying numbers of students. The identified mid- & long-term goals need concrete operational objectives to attain these goals, and monitoring processes need to be in place.

## II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

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

### Findings

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

The TLI's system of governance is problematic by design—it is too large for effective decision-making with too many factions, while at the same time the constitution of the Board does not enable specialized enough committee formation to qualitatively improve the working of the board. The current structure of the board that is mandated by the law may enable regulated decision-making if all the stars align together, and can lead to a deadlock if they turn out to be not.

Recent political upheavals have left the university without proper governance for too long, as the government failed to form a properly functioning Board of Trustees. The Board was unable to choose a Rector and as a result the management team did not have the proper long-term mandate to generate and pursue longer-term strategy with clearly identified preferences that may reflect hard choices. The new law on higher education that addresses some of these issues has been currently challenged in the Constitutional Court on the matter of the composition of the Board. Whatever the result, it is imperative that the Government ensures a smaller properly functioning Board that will have the capacity of addressing financial and legal matters in more detail whether in a committee form or through other means (e.g., specialized reports to the Board), while creation of at least two boards is of critical importance. It is imperative that university long-term plans have financial estimates and proper legal assessment, to enable the Board to make evidence-based decisions that will support the vision of the elected Rector.

On the bright side, the university continues to properly function, and has met the challenge posed by COVID, making a significant jump in terms of online teaching and explicating learning objectives to the students in greater detail than has been before. While this ability of resilience in management is well received by the university and the stakeholder community and is acknowledged by the higher education community, it is not resilient enough to complete the organizational transformation of the country's leading university in a new era of market demand and dwindling government support.

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

The TLI's system of governance really provides students and teachers an opportunity to participate in decision-making processes directed to them. Student bodies are quite active, well-informed and can pursue students' interests. While most of the time the issue of contention is grades, students also actively participate in matters of strategy development and curriculum design. Both bodies of students'—Student Union and Student Scientific Society, are being financed through the university and create scores of opportunities for active students. While there are no well-defined services of student study centers where students regularly help each other through regular and regulated tutoring, there are a lot of educational activities enhanced by these organizations. Students are active both at the central and departmental level. One shortcoming is that they cannot earn credit for their activity (with a lot of soft skills as learning outcomes), but this can be discussed after a new law passes that enables freedom of students forming their own study plan by choosing a wider set of elective credits.

Teachers are also extensively engaged in strategic and governance affairs, but mostly in line and staff roles (ex-officio and ad-hoc). We have not been reminded of any substantial role that the Trade Union plays in the Governance.

Both groups have 25% votes in the 24-person Board of Trustees each, which often makes the management of the council unwieldy both to change and routine management. The University has to figure out how to organize the same level of activity within the new legal framework.

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

The TLI has come up with the 3rd 5-year strategic plan since 2011, and there is obvious progress and maturity compared to the previous strategic plans. At the same time, the document is uneven in terms of detail and formalization in different parts of the document—while some are quite specific with numerical targets, others are quite vague, and almost all of them do not contain a baseline to make the targets more meaningful in terms of societal and organizational impact. The strategic plan is extremely vague about hard choices implied by some of the actions (rightsizing of programs, proper use of assets, etc.). Sometimes, the university has tried to adapt to the new environment by creating new structures, while not eliminating the old ones, or making other decisions. For example, having both Chairs and educational program directors in the same faculty where program directors perform mostly analytic functions and do not make any decisions (the chairs make these decisions), is a very interesting mix of the US and Soviet models that is quite cumbersome to manage.

Only the long-term view and consensus-building around the main goals of the plan will enable to pursue the modernization of the university along the XXI century trends. From this perspective, it is imperative the management presents to the Board the EU-funded Report on Functional Review of the Yerevan State University, and the Board discusses and endorses organizational structure that will support the University's ambitions over the long-run.

The TLI has never engaged in long-term planning and it seems that given the political turbulence, the management has rationally chosen to concentrate on the annual planning for the time being. This mentality has helped the university to gradually implement changes and pursue piecemeal innovations, at the same time keeping long-term vision in place. The problem with this approach is that it does not allow for transparent monitoring and communication of the mentioned objectives. One of the major shortcomings of the Strategic Plan is its only partial correlation with Self-study. Self-study is very good and honest in SWOT analysis of all the criteria, but oftentimes they do not fully correspond neither to the proposed action list of the self-assessment report nor to the Strategic Plan, though these documents have been developed simultaneously. While it is quite normal that all analysis is not becoming an action, it should be transparently addressed in order to have a consistent message for all internal and external stakeholders.

The imposed inability to have 10-year long plans severely limits the capacity of the university to address the challenges it faces. While the University really worked hard to systematically engage both students and faculty in the elaboration of the Strategic plan, without a centralized support unit it will be hard to accomplish. For a university this large in scope and student body, this unit will enable better monitoring, feedback and elaboration of plans.

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

TLI is doing research on aspects impacting the university in a non-systemic manner. While collected data are by and large reliable, a lot of decisions are made on intuitive and everyday knowledge based on routine encounters and sensemaking that are not formalized. While these encounters (that are mostly taking place at faculty and program level) are crucial (with all the relevant and important stakeholders) and are done in good faith, they are not formalized and one cannot tell how they are reconciled with the purposefully collected formal data.

There seems to be a good movement in this direction, mostly driven by younger faculty, and the university can seize the moment and take this effort to a more formalized and systematic effort.

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

There does not seem to be a well-formalized uniform plan-do-check-act (PDCA) cycle in place, but the practice of course exists. Particularly, there is no CHECKING practice outside of program review, program review is being done every two years, which is quite frequent and does not allow to capture essential trends in the environment.

The emphasis is on procedures and regulations ('intra-university acts'), which are found on the appropriate levels and in the different governance and service units. For example, the assessment phase of management decisions is mainly a check on the correct implementation, and the reporting on this, but not a control of the validity of the decision, based on a control of its effectiveness. Though there is an annual performance assessment (and report) on the implementation of the SDP, which identifies shortcomings and omissions.

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

External information is neither very systematic nor very periodic. Internal information is periodic and systematic, with special emphasis on student feedback. While student feedback is essential, it may be overused due to statistical biases and the only numerical evidence in the mix.

As mentioned above, the TLI is doing research on aspects impacting the university in a non-systemic manner. Various encounters with multiple stakeholders are not formalized to enable better-quality analysis.

Sufficient attention must be given to the collection, storage and analysis of relevant data. Data gathering and collection of information must happen on the place, unit, where it is more easily retrievable and where the results are most relevant. The data are collected into folders, hierarchically by faculty, chair, the data are not searchable. The data includes documents starting from planning and development. This severely limits the ability to analyze the data, and find out and communicate all-university trends.

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

The TLI does not have a systematic approach to check the quality and effectiveness of its academic programs against the actual and evolving demands of the labor market.

According to the University, YSU funding is not always in line with YSU strategic goals and objectives as the tuition fee-heavy annual financial income is not fully predictable. Thus, because of insufficient funding YSU does not have a long-term strategic budget for assuring a resource base for the implementation of strategic priority objectives and some actions. There is an issue of managing expectations, as the University cannot always plan Government support when it is neither explicitly promised or has been customary during the last decades.

The only potential external assessment on the academic programs and the subsequent qualifications awarded by the TLI is through the representation of stakeholders from outside the university in the highest Governance body, the Board of Trustees. There is no evidence of such impact yet on the level of the Faculty Boards/Councils, though there is an awareness among faculty heads and staff of the need to involve employers in program development. The informal means of evaluation of the educational processes via the YSU portal and via social networks cannot be taken for an objective assessment.

### **Considerations:**

While YSU has exhibited a great deal of resilience in management during a leadership turmoil caused by the inability of the Government to form a working Board of Trustees thus making it impossible to elect a Rector with high legitimacy that would carry out necessary reforms. To this end, for enabling the

Administration to carry out ambitious plans and address the challenges of modernizing the university to meet XXI century requirements, the governance and the administration of the university should be greatly enhanced. While there is virtually no administrative function that the University does not carry out, the process is not systematic in terms of regulations, data collection, analysis, feedback, coordination and evidence-based decision making. We commend the University's earnest engagement of students in different decision-making processes, at the same time warning against the overuse of student survey data at the expense of systematically collected and analyzed data from external stakeholders.

**Summary:**

Given the externally-imposed serious governance crisis of the last three years, we judge YSU's system of governance, administrative structures and activities not as much against the comprehensive set of the best experience, but against the ability to survive in turmoil and make a tangible leap forward in online environment and enhance quality assurance during the pandemic. At the same time, governance may be inadequate to address the ambitions and challenges YSU faces.

**Conclusion:** Overall satisfactory, with significant room for improvement.

**Recommendations:** YSU needs major improvements in governance and management. In particular, there is a need for continuous effort for coordination and cohesion of strategic plans, self-reviews and educational programs. To properly address the transformative challenges it faces, the university needs to engage in a longer (10-year long) planning exercise that will also outline the hard choices and give an estimate of needed financial and other resources. The university should have a clear Strategic Development Model which makes a prognosis of required budgets to finance education & research activities for the years ahead, based on various scenarios of diversified income and varying numbers of students. Without such a plan, the university cannot manage all the risks that demographics and markets impose upon the university.

As mentioned in the recommendations of criterion 1, the University should make a clear distinction between short-term, mid-term and long-term objectives of YSU, in separate forms and documents and have a Business Development Plan.

To this end, the university should consider establishing a centralized support unit that will periodically guide the process and monitor and evaluate the progress against the targets and plans, as well as regulate the whole process of strategy setting and execution. We urge the university to discuss at the Board level the EU-funded Report on Functional Review of the Yerevan State University during the longer-term strategy elaboration process. It is important for the university to develop a system of systematically collecting and processing information from the external stakeholders and feed this analysis into evidence-based policy making. To ensure the system is working, the university needs to establish Key Performance Indicators and prioritize reporting and decision-making along these indicators. With such indicators in place, they can be used to enhance internal and external communication of the progress of the university towards its goals.

### III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

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

#### **Findings**

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

By and large, BA & MA programs are aligned with the Armenian National Qualification Framework (ANQF) and are based on learning outcomes. The academic programs are in line with the educational mission of the institution, they have well-defined structure and explicitly stated learning outcomes, while still developing the alignment with the research ambitions of the university. At the same time, there should also be a focus on 'continuous education', so that it fully reflects the real needs of all layers of the society (including graduates) and the different employment sectors.

At the same time, the programs are not fully fledged to the course level to reflect the learning objectives in each course description and assignment and skills levels.

While alignment with the ANQF is a must, in the modern world it is not sufficient. Attention must also be paid to the alignment of YSU programs to existing Armenian professional QF in the relevant fields (wherever they exist), to ensure that the programs are relevant and cutting-edge.

The weakest point of academic programs is their non-systematized encounters with outside stakeholders. While on the program level the faculty and staff often actively engage with the industry, there is no process and policy on how to do it. There is no indication of the number and scope of partnerships with professional organizations, private businesses (including SMEs).

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

The institution has a regulated cycle of reviewing the programs with student feedback playing a very important role. Programs are regularly checked with students, rarer with the alumni. As mentioned above, there are encounters with public and private companies to be the closest to the labor market, but they are not performed in a systematic manner.

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

As mentioned above, the programs are not fully fledged to the course level to reflect the learning objectives in each course description and assignment and skills levels. Thus, there is still overbearing of formal (traditional) assessment, without explicit linkage of courses and assignments to the learning outcomes.

While there is self-awareness of occurrence of plagiarism & favoritism, there do not seem to be effective measures in place combating this practice. Introduction of Research Component tried to address this problem, but may not be enough. Modern solutions often require new technological tools and access to specialized common databases of academic works both of students and teachers, to ensure effective guard against plagiarism.

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

There is no inter-university mobility among Armenian universities, also because of the legal regulations. The only examples of mobility happen within the framework of foreign cooperation, mostly through the Erasmus exchange. There are numerous official collaborations with targeted universities from abroad, including near east and other parts outside of Europe. Courses in English are organized in the context of Erasmus exchange. At the same time, foreign-language instruction at YSU could be improved to facilitate YSU students' learning and mobility opportunities abroad.

While there are officially announced elective courses in the university, there is no facility or opportunity for intra-university mobility as well, when a student can take a course from a different program.

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

The YSU has started to monitor the programs starting 2019. The programs are set to be reviewed every two years, which is too fast to allow capturing trends in the market in a comprehensive way and does not allow to look at the programs more strategically. Monitoring and evaluation are often not comprehensive (particularly with regards to external stakeholders), with only systematic elements of assessment being student survey feedback. All the other elements are performed in a non-systematized way, with little attention being paid to checking the performance of the programs against learning objectives.

#### **Considerations:**

While there are policies and procedures in place to ensure academic program delivery aligned with ANQF, the programs are often not judged against the learning objectives and have sketchy input from external stakeholders.

#### **Summary:**

While the sub-criterion for the mobility is not fully functional that is partly due to legal regulations in the country, and there are no modern-age technological tools to fight plagiarism, the panel believes that policies and procedures in place ensure academic program delivery aligned with ANQF. At the same time, these policies and procedures should be constantly monitored and improved through evidence-based decision-making.

**Conclusion:** Satisfactory.

#### **Recommendations:**

The institution has to put learning objectives in the center and not only build, but also to monitor and evaluate all the programs based on their ability to deliver learning objectives. To do so, there should be Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in place that will specify their performance of the programs with regard to employment, skill development, market requirements, etc. To ensure these KPIs are met, there should be well-developed comprehensive policies and procedures in place that will specify in detail how the information and insights from key stakeholders (particularly, external stakeholders) is collected, processed and communicated. It is also important to have a longer period for program reviews to ensure more strategic and comprehensive review. It can be also useful if the University collaborates with other universities or internally develops anti-plagiarism software that will check against larger databases, as this is becoming a very wide-spread tool in the world.

## **IV. STUDENTS**

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

#### **Findings:**

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

The admission procedures are clearly identified in YSU both for local and foreign students. The recruitment is implemented based on the legislation of RA. YSU obtains a high percentage of the BA students (over 30 %) that get admission to the universities. Admission is carried out at three 3 levels of education: bachelor's, master's and postgraduate studies.

In recent years, the university has become more interested in attracting international students. Currently YSU is in the process of recruiting foreign students. For this purpose, the university uses both foreign companies and its offices in Europe, Asia and America to recruit students, as well as interact with the Armenian embassies in different countries. The main area of interest for foreign students is the Pharmaceutical Institute.

Students learn about the university through the media (website, brochures, advertisements). The links between YSU and schools/high schools is the opportunity to allow a presentation of what is done in YSU. To recruit students, representatives of the university organize visits to colleges, schools, distribute brochures, and provide applicants with information about the university, educational programs and their further development.

It should be noted that the effectiveness evaluation of the recruitment system both for Armenian and foreign students has not been conducted by YSU.

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

YSU uses several mechanisms to identify the needs of students. For this, the university conducts anonymous student polls. The questionnaires are available in Armenian and English. By analyzing the questionnaires, the university can draw conclusions about what students need. The university also organizes meetings with students, during which they discuss the points improvement in different areas of YSU, as well as identify the needs of students.

The University regularly conducts surveys on evaluating the infrastructure and resources for the purpose to improve education. As a result of the meetings with teachers, students of different faculties, as well as graduate students, it turned out that most of the students are satisfied with the technical and material base of YSU. The surveys are not analyzed statistically across the departments, chairs or disciplines.

It should be noted that the students regularly, while the alumni and private companies rather sporadically are involved in the evaluation of the programs. While there is regular, or rather continuous feedback from the labor market, there is no analysis of labor market demands and expectations.

In order to support the freshmen during their studies, educational advisors are appointed, who are experienced lecturers of the faculty. The number of teaching advisors is determined by the faculty, providing one advisor for 30 students. However, the effectiveness of the system has not been analyzed by YSU.

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

Students can get advice from teachers, course curators, departments and the dean's office.

The university has just adopted the Internet-based Moodle platform on which teachers upload course outlines and respective materials. The Career Center also organizes seminars.

While YSU offers opportunities for engaging students in “extracurricular activities”, these are quite limited in scope and scale, and the pedagogical/methodological support for all students, particularly first-year students is often missing.

**4.4. There are precise regulations and schedules set for students to turn to the administrative staff for additional support and guidance.**

Students can ask and raise their questions at all levels of the university organization. But defending the rights of students at the university is mainly about the student council, which tries to solve problems on its own. All university councils also have student representatives (Academic Council of Departments, Academic Council of the University, Administration, Board of Trustees). Thus, the student's voice is heard everywhere. Most of the questions were resolved, and the students were satisfied.

It is not clear if the treatment of student complaints, or students' applications for assistance are dealt with systematically and in an ethical way. The percentage of the students having access to the different administrative services is difficult to assess.

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

Career center collects the data and gives the information to the students. These latter are satisfied with the center. For some departments and institutes (e.g. pharmaceuticals), they also collect the internships offered to the students, which increase their contacts with companies. Alumni YSU organization is present and independent from the university governance bodies with an independent budget for event organizations; this organization also has good contact with private companies.

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

The university tries to actively involve students in research activities. Students of all faculties defend their thesis at the end of a bachelor's or master's degree. The university decided to cancel theoretical in-course projects to introduce projects with a clear research component inclusion. While this type of work is still in the beginnings and not very formalized, such an effort leads to the fact that from the third year onward the students begin to acquire research skills, which will be used more actively in post-graduate studies.

The University has a Student Scientific Society (SSS). This organization organizes Olympiads, some scientific publications, they have their own journal in which students' works are published.

The students are encouraged by the academic departments to have a research activity. This is possible through the possibilities to spend a long period of time working on a defined research project given by a researcher. These activities receive no academic credit.

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

Students' rights are by and large championed by student councils. Except for that, there is an ethics committee with elected students. It investigates any misconduct.

In case of money problems, students have to ask for partial or full reimbursement of tuition fees, based on the financial situation of the student/students' parents. There is no student ombudsperson/service available at the central or faculty level.

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

No systematic effort is taken to evaluate the quality of services provided to the students, except for occasional questions filed anonymously by random students.

Every student can run to be elected as a member of the different councils or committees.

**Considerations:**

YSU gives the students a voice and opportunity to access various support services to ensure a productive learning environment: research activity, access to the labor market, etc. However, there is no evidence that the usage of services is evenly distributed across the board, or support services for students having

problems are widely utilized. Particularly, first year students should be better integrated into various structures.

**Summary:** Although student opinion is sought and taken into account, there are issues with representativeness and lack of deeper analysis of this data, and while students utilize their rights, often they are limited in scale and scope and often boil down to grade appeals only.

**Conclusion:**  
**Satisfactory.**

**Recommendations:**

Student rights and duties should be presented in a positive way-not in terms of impending punishment, but in terms of creating a fair and productive learning environment. The involvement of students in research should be granted ECTS--i.e. academic recognition. A student ombudsperson could be appointed with the necessity to make an annual report on his or her operations to the governance bodies. YSU should promote alumni-private company interactions for a better employability of the graduates.

## V. FACULTY AND STAFF

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

### Findings

**5.1. The Institution has policies and procedures promoting recruitment of a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff for the provision of academic programs.**

The university considers its teachers (all positions) as its most important guarantee for delivering quality education, so due attention is paid to the recruitment of qualified teaching staff, with regard to qualifications, pedagogical experience, scientific and professional background. The average age of the teaching staff is quite high, and moreover few young teachers are recruited, because of the decreasing student numbers (a demographic evolution).

The university has a wide scope of MA degree programs, offering a great variety of specializations, which means they need to attract a high number of specialist teachers from outside the university, with either a specific academic background or professional experience in the relevant sphere. The student assessments bear witness to the quality of the teaching and the commitment of the teaching staff.

The university has a policy of putting teaching and research as twin activities, involving research-oriented teachers in the educational process, which results in a strong emphasis on research in the teaching, and in the learning process, and this in the three cycles (BA, MA & PhD).

The university intends to alleviate the workload of teaching staff by reducing the hours of teaching, and by this make more time available for research, student assessment and mentoring in teaching & internships.

Among the other challenges are the recruitment of young teaching staff with the best qualifications for teaching specialist courses, because of the low salaries compared to the private sector. For the recruitment of teaching staff (all levels) there should also be an opportunity for candidates outside the university to apply, to broaden the recruitment basis.

The SWOT analysis however reveals there is hardly any external (extra-university) competition in the process of recruiting teachers, which is a missed opportunity to attract extra talents.

In order to guarantee fair and equal treatment, there should be university-wide valid regulations for the appointment or election for the positions of chairs and deans of faculties.

The same high standards as for the teaching staff should be required for the various categories of administrative staff, but there is less evidence of this, as the relevant documents are in the domain of the university administration. The KPI indicators however express an approximately comparable degree of appreciation for supporting staff from the part of the students.

Contrary to the teaching staff, job descriptions for supporting staff are still work in progress and does not contain emphasis on expertise, expected skill and performance levels, which has an impact on developing an overall HR policy for administrative staff.

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

The YSU has initiated a pilot teaching development reform, which consists of setting requirements (both professional and pedagogical) for the programs at BA and MA level in a substantial number of faculties. The job descriptions that were subsequently introduced are the appropriate tool to bring this to the level of the individual teacher, considering the personality, professional development and qualifications for a specific teaching job. However, these job descriptions remain vague, as they still need to be linked to the learning objectives of the course programs, and are absent for the administrative staff. The pilot project is also set to be extended to the whole university.

The next step will be to align the job descriptions to the LO of the program and of the individual courses.

The notion of interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary programs has induced changes in the way new programs are developed, and how they will be monitored at the university, as they may often be within the remit of two or more chairs and/or deans, who each have the academic supervision of a specific course or program. The faculty administration, which has to take into account the related resources (human and financial) for such a program, and the concerned chairs and deans appear to be fully aware of this. Cross-sector or multi-disciplinary are deemed crucial for the MA programs, and they require specialist teachers.

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

The university wants to raise the satisfaction of its students with a multifunctional evaluation of the teaching staff, and online student and graduates' surveys to measure the satisfaction with the dispensed education. Though there may be sporadic negative/perverse effects of such evaluation methods (e.g., impact of teachers' evaluations on student scores), the fact that they are linked to performance-based premiums for the staff, and may have an impact on their promotion, means that there are benefits for the staff as well. The allocation of Excellence awards in teaching, for the main specializations, is a move in the same direction. As indicated by the relevant indexes, the satisfaction ratings for teaching staff at YSU are high.

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

The university has so far not been able to identify the individual staff needs for continuous professional development through the student surveys on teachers and the teachers' self-evaluations. Generally, HR is not dealing sufficiently with acquisition, retention and promotion of the administrative staff. These functions within HR should be strengthened significantly and not be delegated to line managers such as deans and chairs.

However, in order to meet the general need of staff for professional development, the Department of Postgraduate and Supplementary Education (DPSE) provides programs targeting the chairs and other teaching staff, often linked to credits, and tailored to their specific needs. The teaching development programs offer courses for different levels and make use of specific tools (such as the MOODLE online platform, which is widely used by the staff), and provide the (often mandatory) English language course. It is also commendable that the university extends its expertise by taking part in several benchmarking projects, such as the EU sponsored PRINTel project, a multi-disciplinary program with built-in feedback offering specific training in innovative teaching and digital skills.

Hiring specialist teachers (for the MA programs) with links to the labor market also has the effect of bringing in innovation. It may also be beneficial for the university to stimulate part-time teaching, which allows part-time staff to build a professional experience outside the university.

It should however be noted that the university's Teaching Staff Development strategy focuses almost exclusively on teaching, and not on the teaching environment and on those in charge of implementing or monitoring it (administrative and support staff). It is clear that the two should go in pair, especially now that the new modes of learning (online classes, MOOCS) have gained ground, and in the modern world the learning process has shifted to student-centered learning.

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

YSU values the diversified academic profile of its teaching staff, in view of the increased number of specialized MA programs, and one of the methods to achieve this is by hiring specialized experts from the field, who have specific (technological) expertise gained in the private sector. This is commendable as it may also lower the average age of the teachers. However, the university's own HR policy does not always support these efforts, as promotion opportunities are mostly reserved for full-time positions.

The university has a policy for a competitive selection and appointment of teaching staff, and has implemented several measures to reward competent and performant teachers, but the required mechanisms are not yet fully in place to create a more competitive environment.

The university's Strategy Development Plan points at the need to make optimal use of the potentials of individual staff members, but so far no link is made between different scenarios of use of staff and the workings of the HR management.

Salaries have to be commensurate with the job profile and responsibilities. In return appointed or recruited academic staff have to show a commitment to the moral standards upheld by the university.

Every newly recruited staff member should therefore be asked to sign a Code of Ethics relevant for the position or function as a lecturer or administrative person in charge.

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

YSU staff promotion is based on a policy for promoting professional development of its staff, of which the Faculty Development Program is the most important instrument. Among the other noteworthy stimuli are: the possibility of an international mobility (staff training exchange under the Erasmus+ program), stimulation of the knowledge of English, paying differentiated bonuses for different types of research output, and 'excellence awards in teaching'.

The current HRM department (which is more of an extension of the legal department rather than an HR department) has not yet developed university-wide regulations for facilitating the promotion of staff, based on clear and equitable criteria. As there is a high degree of autonomy of the university to fix the terms and salaries of its academic staff, there is a potential risk that ethical rules in terms of fair salary and responsibilities are not always observed.

Day to day HR management is still in an embryonic state. Whereas efforts have been made to regulate and implement teaching staff HR management, a lot of work still has to be done for administrative staff. Unlike with the teaching staff, a competitive 'election and appointment' procedure is missing here.

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

There is an awareness (and concrete plans) to implement for the supporting staff what has been done for the teaching staff. However, there are at the university no systematic training programs for other than teaching staff, and there is no overall and systemic assessment of admin & technical staff.

As indicated in the YSU Strategic Development Plan (2016-2020) there should be a link between the Strategic Development Plan scenarios and HR management. According to the HR department they are in the process of making job descriptions for the different positions implying the administrative staff of the subdivisions, and the supporting engineering-technical staff categories. It is not clear whether it is also the intention to widen the project to include also the senior administrative staff positions.

The staff in the different departments generally seem to be aware they will need to adapt to the changing academic context (from teacher-centered to student-centered learning), and will have to respond to the need for a more diversified learning environment (more online provision), which has been accelerated by the ongoing pandemic.

**Considerations:**

The university has taken the recommendations of the 2015 accreditation review to heart, but so far has not brought their realizations to the required level, in terms of staff development, in line with the objectives of its programs and its mission of a research-intensive university.

**Summary:**

It is clear that the university has at its disposal a sufficient mass of competent teaching staff to achieve the objectives of the programs they offer, but it needs to enhance its efforts to ‘modernize’ the way it manages its human resources, by stimulating competitiveness and flexibility among its staff.

**Conclusion: Overall satisfactory, with areas for improvement.**

**Recommendations:**

- The pedagogical and professional requirements for teaching staff still need to be attuned to the specific professional content of the different academic programs, so as to attain the intended results of these programs.
- Have uniform and university-wide mechanisms for the selection and appointment of staff, with open calls that also include competent staff outside the university.
- Devise and implement professional development programs for all support staff, equivalent to those of the teaching staff.
- Elaborate and implement a strategy (with clear baseline and milestones) of gradually reducing the average age of the faculty, without harming the educational quality in the process.
- To adequately address the challenges of faculty and staff development, have full-fledged HR services supporting this process.
- Foster international mobility of faculty and staff to enhance their skills and credentials.

## VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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

### Findings

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

The various components of YSU (departments, Faculties, Institutes) strongly encourage research by inviting BA and MA students to join the labs for a short or long period of time and to work on a research project. The courses on the research paper also require the student to publish their work, when possible, and the publication fees are paid by YSU.

- The weakness regards the doctoral level. Even if the protocol from the candidate selection to the final PhD defense is clearly established and in the norm of the Salzburg principles, PhD students are not considered as “true” research workers and their salary does not reach what could be expected for this level of education.
- Teachers have a sizable amount of teaching duty. Reducing the workload of teaching will help to develop more competitive research.
- Professionalization of the doctorate should be encouraged, mainly by having a PhD student in a company tutored by an academic member together with an authorized member of the company. It would also be important to involve the private companies when designing the research subject and program.
- PhD often miss the different steps for applying to a PhD program as the deadline is too close. YSU should promote the PhD by clearly explaining the successive steps for applying, by organizing a “PhD annual meeting” with the presentations of the current studies by the PhD, and why not organize a large and open celebration for the PhD graduation day.

At last, but not least, if all departments, faculties and institutes definitely want to develop research, the exact roles of the different university councils in the management of the research are not clear. This fact makes it difficult to see a clear strategy in terms of research at a central level (board of trustees, scientific council...). E.g., the scientific council does not have the authority to give more money to a specific laboratory to favor a specific scientific activity based on its excellency. However, YSU is working on it and the process should be clearly and officially formalized.

YSU should also publicize the results of its research to explain how the funded research is helpful for the country’s development and its inhabitants. This will also help the efforts to raise funds for research.

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

As explained above, it is difficult to ascertain whether a “defined” strategy exists at the central or intermediate levels as previously detailed, however the intermediate levels (department, Faculties, Institute) clearly encourage the students to practice research.

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

For PhD, YSU has a clear procedure to select the PhD students through a qualifying exam and the research projects. The procedure to allow the PhD defense involves numerous councils and steps and this is also well defined.

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

Internationalization is an important priority of YSU, by developing many collaborations with universities from abroad (in close countries or farther). This internationalization is more for the teaching part than the research aspect. The research aspect should be expanded, as well as the mobility of researchers should be encouraged.

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

Despite the fact that the teaching duties are incredibly important, teachers also have a research activity with expectations of published results, which is a challenge. However:

- it is not clear how the teachers are evaluated on the research they have performed alone or with their PhD students: is this based: i) on the number and level of (international or not) publications; ii) on their research program(s); iii) on the invitation in international conferences; iv) on the independent grants they could obtained for their funding...
- How their mentoring of PhD students is analyzed: i) length of time spent for the research; ii) number of scientific papers published as first author by the PhD; iii) employability of the doctors, type of the jobs and level of income salary...
- Adding indexes for promoting research.

**Considerations:** While there is no clear linkage of research and teaching, especially in terms of learning objectives, and there is a lack of mobility for researchers, overall, there is a tradition and expectation of research from the faculty that is put to life.

**Summary:** There is a well-established tradition of doing research, and the expectation of research performance is embedded in the university experience. At the same time, there is no vice-rector formally in charge of research, and with many plans for university-funded research and a new infrastructure to support it, all of these plans are still work in progress.

**Conclusion:** Overall satisfactory, with areas for improvement.

### **Recommendations:**

- Clear cut mid-term and long-term strategies for research should be defined at the central level and then described and applied at the lower levels.
- Central organization of YSU should give a clear impact of the internationalization of the research by encouraging its own labs to interact not only with foreigner universities but also with research institutes from abroad.
- The university is encouraged to contemplate the creation of Doctoral Schools for institutionalizing research in priority directions.

## VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

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

### Findings

#### **7.1 The Institution has an appropriate learning environment for the implementation of current academic programs.**

In the YSU Strategic plan the 5th goal is defined as “to create university infrastructure meeting the modern requirements” and it is expressed in two objectives: a) to develop necessary auditoriums, laboratory conditions, to renovate university infrastructure b) to develop necessary information systems and laboratory infrastructure for implementation of educational processes. The University has 1 administrative, 1 laboratory and 10 educational campuses. There are 3 scientific-research institutes, 30 laboratories and 639 classrooms within YSU. Education process is organized on a double shift basis. The Ijevan branch of YSU has 4 buildings and 55 classrooms. YSU has education-production bases in Tsakhkadzor, Dilijan, Hankavan and Byurakan. YSU has 186 laboratories and professionalized cabinets most of which-- namely 141 are in the 3 buildings where faculty of natural sciences as well as faculty of physics and mathematics are situated. According to the SER the condition of buildings and educational and production base is good.

The improvement of the library is YSU's strategic priority. It occupies about 16000 sq.km. It has 2 inventories where there are 1.85 million units of literature. In 6 reading halls there are about 90 000 units of literature and in the funds, there is about 100000 units of literature. The reading halls are capable of serving 1200 readers at a time. In 9 faculties of the University there are faculty libraries with about 10,000 units of literature. The library is not an open-stack library inviting students to explore shelves with accessible literature, but a system with partially digitized file system that is mostly accessed with the help of the librarians.

While there are also a number of electronic resource bases for library users, such as Elibrary.ru, mathnet.ru, etc., these resources are not actively used by the students and faculty, nor there are KPIs specifying or prioritizing library resource usage. The reason for not very active usage of electronic resources has been mentioned lack of funds for acquiring subscriptions to the larger databases.

In the scientific-educational laboratory there is a need to renovate the equipment, though it opened in 2015. There are problems in financial assurance and indicators of workability of equipment. Besides, students are provided with necessary resources to conduct their research, however the large number of students in a group does not give the student an opportunity to fully master the given material. There are laboratories where the equipment is old and does not meet the requirements of the modern employer. There are also problems concerning computers in YSU faculties, there are few computers, some of them are out of work or do not have the necessary software.

According to the internal stakeholders, classroom and methodical resources of academic programs are sufficient to operate effectively. However, in emergency situations a transition was made into the ZOOM platform and the teaching staff didn't have time to make the courses appropriate for distance learning (expert panel protocol). At the end of the day, the university successfully managed to deliver the education through an online platform, but it took time and a lot of effort to get things moving.

According to YSU SER the results of the evaluation made by the alumni for 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 were a little bit different from the evaluation results of previous years as there was some increase in the satisfaction with the laboratory equipment but the satisfaction with the computer halls and internet was decreased. So, the survey conducted by the University as well as discussions made during the site-visit state that not all the stakeholders are satisfied with the infrastructure and resources of the University. Public TLI should have a sound state funding base, which allows them to offer quality education in line with their mission. As this is lacking, and the student numbers are unstable, the TLI should have a mid-term business development plan, according to the varying income streams, with different scenarios for allocation of their scarce resources.

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

In order to implement management and control of financial inflows annual estimate of budget inflows and outflows is formed having as a basis predictions and envisaged activities for the coming year. In order to ensure an effective and targeted educational and research environment and to regularly improve it, YSU makes budget allocations for reconstruction, acquisition of not current activities, services, salaries, main directions (educational, research and other) as well as for the improvement and renovation of laboratories, library funds and classrooms. In the annual financial planning also grant projects are mentioned according to international and state funding and their respective expenses. After the end of the academic year based on the factual data analysis annual performance of the budget is presented. According to the internal stakeholder YSU has one base funding and one targeted funding that is given for a particular project for the scientific activities funded by the state but funding for national value YSU does not have.

According to the internal stakeholders the University has envisaged to increase the salaries with 50% due to structural changes. At the same time the proportion of tuition fees is dominant in financial inflows which makes dependence on the number of students and makes the process complicated. There is no structurally sound plan that ties ambitions and possibilities together.

YSU does not implement risk management even if it knows about it beforehand, as, according to the stakeholder (see protocol, page 2) Government decrees are subject to regular changes.

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

The YSU budget is formed by the Rector, Vice-Rectors, the Department of Financial Analysis and Chief Accountant based on the performance of the previous years, envisaged events for the coming year, expected incomes and expenses.

The draft budget is discussed in the YSU Scientific Council session and in case of approval it is presented to YSU Board of Trustees for approval. Salaries of the teaching staff are decided according to the position, scientific degree, title and workload. There is also a system of differentiated additional payment for the teaching staff. It is worth mentioning that some faculties have some autonomy in the allocation of financial resources formed by themselves which covers the expenses of additional payment of the main teaching staff and material-technical base for the educational process. During the site-visit the stakeholders stated that diversification of financial sources has also some restrictions. Allocation of annual financial resources is carried out at the beginning of the academic year. Budget allocation is mainly carried out according to strategic directions.

The allocation of funding to the different units is based on their demands/needs during the previous year.

There may be insufficient reserves to cater for mid- and long-term needs.

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

There is an objective in the 2016-2020 strategic plan to develop classrooms and laboratory conditions for the effective implementation of educational processes, to renovate university infrastructure, to develop necessary information systems and library infrastructure. In order to solve these problems, the University continuously updates classrooms and educational bases, information and library resources. However, during the site-visit internal stakeholders mentioned that there are still laboratories where the equipment is old and does not meet the requirements of modern employers.

There is also a problem with computers in YSU faculties. The computers are few, some of them are out of work and without necessary software, according to internal stakeholders, in some cases the teaching staff provides its own resources to students (books, journals, etc.).

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

During the recent years for the improvement of this sphere YSU has allocated a significant amount of material, financial and human resources to improve the operating information system and internet. It is praiseworthy that since 2019 the University has been integrated in Eduroam134 global scientific roaming Wi-Fi network and as a result, the representatives of students, teaching staff and other staff members have the opportunity to use free Wi-Fi not only at YSU but also in all scientific centers that are connected to that network. Since the previous academic year Mulberry and Supervision electronic systems have been invested in YSU.

During the site-visit the internal stakeholders mentioned that some document activities are carried out, optimization of support and administrative staffs is envisaged, currently the scope of responsibilities are being studied, etc. Not all the decisions of YSU are available which, according to the stakeholder, is a matter of coordination. The information is available only through Mulberry (Expert panel protocol, pages 29-30).

At the same time, not all documents are searchable and mergeable, so a lot of quantitative reports are not analyzable through software. There is no decision about a general information platform (e.g., G-suite or something like that), there is no registration software, so the systems are good to get by, but not for strategic change.

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

There is a medical unit at YSU to provide first aid to YSU students and staff. The medical unit implements its activities in the sports complex, in 7th and 8th building having one doctor in each building.

Starting from the first year of study students are examined for the course on physical training and are divided into 4 groups: main, preparatory, special and medical. Students involved in a medical group that have no chronic diseases (post-operative period) in the second semester again pass the medical examination. And based on the results of these examinations there can be a change of the group.

YSU also has 24-hour security and sanitation services.

YSU staff and students organize their holidays in YSU Tsakhkadzor base with discounts.

In emergency situations civil defense of students and staff is carried out by Civil Defense Staff of YSU. In case of necessity the staff also carries out organization of student rescue squads. In some buildings there is a fire alarm system.

During the sit-visit it became clear that there are not sufficient conditions for people with special needs in the infrastructure of the University. Internal stakeholders mention that

In YSU vision the University takes measures to ensure a secure environment and inclusive education for students with visual, hearing, moving and other special needs.

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

YSU has developed a questionnaire consisting of 8 questions through which students assess the effectiveness of provided resources and services and alumni assess the satisfaction with the provided education. They can also present their opinions and suggestions about the provided resources and quality of services.

In table 5 of standard 7.7 is the data concerning educational resources and support services but only the data about the satisfaction of students is presented and results of surveys conducted among the teaching staff are missing.

During the site-visit it also turned out that the information about the satisfaction of teaching staff is missing. Regularly applied and effective mechanism of evaluation of resource application, accessibility and effectiveness is not sufficient.

**Considerations:** The expert panel assesses YSU's efforts directed to the assurance of necessary education resources for the organization of the education process. YSU is open and willing for allocation of resources as well as strives to improve classrooms and laboratory conditions, library, to renovate academic infrastructure by cooperating with different structures including local and foreign funds and charity organizations.

To renovate and reconstruct YSU Dilijan and Hankavan sports and health base. To provide means for YSU services on payment basis, particularly to activate the marketing processes of new dormitory, language center, courses on preparatory and continuous education, etc.

Actions taken towards the technical and technological equipment are not sufficient in current conditions (pandemic) for the organization of the education process more effectively. It is worth mentioning that some faculties have some autonomy in the allocation of financial resources formed by themselves which covers the expenses of additional payment of the main teaching staff and material-technical base for the educational process.

YSU's planned activities: to provide means for YSU services on payment basis, particularly to activate the marketing processes of new dormitory, language center, courses on preparatory and continuous education, can promote enrolment of students from both abroad and from RA and can ensure increase in the number of students.

IN YSU there is an infrastructure and services targeted to the maintenance of health and security, however there are not sufficient means for students with visual, hearing, moving and other special needs. Mechanisms for the evaluation of availability and effectiveness of resources provided to students and teaching staff are surveys conducted among the internal stakeholders. However, survey results of the teaching staff were not presented.

**Summary:** Taking into account the existence of resources necessary for the effective fulfilment of mission and goals-infrastructure, library electronic resources, efforts to enrich and recruit technical and technological resources, the practice of interconnected budgeting with the strategic priorities, digitalization of documentation system, assurance of secure and safe environment, the expert panel finds that YSU meets the requirements of Criterion 7.

**Conclusion: Overall satisfactory, with significant room for improvement.**

**Recommendations:** There seems to be enough cash flows for the University to operate, but it is impossible to judge whether there is strategy or resources to support the strategic plan. The University needs to set aside resources for strategic development and clearly state the relevant costs to make informed and evidence-based decisions possible. Without that, it may always get along and operate on day-today basis, while jeopardizing long-term strategic development. There is a need to clearly link university resources to the strategy through explicit governance processes.

## VIII. SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY

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

### Findings

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

The Institution has multiple channels of accountability envisaged by law and the Charter. The Academic (Scientific) Councils work both at the central level and faculty level, and are the most important forum for internal institutional accountability. Deans and the rector report accordingly. External accountability is mostly relegated at the Board level, as well as through the Press Office. While there is obvious activity of the Press office, it is mostly reactive rather than proactive, without set KPIs. At the Board level, while during the Board meetings detailed reports are presented, they are not discussed in more detail through Committees or a similar forum. This is more of a general governance issue, not pertaining to accountability in particular.

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

While a lot of procedures and processes are quite transparent (and the University is subject to Public Procurement Law), there seems to be a lack of structured and repeated communication on the matter, as a result of which there may be perceptions of a lack of public availability of information.

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

The Institution has a plethora of experiences with the society, most prolific at the faculty level, but this is the most unsystematized aspect of the university's activity. There is no system of schedules and minutes, formal analysis and further plans of engagement with different external stakeholders as far as the contact with the society is concerned. Interestingly, there is not much effort to show the research that the university is carrying out, particularly with regard to its impact on the society as whole, as well as emphasizing the role of the faculty in policy debates.

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

The University has a presence in one of the regions of Armenia, where the branch of University is operating in full force. It has all the relevant practices and experiences that are characteristic for YSU, and serve a prominent role in the borderline region.

Apart from the delivery of quality educational programs, YSU's contribution to society has centered on the Postgraduate & Additional Education department. Studies on how to better respond to market demand have not yet resulted in a mass of concrete offers of /additional education on an advanced level.

Not enough attention is given to delivery of expert advice of the faculty to relevant policy debates, faculty is not acknowledged on the matter.

**Considerations:** Taking into account the large number of reports generated by the university for different levels of decision-making, we can see the efforts, at the same time we notice lack of active engagement with external stakeholders, and reactive rather than proactive nature of communications.

**Summary:** We can state that there is a sustained effort to be accountable to the society, but the effort can be more focused and more comprehensive in scope.

**Conclusion:** Overall satisfactory, with areas for improvement.

### Recommendations:

- Engage in more proactive media campaigns explicating and explaining YSU activities and priorities;

- To enhance transparency and support the internationalization of the university, there is a need to translate and post essential documents in English on their website;
- Contemplate widening the scope of operations of YSU in the regions of Armenia, as in the case of Ijevan is, to have better outreach and impact.

## IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

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

### Findings

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

Yerevan State University has the position of Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Community Relations, while the burden for cooperation with the local universities is carried out by the Rector and there is no administrative unit dealing with it.

The state university has an international department that deals with both attracting foreign students and establishing relations with universities in other countries. The International Department closely cooperates with the embassies of many countries in the territory of Armenia.

The university is part of the Erasmus + mobility program, which provides opportunities for student exchange with European universities. There are many agreements on cooperation, not all of which are operating in full scale if not fully abandoned.

While there are a lot of activities on the central level, there are not enough resources at the faculty and program level that should foster livelier student exchange or directed program development. Most of the activities are supply-driven and there is no evidence that YSU prioritizes program development through local or international cooperation, and there are no such policy goals (and indicators) stated in the documents.

Today, more than 200 foreign students study at the university, but the number of “real” foreign students, i.e., non-Armenian speaking students is quite low. This indicator is small for the scale of the first state university, but in the strategic plan of 2021-2026, special attention is paid to this issue.

Another positive point is that the university website has three language options, but the Russian and English versions of the web site need to be improved (translation of documents, more complete provision of educational programs).

The external relations with other counterparts are developed more along the research lines, while not focused on program development, enhancement of frequent and periodic student exchange and creation of dual- or joint-degree programs.

**9.2 The Institution’s external relations infrastructure ensures a regulated process.**

The university has an international department that is engaged in the search and attraction of foreign students to the university. Also, the functions of this department include monitoring of some educational programs that are carried out with foreign universities. This unit closely cooperates with the embassies located in Armenia, as well as with the RA embassies abroad to recruit students.

While the unit works hard at maintaining the existing relationships and forging newer ones, there seems to be a lack of policy guidance of the processes. While the capacity exists, it is centralized and largely routine SOPs. There are no manuals or handbooks for student mobility, which could be highly beneficial in this regard.

The cornerstone for student mobility is the clockwork mechanism for mutual credit recognition both with local and foreign universities. We did not find evidence of smooth operation in this regard and this is a function that should be carried out on the faculty and department level. Such a mechanism should be based on the equivalency of reaching certain learning objectives delivered by the courses, not the exactness of their content.

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

There are many agreements with foreign universities, while not many formal agreements with local ones. As mentioned, many agreements are not fully working, if not dated. Also, the university cooperates with some foreign companies that are also engaged in the search and recruitment of students. These companies are mainly located in Asia (India, Iraq, Iran).

There are mechanisms and goals in place for the attraction of international students, but great efforts must be made for a wider international presence that will enable to draw a larger number of foreign students.

While the students are given all the information when they exhibit interest in studying abroad, most of the time they prefer using their own networks (participation to online conferences e.g.) than going through the international department.

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

To provide high-quality academic programs, highly qualified personnel and resources are required (teachers, laboratory assistants, material and technical base that meets international standards). Teachers and laboratory assistants speak English to provide services to international students (minimum level B2).

The university also has foreign teachers on its staff who introduce students to the culture of their countries, and they are native speakers. These valuable people can serve as bridges of exchange between programs in different countries as well as be a wider resource for the whole university, not only for particular programs.

The students expressed a wish for more foreign-language instruction to enhance their capacity for participation in international programs.

**Considerations:** The University has many agreements with foreign universities and likely is the most active in the country. At the same time, the external relations with other counterparts are developed more along the research line, while not focused on program development, enhancement of frequent and periodic student exchange and creation of dual- or joint-degree programs.

**Summary:** With most of the activities being supply-driven and no evidence of prioritization of program development through local or international cooperation, at the same time there is active use of Erasmus+ or similar programs, and there is a good potential for developing policy-driven international cooperation.

**Conclusion:** Satisfactory.

#### **Recommendations:**

- To increase the number of non-Armenian speaking students, more courses in other languages (however mainly in English) should be proposed.
- There should be a sustained effort to increase the number of protocols with foreign universities that result in actual exchange of students and faculty.
- To enhance the cooperation between the international office and faculties, in order to make more active faculty exchanges and attract foreign students for larger term engagement.
- There should be more intense cooperation with exchange agencies (e.g., Erasmus+ Office) and recognition bodies, such as ERIC/NARIC.
- To have a policy-driven internationalization effort that is not routine operation, the university needs to develop a white paper discussing YSU capacities and possibilities of cooperation (particularly assessing it on program level) with exact metrics such as joint programs, student mobility numbers, etc.
- There should be handbooks of mobility and student services for foreigners, such as help with dwellings, etc.

## X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

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

### Findings

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

YSU already initiated an IQA concept in 2012, and has since then implemented several QA units & their staff on central and faculty level. The university also made the improvement of the efficiency of its IQA process a central objective of the latest SDP. It claims significant progress in the continuous improvement of the organization and the educational programs, and has at the same time decentralized its processes. It has also set up a central QA unit (CAC), independent from the central administration, and under the supervision of the Rector.

The QA has since the previous accreditation review increased its impact in the various education units, the central services (departments) and the entire university life. IQA now has an impact in all internal processes of the university (professional development services, development & monitoring of programs, student & graduate surveys, careers service, etc.).

In spite of the formal realizations, the effects of new IQA mechanisms and processes are not altogether positive: low participation of staff, a complex organization & structure of IQA, limited practical impact, hardly any involvement of external stakeholders in QA processes, little feeling of ownership as there may be no university-wide understanding of the quality culture concept.

The lack of organizational management and of practical applications often leads to failure or poor results of well-intentioned reforms, which remain at the initial stage (e.g., professional development and training of teaching staff, also within the remit of IQA). So the improvement of the efficiency recommended by the previous accreditation review is only partially addressed.

Quality management (the PDCA cycle) is the underlying principle for the new governance system of YSU, including QA processes. It follows from the adoption of internal regulations that govern the activities and workings of university sub-structures and services ('intra-university acts'). Though the principle is good, this approach is also bureaucratic.

The PDCA cycle is implemented on the different levels of the university and this is also the case for the different activities in which the QA unit is involved, however with varying success and impact.

YSU now has IQA regulations on the central level, but opted for a decentralized implementation. For this they created different bodies on the central & faculty level. But this work division is not always observed, as the central department does more than designing the regulations, and overseeing the processes. They also 'conduct' the processes, and the reason they give for this, is that this guarantees uniformity of the applications (which are already highly regulated).

The reasons why some new IQA mechanisms fail to reach their goal are: too much top-down, little feeling of ownership, lack of organizational management and absence of practical applications or implementation.

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

Complementarity of the QAC & the QA permanent committee of the Academic Council exists on paper, but it is not clear how they divide the tasks. The QAC staff are highly motivated and know what they have to do; they are well informed and obviously they learned a lot from training via projects & benchmarking.

They are the specialists, whereas the people in charge of the implementation (Council committees in the faculties) are staff with other obligations, elected or appointed for this additional job.

The whole system requires a lot of investment in human resources, from the individual actors and from the university. It would be interesting to see the overall cost of the IQA, and to measure the impact of making the system more streamlined, so more efficient.

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

There is a systematic and high stakeholder involvement in the diverse processes (the scope of their involvement, their engagement in program development, program monitoring & review), but the picture is diversified for the different types of stakeholders.

The declared implication of stakeholders is greatest on the side of the internal stakeholders (students & staff), and this in the various processes (see under 10.5). Still for the former, the university could look for incentive ways to increase the interest and participation of students and teachers, not only to answer the polls, but more importantly in incorporating the process outcomes in their work (for the teachers). The problem is that often concrete outcomes are missing (for lack of analysis of data).

The university has to lower the threshold for stakeholder participation in QA processes. This also applies to the students, by having a proper way of recruiting, and making a pool of student representatives. At the same time, they must take care to avoid 'undue' influences (political affiliation, students with wrong or poor motivation).

Students, teachers and administrative staff do not seem to be really motivated to participate in the IQA. YSU decided to go further and to develop incentive procedures to increase the teacher participation. The low student participation is also paralleled by the fact that there is no student commission on the programs to follow up the survey results and to provide feedback. External stakeholder involvement presents more or less the same picture (partial or limited involvement). There is some involvement of the employers (and alumni?) in the development of programs, but not in the monitoring or review process.

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

This is only the second external QA review, after the pilot review participation in 2015. Still YSU has made substantial efforts in getting experience (and direct benefits) from IQA & EQA engagement, this also through international project participation & involvement (Tempus-Erasmus+).

In a preparatory phase there was the involvement in the ARQATA project (2014), leading to accreditation of 4 of its programs, followed by participation in a pilot, the ARMENQA project, establishing Armenian sectoral qualifications frameworks, on which several YSU programs were modelled (2015). Finally, the participation in the current PRINTel project, promoting innovative T & L. The experience gained in these EU or international projects should be beneficial for the individual teachers and chairs (e.g., for the alignment of YSU programs to the Armenian national and sectoral qualifications frameworks), but it is not clear whether this experience was shared throughout the university.

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

On the elaboration of the PDCA cycle: the tool is unequally used for the different purposes (academic program development, monitoring of programs, teaching staff assessment, student polls).

Where the PDCA cycle is closed, the right questions are asked: e.g., in teacher development: the actual training, polls among staff, findings which lead to implementation on the next stage. Huge work has been done in the monitoring of the MA programs on the faculty level, with input of teachers & students.

However, this is not yet happening on the BA programs, and not on the course level either. The latter may be problematic when the teaching context changes (e.g., new teacher on a course).

The university could next implement the sectorial QF in the Social Sciences and Humanities faculties, based on the experience gained in the other disciplines via the PRINTel project. Practitioners and specialists from the field are to work together in this and in the teaching and monitoring processes.

The new IQA set-up, with beginnings of (external & internal) stakeholder involvement in program development, etc. will also lay the foundation for a next EQA phase.

The university should also take advantage of the work already done on the program level, and implement it on the course level.

YSU should stay attuned to trends & evolutions in European and international QA. A (selective or sample) program accreditation remains a useful accompaniment to institutional accreditation.

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

Among the positive realizations are: a network information system ‘SuperVision’ on the longer term makes available a data-base on students & courses. (a QA realization). New tools such as the internal network platform Intranet for all university staff were only recently introduced.

But these are realizations from the other departments or services as well (with the input of the QA unit).

Towards the external SH it is more difficult to get a global picture: the website addresses students mainly, and in certain important aspects of the T & L process, QA appears to be missing (internships), which is a missed opportunity to get the labor market involved.

Assessment of the effectiveness of the teaching and learning processes is only beginning.

YSU has to work more intently on raising the awareness and involvement of students and staff in quality culture. This may enhance the interest in QA, when it becomes more obvious for them that the practical applications are helpful, and not necessarily bureaucratic. This is a realization that we find in the chairs & some teachers, but it may not be generalized. It is difficult to see that in the students.

Meanwhile the work on program monitoring and review has to be continued.

#### **Considerations:**

In spite of the formal realizations, the effects of new IQA mechanisms and processes are not altogether positive: low participation of staff, a complex organization & structure of IQA, limited practical impact, hardly any involvement of external stakeholders in QA processes.

#### **Summary:**

The Self Evaluation report is very well done, and the amount of collected data and input from the working group is impressive. There are a large number of Indicators that give a picture of the status. On the other hand, a lot of practices are incomplete and there is no systematic processing and interpretation of the data gained during the QA cycle.

**Conclusion: Satisfactory, with areas for improvement.**

#### **Recommendations:**

- IQA mechanisms and tools should be implemented on the level where they produce the greatest effect (central or faculty, individual teaching unit level).
- IQA mechanisms should be employed against the Learning Objectives at program and course level, with specific mechanisms tracking the progress of the students in that dimension.
- The scope of the QA unit is too wide, it should be more focused and more independent of everyday management activities.
- The QA unit is encouraged to amend their instruments and upgrade their tools, engaging in more quantitative analysis.
- Enable collection and storage of data in a manner that avails itself to qualitative, cross-program purposes.

## SUMMARY TABLE OF ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

<b>CRITERION</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>
<b>I. Mission and Goals</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>II. Governance and Administration</b>	<b>Overall satisfactory, with significant room for improvement</b>
<b>III. Academic Programs</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>IV. Students</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>V. Teaching and Support Staffs</b>	<b>Overall satisfactory, with areas for improvement</b>
<b>VI. Research and Development</b>	<b>Overall satisfactory, with areas for improvement</b>
<b>VII. Infrastructure and Resources</b>	<b>Overall satisfactory, with significant room for improvement</b>
<b>VIII. Societal Responsibility</b>	<b>Overall satisfactory, with areas for improvement</b>
<b>IX. External Relations and Internationalization</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>X. Internal Quality Assurance System</b>	<b>Satisfactory, with areas for improvement</b>

**Date: 28.10.2021**

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**Vache Gabrielyan, head of the expert panel**

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1. CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

**Vache Gabrielyan** graduated from Yerevan State University and received his Ph.D. in Public Administration from Rutgers University in 1998. He has served as Vice-Governor of the Central Bank of Armenia (2008-2010), Minister of Finance (2010-2012), Minister-Chief of Government Staff (2013-2014), as well as the Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia, and the Minister of International Economic Integration and Reforms (2014-2018). In January 2019 he has been appointed as the Dean of the Manoogian Simone College of Business and Economics (CBE) of the American University of Armenia. Dr Gabrielyan is the author of a number of scientific papers published in Armenia and abroad.

**Stefan Delplace** Stefan Delplace is an educationalist, specialized in Higher Education policies and their interaction with civil society. Stefan graduated in Germanic Philology (Ghent University, BE) and also studied Commercial Sciences and Law. He contributed to the reform of the European Commission's Jean Monnet program and the implementation of the Tempus and Erasmus+ Programs. Stefan was the Secretary General of EURASHE (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education) 2004-2014, the representative of professional higher education in the Bologna Higher Education Reform process. He was twice elected as a member of the Bureau of the Steering Committee for Policy and Practice (CDPPE) at the Council of Europe (2014-2017). He is a member of various Advisory and Expert groups of the European Commission and of stakeholders' organizations in higher education. Stefan is an Associate of the International Universities Association (IAU-AIU) and Chair of the Board of Directors of International Business College Mitrovica (Kosovo). Stefan has expertise in quality assurance and accreditation issues, as the EURASHE delegate in the 'E4' Group (with ENQA, EUA, ESU), and as an external evaluator and Board member of a number of QA agencies. He was also a member of the Executive Board of EQAR from 2012-2014, the European Register for Quality Assurance Agencies.

**Jean-Marc Lobaccaro** studied at the University of Montpellier (MSc and PhD) in 1987-1992 and received Ph.D. in Reproduction and Development. Since 1997 he has been a professor of molecular physiology at Université Clermont Auvergne. Worked in French ministry for Research and international cooperation since 2004; in Italian ministry for education, university and research (MIUR) since 2004 for endocrinology, cancer, signalization, lipids; in Flemish foundation for research (FWO; 2012-2018) for cancer; Scientific council of French-Italian University (2015-2019). Member of the International Board of expertise for the Doctoral School in Health Sciences and Life of the National University of Mongolia (May 2019). Since 2017 is vice Dean Faculty Biology, in charge of the Research. UCA and since 2018 is adjunct Professor of the Department of Physiology. University of Bari, Italy. Was awarded the Bronze medal of the City of Clermont-Ferrand in 2010 and Knight of the Academic Palms from the French Ministry of Education and Research in 2017.

**Srbuhi Gevorgyan** graduated from the Department of Preschool Pedagogy and Psychology of the Armenian State Pedagogical University after Khachatur Abovyan in 1989. Defended Ph.D. thesis on "The role of communication in the mental development of senior preschoolers" in 1995. Since 1996 has been a lecturer at the Department of Developmental and Applied Psychology of the State Pedagogical University. In 2000-2006 held the position of Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Psychology and Social Pedagogy, then in 2006-2013 was the Dean. In 2006 defended her doctoral thesis. In 2008-2010 worked at the Diaspora Scientific-Educational Center as a psychology lecturer in the training program for diaspora Armenian teachers. In 2013 was appointed Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs of the Armenian State Pedagogical University after Khachatur Abovyan. Since 2014 has been a full member of the Armenian Philosophical Academy, since 2016 - Chairman of the Professional Council Philosophy-Psychology 064. Has participated in a number of training sessions. She is a member of the editorial board of various

Armenian and international journals, is author and co-author of five teaching handbooks, one dictionary and about 85 scientific articles.

**Vache Gharibyan** is a graduate of the Department of General and Pharmaceutical Chemistry of the Armenian-Russian University. Has been a Ph.D. student of the same chair since 2021. In 2018 participated in the training of student-experts implemented within the framework of ANQA "Student Voice" project. Participated in the accreditation processes of the University of Traditional Medicine և Armenian Medical Institute as a student-expert in 2019.

## APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT

14.06.21 – 18.06.21

	<b>14.06. 2021</b>	<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting with the Rector of Yerevan State University	09:30	10:20	50 minutes
2	Meeting with the Vice-Rectors	10:35	11:35	60 minutes
3	Meeting with the self-evaluation working group	11:50	12:40	50 minutes
4	Break, discussions of the expert panel	12:50	13:50	60 minutes
5	Meeting with employers and Alumni and career center	14:00	14:50	50 minutes
6	Observation of documents, close meeting of the panel	15:00	16:00	60 minutes

	<b>15.06. 2021</b>	<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting with the members of Governing Board Members of YSU	9:30	10:20	50 minutes
2	Meeting with the deans (5-7 representatives)	10:30	11:20	50 minutes
3	Meeting with the Heads of Chairs (12-14 representatives including Ijevan branch)	11:30	12:30	60 minutes
4	Break, discussions of the expert panel	12:40	13:40	60 minutes
5	Meeting with the full and part time teaching staff members (12-14 representatives including teachers from Ijevan branch)	13:50	14:50	60 minutes
6	Observation of documents, close meeting of the panel	15:00	16:00	60 minutes
7	Parallel meeting with the representative(s) responsible for “General Psychology” and “Personality Psychology” academic programs <sup>1</sup>	16:00	16:30	30 minutes
8	Parallel meeting with the teaching staff of “General Psychology” and “Personality Psychology” academic programs <sup>2</sup>	16:40	17:20	40 minutes
9	Parallel meeting with the students of “General Psychology” and “Personality Psychology” academic programs <sup>3</sup>	17:30	18:10	40 minutes

<sup>1</sup> Two members of the panel take part in this meeting

<sup>2</sup> Two members of the panel take part in this meeting

<sup>3</sup> Two members of the panel take part in this meeting

	<b>16.06.2021</b>	<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting with the representatives of Student Council and Student Scientific Union (8-10 representatives)	09:30	10:10	40 minutes
2	Meeting with students (12-14 representatives including students from Ijevan branch)	10:25	11:25	60 minutes
3	Meeting with heads of departments (Educational-methodological department, Postgraduate additional education department, Centers for the implementation of academic programs, Department of scientific policy)	11:40	12:40	60 minutes
4	Break, discussions of the expert panel	12:50	13:50	60 minutes
5	Meeting with heads of departments (Information technologies department, International cooperation office, Department of public relations, department of human resources and legal support, Department of financial analysis, Accountant)	14:00	15:00	60 minutes
6	Observation of documents, close meeting of the panel	15:15	17:15	120 minutes

	<b>17.06.2021</b>		<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting with the representative(s) responsible for the "Pharmacology" academic program	Meeting with the representative(s) responsible for the "Law" academic program	09:30	10:30	60 minutes
2	Meeting with the teaching staff of "Pharmacology" academic program	Meeting with the teachers for the "Law" academic program	10:45	11:45	60 minutes
3	Meeting with the students of "Pharmacology" academic program	Meeting with the students of "Law" academic program	12:00	13:00	60 minutes
4	Break, discussions of the expert panel		13:10	14:10	60 minutes
5	Meeting with alumni		14:20	15:20	60 minutes
6	Observation of documents, close meeting of the panel		15:30	17:30	120 minutes

	<b>18.06.2021</b>	<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting with the Quality Assurance Department	09:30	10:30	60 minutes
2	Open meeting	10:45	11:25	40 minutes
3	Meeting with the representatives of foreign teaching staff members	11:40	12:40	60 minutes
4	Break, discussions of the expert panel	12:45	13:45	60 minutes
5	Close meeting of the panel	14:00	16:00	120 minutes
6	Meeting with the Leadership of YSU to summarize the results	16:10	16:40	30 minutes

### APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

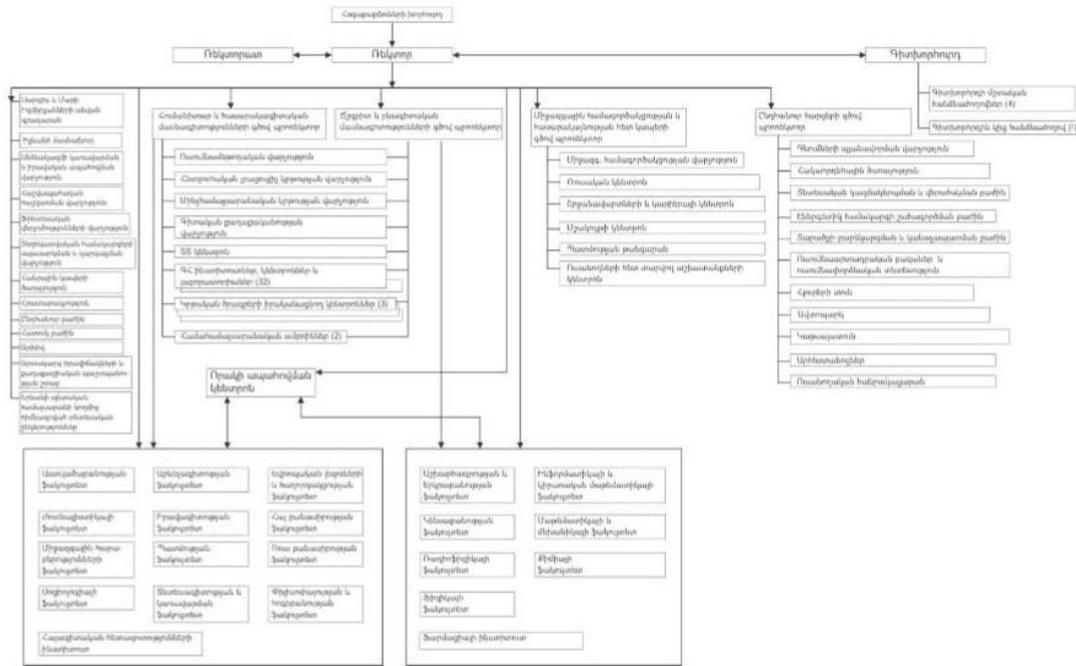
N	Document	Criterion
1.	Protocols of the sessions of the Board of Trustees for the last 3 years	2
2.	List of the members of the Board of Trustees /if available/	2
3.	Examples of needs assessment questionnaires conducted among the external stakeholders and respective analysis /if available/	2
4.	Working plans of structural units	2
5.	Regulation on award of the qualification of a pedagogue	3
6.	Examples of assignments of professional subjects for the presented academic programs /examples of mid-term and final exams/	3
7.	A few examples of final papers /master theses/ within the framework of presented academic programs	3
8.	Final papers in English if available /from the spheres of Pharmacy, Biology, Sociology/	3
9.	Protocols of the sessions of chairs of the presented academic programs /3 examples from each chair/	5
10.	Examples and results of surveys conducted among the teaching staff	7
11.	Questionnaires of alumni. Summary of the survey results or analysis /if available/.	10
12.	Notes and analysis of all the surveys conducted within the last 3 years	10
13.	Plan and report of the QA Center /for the last three years/	10
14.	Examples of job descriptions of administrative and teaching staffs	5
15.	Examples of the evaluation of the academic programs	10
16.	Concept on the development of YSU HRM system	5
17.	Entry to YSU Moodle system	3

## APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED

1. Legal clinic
2. Court Hall
3. Classrooms, SMART rooms, computer rooms, computer laboratories
4. Library
5. Reading Hall
6. Videos about laboratories

# APPENDIX 5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

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## APPENDIX 6. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANQA -National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation

NQF - National Qualifications Framework

SP – Strategic Plan

YSU-Yerevan state university

KPI - Key Performance Indicators

SC – Student Council

QA – Quality Assurance