

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE,  
FOUNDATION



EXPERT PANEL REPORT  
ON INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF  
“YEREVAN BRUSOV STATE UNIVERSITY OF  
LANGUAGES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES” FOUNDATION

**Yerevan – 2019**

## INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of “Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences” Foundation (hereinafter YSULS) was carried out based on the application presented by the University. The process of institutional accreditation was organized and coordinated by the National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance, Foundation (ANQA).

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

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

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

- 1) To carry out an expertise of institutional capacities in line with the RA standards for state accreditation.
- 2) To carry out an evaluation for the improvement of institution’s quality and for its integration to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The report refers to the expertise of institutional capacities of the YSULS according to the state criteria and standards for accreditation as well as to the peer review from the perspective of integration into the EHEA.

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## SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

### EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

Evaluation of the measures taken by the University showed that the issues mentioned in the previous accreditation expert report were mainly highlighted and solved by the institution. Guided by the follow-up plan, YSULS has undertaken relevant reforms in almost all areas of its activities. The TLI's progress is not yet tangible in the areas of "Research and Development" and "Infrastructure and Resources".

The expert panel evaluates positively the changes made in YSULS mission after the previous accreditation on which the stakeholders have almost unified understanding. This allows to conclude that the role of the University is certain among the stakeholders. However, the lack of clear quantitative indicators for the evaluation of the results of HEI's strategic goals makes it difficult to assess the YSULS progress.

The expert group evaluates positively the definition of new approaches in the University's management processes. These approaches have already ensured tangible results, particularly, over the past two years, the University has managed to overcome the large budget deficit and form the surplus budget for 2019. At the same time, the allocation of the budget is not carried out by strategic goals.

The expert panel evaluates positively the opportunities of faculty and students to participate in the management system, but the lack of involvement of MA students in the Student Council does not provide equal opportunities in terms of voicing their problems.

The expert panel thinks that YSULS's academic programs are in line with the mission of the institution, form an integral part of the institution's activities and promote the mobility of lecturers and students. In this regard, the reforms implemented by the TLI in academic programs based on the recommendations mentioned in the previous expert panel report are commendable.

The expert panel evaluates positively the steps taken by the YSULS to elaborate academic programs as a result of the analysis of the demands of the labor market and global challenges, as well as measures aimed at the implementation of academic programs with the double diploma. However, when offering new academic programs, the TLI must evaluate and analyze its own resources.

The expert panel recommends that the TLI pay attention to the organization of education process in the courses with a small number of students, teaching methodology and the number of hours of the second foreign language, teaching and learning methods in distance learning, the number of elective courses, as well as teaching foreign languages in the language of specialization. The expert panel believes that TLI should enlarge the involvement of targeted employers and graduates in the monitoring, evaluation, and review of academic programs.

The expert panel evaluates positively the existence of the procedure for the selection of teaching and support staff and TLI's efforts to staff the faculty with employers and foreign

native speaker lecturers, but due to the lack of knowledge of the Armenian language, their teaching becomes less accessible for first and second year students.

The existence of procedures for the evaluation of the teaching staff, their development, as well as the mentoring mechanism for the young lecturers in some chairs are commendable, however, in this and other respects, the University should organize exchange and localization of the experience in different chairs and RACs.

The expert panel notes that the absence of substitute lecturers creates risks for the effective organization of the educational process, especially in the case of the languages for which there are few specialists in the Republic.

The expert panel evaluates positively the efforts of the University to expand its financial resources, however, the steps taken to diversify financial inflows have not guaranteed financial stability yet, as the main part of the budget of the TLI is generated from the students' tuition fees.

University's material-technical base is insufficient for the effective implementation of academic programs in terms of the number of students and the available resources. The University has not made any tangible progress in this direction since the last accreditation. During the site visit most of the YSULS stakeholders mentioned the insufficiency of the resource base.

The expert panel evaluates positively the existence of the student recruitment procedure. However, taking into account only GPA for the admission to the Master's program creates unequal conditions for competition, since students with high GPA can study another specialty (even free of charge) that has nothing in common with their profession and for which they lack the basic knowledge.

The expert panel highly appreciates the open door policy of the University, thanks to which the students can freely address their concerns with the administrative and teaching staff. Students are provided with supplementary training and counseling opportunities. International cooperation is also highly valued, thanks to which students participate in mobility programs. However, students are not motivated to be involved in research activities. In this regard, the TLI has not yet taken steps to address the issues mentioned in the previous expert report. It is still early to assess the effectiveness of the Student Council's activities (the main body responsible for the protection of students' rights) since it is in the process of reorganization. However, there is a need to increase the reputation of this structure among the students, as students often address the administrative circles rather than the Student Council.

The expert panel also appreciates the activities of the Career Centre, the activities of which contribute to the professional advancement of students.

Though scientific-research activity is one of the strategic priorities of YSULS, the TLI has not yet made serious steps in this direction since the previous accreditation. Financial allocations in this direction are insignificant (business trips). Research carried out by the teaching staff is mainly due to the personal initiatives of the lecturers, within their own interests and self-financing. This fact, as well as the low percentage of students engaged in research, is the result of the lack of motivation mechanisms for the development of research. There are few

publications of the lecturers in international journals and impact factor journals. The inclusion of the research results in the educational process is of a situational nature and is not implemented through clearly functioning sustainable mechanisms.

The expert panel evaluates positively TLI's transfer of knowledge to various groups of the society, as well as the implementation of supplementary educational and consulting services.

The expert panel evaluates positively the reforms in external relations and internationalization, implemented after the last accreditation, as well as the activities that triggered these processes, the existence of numerous international programs, the access to international databases, which is ensured by TLI's library staff. However, the University would have benefitted, if it had increased the number of students and employees participating in different international programs as well as if it had implemented academic programs in foreign languages.

The expert panel highly appreciates the existing policy, procedures and processes in the IQA system, the motivation of the employees of the Centre for Quality Assurance and the reforms carried out as a result of the previous accreditation. Quality assurance culture is disseminated among YSULS stakeholders but the TLI has to make further efforts in this field.

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

- 1) The University's revised mission and strategic goals is shared by internal stakeholders.
- 2) Implementation of new, more effective approaches in management processes.
- 3) The steps taken to introduce new academic programs that meet the demands of the local labor market.
- 4) The compliance of academic programs with similar academic programs.
- 5) Students' satisfaction with the support provided by the University.
- 6) Effective activities of the Career Centre.
- 7) Dedicated teaching and administrative staff.
- 8) The faculty is staffed by employers and foreign lecturers.
- 9) Active cooperation with the society.
- 10) Effective cooperation with foreign universities, involvement in international projects, mobility of lecturers and students.
- 11) High motivation of the employees of the Centre for Quality Assurance and Reforms.

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

- 1) The absence of quantitative indicators for the evaluation of outcomes of the Strategic Plan.
- 2) Not always justified nature of implemented changes according to the evaluation of the HEI processes.
- 3) Inadequate development of different chairs and RACs due to the lack of best practice exchange procedures.
- 4) Low motivation among BA graduates to apply to Master's program with the same profession (judging by GPA during the admission to Master's program)

- 5) Ineffective organization of the education process in the courses with a small number of students.
- 6) Dissatisfaction of students with the second foreign language teaching.
- 7) The application of non-effective motivation mechanisms for students to participate in University management and decision-making processes.
- 8) The issue of sustainability in the case of languages that are not widely taught in the Republic.
- 9) Low involvement of lecturers and students in scientific-research activities and lack of encouraging mechanisms.
- 10) Insufficient material-technical base and lack of facilities for stakeholders with special needs.

## **MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **Mission and Purpose**

1. Define quantitative indicators for the evaluation of outcomes of the implementation of HEI's strategic goals and carry out a mid-term evaluation of the Strategic Plan by analyzing the efficiency of the University's processes by indicators.

### **Governance and Administration**

2. Establish conditions for dissemination of administrative best practices among the subdivisions and be consistent in the implementation of activities aimed at the improvement of the PGPA cycle, highlighting their linkage with the issues identified during the evaluation.
3. Regularly carry out quantitative and qualitative analyses of information obtained from external and internal environment, as well as introduce mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of data acquisition methods.
4. Develop a methodological guideline for a unified understanding of the results of surveys carried out by the TLI which will contribute to decision-making based on reliable data.
5. Publish data on TLI graduates employment by providing information on the quality of the awarded qualifications to the society.

### **Academic Programs**

6. Implement students' progress mapping for each academic program (professional progress by academic years in accordance with the outcomes of academic programs, as well as the progress of mastering the course in accordance with the outcomes of a separate course) and continuously monitor the progress of students in accordance with the clearly defined assignments.
7. Increase the effectiveness of the teaching methods and forms of classes for the second foreign language, as well as for the courses with a small number of students and distance learning courses.
8. Inform students about plagiarisms and its consequences through specific trainings, guidelines, and other measures for preventing plagiarism.
9. Establish a common approach for the development, monitoring, evaluation, and review of all the academic programs by applying the successful experience of the University.

### **Students**

10. Revise the procedure for the admission to Master's program by setting up admission requirements for all academic programs prioritizing applicants' professional knowledge and abilities.
11. Introduce incentive mechanisms for the engagement of students in research activities.
12. Develop mechanisms for the involvement of Master's students in Student Council.



### **Teaching and Support Staff**

13. Revise the recruitment process of the teaching staff (local and foreign) by defining clear requirements for the professional qualities of the teaching staff and criteria for practical skills assessment for each course.
14. Introduce mechanisms to encourage professional development and mentorship of young lecturers at the institutional level.
15. Organize Armenian language courses for foreign lecturers to promote their teaching efficiency.
16. Carry out work on the formation of teaching staff reserve to reduce the risks threatening the sustainability of educational processes.

### **Research and Development**

17. Carry out a comprehensive analysis on research efficiency according to the TLI's research priorities, indicating the processes aimed at improving this area.
18. Allocate appropriate means for targeted funding of the University's research activities.
19. Develop and introduce encouraging mechanisms for the promotion of research activities to activate publications in journals with impact factor, as well as joint research projects of students and lecturers.
20. Encourage students to write their graduations papers in specialized languages, promoting the development of scientific thinking in those languages.
21. Apply sustainable and effective mechanisms for the introduction of research findings in the educational process at all Chairs and RACs.

### **Infrastructures and Resources**

22. Carry out a resource provision analysis necessary for effective implementation and internationalization of each academic program.
23. Establish partnership with sectoral employers to use their resource bases for the needs of the TLI's academic programs.
24. Adapt the University's infrastructure resources for the stakeholders with special needs.
25. Distribute financial resources in accordance with the goals of the Strategic Plan.

### **Social Responsibility**

26. Publish the results of the surveys of the stakeholders' satisfaction with the University's activities on the official website of the University, thus raising awareness of stakeholders on the quality of different processes.

### **External Relations and Internationalization**

27. Effectively use national and international relations to improve research activities.
28. Take measures to accelerate the introduction of academic programs in foreign languages.
29. Organize foreign language teaching mainly in the language of specialization, thus contributing to the increase of students' knowledge of foreign languages.

## Quality Assurance

30. Introduce specific mechanisms for involvement of stakeholders, in particular external stakeholders in QA processes.
31. Regularly evaluate the impact of the IQA system on the improvement of the University.

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

Building upon an over 80-year-old tradition of teaching foreign languages, YSULS is currently reinventing itself as a University combining humanities and social sciences. The effort to throw bridges between different areas of teaching and research, between the East and the West, between the pressures of the market and academic standards, between professional training and scholarly pursuits is visible in the documents submitted to the expert panel for review and it also surfaced during meetings with various groups of stakeholders. International cooperation, including international mobility, has been a priority for YSULS from the beginning of its history. YSULS has partners both in the East and in the West and in its policy of reaching out to Armenian Diaspora, its international relations are indeed worldwide. Nevertheless, it consistently seeks integration into European Higher Education Area and strives to meet the standards that would enable its staff, students, and graduates to compete with scholars in Europe and worldwide.

It is commendable that YSULS seeks to internationalize various areas of its activity, including QA processes, career management, education, and research. The administrative staff of YSULS participated (in one case as a coordinator) in a range of Tempus programs, whose aim was to improve management and to effect alignment with international standards. All these efforts are praiseworthy and during the site visit it was possible to observe that the awareness of QA is gradually spreading throughout the TLI. It has not yet reached every stakeholder, and one can hardly claim that the TLI has already attained quality culture. The QA Manual actually requires revision and the process of making internal stakeholders aware of their role in shaping the mission, vision and strategic plans of the TLI needs to go on. It is commendable that career management is internationalized. The Career Centre plays a major role at YSULS and its dedication to work on both national and international level is praiseworthy.

The site visit confirmed internationalization of education at YSULS and numerous examples have been quoted both in the self-evaluation report and during meetings. Students travel abroad and foreign students come to YSULS, but the figures so far are not impressive. Clearly, it demands further efforts to make YSULS attractive and accessible to foreign students and to prepare YSULS students for study abroad. One of the ways to attract students from abroad would be to offer APs in foreign languages. The TLI mentioned in the self-evaluation report its intention to teach academic programs in Russian and English to attract foreign students to YSULS. The site visit showed that these plans had not yet materialized and the few foreign students who study at YSULS rely on the generous help of teachers, administration staff and fellow students if they do not know Armenian. No APs are offered entirely in Russian or English.

Although the percentage of students proficient in foreign languages is high, meetings with students showed that APs in specific foreign languages are not always consistently taught in the language of specialization. Furthermore, the quality of language teaching varies from one teacher to another. There are some excellent teachers, but there are also some who miss classes or use outdated methods of teaching (for example, teach English or Italian using more

Armenian than the language of the specialization). Students argued that foreign languages should be taught in the languages of the specialization, and not in Armenian. Students in non-philological study programs in humanities and social sciences learn foreign languages within a certain limited scope, but feel they would benefit from a greater exposure to foreign languages, especially English. APs in foreign languages would also be beneficial to Armenian students and could pave their way to international exchange and careers.

The TLI declares the use of ECTS and offered a selection of syllabi (or course guides) for review. Most of the syllabi were written in Armenian with elements of foreign languages. Only some were written in English. The course guides viewed during the site visit contained mistakes. For example, the syllabus for Romanian Language and Literature gives very confusing information about the level (according to the CEFR description): at first – A2, then in preconditions – B1, and in brief description – A1 to B1. The brief description is actually quite long and contains information that is repeated later on, such as rationale, teaching methods and evaluation process. The information about course objectives is missing. Learning outcomes are stated vaguely and are not defined in terms of knowledge, skills, and competence. Bibliography is very long and includes 22 publications. These are relatively recent, which is good. The table with the scale of rating is not quite comprehensible and if retained would need to be explained to students. A detailed plan of topics for each week is helpful and indicates that the level is actually quite basic.

It is crucial to keep in mind that the addressees of the syllabi are students both Armenian and international, as well as external stakeholders who host interns. The wording, and especially the formulation of outcomes, needs to be clear, succinct, and to the point. Syllabi need to be consulted with students to make sure that they understand them. Syllabi of different courses need to be compared for the sake of uniformity, consistency, and to make sure that put together the courses offered within an individual AP add up and reinforce each other, meet the students' needs and are feasible. All syllabi should follow the same format and there needs to be a limit set on the number of sources to be studied.

The European system of higher education makes a clear distinction between BA and MA programs based on the level of teaching. The TLI introduced the division into BA and MA programs, but meetings with students have shown that they do not really see the difference. Some of them voiced the opinion that MA programs repeat the content of BA programs. For this reason, students who choose to continue studies at YSULS change majors in order to learn something new and improve their chances on the job market. When students switch majors, teachers at MA level work with students who have little or no knowledge of the field, and in turn feel obliged to adjust the level of teaching to the level of the students who at the MA level begin a new major. Hence teachers may well be repeating at the MA level the content of the BA program. As a result, in fact, most of the APs taught at the TLI may well be at BA level. This state of affairs is aggravated by the decision of some faculties and chairs not to hold entrance exams for or interviews with candidates for MA studies. The criteria and policy of recruiting students should be transparent and uniform or at least comparable. During the site visit, the expert panel received contradictory statements concerning methods of recruiting

students: some stakeholders claimed they had entrance exams or interviews, others did not. The division into BA and MA programs is important from the point of view of student mobility. In the disciplines represented at YSULS, European universities implement clear-cut classifications of BA and MA programs with relevant sets of learning outcomes, different for each of these levels. During the site visit, the expert panel was confronted with contradictory information about the languages in which BA and MA theses are written. Some stakeholders claimed that students were free to choose the language of their theses, others that they had to request the right to write a thesis in a foreign language, and still others claimed that all theses have to be written in Armenian by law. The idea of having an external reviewer at MA thesis defences is good and the final reports of the Attestation Committees read during the site visit were informative and praiseworthy. They contained the statistics of grades in a given group of students, as well as comments on various shortcomings of the theses. A selection of theses and reviews read during the site visit demonstrated a good quality of theses and their definitely practical orientation. For example, one thesis in Pedagogy defended in 2019 concerned teaching active and passive voice in Armenian high schools. The review templates were adequate, the reviewers' comments informative and grading realistic. The thesis itself, some 60 pages in length, consisted of a theoretical chapter and an analytical chapter, followed by a brief conclusion and two appendices: PowerPoint presentation and research materials. The thesis was written in Armenian. It was both stylistically and technically correct.

The only objectionable part was its bibliography, which contained very old sources: 7 out of 20 entries were published in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, 1950s, 60s and 70s, even though the subject of the thesis relates to contemporary English. Another MA thesis, defended in 2018, dealt with indirect speech acts in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Great Gatsby* and its Armenian translation. The thesis was 80 pages in length, divided into two chapters: theoretical and analytical, conclusion and bibliography (some 42 sources). It was clearly an outstanding thesis and rightly received the best marks. It was written exclusively in Armenian (with the exception of examples in English). It is a pity that theses (graduation work) at YSULS are written almost exclusively in Armenian. Even if the intention is to protect the native language, which is commendable, some parts of the theses, or at least a summary, could be written in one of the major languages taught at YSULS. This would help students become "internationally competitive", which is the aim of YSULS stated in its new mission. Another way of preparing students for international study would be to allow them a real choice of subjects and languages studied at YSULS. The percentage of elective courses named during meetings is still relatively low (20%). What is more, during meetings students indicated that the actual choice of languages and subjects is still more limited. Students are not used to choosing, which also applies to the topics of theses. These are usually suggested by the teachers. Compliance with European standards means allowing students to choose, which they will have to do when they participate in exchange programs.

Internships seem to be another problem area. The information received by the expert panel during the site visit was contradictory. Some stakeholders emphasized the significance of internships and others claimed that they are useless. Internships are a crucial part of an AP

and should be well integrated into the study program. Students need to be prepared for their internship, and the internship needs to come at the right moment in their educational development. It also needs to be adequately assessed and useful to students. It seems that some work still needs to be done in this respect.

The self-evaluation report presents convincing numerical indices of the TLI's academic staff participation in international programs and business trips as well as the numbers of foreign lecturers on both short- and long-term basis, but the doubt concerning the distribution of activities and funding across Chairs and RACs has not been resolved. Most of the staff and students met during the site visit know someone who participated in international exchange, rather than participating themselves, which means that relatively few teachers and students in fact have an opportunity to participate in such programs. The internationalization of research exists at YSULS, though it seems to be a matter of individual contacts of researchers, rather than a more general strategy. The international exchange in fact concerns mostly teaching. Presentations of scholarly work at conferences and invited talks are still a minor part of internationalization at YSULS. Even though YSULS has included research and especially international research in its new SP, allocation of funds for research is still very limited and there are too few incentives to really promote research. There are always more urgent issues than research, for example, construction works and repairs in the TLI's buildings. The question needs to be addressed by different groups of YSULS' stakeholders, how important research really is for the TLI and how it is understood. During meetings the definition of research varied from one group of stakeholders to another.

Coping with heavy teaching workload, teachers have little time for research. What is more, they can only hope for moral support of their work and often have to pay for publications or participation in international conferences out-of-pocket. In other words, those teachers who do research in addition to teaching, do so out of passion. Rank-and-file teachers do not even apply for funding to cover the cost of participation in international conferences because they know the TLI would not be able to help and would turn their application down.

YSULS has demonstrated in the self-evaluation report and during the site visit that it has health and safety mechanisms, including the system of medical check-ups for students and the activities of the Chair of Physical Education and Civil Defense. These activities are commendable. There are nevertheless spaces in the TLI's buildings that are not accessible to students with disabilities (for example, restrooms). An apparently minor point that makes a big difference is the need for consistency in using names and acronyms of the TLI, its units, programs, and documents. In the submitted documents and on site the same units and documents often have different names, which is confusing. The same applies to the names of internships vs. practica. The English equivalents of Armenian names need to be used consistently for the sake of clarity.

## DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

### COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

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

- **Margarita Poghosyan** – PhD in Economics, a lecturer at Northern University’s Chair of Economics and Management, RA, member.
- **Angin Martirosyan** – PhD in Engineering, Head of the Division of Academic Programs and Teaching Methodology of National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia , RA, member.
- **Lilit Bekaryan** – PhD in Philology, Assitant at YSU chair of English for Cross-Cultural Communication, RA, member.
- **Mirosława Buchholtz** - Ph.D. in English and American Literature, Head of the English Department of Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland, member.
- **Haykanush Harutyunyan** - 2nd year MA student of the Faculty of Primary Education at the Armenian State Pedagogical University after Khachatur Abovyan.

The works of the expert panel were coordinated by Lilit Pipoyan –specialist of ANQA Institutional and Program Accreditation Division.

The translation was provided by Shushanik Melik-Adamyanyan – lecturer at Russian-Armenian University (RAU).

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

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

## **PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW**

### **Application for State Accreditation**

The YSULS applied for institutional accreditation by submitting to ANQA the application form and the appendices on 07.04.2018.

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

The decision on accepting the application request was made on 14.05.2018. A bipartite agreement was signed. The timetable of activities was prepared and approved.

### **Preparatory Phase**

Armenian and English versions of the SER and adjacent documents were submitted to ANQA on 13.12.2018.

ANQA coordinator observed the report with the aim of revealing its correspondence to the technical requirements of ANQA. Taking into consideration the negative feedback of the coordinator, the SER submitted by the institution was not accepted by the ANQA and was returned to YSULS on 10.01.2019 for revision. On 08.02.2019, the University submitted the revised version of SER which was accepted by ANQA on 15.02.2019 after receiving the positive feedback from the accreditation process coordinator.

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

Trainings on the following topics were organized for the expert panel members with the aim of preparing the latter and ensuring the effectiveness of the activities:

1. Accreditation process, peculiarities of expert work, ethics conduct and norms of ethics of the expert.
2. Preliminary assessment of institutional self-evaluation through the examples taken from practice.
3. Site visit through role-play.
4. Preparation of the expert report.

Having observed the self-evaluation and documents of the University, the expert panel conducted the initial evaluation between 28.03.2019 and 12.05.2019. According to the format, the list of questions for different target groups and subdivisions and also the list of additional documents needed for observation have been prepared.

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

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



### **Preliminary Visit**

The Preliminary visit to the YSULS took place on May 3, 2019. The ANQA was represented by the process coordinator, expert panel Chair, Head of the Department of Institutional and Programme Accreditation while the University was represented by the Rector and the employees of the Centre for Quality Assurance and Reforms. The plan-schedule of the site-visit was agreed upon, the list of additional documents was presented. The rooms prepared for focus groups and expert panel discussions were also discussed, the issues related to the equipment and facilities were clarified. 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 the meeting participants were also touched upon.

### **Site visit**

The day prior to the site visit (13.05.2019) all the members of the expert panel (international expert including) and the coordinator met at ANQA. Throughout the meeting the expert panel agreed upon the framework of assessment, the scale of criteria for assessment, which according to ANQA procedures has two levels: 1. satisfactory (is in line with criteria requirements) 2. unsatisfactory (does not comply with the requirements of the criteria). The strengths and weaknesses of the University per criteria, the procedure of focus group meetings, the norms of ethics of conducting meetings have been finalized and further steps have been determined.

The site visit of the expert panel took place from May 14th till 17th, 2019. The site visit initiated and culminated with the meeting with the Rector. Representatives from the teaching staff, students, deans, heads of chairs, employers and alumni were selected randomly from the list provided beforehand. All the meetings, foreseen by the schedule, have been carried out. Throughout the site visit the expert panel had document review, resource observation and focus group meetings in different subdivisions of the University. The expert panel highly appreciates the open discussions with the participants of the meetings.

During the close meetings of the panel at the end of each working day the interim results of information obtained were discussed and at the end of the site visit the main outcomes were summarized. The expert panel discussed the main outcomes and reached an agreement on accreditation standards and criteria. The final conclusion referring to criteria was reached through open discussions of all expert panel members via consensus.

### **Expert Panel Report**

The expert panel prepared the draft version of the expert report based on the self-evaluation report of the University, the documents attached to it and the observations during the site-visit as a result of regularly organized discussions. Each member of the expert panel has contributed to the preparation of the report, and has responded to the full version. The international expert has prepared her own conclusion and a separate opinion for peer-review. These documents were translated and provided to the expert panel. The views of an

international expert have been summarized in the report and the peer review has been holistically included into the report.

The response to the expert report was submitted to ANQA by YSULS on 12.07.2019. Reviewing the draft version of the report, the HEI did not present any objection and the expert panel made the final version of the report which was approved on 24.07.2019.

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**Lilit Pipoyan**

**24.07.2019**

## EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

### BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

**History.** Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences was founded on February 15, 1935. YSULS was originally established as a two-year pedagogical institute for training Russian language teachers. In 1940, the two-year institute was reorganized into a state pedagogical institute. In 1941, the Institute established two-year courses of foreign languages (German, French and English) to provide foreign language specialists for schools. In 1948, it was decided to establish the Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages on the basis of the Department of Foreign Languages of Russian Pedagogical Institute in Yerevan. In 1962, the Pedagogical Institute of Russian and Foreign languages was established on the basis of the YSU Russian and Foreign Language faculties. In 1962, the Institute was renamed “The Yerevan State Pedagogical Institute of the Russian and Foreign Languages after V. Brusov”. In 1995, the Institute was renamed into “The Yerevan State Institute of Foreign Languages after V. Brusov”, and only 5 years later, in 2000, it was renamed into “The Yerevan State Linguistic University after V. Brusov”. In 2014 the University was reorganized into “Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences”.

**Education:** 23 undergraduate, 27 graduate and 9 post graduate (research) academic programs are carried out at the University. The University is currently preparing specialists in linguistics, pedagogy, philology, political science, geography, international journalism, international tourism, psychology, translation, service, public administration, European Studies, information and public communication technologies and international relations.

**Research.** In 2013-2017 Strategic Plan YSULS has set a goal to promote the development of knowledge-based thinking in line with international standards, to assist the formation of a knowledge-based educational environment, to contribute to the introduction of the results of scientific and research activities in the educational process (ensuring interconnection between education and research), to ensure close connection between teaching, learning, and research, to ensure the participation of the teaching staff in scientific grants, to assist individual researchers and research groups.

In 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, it is envisaged to develop a comprehensive program of YSULS research activities, priorities, goals, and objectives for the development of YSULS’s academic and research activities, their comparability and competitiveness with the research activities of foreign universities, to develop and introduce innovative mechanisms, technologies and methods promoting YSULS research activities, effectively utilizing the University's scientific, research, and innovative potential, contributing to the development of students' scientific and innovative activities, creative initiatives, and the development of knowledge-based economy at the national level. It is also envisaged to ensure internationalization of YSULS research activities and comprehensive development of international scientific and educational cooperation aimed at promoting scientific and educational innovation at the University, as

well as to enhance the effective use of YSULS fundamental and applied research outcomes in the educational process.

**Internationalization:** One of the most important goals of YSULS internationalization is to improve the quality of education and scientific-research through the expansion of international cooperation, provide wider mobility opportunities to students, administrative, and teaching staff of the University through innovative academic programs and integration of internationalization elements, to enhance the University's attractiveness and visibility, to ensure the University's competitiveness on national and international levels, promoting the increase in the number of skilled specialists in accordance with the market requirements, as well as to ensure graduates competitiveness in national and international markets.

**Quality Assurance:** YSULS carries out Quality Assurance (QA) policy, ensuring its core components, including mutually agreed and continuous improvement of general and targeted, accountability, provision of necessary resources for the implementation of academic programs and relevant education support services, ensuring educational environment in accordance with national and international standards, implementation of continuous processes to meet the needs of the University internal and external stakeholders and, in general, application of internal and external QA mechanisms of the University.

The expert panel was guided by the principle of "compliance goals" and considered the above-mentioned information as the main ambitions and goals of the institution.

## **I. MISSION AND PURPOSE**

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

### **FINDINGS**

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

After the previous accreditation, the TLI revised its mission, vision, and strategic plan.

The expert panel thinks that the University's new mission is clearer now than in the earlier document due to the previous expert panel recommendations. It defines the range of academic interests and reflects the areas of educational activities. The new mission focuses on the educational and social responsibilities of the TLI and emphasizes the intention of training specialists who can successfully compete in the international markets.

Analysis of the relevant documents revealed that the charter, mission, and strategic plan of the University are in line with each other. Though there is no direct reference to the levels of the NQF in the formulation of the TLI's mission, it should be noted that there is no contradiction in terms of NQF.

It should also be noted, that according to the University stakeholders, the transition from a “teaching” University to a “research” University is a serious challenge for them.

#### **1.2. The TLI's mission, goals, and objectives reflect the needs of the internal and external stakeholders.**

According to the University, mechanisms for identifying the needs of internal and external stakeholders have been developed and introduced to define the mission, goals, and objectives of YSULS. However, meetings with different stakeholder groups revealed that the mechanisms mentioned by the University have not been applied regularly.

Although YSULS stated that there was a wide and repeated internal circulation of the draft version of both the 2013-2017 SP and the 2019-2023 SP and that there were discussions with external stakeholders about this process, it became evident during meetings that only some groups of internal stakeholders, mostly heads of academic and administrative subdivisions, were familiar with these documents, contributed to their formulation and participated in the process of ratifying the SP in their capacity as members of collegial bodies.

During the site visit, it became clear that some issues raised by the internal stakeholders were reflected in the strategic goals of the TLI. The external stakeholders were not actively involved in this process: it seems that the mission and the SP have been automatically approved by some of the external stakeholders. However, meetings during the site visit proved that both external and internal stakeholders share the main provision of quality education and internationalization stipulated in mission and strategic plan.

Scientific-research activities have been emphasized in the University's strategic plan, however, meetings with stakeholders showed that the definition of research activities varied from one group of stakeholders to another. The employers who took part in the meetings valued practical skills and transferable competences rather than research.

Most of the stakeholders present at the meetings consider the TLI's mission and strategic goals acceptable, regardless of their participation in its development process.

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

Mechanisms and procedures for evaluating the progress of the implementation of TLI's mission as well as the further improvement of the implementation of the strategic plan are not clearly formulated in the University's documents. On the basis of the recommendations outlined in the previous expert report, the University has fixed indicators for evaluating strategic goals. However, these indicators are generally not measurable, in particular, quantitative indicators which are not clearly defined.

YSULS Strategy and Action Plan assessment in fact consists in the Rector's annual report, which is based on the summary of the reports submitted by all structural subdivisions.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

The expert panel evaluates positively the changes made in YSULS mission after the previous accreditation on which the stakeholders have an almost unified understanding. This allows to conclude that the role of the University is certain among the stakeholders. However, the improvement of the mission is not accompanied by the involvement of stakeholders, in particular with the involvement of external stakeholders. Hence, while the mission may be well-formulated, it may not be acceptable to stakeholders, whose perceptions of it vary.

The expert panel evaluates positively the fact that the needs of stakeholders are partially reflected in the goals and objectives of the TLI, but there are no mechanisms to guarantee the reflection of these needs. As a result, the needs of internal stakeholders may be later left out from the YSULS strategic management processes.

The lack of clear quantitative indicators for evaluating the University's strategic goals can make it difficult for the TLI to assess its progress and can hinder its continuous improvement. At the same time, the reporting mechanism can contribute to relevant improvements at the University, although the reports submitted by the subdivisions are not always related to the institution's strategy.

**SUMMARY:** Taking into consideration the facts that the TLI has a new improved mission which is in line with ANQF and the fact that internal and external stakeholders share the strategic goals of the TLI, the expert panel concludes that the TLI meets the requirements of Criterion 1.

**CONCLUSION:** The correspondence of YSULS' institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 1 is *satisfactory*.

## II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

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

### FINDINGS

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

In 2017, YSULS has undergone major organizational and legal change (from SNCO to the Foundation). The decision of the TLI to change from a SNCO into a Foundation is conditioned by several factors, including the increase of the academic autonomy of the University and the importance of financial and economic independence. At the same time, according to the management of the University, the existing gaps in the legislative sphere of RA still hinder implementation of major changes. Particularly, freedom of economic activity and autonomy attributed to the foundations is restricted by the requirements of the RA law on procurement, which does not provide a differentiated approach for foundations and SNCOs. However, this change has significantly improved the TLI's financial state.

The organizational and legal change brought about changes also in the management system: from 2003-2017 (SNCO), the governing body was YSULS Governing Board. In June 2017, when YSULS became a Foundation, the YSULS Board of Trustees became its governing body. Since 2013, YSULS has twice implemented structural changes in order to coordinate and specify the functions of structural subdivisions (based on the recommendations of the previous expert report).

At the institutional level, University management is carried out on the sole and collegial governance, YSULS Board of Trustees, YSULS Scientific Council and the Rector. According to the YSULS organizational structure, there are two Vice-Rectors at YSULS (instead of the former 4 vice-rectors): one on Scientific and Academic affairs and the other on Academic Staff Management and Economic Affairs. They are appointed by the Rector.

Governance at YSULS at the subdivision level is carried out by the relevant faculty council. The faculty council is the collegial body, the chairman of which is the Dean of the Faculty. YSULS has 4 faculties with 13 chairs and 4 Research and Academic Centres.

The activities of all subdivisions, committees, and governing bodies are regulated by the elaborated regulations, procedures, and other legal acts. The above-mentioned regulations are available on the official website of YSULS. There are also job descriptions for both administrative and support staff. The University carries out financial resource planning in two forms, for academic and calendar years. During the site visit it became evident that internal stakeholders are satisfied with the human resources provided to the governance system for

educational and other purposes. However, according to stakeholders, material and financial resources need to be improved.

The efficiency of the YSULS administrative structures cannot be evaluated, as the governing bodies, administrative subdivisions and the structure of the institution have recently been reorganized.

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

The representatives of YSULS teaching staff and students are represented at all levels of the University's Governing Body, at YSULS Board of Trustees, Scientific Council, as well as Faculty Councils, with 25% representation of each group. Students with high performance are involved in the governing bodies. The chairman of the Board of Trustees assured that a constant contact with the members of the board is ensured through e-mail and social networks.

The University also has a student self-governing body, the Student Council, which functions according to the relevant Charter. Although, according to the submitted documents, the Student Council Charter was approved in October 2018, in the course of the site visit, the SC representatives stated about the elaboration of the new charter. One of the main functions of the Student Council is to raise students' problems, but in this regard, it should be stated that the Student Council has a problem of the representation of a certain group of students, in particular, MA students are not involved in the council.

The teaching staff is informed about the decisions and orders of the governing bodies of the University at the chair's sessions, at the same time, they are sent through Mulberry system. The draft decisions are also presented to the chairs through the system, and lecturers have the opportunity to get familiar with them and make their own suggestions.

During meetings with students, it was found out that the level of awareness of decision and draft decisions among the students is low, except for Student Council members. Moreover, students are rather passive and non-motivated in the participation of management of the TLI, even in terms of student life. Surveys conducted in the University also assure that the main part of students is indifferent to the participation in management process of the institution. but no specific steps are taken to improve the results of these surveys, to increase students' interest, and to actively engage them in University governance processes.

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

YSULS implements long-term planning at the institutional level. A five-year YSULS Strategic Plan has been developed to implement the mission of the University. In 2018, the TLI was guided by an annual conceptual plan, taking into account the issues related to the formation of a new Board of Trustees.

The University considers the planning and implementation of two-year activities carried out for the previous accreditation as an example of mid-term program.



Short-term planning is carried out for one year in all subdivisions of the University. Different faculties, chairs, and RACs have different formats of annual planning, and they are not always directly linked to the institution's Strategic Plan. Although the previous expert group recommended the University to stem subdivisions' plans from the strategic plan, it should be stated that, in some subdivisions, annual planning linkages are not related to the Strategic Plan, whereas in some of them, it is clearly highlighted and mapped.

Chairs carry out annual self-evaluation, based on which the next year's plan is drawn up. YSULS annual plan performance is assessed by the Rector's annual reports.

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

Based on previous accreditation recommendations, YSULS conducts an environmental scanning identifying and evaluating the possible risks. Studies are being conducted among employers and external stakeholders, in particular, meetings with former students, who are currently employers, an analysis of information received from structures where students had their internship based on which the academic programs are revised. However, not all of these processes are of a regular nature.

It should also be noted that the University has not defined clear indicators of positive and negative discrepancies for the analysis of the results of the surveys. It was not clear why the University positively evaluated stakeholders' e.g. twenty percent satisfaction with this or that area or vice versa.

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

The administration of policies and procedures in the institution is primarily based on the principles of quality management. However, as a result of the site visit showed that the subdivisions of YSULS are not equally developed in this respect, in particular, the procedures in some subdivisions are developed and implemented on the basis of quality management, but the implementation of the PDCA cycle in some new subdivisions is still weak. Based on the previous expert panel's recommendations, the University implements a number of measures aimed at improving administration, such as organization of training courses, appointment of responsables for quality in some subdivisions, inter-chair and inter-faculty exchanges of experience. However, the University has not succeeded in full and effective dissemination of the best practice.

At the same time, from the viewpoint of the PDCA cycle, it should be stated that the analyses of the results of the processes implemented at the University are not always clear, and their subsequent improvements are not quite visible. Although the processes in the institution are frequently reviewed, they are mainly based on the situation with no clear definition of the frequency, and the need for changes is not always based on the results of evaluation of the processes.

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

On the basis of the previous accreditation recommendations, some mechanisms for evaluating information about the academic programs and the effectiveness of the processes were introduced in the University, e.g the University conducts surveys, self-evaluation formats monitoring. However, these are of mostly situational nature and are not being implemented on a regular basis.

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

The TLI carries out analysis on the evaluation of quantitative and qualitative information on the quality of current academic programs and awarded qualifications. For example, the University is trying to analyze what impact such publications have on the number of the applicants. If the applicants' recruitment rates are low for any profession, appropriate measures are taken based on that information. However, a comprehensive evaluation of this area has not yet been implemented by the University.

## **CONSIDERTIONS**

Although many circles of the governing system of the University and the administrative structures have recently been re-organized and it is still early to evaluate their effectiveness, the definition of new approaches to institutional governance has already achieved tangible results, which can lead to the most targeted implementation of YSULS strategic goals.

The reorganization of the University into Foundation has led to positive changes and allowed the University to manage its own extra-budgetary revenues, which can contribute to the continuous improvement of the financial situation of the HEI and result in ensuring the necessary resources for the implementation of the University's strategic goals. During the past two years, the TLI has succeeded in overcoming the huge budget deficit, and even forming a surplus budget for 2019, which is a positive indicator. At the same time, the budget planning is not carried out according to strategic goals (for example, the research direction has been identified as a strategic priority, but YSULS has not provided funding for this sector in its budgetary plan), which does not allow the implementation of University budget allocations according to the strategic directions.

It is positive that the University governance system allows the lecturers and students to participate in decision-making, but the lack of MA students in the Student Council does not provide equal opportunities in terms of raising their problems.

The expert panel evaluates positively the availability of planning and accountability systems, which indicates that the TLI emphasizes the planning process and their consistent implementation, but different formats used by various subdivisions in planning processes do not provide a unified planning approach.

The unsystematic nature of the environmental scanning, as well as the evaluation of information on the effectiveness of academic programs and processes at the University may lead to the accumulation of unreliable data, which can lead to inaccurate decisions.

The expert panel believes that the publication of graduate employment data will help to provide the society with quantitative and qualitative information on the quality of qualifications awarded.

**SUMMARY:** Taking into consideration that governance and decision-making processes are regulated, lecturers and students have the opportunity to participate in decision-making, there are planning and accountability mechanisms, the administration of policies and procedures is mostly implemented on the basis of quality management principles, relevant reforms have been carried out on the basis of the previous accreditation, the expert panel concludes that the TLI meets the requirements of Criterion 2.

**CONCLUSION:** The correspondence of YSAFA's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 2 is *satisfactory*.

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

Academic programs implemented at YSULS comply with the scope of the academic interests set in the University's mission and the fields of educational activity, which indicates that the goals of the academic programs are in line with the reformulated mission of YSULS. Based on the recommendations of the previous expert panel, intended leaning outcomes have been described in all the academic programs in details.

In recent years, the institution has been undertaking steps to elaborate academic programs in the direction of new, more attractive spheres based on the analysis of labor market needs.

There are outcomes defined for each course implemented in the frame of the academic programs, but mapping of the courses and academic program outcomes is not available in all the academic programs. However, this practice varies across chairs and RAC's.

It should be noted that the formulation of outcomes described in course descriptions is often difficult to understand for the students.

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

Teaching and learning methods are listed in the academic programs and course descriptions. The class observations and meetings with HEI's stakeholders by the expert panel showed that the technical insufficiency of the institution does not always allow the the lecturers to apply the necessary teaching methods. What concerns distance learning, it should be noted that with regard to language teaching and learning methods, some of the stakeholders, expressed their concern about the possibility of achieving the necessary outcomes by the students. During the site visit it was found out that in those courses, where there is only one student, the classes are mostly organized in chairs, where it is noisy and there is no technical equipment. During the meetings with the students, the weak side of the institution that were repeatedly mentioned concerned the issues of teaching foreign languages mainly in Armenian, the quality of the second foreign language teaching and teaching hours, as well as the choice of elective courses. It seems obvious that the proportion of elective courses is relatively low and the actual choice of courses is still restricted. Thus, if all the “places are taken” in the course, the students have to choose another course even if they do not want to study it. The analysis of the documents and the meetings with stakeholders during the site visit showed that in general, employers are satisfied with the theoretical knowledge of the students and graduates of the University but not with their practical skills, in connection with which YSULS has planned to increase the number of internships in academic programs.

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

The TLI has the criteria for evaluating internships and written assignments. Some students were involved in the development of of these assignments. However, there are no clear criteria for verbal assessment in all the chairs and RACs of the University (rubrics). The students stated that at the end of the oral examination, the teacher gave them a verbal response to their shortcomings, but the components of the verbal assessment had not been presented to them beforehand.

Although, as a result of the previous accreditation, the University has undertaken to develop a comprehensive document regulating the issues of academic honesty, there is still no such document in the institution. It was noted, however, that the supervisors of the graduation papers control the academic honesty themselves, and students undergo monitoring prior to the defence of the graduation thesis. The Master's thesis also contains a written statement by the students on the exclusion of plagiarism, and the theses are sent to partner institutions for external review. Some chairs, on their own initiative, check out the research done by students through the free tools offered online. Some professors also pointed out that in order to ensure academic honesty, they give individual assignments to students, trying to develop students' independent research skills and to improve their academic writing skills. Nevertheless, as the students stated during the meetings, these mechanisms still do not provide the necessary results and plagiarism often occurs at the University.

Students have the opportunity to appeal their mark, according to the established order, at the same time during the site visit it was found out that such cases are rare at the University.

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

Based on the recommendations of the previous expert panel, YSULS has developed a methodology for benchmarking and has conducted a benchmarking of a number of academic programs in line with the content of other well-known academic programs. Cooperation with local and foreign institutions has also led to the improvement of separate academic programs, as well as promoting their internationalization. Being involved in "ECML", "DAAD", Austrian Academic Exchange Service, "TEMPUS", "Erasmus +" and in many other programs, the University has created an opportunity not only to improve the implementation of academic programs, but also to ensure the mobility of students and lecturers. As a result of these cooperations, the number of foreign students and lecturers has increased.

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

The quality assurance processes of academic programs are described in detail in the "Quality Assurance Guidelines" and in the Regulation for the "Development, review, assessment and approval of academic programs".

Internal stakeholders are mainly involved in the process of monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing of the academic programs, and the participation of external stakeholders is not yet active. Mechanisms for developing, monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing of the academic programs include surveys conducted by chairs, situational analysis of the labor market, feedback from the internship supervisors, employers who are engaged in final attestation committees and governing bodies and who take part in the round-table discussions organized by the Career Centre. The YSULS also attaches importance to the process of investigating the best practices of other HEIs, which also serves as a basis for revision of the academic programs. As a result of monitoring and evaluation, visible changes in academic programs have been carried out mainly in chairs with successful experience but no systematic processes have yet been implemented at the level of all academic programs.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

The evaluation of the academic programs observed by the expert panel allows to conclude that they are in line with the reformulated mission of the institution and are the integral part of the institution's activities. The intended learning outcomes of the academic programs are largely in line with the formulation of the relevant levels of NQF. The determination of the expected outcomes at the academic program and course levels allows to have a clear idea of the expected outcomes of the graduate, nevertheless, when determining the outcome, it is necessary to make them understandable both for students and external stakeholders, particularly to employers. In the case of some academic programs, the absence of the analysis of the combination of outcomes of courses and outcomes of the academic program can result

in an inappropriate evaluation of the courses in undergraduate and graduate academic programs.

The expert panel evaluates positively the steps taken by the YSULS to elaborate academic programs as a result of the analysis of the demands of the labor market and global challenges, measures aimed at the implementation of academic programs with the double diploma. However when offering new academic programs, the University should take into consideration the resource opportunities, because the lack of human and material resources can hinder the implementation of the programs.

The expert panel evaluates positively that there are teaching, learning, and assessment methods for the academic programs and each course. The expert panel thinks, that it will be beneficial for the students if the lecturers give them assignments that would clearly map the student progress and lead to the achievement of the outcomes; this would contribute to the targeted development of practical and research capabilities.

According to the expert panel, the University should pay attention to the organization of the education in the courses with a small number of students, methodology and hours of second foreign language teaching, teaching and learning methods in distance learning program, number of the elective courses, as well as foreign language teaching in the language of specialization. This will contribute to the solution of issues raised by the TLI stakeholders in the above mentioned issues and will increase the effectiveness of academic programs. The initiative of the University to increase the internships in academic programs is a positive example.

There are still no clear mechanisms against plagiarism at the University. The evaluation of students' progress and the credibility of the qualifications awarded by the University are at risk.

The expert panel highly appreciates the work done by the University in the direction of benchmarking and the expert panel believes that exchange of the successful experience in this direction should be done by all chairs and RACs, which will contribute to the modernization and enhancement of all academic programs.

**SUMMARY:** Taking into consideration that YSULS academic programs are in line with the University's mission, there are formulated outcomes, as well as teaching, learning, and assessment methods at the level of programs and courses, there is a successful experience in the monitoring and improvement of the programs, the fact that the academic programs contribute to the mobility of the lecturers and students and that reforms have been carried out based on the recommendations of the previous accreditation, the expert panel concludes that the TLI meets the requirements of Criterion 2.

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

## IV. STUDENTS

**CRITERION:** The TLI provides relevant student support services ensuring the effectiveness of the learning environment.

### FINDINGS

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

There are clear regulations on the recruitment of the student at the University. The admission to the Bachelor's program is carried out based on the results of the joint examinations while the admission to the Master's program is organized by the University. There are no entry requirements for the admission to the Master's program; only interviews are conducted by some chairs.

The number of applicants has decreased in recent years, the main reason for which, according to the University, is the demographic change in recent years. However, the studies of other possible factors related to this issue, such as fall of professions rating and so on, have not been carried out by the University,.

The TLI conducts meetings with potential applicants in different schools and colleges in the region. The mechanisms of recruitment include the organization of events and expos, the publication of advertising materials and leaflets, etc. by the Career Centre's. However, the University has not yet implemented a comprehensive analysis of the efficiency of student recruitment mechanisms.

Based on the recommendations of the previous expert panel, YSULS took steps to improve the recruitment policy of foreign students. Although there is some progress in this direction (the number of foreign students has increased), the results are still not quite satisfactory.

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

Based on the recommendations mentioned in the previous expert report, YSULS has improved the mechanisms for the identification of students' educational needs. The student's educational needs are mainly identified by surveys conducted by various subdivisions (Centre for Quality Assurance and Reforms, chairs), student council events and discussions with the participation of students in the governing bodies. Based on the meetings with the stakeholders, it should be stated that the survey among the students on the educational resources and services provided by the University has been carried out only once.

Apart from the fact that students, being involved in different levels of management (Board of trustees, Scientific councils, faculty councils), present their needs, their problems are also voiced by the deans and heads of the chairs. The results of some surveys carried out at the end of the courses serve as a basis for the deans and heads of chairs, but this practice is not implemented in all the chairs. Students pointed out that they often first apply to faculties and chairs with their problems (timetable for applying is not regulated).

Meetings with the Rector of the University are also regularly organized, during which students' problems are discussed.

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

Although no clear procedures for additional advising services have been introduced at the institutional level, some subdivisions have advisory schedules, which specify the hours of each lecturer. Additionally, as it became clear during the meetings with stakeholders, students are free to apply to the lecturer for the necessary clarification or additional training.

Additional language training courses are also organized, during which lecturers and a number of students of the University teach foreign languages to other students .

The Student Council organizes informal courses for students in the scope of their interests.

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

Although there is no clear regulation and timetable for applying to the administrative staff at TLI, it has become clear from the meeting with the stakeholders that students can freely apply to the relevant bodies during working hours and receive support, guidance, or counseling. A survey has been conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the services provided by TLI according to which the students rated the support and guidance provided by the administrative staff above average.

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

The Career Centre provides students with career-support services. Based on the recommendations of the previous expert panel, the Career Centre frequently organizes conferences, round-table discussions with the sector's employers, and issues raised by them are being viewed during the revision of the academic programs.

Students are always informed about vacancies, volunteer work, exchange, and other professional programs via e-mail. Besides, with its programs the Career Centre contributes to the formation of certain skills that are missed as a result of the courses taught in the frame of the academic programs (CV, capacity building for job interviewing, entrepreneurial skills development, etc.).

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

Students engagement in scientific-research activities is mainly ensured by writing articles, drafts, and Master's theses.

There is also a Student Scientific Society at TLI which is in the initial stage of re-organization and is not very active yet. Moreover, the students who are not involved in the Student Scientific Society were unaware of its activities. Although, based on the previous accreditation, the University has undertaken to develop practical mechanisms for involving students in scientific-research activities, the meetings with students showed that they are generally not motivated to be involved in research.



It should also be noted that during the meetings with the expert panel, the MA students only mentioned their master theses, pointing out that they were not involved in other research carried out by the University.

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

The main body responsible for the protection of the students' rights at TLI is the Student Council. It has been recently reorganized, hence it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of its activities. Master's students are not involved in Student Council. From the meetings with students, it was revealed that the applicability to the Student Council is still not high; students prefer to apply to the administrative bodies, which may be conditioned by the low rating of the former Student Council. The students often apply to the new Student Council via non-direct communication, in particular with anonymous leaflets or through the YSULS "confession" Facebook platform.

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

The main mechanism for evaluating the quality of educational, advisory and other services offered by TLI is the surveys conducted by the Centre for quality assurance and some chairs. During the site visit, it became clear that mainly the Master's students participated in the survey conducted by the QA Centre.

Focus group meetings conducted by different subdivisions of the University also contribute to the evaluation of services by students.

### **CONSIDERATIONS**

The acting mechanisms for the recruitment of students are clear and contribute to the regulated organization of the admission. However, taking into account only GPA for the admission to the Master's program, and the lack of professional requirements for applicants (only few chairs conduct an interview) may lead to the ineffectiveness of further education process, since students with high GPA can study another specialty (even free of charge) that has nothing in common with their profession and for which they lack the basic knowledge. This leads to the situation when the BA graduates do not want to continue their studies in their profession at the Master's level because, according to the students, the lecturers often have to adapt the level of teaching to the level of students' knowledge, because of the MA students who lack of the basic knowledge in that profession. Thus, the students have the impression that lecturers repeat the content of a Bachelor's program at the Master's program. It would be desirable to include successful graduates in the groups that visit different schools, which would contribute to the recruitment of applicants and increase the interest in the University.

Although there are a number of mechanisms for the identification of the students' needs, the expert panel is concerned that the undergraduates are indifferent and less aware of the processes and activities of the relevant circles for identifying their needs. There is a need to

make additional efforts towards the identification of the educational needs both in the groups with a small number of students and in the distance learning groups, which will enhance the effectiveness of the education organization and activate the involvement of the students in the student life.

The students often apply to administrative staff rather than Student Council which is the main body responsible for the protection of students' rights at the University. This is partly due to the fact the new Student Council is at the stage of establishment, but the lack of active steps in this direction can lead to distrust towards this structure.

Student Scientific Society is the main structure that involves students in research activities. However, the lack of motivation among students suggests that the institution and the University should generally improve the work in this direction, otherwise there will be a problem in the development of research interests and capacity building among the students.

The expert panel appreciates the institution's open-door principle to provide assistance to students, which contributes to a positive relationship between the TLI and students, but the lack of clear schedule does not allow to provide the administrative staff with a necessary environment for the effective implementation of their work.

The expert panel finds the activities of the Career Centre commendable. The majority of the students is aware and satisfied with the activities of the Career Centre, has frequently participated in the courses, conferences and other events organized by the Centre.

**SUMMARY:** Taking into consideration that TLI has a clear policy of student recruitment, mechanisms for the identification of students' educational needs, creates opportunities for students to receive advisory services and support, the structure protecting students' rights is at the stage of establishment, reforms have been made after the previous accreditation, the expert panel concludes that the TLI meets the requirements of Criterion 4.

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

## V. FACULTY AND STAFF

**CRITERION:** The TLI has a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff to accomplish the institution's mission and to implement the goals set for academic programmes.

### FINDINGS

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

YSULS has procedures for the recruitment of teaching, administrative and supporting staff.

The process of assessing the effectiveness of the recruitment and activities of teaching staff at

the University is regulated by “Job descriptions of YSULS Teaching Staff, policy on the recruitment of the candidates via competitive selection and the appointment of YSULS teaching Staff”. Based on the results of previous accreditation, the University has developed job descriptions for both teaching and supporting staff. The selection of the faculty is carried out on the competitive basis while the selection of the supporting staff is carried out on non-competitive basis: for these positions specialists are appointed or invited through personal contacts, or they may be graduates of the University who voluntarily worked for chairs or faculties during their studies.

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

The selection of the teaching staff is carried out in accordance with the requirements of the defined job descriptions by the following categories: lecturer, senior lecturer, assistant, associate professor and professor. However, professional requirements for the implementation of each academic program are not separately described in job descriptions, although based on the follow-up plan mentioned in the previous expert report, TLI has undertaken to elaborate the clear requirements for the composition of the teaching staff, taking into account the peculiarities of the academic programs. Although the requirements for the professional qualification of the teaching staff composition for each academic program are not clearly defined by the academic programs, the meeting with the heads of chairs and lecturers revealed that there is a common approach at the targeted courses level. There is a clear understanding of requirements set for the lecturer in each chair. After the announcement of the competition, the professional skills required for the teaching are assessed by appropriate mandate commissions.

Foreign lecturers are working within different short-term and long-term programs of YSULS. The assessment of the compliance of their professional qualities with the requirements of the academic programs is mainly carried out by the inviting international organization. The institution has not yet developed a procedure for attracting foreign specialists.

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

Every five years, the attestation of full-time lecturers is carried out, the basis of which serve the participation in qualification and the training courses provided by the five-year plan and the accumulation of necessary credits during that period. Upon the successful completion of the training period, the contract with the lecturer is re-signed.

One of the formal mechanisms for assessing the teaching staff is the surveys conducted among the students by the chairs. However, the meetings with the students showed that surveys of lecturers are organized regularly only in some chairs, there are chairs where lecturers' assessment practice is not carried out.

Various meetings during the site visit showed that the stakeholders think that the class observations are the most effective measure taken to improve the quality of teaching staff. The

results of the class observations carried out by the chairs are recorded and then discussed in the chairs and during the informal meetings with the lecturers, which in turn contributes to the improvement of teaching quality.

In order to improve the teaching quality, lectures also carry out class-observations for the exchange of teaching methods and professional experience.

“Regulations on granting YSULS honorary titles” can be considered as an encouraging mechanism for the teaching staff which, according to the relevant categories, means awarding honorary titles to those who have been engaged in long-term pedagogical activities and who hold certain administrative positions in the University.

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

As a result of the previous accreditation, YSULS has planned to develop the competences of the teaching staff. YSULS organizes a number of trainings in order to develop professional and methodological skills of the lecturers. Chairs submit a request to the Continuing Education Centre, where a list of upcoming trainings is being developed and emailed to lecturers, who can choose the training from the list.

During the site visit it was found out that the trainings are not always carried out in accordance with the identified needs of the lecturers. At the same time it is worth mentioning that, for example, when organizing trainings in the field of information technology, the level of initial knowledge of the lecturers is taken into account and the teaching is carried out according to it.

During the site visit, it was found out that in case of problems raised by the students about the lecturers, the chairs take appropriate measures, particularly in the chair, the lecturer is provided with the necessary consultation by more experienced lecturers, and if the problem cannot be solved, the lecturer is replaced by another.

Inter-chair and intra-University trainings are also organized. Lecturers participate in professional trainings outside of the University on their own initiative and self-financing. As far as the development of the lecturers' research skills is concerned, there is no encouraging mechanism for research at the University. (The authors of the articles pay for the publication of their articles in the YSULS Journal "Banber"). Publications in international journals are supported morally, there are no extras, and the University does not support lecturers' initiatives to submit scientific papers to international journals.

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

The sustainability of the teaching staff according to academic programs vary across chairs and RACs, in particular, the average age of the teaching staff. The teaching staff in RACs is mainly employed on co-current basis. Employer lectures are also invited on external co-current basis. There are lecturers teaching several subjects (more than five) at a time, and there are subjects where there are no substitute lecturers.

It should be noted that in recent years in parallel with the number of students, the number of teachers has also decreased, but to a lesser extent, due to demographic changes in the RA as well as the introduction of high schools.

To ensure the sustainability of the teaching staff, the TLI implements the engagement of young specialists through its postgraduate studies.

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

YSULS has developed Job Descriptions of YSULS Academic Staff, Policy of Recruiting Candidates for Vacant Positions and Appointment of Academic Staff. There is no systematic approach to support and guidance for young lecturers at the University, and each chair has its own approaches to mentoring. At the same time, it should be stated that there are no mechanisms for encouraging the teaching staff to be engaged in the scientific activities.

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

The University is staffed with the necessary technical and administrative employees, which was evidenced during the meetings with the staff of different subdivisions. Almost all the subdivisions were satisfied with the human resources, however, the analysis of the necessity of the administrative and technical staff at the University and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the work of the current staff in terms of achieving strategic goals has not been carried out yet.

### **CONSIDERATIONS**

The expert panel evaluates it positively that the University has developed procedures for the recruitment of the lecturers and job descriptions, but the requirements for professional qualities for each course have not been clearly defined, which may lead to the non-targeted selection of lecturers in the future.

It is commendable that the TLI also recruits employer lecturers who can contribute to the introduction of a practical component in the academic programs and to the development of students' practical skills.

The expert panel evaluates positively the involvement of foreign teachers, but the lack of organization of Armenian language courses for them hinders the effectiveness of their teaching, as the absence of parallels with the native language makes the foreign language inaccessible for the first and second year students.

It is positive that the recruitment of the supporting staff is carried out in accordance with the requirements of the relevant job descriptions, but the recruitment procedure is not competitive, which restricts the selection and does not ensure the engagement of the best professionals through fair competitive selection.

It is positive that there are evaluation processes of the teaching staff. However, they are carried out in different ways and at different intervals in chairs and RACs. Although class-observations were qualified by the stakeholders as the most effective mechanism for evaluation of lecturers, meetings with lecturers and heads of chairs showed that in many

chairs, the lecturer's activities are discussed at general meetings, which can lead to ethical issues. The effectiveness of conducting lecturers' evaluation surveys has not been analyzed, which may hinder the development of general mechanisms for evaluation of the teaching staff and the credibility of the assessments formed as a result of data analysis.

As indirect mechanisms for evaluating the teaching staff, the University can consider the opinions of employers engaged in the state final exam committees, as well as feedback received during internships that can help shape an objective image of evaluation of the lecturers' activities.

It is commendable that the University, with its internal resources, organizes various trainings aimed at the professional development of its teaching staff. However, measures directed towards the professional development of the lecturers are not always related to the needs identified during the evaluation of the teaching staff. The problems identified during the evaluation are not always eradicated by a systemic solution, which in turn hinders the continuous progress of the teachers. Financial resources are hardly ever allocated by the University for trainings abroad. This restricts the opportunities for the acquisition and localization of the experience of the world's advanced education systems.

Working on part-time basis in RACs is risky from the standpoint of the sustainability of the teaching staff, on the other hand, part-time lecturers are mainly employers who transfer not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills to students.

It should be noted that the practice of teaching several subjects by one lecturer and the absence of a substitute lecturer create risks for the organization of the classes. Absence of the teacher or their leaving will lead to failure of the education process and the lack of a staff reserve will make it difficult to quickly arrange for a replacement. The problem may be even more acute in the case of the languages in which there are few specialists in RA.

Mechanisms for support and exchange of professional experience for young lecturers do not exist in all chairs and RACs. This can lead to difficulties in improving the quality of teaching of young lecturers and in the long run also lead to the loss of the University's pedagogical and professional best practice.

The lack of encouraging mechanisms for lecturers to be engaged in research activities can lead to the loss of the professional skills and stagnation of the existing staff.

**SUMMARY:** Taking into consideration that the TLI has policies promoting recruitment of a teaching and administrative staff, mechanism for the evaluation of the teaching staff, a qualified teaching staff, and the fact that some reforms have been implemented after the previous accreditation, the expert panel concludes that YSULS meets the requirements of criterion 5.

**CONCLUSION:** The correspondence of YSULS' institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 5 is *satisfactory*.

## VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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

### FINDINGS

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

The research interests and ambitions of YSULS are defined in 2013-2017 Strategic Plan. In 2018 the TLI elaborated a strategy for the development of research activities (2018-2023), which outline the research priorities according to the chairs' directions.

The TLI has not yet carried out a comprehensive evaluation of its research priorities. The University elaborated and implemented tools for assessing the effectiveness and relevance of scientific research activities based on follow-up plan mentioned in previous expert report, but these have not been developed yet.

Meetings with the stakeholders revealed that they had low involvement in the process of defining research priorities of the YSULS.

The University stakeholders stated that transition from a "teaching" University to a research one is still a challenge because for many years the TLI has been a teaching University and has established traditions in this regard.

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

As it was already mentioned, the research interests and ambitions of TLI in the field of research stem from the 2013-2017 Strategic Plan. As an example of a medium-term program, the University considers the state-funded Maintenance and development expenditure program for 2014-2016 and 2017-2019 (MTEP) of the "Centre of Perspective Analysis and Initiatives". Short-term research programs are presented in the annual plans of the chairs. However, the results of the work performed are not analyzed in terms of effectiveness, and no monitoring and evaluation of the results is carried out.

Generally, research is not viewed as a source of income at YSULS, which is probably due to the peculiarities of the field.

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

The main purpose of the Science Department that functions at the University, is to coordinate the organization and implementation of the TLI's scientific-educational activities and to create conditions for the development of scientific potential. However, the department largely assists teaching staff in business trips and participation in international programs, as well as provides technical assistance in applying for various programs (mainly the State Committee of Science).

Although the follow-up plan drafted after the previous expert report mentions the intention to increase the relevant financial investments to enhance the efficiency of the University's scientific activities, appropriate financial resources have not been allocated from the budget of the institution for the development of research. The site visit and the analysis of the relevant documents showed that the funds allocated for the implementation and encouragement of research in the institution's budget are intended only for business trips. The research is carried out mainly on external funds, particularly coming from a few grant programs. In this regard, it seems that research is not a priority for the TLI.

There are no mechanisms in place to support the teaching staff and students in research activities. Although some professors regularly publish articles, this is largely due to their personal initiative and self-financing, even those who publish their articles in the TLI's "Banber" journal pay for the articles themselves. Publications in international databases receives only moral support. The University does not support lecturers financially in submitting scientific works to international journals and in publishing articles.

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

Although the TLI has defined the internationalization of research activities in its strategic documents as a goal based on the recommendations outlined in the previous expert report, there are no specific mechanisms to promote the internationalization of research in TLI's everyday activities. In particular, the institution does not have any mechanism for encouraging faculty or students to publish their articles in impact factor international journals. Existing publications have largely been the result of individual initiative or support from foreign partners.

In recent years the TLI has organized two international conferences.

Lecturers mainly participate in training and research summer schools organized abroad on their own initiative and self-financing. During the meetings with the panel it was noted that the lecturers do not apply to the TLI for the funding of their participation in international projects because they assume that their application will be rejected for lack of financial resources.

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

Although there are no established and sustainable mechanisms for linking research with teaching at YSULS, there are activities carried out in this direction: as a result of the research activities, some of the courses of the existing APs were reviewed, elective courses were introduced, books and manuals were published. At the same time, based on the follow-up plan mentioned in the previous expert report, it was intended to ensure the connection of science and education. This process is not yet systematic in nature, the situation varies across chairs and RACs, and mechanisms for the continuous provision of this link have not been developed. There is no evaluation of the effectiveness of research activities in the University in terms of impact on the education process.



Student research at the TLI is mainly carried out through course papers, research internships, and master's theses. Students are given the opportunity to select research topics with their supervisors. The study of the graduation papers and master theses during the site visit showed that one of the criteria of the selection of the theme is the topicality, however, there were few modern sources in the bibliography. The essays, individual and course papers at the institution are generally perceived as descriptive work, whereby the students do not conduct research, but simply learn about research in the field.

The observation of student internship reports at the TLI showed that they mostly describe student internship activities that are not always relevant to the research theme of the student. Students write their graduation papers in their native language. This was explained by some stakeholders as a measure intended to stop plagiarism, since students will not simply try to reproduce foreign language literature but will read and present it in their own language. In fact, however, plagiarism is easier in this case, as students can merely translate foreign language literature related to the topic, rather than carry out research.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

It is positive that the TLI has strategies and short-term plans that express its interests and ambitions in the field of research. However, the lack of comprehensive analyses of effectiveness and impact according to research priorities hinders the evaluation of existing achievements and gaps, which in its turn may hinder the identification of steps aimed at improving the research activity and its connection with the research priorities.

Lack of funding needed for research and failure to view research as a source of income can make it difficult to achieve the goals set in the research field.

Research conducted by the teaching staff is mainly due to the lecturers' own initiatives, within their own interests and self-financing. This, as well as the low percentage of students involved in research, is a consequence of the lack of motivation mechanisms, which may have a negative impact on the quality of educational processes. Faculty's and students' low level of interest in research jeopardizes the development of research skills and analytical skills of students, hinders professional development of the teaching staff, thus putting the modernization of courses at risk.

It would be better, if students were encouraged to present their graduation papers in the languages in which they specialize; this would promote the expansion of scientific thinking in foreign languages and thus increase their competitiveness in the international market.

It is positive that YSULS attaches importance to the internationalization of the research, but a small number of publications of TLI's lecturers in international periodicals and prestigious impact factor journals can hinder international recognition of TLI's research and University's reputation.

The inclusion of research findings in the teaching process is situational in nature and is not implemented through well-established sustainable mechanisms which hinder the regular modernization of courses and consequently the TLI's advancement as a TLI with research ambitions.

**SUMMARY:** Taking into consideration that there are no encouraging mechanisms for the conduct of scientific research, scientific-research activities are mainly the result of individual initiatives, publications in impact factor journals are few, there is a lack of sustainable mechanisms for linking research with teaching, no significant improvements have been made since the previous accreditation, the expert panel concludes that the TLI does not meet the requirements of Criterion 6.

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

## VII.INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

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

### FINDINGS

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

One of the goals of YSULS 2013-2017 Strategic Plan is to ensure transparency of financial activities and improvement of material-technical base with the objective of modernizing the logistical base and promoting the subdivisions' initiative of forming own off-budget funds.

During the site visit, the panel was convinced that work is being done towards the modernization of the material-technical base, but the learning environment is still found insufficient by the University's internal stakeholders. As for the formation of off-budget funds by different subdivisions, the expert panel did not see any examples of off-budget funds formation or funding mechanisms during the site visit.

Although based on the follow-up plan elaborated as a result of the previous accreditation, the YSULS planned to improve the infrastructure by funding not only computer replenishment, but also furnishing of the auditoriums, the site visit showed that the furniture in the auditoriums is worn out, software provision is old, and there are only few classrooms equipped with computers and projectors.

During the meeting with the lecturers, it became clear that there is a lack of basic conditions in some of the classrooms for conducting the class, e.g. the lack of blinds in the sunny and hot weather, which reduces the visibility of the blackboard, as well as the students' comprehensibility. The site visit also revealed that a large part of the classrooms needs to be renovated, and very often lecturers use their own technical equipment, as most classrooms are not equipped with the necessary technical means.

A software, called REGISTRAR has been incorporated (a system for entering and storing grades) at the University. This system is a general information database that gives an

opportunity to quickly and effectively store data about the number of teaching staff, the students, student progress, and conduct analysis.

WiFi coverage in the TLI is weak, and even missing in some places.

The library of YSULS is located in a separate building. The library provides free services to both YSULS professors and students, as well as external readers, who can only access library resources in the library area. Foreign language literature is mainly donated by embassies and consulates. The YSULS Library is actively involved in various international projects and initiatives. However, the library lacks scientific literature on some of the University's research priorities (e.g. computational linguistics). There are no Braille handbooks, textbooks or audiobooks for people with visual impairments, although there is a student with visual impairment at the University.

The Library has an online management system (KOHA). All the library books are included in the online list, which gives students an opportunity to search and order a book online. It can also be accessed through the official website of the University, but during the site visit the website was under construction and testing and the online ordering system did not work.

The YSULS has two gyms, one located on the University area and the other in the building in 123 Hovsep Emin street. In the course of the resource observation by the expert panel it became clear that the gym equipment is worn out, the dressing rooms adjacent to it are small, not furnished, and in need of a major renovation.

The dormitory of the TLI is also in 123 Hovsep Emin Street. The review of the expert panel revealed that no student of the University is hosted at the dormitory. The main residents are foreign volunteers. There is a WiFi at the dormitory.

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

The TLI's financial resources are mainly generated from tuition fees. During the meetings, the internal stakeholders stated that the institution's financial planning largely stems from admission rates.

Alternative financial flows are ensured mainly from public catering services and recreational services, organization of training for the lecturers from other Universities, grant programs. The University also established an intact fund in 2017.

Meetings with stakeholders revealed that although the University has been struggling to find the necessary financial resources in recent years, the YSULS financial resources are still insufficient for effective and full implementation of the TLI's mission and goals, largely due to objective reasons.

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

YSULS has a financial distribution system for the implementation of academic programs. The applications submitted by YSULS subdivisions are taken into consideration during expense planning. However, funding for academic programs is mainly allocated for the salaries and

current needs of the teaching staff, which is due to the insufficient financial resources of the University.

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

The acquisition of the classroom and computer equipment of the TLI is mainly due to grants, cooperation with embassies and other donations.

The observation of educational resources by the expert panel showed that the technical equipment in the classroom is mostly old and not sufficient compared to the number of students, and the computer software needs updating. For example, the TLI carries out the "Translation work" academic program, but only two rooms for the simultaneous translation courses are available at the TLI. There are seven computers in the classroom for simultaneous translation into English, when there are groups of up to sixteen students. There is a non-licensed version of "Trados" in the written translation programs on computers. During the class observations it became evident that very often the lecturers use their own technical means (computers) to conduct the lesson.

The TLI has an electronic learning management platform "Moodle". 16 courses are implemented through it. The courses are taught in a combination of distance and traditional learning. The site visit revealed that the courses on the Moodle platform are few, while meetings with students indicated that they would like to see more on the platform.

During the meetings with the expert panel, the students and the teaching staff repeatedly raised the issue of technical equipment replenishment. During the meeting with the lecturers, it became clear that the latter had applied to the University with suggestion to replenish the TLI with resources, e.g with cameras, soundproof auditoriums, vehicles, etc., but due to lack of financial resources, these problems have not yet been solved.

Although the YSULS planned to implement financial resource distribution monitoring in accordance with the objectives and directions of the strategic development plan (based on follow-up plan developed as a result of previous accreditation), the budget allocation at the institution is not carried out according to the directions of the strategic plan, but according to the need of the moment.

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

The internal document circulation is entirely carried out through the Mulberry system. The introduction of the internal network is currently underway. The TLI employees are aware of the mechanism by which reports can be submitted to the relevant circles.

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

There is a 24-hour Security guard service at the University. Access into the University is with individual magnetic cards.

There is a Civil Defense Plan to maintain a safe environment. Fire extinguishers installed and evacuation plans are posted on all floors of the University buildings.

YSULS health care services are provided by a special Centre, which is the first aid room with one doctor and nurse. The Centre is stored with the minimum necessary medicines and furniture. The list of students with health problems is kept in the faculties. The doctor has access to the Mulberry system, which helps to keep track of the reports she has submitted.

Although, based on the follow-up plan developed as a result of the previous accreditation, YSULS has undertaken to provide students with special needs with the necessary conditions for study, there are still not sufficient conditions at TLI. That is why students with mobility problems do not study at the TLI. There are only two moveable ramps. There are no elevators inside the buildings, and most of the classrooms for practical trainings are too narrow to accommodate wheelchairs. The lack of such conditions in the University is explained by insufficient financial resources.

The main building of the University has a renovated canteen, which is open to both internal stakeholders and the general public. A survey by the TLI revealed that only about 20 percent of YSULS students regularly visit the canteen.

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

The Centre for Quality Assurance conducts surveys on the effectiveness, applicability and availability of resources given to the teaching staff and students. Meetings with students and faculty are also organized. However, the meetings with stakeholders showed that there has been no tangible progress in the implementation of reforms as a result of the analysis of issues raised during the surveys and meetings. Some changes have been made only in the heating, replanishing of the library and renovation of the canteen.

During the site visit both internal and external stakeholders mentioned that the resource base of the TLI needs to be replenished, enriched, and upgraded.

#### **CONSIDERATIONS**

The expert panel evaluates positively the efforts of YSULS to ensure the necessary resources. The TLI strives to replenish its resource base and improve classroom and technical conditions. However, the inadequacy of majority of the University's audiences for interactive training, the limited number of classrooms equipped with smart boards, computers, and projectors hinders the effectiveness of the education process.

The logistical base of the University in terms of the number of students and the ratio of available resources is not sufficient for the effective implementation of academic programs. The expert panel believes that in order to provide necessary modern resources it would be advisable for the institution to make more use of the resources of its employer stakeholders.

In the conditions of the scarcity of financial resources, replenishment of the institution's material-technical base mainly through international grant programs or donations may in the future make the University vulnerable from the point of ensuring sustainable funding

allocated for the replenishment of the material-technical base and continuity of the academic programs.

The fact that the University funds are mainly generated from tuition fees makes the educational institution vulnerable, in case the number of applicants decreases.

Although the diversification of financial flows in recent years has led to positive changes in the University budget, the funds are still not distributed according to separate strategic goals. For example, no allocations have been made for the TLI's priority research areas.

The sanitary and hygienic conditions of the TLI are generally satisfactory, but bathrooms and dressing rooms need to be repaired.

The docflow at the institution is carried out in a systematic way, which helps to raise the awareness of the staff about the decisions directed to them.

The availability of health services and the importance of safety are positively assessed by the expert group, but it would be more appropriate to keep a list of students with health problems at the First aid Centre which would make it easier to provide first aid to students seeking medical assistance.

The lack of conditions for people with special needs makes it impossible for students with such problems to study at the University. The recruitment of the teaching and administrative staff with the employees with special needs becomes also impossible. The availability of appropriate facilities for people with disabilities can lead to an increase in the number of applicants and the involvement of professional employees.

Insufficient material-technical base for further development of the University will make it difficult to manage possible changes, especially when the TLI has serious ambitions in the fields of internationalization and research.

**SUMMARY:** Taking into consideration that the resource base at the University is evaluated as insufficient by all internal stakeholders, the necessary financial resources are not yet allocated for the implementation of some of the priorities set in the HEI's Strategic Plan, the material-technical base of the TLI is not sufficient for the implementation of the mission and goals set by the University, the scarcity of financial resources does not allow the TLI to guarantee continuous improvement of the academic programs. No conditions are created for people with special needs at the institution, no tangible changes have been made in this field since the previous accreditation. The expert panel concludes that the TLI does not meet the requirements of Criterion 7.

**CONCLUSION:** The correspondence of YSULS' institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 7 is *unsatisfactory*.

## VIII. SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY

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

### FINDINGS

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

YSULS has a clear system of internal accountability. Accountability for all directions of the TLI's activities is ensured through the Rector's annual report which is based on the reports of the structural subdivisions and is discussed at Board of Trustees. The annual reports of the Rector are published on the official website of the University. Reports on separate directions of YSULS activities are prepared and submitted to the relevant state agencies.

The YSULS subdivisions have not yet fully transitioned to work planning and reporting formats according to the goals of Strategic Plan.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms have not been implemented yet.

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

The official website of the University, posters, leaflets, student guidebooks, Facebook pages of YSULS subdivisions and newsletters are the main tools for making procedures, processes transparent, public and available to the society.

The structure, documents related to YSULS activities, as well as information on education, scientific processes, continuous education, international relations, YSULS cooperation, student life and news can be found on the University website. The official website of the University is under review and is constantly updated, but still there are no results of surveys on stakeholders' satisfaction with educational processes or their analysis, as well as information on the quality of implementation of the academic programs.

Public Relations and Media Department has been functioning at YSULS since 2009, which was reorganized in 2018 expanding the processes of ensuring HEI-Society information flows as well as formation and strengthening public relations. Based on the recommendations of the previous expert panel, to make the University's work more open and transparent to the public, the Department of Public Relations and Media conducts coverage of the University's activities by regularly organizing press conferences, interviews, and other events. However, mechanisms for analyzing the effectiveness of tools for ensuring transparency and accessibility of processes are still missing at YSULS.

The Regulations on the Coverage of Major Events at the Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences and Public Relations were approved by the decision of the YSULS Scientific Council in 2017, but this is not fully applied by the subdivisions.

Highlighting the activation of the faculties in the process of formation of public relations, YSULS also plans to introduce the institute of public relations responsables in the faculties.

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

The YSULS website has a section called "Write us a message", which was not functioning during the site visit. There is also an electronic system for joining the alumni union. Both sections give an opportunity to establish contact with the University. The contact information of all subdivisions is also posted on the official website of the TLI.

The separate Facebook pages of the University and its subdivisions are considered to be one of the most effective feedback mechanisms.

YSULS has established active relations with embassies, schools, NGOs with different formats of cooperations - internships, volunteer activities, roundtable discussions, etc. This is another source of feedback on different areas of the University activities.

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

YSULS has a Centre for Continuing Education which offers the public language courses, capacity building, professional development and training programs.

YSULS provides knowledge transfer and additional educational services to the public through the various Centres of the University, as well as the Library and History Museum. The students of the TLI also contribute to the transfer of knowledge to the society. They launched the initiative, in the framework of which language courses are conducted for vulnerable groups of the society, especially for children of the orphanages. There are other projects (e.g. "Smart café") in the planning phase.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

Mechanisms to ensure transparency of procedures and processes at YSULS (websites, Facebook pages, booklets, etc.) and established reporting system makes the activities of the TLI transparent. The transition of all YSULS subdivisions to planning and reporting according to the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan will enable the TLI to continuously evaluate the implementation, achievements, and shortcomings of the objectives defined by the Strategic Plan and point out the areas that need improvement.

Publication of results and analysis of the surveys on the stakeholders' satisfaction with the HEI' activities on the official website of the University will raise and ensure stakeholder awareness of the quality of various processes, and information on the quality of the implementation of the academic programs can help to raise the TLI's reputation, resulting in an increase in the number of local and foreign applicants.

The expert panel evaluates positively the fact that there are opportunities for establishing relations with the society and the provision of knowledge transfer and additional educational and consulting services to different groups of society, which can promote the formation and strengthening of the positive image of the HEI.

**SUMMARY:** Taking into consideration that the TLI has a clear system of accountability, provides the availability to information to the public, has knowledge transfer mechanisms,



carried out relevant reforms after the previous accreditation, the expert panel concludes that the TLI meets the requirements of Criterion 8.

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

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

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

### **FINDINGS**

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

Based on the recommendations mentioned in the previous expert report, YSULS has developed an internationalization strategy, which sets goals and relevant measures for the TLI's internationalization.

It is noteworthy that YSULS strives to expand its external relations and internationalization in various fields: education, research, career management, quality assurance processes, etc.

The TLI has policies and procedures aimed at developing and strengthening external and international relations.

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

YSULS external relations and internationalization take place on both centralized and decentralized levels. The Foreign Relations and International Cooperation Department, created in 2008, organizes international cooperation on the centralized level for all groups of stakeholders. To some extent the activities of the Foreign Relations and International Cooperation Department overlap with the responsibilities of the Career Centre. During the site visit it became clear that the Career Centre is more acknowledged by the stakeholders as a subdivision implementing external relations and internationalization.

Meetings during the site visit have shown further that both the Career Centre and the Foreign Relations and International Cooperation Department have a very competent and dedicated staff, not only fluent in major languages taught at YSULS, but also active in building up and cultivating good relations with partners outside the TLI and abroad.

The TLI has access to international scientific and information databases. YSULS Library staff is actively working in this direction.

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

The cooperation with local and international institutions is carried out in the following formats: staff and student mobility, conferences, foreign invited lecturers, as well as participation of administrative staff in several Tempus and ERASMUS+ programs. Meetings with both staff and students proved that such activities really take place and result in improvement. After attending scientific and educational events abroad lecturers of the University present reports on the results achieved.

YSULS cooperates with local and international counterparts. It has 65 agreements with universities worldwide (29 agreements have been concluded recently). However, site visit showed that not all agreements are fully implemented. It should be noted that the requested analysis of unimplemented agreements and of reasons for the lack of implementation has not been submitted for review during the site visit.

The expert panel has heard success stories of YSULS students who have participated in exchange programs. Some members of the faculty also participate regularly in academic exchange. However, the mobility rate of lecturers and students vary across chairs and RACs.

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

YSULS seeks to enhance the scope of internationalization by prioritizing the faculty's and students' knowledge of foreign languages, which is natural in a TLI which has traditionally specialized in teaching foreign languages. As the expert panel found out during the site visit, the recent decrease in the number of professors who are proficient in foreign languages is due to the inclusion of social scientists.

Meetings with internal stakeholders confirmed a good command of English in many cases. During meetings some students voiced, however, their wish to study foreign languages in a more efficient and up-to-date manner. In particular, some language-related subjects are taught not in the language of specialization but in Armenian.

Although many TLI representatives mentioned the plans to implement academic programs in other languages, there are no such examples so far.

### **CONSIDERATIONS**

The expert panel assesses positively the existence of the infrastructure that guarantees regulated processes of establishing and cultivating external relations and internationalization. Although YSULS cooperates with both local and foreign institutions, the lack of a comprehensive analysis of the results of cooperation with these institutions may hinder the effectiveness of internationalization processes.

The number of foreign students at YSULS and of YSULS students involved in mobility programs (academic and research) is not impressive so far. Efforts still need to be made, however, to increase the number of staff and students who benefit from international exchange. This can contribute to enhancing the efficiency of educational and research processes in the University and improving academic programs, introducing foreign language academic programs, as well as strengthening the TLI's internationalization culture. The

involvement of a greater number of people in "Tempus" and "Erasmus + " programs would be beneficial for the University. The introduction of academic programs in foreign languages will ensure the inflow of applicants, high reputation of the TLI, and a positive change in the overall environment.

The TLI recognizes the importance of ensuring appropriate level of foreign language acquisition as a prerequisite for international competitiveness inscribed in the TLI's mission. The continuous improvement of the (especially social-sciences) lecturers' and students' knowledge of foreign languages, will make it easier to develop international cooperation in both teaching and research. In this regard, it is important to combine the teaching of foreign languages and Armenian correctly, giving preference to the organization of education in the specialized language.

It is positive that, after participating in scientific and educational events abroad, the lecturers present the results achieved through reports, however, from the point of view of efficiency, the University may also consider the representation of experience among staff which will contribute its localization at the University.

It is commendable that the TLI has access to international scientific and information databases, which may contribute to the modernization of research and course descriptions.

**SUMMARY:** Taking into consideration that YSULS has a strategy for promoting external relations and internationalization, has an infrastructure that guarantees regulated process, has shown examples of efficient cooperation with local and international institutions and organizations, and has demonstrated a high percentage of staff and students proficient in foreign languages, has carried out reforms since the previous accreditation, the expert panel concludes that YSULS meets the requirements of Criterion 9.

**CONCLUSION:** The correspondence of YSULS' institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 9 is *satisfactory*.

## **X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE**

**CRITERION:** The TLI has an internal quality assurance system for promoting establishment of a quality culture and continuous improvement of all the processes of TLI.

### **FINDINGS**

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

In accordance with the recommendations provided by the previous accreditation expert group, YSULS has developed a general quality assurance policy set out in the "Quality-2015" Strategic Plan. It describes the TLI's internal quality assurance system. The methodological basis for the IQA system is the Charter of the Centre of Quality Assurance and Reform, the University's Internal Quality Assurance Manual, which describes the goals and objectives of

the YSULS IQA system, the IQA organizational structure, processes and procedures. These procedures include processes for the quality assurance of academic programs, teaching staff, student assessment, and resources. The manual clearly describes the TLI's perception of quality assurance, according to which the activities and processes carried out by the YSULS subdivisions are considered of high quality, if they are in accordance with the defined strategic goals, and on the other hand, these objectives should be well-founded and adequate to the higher education issues.

The review of the academic programs by the expert panel showed that quality assurance processes are important in the development and review of the academic programs, but the systematic quality assurance processes of all academic programs have not yet been implemented.

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

Centre for Quality Assurance was established in 2009. There was only one position, later it was staffed with two more employees. In 2017, as a result of YSULS structural changes, YSLU Centre for Education Reform was incorporated into the Centre for Quality Assurance, forming the YSULS Centre for Quality Assurance and Reforms. The QAR is accountable to the Rector and the Scientific Council, but it is also envisaged to establish direct accountability to the Board of Trustees. The University attaches great importance to the Centre. It is provided with all the information necessary for its activities by all University subdivisions and management.

According to the recommendations of the previous expert panel, the Centre has been provided with the necessary material and financial resources. The Centre has an office with the necessary furniture and material-technical resources.

Although by follow-up plan, the YSULS committed to ensure the Centre's financial independence and the QAR Centre representatives stated that the Centre had a separate budget, the expert panel observations showed that these finances were allocated to cover this accreditation expenses. However, in general, the TLI provides appropriate financial resources (in the form of staff salaries, training, surveys, as well as for the YSULS accreditation) for the implementation of the IQA necessary processes.

There are clear requirements for professional qualities in the recruitment process of QAR Centre employees. It can be stated that the University allocates necessary human resources for the management of quality assurance processes. Currently, the Centre has 5 employees whose functions are set out in job descriptions. QAR Centre staff often participates in professional trainings and share their experience with YSULS staff. At the same time, the staff of the Centre also performs other duties, such as conducting lectures or managing chairs.

Mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of administrative staff are still missing in YSULS, therefore the evaluation of the performance of QA staff is not being implemented either.

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

YSULS QA system is decentralized: there is a QA Standing Committee adjunct to YSULS Scientific Council, Faculties have QA Faculty Committees, there are quality assurance responsibilities in some chairs.

YSULS Internal Quality Assurance Manual describes the ways in which internal and external stakeholders can participate in QA processes. Based on the recommendations of the previous expert panel, YSULS tries to involve its stakeholders in quality assurance processes through various mechanisms. Various stakeholders were involved in YSULS self-evaluation working group, the students raised their questions through surveys or applying to chairs, faculties, the teaching staff is involved in the Chair's annual self-evaluation working groups, surveys, and class-observations. The involvement of the employers is carried out in the following way: they are invited to the discussions of the faculty councils or focus groups organized by the Career Centre, during the benchmarking conducted by various chairs, supervision of the internships, engagement in final attestation committees etc. The members of the Alumni Union (the composition of which is currently small) are involved in QA processes (academic programs review). The feedback from a large number of graduates is rather weak.

Surveys are the main mechanisms for ensuring stakeholders' participation in internal quality assurance processes, but the stakeholders who participated in the survey were not able to present any examples of the impact of surveys on the improvement of University activities. In general, the internal stakeholders are more involved in quality assurance processes than external stakeholders.

YSULS has not yet evaluated the effectiveness of stakeholders' involvement mechanisms in quality assurance processes.

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

The TLI's internal quality assurance system has been functioning for ten years and the University has had the opportunity to become familiar with the leading experience of different countries in quality assurance within the framework of various programs and trainings. It has also carried out benchmarking of the quality assurance system. In the nearest future, the Centre is planning to change its accountability (reporting directly to the Board of Trustees), the Internal Quality Assurance Manual is currently revised. The accreditation process is another tool for reviewing the internal quality assurance system for YSULS.

In order to introduce an IQA tool at the University, the QAR Centre first launches it, then evaluates, then reviews it. However, clear institutional mechanisms for periodically evaluating and reviewing the internal quality assurance system have not yet been developed.

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

In order to provide a sufficient background for external evaluation processes, each year the chairs perform a self-evaluation of their activities in accordance with the format developed by the University. Self-evaluation of institutional capacities was carried out to organize the external evaluation process. However, the self-evaluation presented was more of a descriptive

than analytical nature, taking into account that the University conducted it for the second stage of accreditation.

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

YSULS internal stakeholders have access to the QA manual, self-evaluations of the chairs and the TLI. However, further steps that address the issues identified as a result of the surveys are not available to the stakeholders, which is evidenced by the lack of knowledge of both internal and external stakeholders.

The main source of obtaining information for external stakeholders is the official website of YSULS, where information about different processes of YSULS is posted. There is a section on "Quality Assurance" on the website, but it does not yet contain information on the quality of different HEI processes, nor does it provide information on the results of surveys on stakeholder satisfaction with different HEI processes or their analyzes, and the quality of implementation of the academic programs.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

YSULS's quality assurance structure, which has a decade-long history, has been significantly integrated into the processes of the TLI. The gradual development of the YSULS quality assurance system can create favorable conditions for the establishment of a quality culture at the University and its dissemination among stakeholders. QA policies and procedures ensure a sufficient background for the regulated implementation of QA functions.

The TLI provides sufficient human resources to manage internal quality assurance processes. The staff of the QAR Centre is highly professional and highly motivated. The staff of the Centre also performs other duties such as managing chairs, which is good on the one hand, as the staff of the Centre can get acquainted with the problems of the University (though they can get acquainted with the problems due being included in faculty councils), but at the same time this practice can be risky, in particular due to being overloaded with other processes. As for the human resources, the University has no guarantee that it will be possible to replace them with new employees once the present employees leave.

The expert panel evaluates positively the involvement of internal stakeholders in QA processes, but the involvement of external stakeholders, in particular, the activation of graduates and employers engagement in these processes could have contributed to more targeted review of academic programs.

The lack of regulated processes for evaluating and improving the quality assurance system can hinder the objective assessment of the real impact of QA processes on academic programs and TLI's activities.

The expert panel highly appreciates the University's efforts to raise awareness among stakeholders about quality assurance processes, however in order to ensure more targeted and effective activities, the University needs to improve the the steps in this direction.

The TLI still has to make efforts to cover the information about the quality of its processes, which will help to enhance the University's reputation and ensure transparency of processes.

**SUMMARY:** Taking into consideration that YSULS has quality assurance system which creates an environment for continuous improvement of the institution's activities, dissemination and strengthening of the quality culture, has developed necessary set of documents regulating the quality assurance processes, provides necessary resources for the implementation of the quality assurance processes, has implemented relevant reforms as a result of the previous accreditation, the expert panel concludes that YSULS meets the requirements of criterion 10.

**CONCLUSION:** The correspondence of YSULS' institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 10 is *satisfactory*.

## EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERION	CONCLUSION
<i>I. MISSION AND PURPOSE</i>	Satisfactory
<i>II. .GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION</i>	Satisfactory
<i>III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES</i>	Satisfactory
<i>IV. STUDENTS</i>	Satisfactory
<i>V. FACULTY AND STAFF</i>	Satisfactory
<i>VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT</i>	Unsatisfactory
<i>VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES.</i>	Unsatisfactory
<i>VIII. SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY</i>	Satisfactory
<i>IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION</i>	Satisfactory
<i>X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE</i>	Satisfactory

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**Margarita Poghosyan**

The chair of the panel

24.07.2019



## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1. CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

**Margarita Poghosyan** graduated from Yerevan National Economic Institute (now Armenian State University of Economics) Faculty of Informatics and ASM in 1995 receiving the qualification of Engineer-economist. In 2008, became a Ph.D student at Yerevan State University, Faculty of Economy. In 2015, defended Ph.D thesis on "Major social-economic issues of physical education and sport in the context of human capital theory". Covered a course of seminars of the Yerevan School of Political studies of the Council of Europe, 2015-2016. Worked at Yerevan State Physical Education Institute, Chair of Sociology as a lecturer (until 2008), then as a senior lecturer, 2004-2015. Since 2006 has been working at Yerevan Northern University. Was the head of the chair of Management and Economy of the same University, 2013-2014. Participated in numerous local and international conferences and grant programs. Author of 17 articles.

**Angin Martirosyan** graduated from Yerevan State University of Architecture and Construction in 2006 (Certified Civil Engineer, Civil and Industrial Engineering). Applicant for Scientific Degree, in Hydroengineering and Water Problems at Institute after Academician I.V.Yeghiazarov, 2010-2013. In 2013, defended Ph.D thesis and received the degree of a candidate of technical sciences. Has been an assistant Professor at the Chair of Strength of Materials, NUACA since 2013. Has been the head of the Board of NUACA Educational Programmes and Methodology since 2015. Head of Department of Provision of Educational Reforms. In 2009 was a task Force Member of the Development of State Educational Standards for Preprofessional (Vocational) Education at National Institute of Education. Author of 15 (fifteen) technical papers in Specialized Journals, 1 Manual, 1 Educational-Methodological Manual. Has been an expert at "Professional Education Quality Assurance National Centre" Foundation several times, Quality Consultant in "Education Quality and Comformance" World Bank grant program.

**Lilit Bekaryan** graduated from Yerevan State University, Armenia, MA in English Philology. In 2007 defended Ph.D thesis. Was an English Language Instructor at Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) State University, 2001-2015. Has lunched "English for the Media" Project hosted by the US Embassy in Armenia and "Online classes for remote regions in Armenia," since 2014. Currently Assistant Professor at Yerevan State University, TEFL Trainer, Peace Corps Armenia, and at the same time Examiner at British Council, Armenia. Author of more than twenty scientific-methodical works and two textbooks. Received Cambridge CELTA (certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults) and DELTA (Diploma of English

Language Teaching to Adults, participated in a number of international programs and has delivered reports at national and international conferences.

**Mirosława Buchholtz** graduated from Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland M.A in English in 1987. In 1995 received Ph.D. in English and American Literature, at Brandeis University, USA. Has been a lecturer at Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland since 2003 and has been the Head of the English Department at the same University since 2007. Was awarded professorship in Humanities conferred by President of Poland in 2009. Author of 6 academic books, 2 language teaching textbooks (in German and English), over 70 articles, edited and translated numerous books. Is a member of professional organizations, member of the Polish Accreditation Committee. Has participated in numerous trainings, conferences and grant programs.

**Haykanush Hrutunyan** graduated from of the Department of Pedagogy and Methodology of the Faculty of Primary Education of the Armenian State Pedagogical University after Khachatur Abovyan in 2017 (Bachelor's degree). Has been a Master's student at the same faculty since September 2017. In January-May 2016, studied at the University of Oulu, Finland. Has been working at Global Bridge Educational Centre as an elementary school teacher since 2017. Author of a number of articles. Has participated in a numerous trainings, including the course for student experts organized by ANQA "Student Voice" project.

## APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT

14.05.2019-17.05.2019

	<b>14.05.2019</b>	<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1.	Meeting with the Rector of the University	09:30	10:00	30 minutes
2.	Meeting with the Board of Trustees	10:10	10:40	30 minutes
2.	Meeting with the Vice-Rectors	10:50	11:50	60 minutes
3.	Meeting with self-evaluation working group (8-12 representatives )	12:00	12:40	40 minutes
4.	Lunch, internal discussions	12:40	13:30	50 minutes
5.	Meeting with the employers	13:40	14:40	60 minutes
6.	Meeting with the Deans of Faculties	14:50	15:40	50 minutes
7.	Meeting with the graduates (8-12 representatives)	15:50	16:30	40 minutes
8.	Review of documents and close meeting of the expert panel	16:40	18:00	80 minutes

	<b>15.05.2019</b>	<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1.	Meeting with the Heads of Chairs (including the heads of chairs implementing three academic programs mentioned in the self-evaluation report) and Heads of Scientific-Educational Centres	09:30	10:30	60 minutes
2.	Meeting with the teaching staff (including three academic programs mentioned in the self - evaluation report) (8-12 lecturers)	10:40	11:40	60 minutes
3.	Visit to Faculties and review of documents	11:50	12:50	60 minutes
4.	Lunch, internal discussions	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
5.	Visit to Chairs and review of documents	14:10	15:10	60 minutes
6.	Meeting with the staff of the Centre for Quality Assurance and Reforms	15:20	16:20	60 minutes
7.	Review of documents and close meeting of the expert panel	16:30	18:00	90 minutes

	<b>16.05.2019</b>	<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1.	Meeting with the members of Student Council, representatives of Student Scientific Society and students involved in Scientific Council (8-12 representatives)	09:30	10:30	60 minutes
2.	Meeting with BA students (10-12 full-time and part-time students)	10:40	11:40	60 minutes

3.	Meeting with MA students (10-12 full-time and part-time students)	11:50	12:50	60 minutes
4.	Lunch, internal discussions	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
5.	Meetings in University subdivisions (Education Department, Scientific Department , HR management and Development Department, Career Centre, Centre for Quality Assurance and Reforms, Public Relations and Media Department, Department of E-learning and Resources, Financial Department )	14:10	16:10	120 minutes
6.	Review of documents and close meeting of the expert panel	16:20	18:00	100 minutes

	<b>17.05.2018</b>	<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1.	Meeting with staff chosen by the experts panel	09:30	10:30	60 minutes
2.	Review of resources (clsrooms, labortories, library, first aid Centre, canteen, dormitory, publishing house, scinetific-educational and cultural Centres)	10:40	12:10	90 minutes
3.	Open meeting with the expert panel	12:20	12:50	30 minutes
4.	Lunch, internal discussions	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
5.	Review of documents and close meeting of the expert panel	14:10	16:50	160 minutes
6.	Meeting with the Rector	17:00	17:30	30 minutes

### APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

N	Name of the Document	Criterion
1.	The structure of the University approved by the Board of Trustees	2.
2.	List of chairs and the academic programs carried out by each	
3.	The assessment of the implementation of 2013-2017 Strategic Plan	
4.	Annual discussions on the course of implementation of 2013-2017 Strategic Plan and changes made in it. Protocols on the assessment of the Strategic Plan effectiveness by Scientific Council.	
5.	Examples of the assessment of 2019-2023 Strategic Plan draft version	
6.	Full packages of academic programs Service, Journalism, International Relations	3.
7.	Analysis of the labour market and the profession for the formulation of outcomes of the academic programs Service, Journalism, International Relations	
8.	The list of internship programs/internship places for the academic programs Service, Journalism, International Relations	
9.	Internship descriptions	
10.	The Strategic Plan of the chair of English Communication approved in 2011-2015	
11.	Maps of resource provision for each course ( for the academic programs Service, Journalism, International Relations)	
12.	Complete data on mobility of students and lecturers ( academic programs Service, Journalism, International Relations)	
13.	Lecturers' business trip reports, orders, etc (e.g. Siranush Ghazaryan)	
14.	Bases for the revision of the academic programs Service, Journalism, International Relations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bases of the educational subdivision,</li> <li>• Presentation of the bases and their approval at Faculty Council,</li> <li>• Opinion of the Quality Assurance Centre,</li> <li>• Opinion of the Methodological Council,</li> <li>• Approval of the Scientific Council.</li> </ul>	

15.	Opinions of the Final Attestation Committees for the past 3 years for the academic programs Service, Journalism, International Relations	
16.	Schedules of class observations	
17.	Diploma supplement template	
18.	Tactics elaborated for the professions of Linguistics, Russian language and literature	4.
19.	Surveys on how to apply to the lecturers for consultation and their effectiveness	
20.	The number of graduates working by their profession and their workplace for the last five years	
21.	Foreign teachers' involvement policy /procedure/ grounds from the chairs and other bases	5.
22.	Course descriptions presented and implemented by foreign specialists	
23.	Documents related to class observations ( completed versions of forms for class observations)	
24.	Training programs for lecturers	
25.	List of employer lecturers according to the academic programs	
26.	Policy and procedures that ensure the sustainability of the teaching staff	
27.	Policies and procedures for encouraging mentoring, ensuring the professional advancement of beginner lecturers	
28.	Personnel reserve	
29.	Information on faculty planning (one year after the current year)	
30.	List of support staff (by chairs)	6.
31.	YSULS Strategy in scientific field	
32.	Quantitative dynamics of articles included in international highly cited and ranking databases according to topics reflecting the University's priorities	
33.	Evaluation of achievements in 6 directions of scientific activities mentioned in 2013-2017 Strategic Plan	
34.	Policies and directions of scientific activities of chairs and scientific-educational Centres	
35.	Scientific activity report or performance of SP's scientific activity (2017)	
36.	Students' research topics in partner universities and their relevance to the University's research priorities	

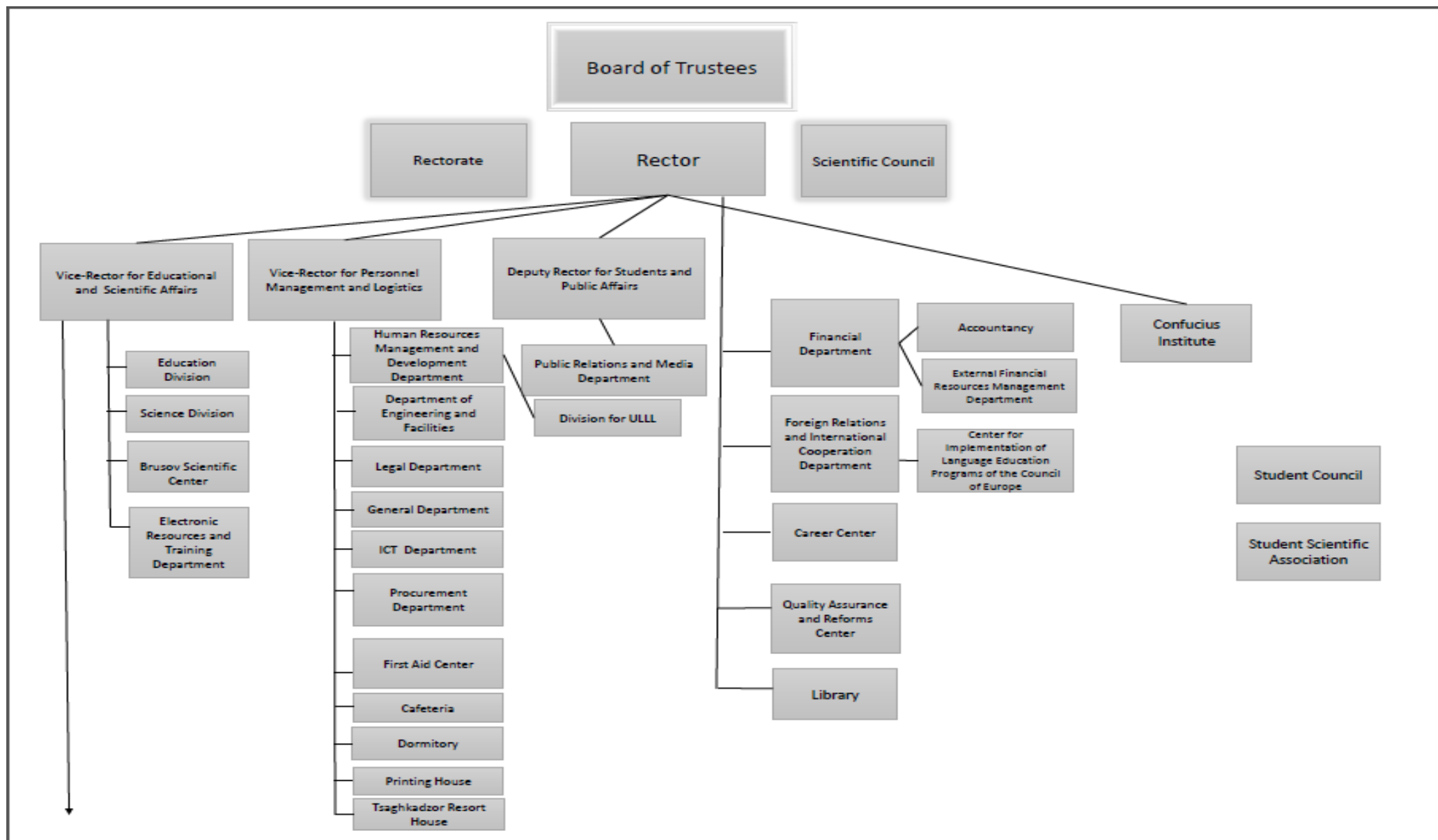
37.	Analyses of the inclusion of research results in the learning process	
38.	List of courses that have been introduced as a result of specific research / relevant research works	
39.	Topics of the graduation papers for the last 3 years	
40.	Analyses of budget implementation efficiency	<b>7.</b>
41.	The assessment of efficiency of expenses of strategic directions	
42.	Documents given to the University by audits	
43.	Evaluation of resource provision of academic programs	
44.	Improvement action plan and its implementation report on University's resources based on the analysis of survey results	
45.	Internal and external evaluation tools for additional educational and consulting services to the society	<b>8.</b>
46.	Internationalization strategy of YSULS activities	<b>9.</b>
47.	Business trip report template	
48.	The number of lecturers assessed by international tests and results of test assessment	
49.	Analysis of unimplemented agreements and their reasons	

## APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED

1. Classrooms
2. Faculties
3. Chairs
4. Laboratories
5. Subdivisions
6. Library
7. Canteen
8. Cultural Centre
9. Dormitory
10. Session Hall
11. Hall
12. Gym



APPENDIX 5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION



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

- 1. RAC-** Research and Academic Centres
- 2. EHEA-** European Higher Education Area
- 3. YSULS –** "Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences Foundation"
- 4. RA –**Republic of Armenia
- 5. AP –**Academic Program
- 6. GPA –** grade point average
- 7. TLI –** Tertiary Level Institution
- 8. QA –** Quality Assurance
- 9. ANQA –** "National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance" Foundation
- 10. QAR** Centre for Quality Assurance and Reforms
- 11. NQF –** National Qualification Framework
- 12. IQA –** Internal Quality Assurance
- 13. PDCA –** plan, do, check, act
- 14. SNCO –**State Non-Commercial Organization
- 15. SP -** Strategic Plan