"NATIONAL CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE"

FOUNDATION

EXPERT PANEL REPORT
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF THE
SHIRAK STATE UNIVERSITY AFTER M . NALBANDYAN

Yerevan– 2022

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of Shirak State University after M. Nalbandyan (hereafter ShSU) was carried out based on the university's application.

The process of the institutional accreditation is coordinated and implemented by the "National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance" Foundation (ANQA). In its activities ANQA has been led by the Order "RA government decision N978-N from June 30 on the State Accreditation of RA Educational Institutions Implementing Academic Programmes and their Specialties" and the decision N959-N approved on June 30, 2011 "On approving the accreditation criteria of the RA professional education".

The external review was realized by the expert panel which was formed according to the requirements of the "Procedure on forming the expert panel of the "National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance" Foundation" and included 4 local and 1 international expert.

Institutional accreditation is aimed not only at external quality assurance, but also at the continuous improvement of the quality of management and educational programs. Therefore, both the local and international experts had two tasks.

1.To carry out an external review of the institutional capacities in accordance with the RA state accreditation criteria,

2. In order to improve the quality, to carry out an expert assessment in line with international developments and in terms of integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

This Report contains the results of the expert assessment of the institutional capacity of the university according to the accreditation criteria of the professional education of the Republic of Armenia and the peer observations of the international expert from the point of view of integration into the EHEA.

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SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

The external review was carried out by the independent expert panel, formed in accordance to the requirements of the Order of the formulation of the expert panel of the "National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance"[1]:

The assessment was made according to 10 criteria of the institutional accreditation approved by the RA Government Decision N 959-N from June 30, 2011. Through the realization of the external review, the expert panel has considered that as a result of the previously reviewed Mission of the higher education institution (hei), SHSU aims to become an Armenian university of the future- based on common principles of scientific, educational, economic, cultural and social processes, comprehensive patriotic and humanistic values, serve the scientific, educational, socio-economic and cultural developments of the region (Shirak region, Armenian communities in Javakhk and for particular professions also for the Diaspora) by ensuring quality training of relevant specialists in line with the international criteria of the development of science and education and the scientific and educational policy of the RA, thus assisting the relevant needs of external and internal stakeholders.

In this context, the expert panel described the proposed Mission as quite ambitious, particularly regarding the aim to align with international criteria, and noted that SHSU graduates mostly meet regional requirements. The expert panel believes that within the framework of the new Strategic Plan (SP), the institution will define a more realistic mission in line with the realities of the university, wherein every planned action will be feasible and clearly measurable. The activities carried out by the HEI in the sphere of education, and the policy aimed at it, are mainly stated to correspond to the mission of the HEI and the 6th, 7th, and 8th levels of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), as determined by the expert panel. The activities of the SHSU include 39 Bachelor, Master and PhD degree full-time programs, 32 Bachelor, 26 Master degree and 20 PhD part-time academic programmes (by 6 directions). A distinctive feature is that new academic programmes are implemented in the SHSU, although the university doesn't pay enough attention to the research of labour market requirements, external analysis, there's no necessary toolkit for the external risks assessment and management in the university, accordingly, there is not sufficient quantity of applicants in both the existing and newly implemented academic programmes.

Besides, there's another challenge for the HEIs: the number of underloaded groups; more than half of the groups consist of fewer than eight students, which is not profitable for the SHSU. The above may directly affect the further development of the Hei. The expert panel mentions that the observed

[1] APPENDIX 1: CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

academic programmes generally coincide with the aims of the Hei, although there has been found some inconsistency between the aims and the stated outcomes of the academic programmes, the contextual link is not visible in the schedule according to the teaching methods included by separate topics, assignments, and resources; moreover, they sometimes have purely formal nature; as well as the alignment of the teaching and evaluation methods are also not realistic. The expert panel finds it disturbing that the majority of the external stakeholders and lecturers are mostly not involved in defining the outcomes of the academic programmes. There are no options for elective courses in the Bachelor degree which could have increased the students' professional and practical abilities.

In this context, the achievement of the defined outcomes may be hindered. Within the 3rd Criteria the expert panel highlights their positive observations that the Hei is realizing benchmarking of the academic programmes of the leading RA and RF HEI's, and, as a result the SHSU has implemented a new academic programme, there's a benchmarking form, designed by the SPQAMC, some students and teachers have taken part in the mobility programs, but at the same time the data is not satisfactory in terms of the results of the improvement of the academic programmes being not measurable and tangible, there's no clear analysis of the alignment of the academic programmes, the mobility opportunities are not used to the full extent. In this context the ongoing improvement of the academic programmes is being limited.

The expert panel positively assesses the sufficient human, material and financial means in carrying out the activities and academic programmes in SHSU. In terms of the human resources, it is appreciated that one of the aims of the HEI is providing enough faculty with the necessary professional qualifications in the realization of the academic programmes, besides, the HEI has an aim to set clear requirements and criteria for the teaching staff in order to increase the efficiency of the academic programmes.

It is highly appreciated that more than 55% of the faculty have a scientific degree or a title, moreover, the number of those receiving an scientific degree or title has increased. SHSU is interested in a gradual rejuvenation of the faculty, besides, according to the academic programmes requirements, teachers from other HEIs are invited to teach in the programmes.

As a result of the professional meetings during the experts' visits, the expert panel emphasizes the strong professional-pedagogical potential of the faculty, which may be directed towards the implementation and constant improvement of the academic programs.

The expert panel values the fact that the HEI realizes rating of the faculty, based on a multifactorial evaluation, according to the "Regular evaluation and rating of the faculty of ShSU" form. Although it is worth to mention that the mechanisms stated in the mentioned form are not being fully operated, and the results of the rating do not lead to any renewal, extension, or termination of the contracts with the faculty members, there are no cases of competitive elections, official promotion, application of material and moral incentives. The expert panel thinks that in case of the improvement and full implementation of the form, the professional qualities of the university's faculty members will be significantly improved. It is also facilitated by the mechanisms for promoting research and scientific-methodological work of the faculty operating in the University. The expert panel has an observation

that the trainings carried out at the University become a separate component of the coordinated policy of the university. ShSU operates in two buildings. Since 2017, the main building has been renovated and equipped with a conference room, the "Key to Intelligence" club, the Lifelong Learning Resource Center, the office for External Cooperation, the Public Relations Center, and other offices, equipped with necessary equipment. The expert panel noted that the University mainly replenished these resources through cash inflows from international programs. It is positive that the institution has a renovated guest house with the necessary conditions, in recent years the gyms, some classrooms, laboratories have been renovated and furnished, but, nevertheless, there is a need of refreshing the laboratories, modernization of the existing computer base, the need to supplement the library and the electronic library with modern professional literature which will directly contribute to the more effective implementation of educational processes in the ShSU.

Regarding the financial resources of the HEi, they are formed from budgetary and extra-budgetary revenues, where the revenues from state financing predominate. The expert group points out that other sources of funding do not have a significant share in the university budget, creating the need to look for new sources of alternative income. The expert group expresses its concern that over the years, there are deviations in the planning and execution of various expenditure items; the distribution of funds does not coincide with the priorities of the SP of the institution, largely jeopardizing the policy of efficient distribution of financial resources. In addition to the above-mentioned, the salary fund predominates in the expenditure items, there are very few funds allocated for research, foreign relations and internationalization, so in this context, this expert group is concerned about the suspension of the further development of the institution.

The expert panel emphasizes that the management processes in the ShSU are carried out by the inertia of the management toolkit.

This is due to the fact that the activities of the bodies carrying out administrative processes in the University PB, SB, the Rector, have been suspended from time to time, causing the need to introduce change management tools in the institution. In this case, the institution does not have a clear orientation in choosing the management tools that correspond to the existing realities, moreover, its SP of 2015-2019 has ended and the institution does not yet have a new SP.

In this context, the introduction of effective tools to service the management process and the improvement of existing ones is of great importance. This refers to the development of KPIs of the institution in line with the new SP, the adjustment of both the educational and financial plans, their performance, the clarification of structural direct links, the definition of comparable standards for the calculation of the KPIs etc. The expert panel considers that at the management level the institution needs to diversify the existing financial resources, while releasing funds to ensure the further development of the university. The expert panel states with confidence that the HEI will not be able to ensure efficiency at the management level until the HEI develops and manages clear mechanisms for managing change.

The internal quality Assurance system is perceived positively as aimed at the continuous improvement of the HEI's educational processes and the provision and dissemination of a quality culture. Internal quality Assurance at the ShSU are within the scope of the SPQAMC, the latter is a multifunctional body, combining the processes related to science policy and postgraduate education.

It is creditable that the research component has been introduced in the QA processes by the SPQAMC, as a result of which the reports are analytical and the decisions are data-based. There are various quality Assurance mechanisms and procedures that are generally effective and problem-solving. During the examination it was positively registered that there are problems identified through various analyzes, for some problems there are separate packages of recommendations, but there are no mechanisms of including the researched problems in the improvement plans, therefore adequate solutions are delayed.

In general, the students are satisfied with the educational environment provided by ShSU, as evidenced by the results of various surveys conducted among students. The expert panel points out that as a result of various changes that have taken place at the institution, the Students Council currently shows great initiative in identifying and solving the educational problems existing at the university. In case of increasing students' involvement in the scientific research, students' professional skills will be significantly improved.

The expert panel positively assesses the aim of the university to draw science to meet the needs of the region. However, at the institutional level, there are no realistic directions and priorities in the research, scientific-educational-innovative, information sphere of the institution, without which it will be difficult for the university to determine the vector direction of developing science and research in the long run. In addition to the above, it is generally bothering that there are not made great efforts in the development of research activities in the ShSU, the funds provided from the budget are scarce, which in turn has led to the incomplete operation of the research component. Within the framework of the written piece, the expert panel presented its observations in terms of clarifying the scientific directions of the institution, including foreign scientists in research programs, and having working plans in line with the research policy.

It is positive that the institution has a multi-level accountability system, ensuring the top-down approach. These reports have a defined form, are discussed in different circles, are public. It is noteworthy that the reports contain a research component. The expert panel positively emphasizes that the institution pays attention to the promotion of the positive reputation of the university and to the dissemination of the information about its activities. In this context, we can single out the courses organized for the students of the secondary schools of Shirak region, the pre-attestation training courses for the teachers of the secondary educational institutions. The expert panel has its observation that the above-mentioned events should be continuous.

It is noteworthy that the ShSU has a wide range of regional partnerships, in particular, cooperation with the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia, regional schools, trade organizations, international institutions and structures. However, it should be noted that the number of international events approved by international cooperation agreements, including academic mobility research, is

unsatisfactory. The expert panel finds it crucial to expand the scope of international events with international partners.

Strengths of the Institution:

1. Being a scientific-educational institution contributing to the development of the region;
2. Meeting the demands of the labor market of the region;
3. Steady flow of applicants;
4. Professional faculty,
5. The clear position of the institution towards the continuous upgrading of the material and technical resources
6. Wide range of cooperation with employers in the region and work experience;
7. Introduced multi-level reporting system;
8. Active programs of international cooperation;
9. Availability of internal grants;
10. Introduced a QA culture and a functioning QA system.

Weaknesses of the Institution:

1. Not fully using the opportunities in accordance with the legal status as a Foundation;
2. Low involvement of the external stakeholders in the management and educational processes of the institution;
3. Inefficiency of financial management, lack of alternative incomes,
4. Priority of state financing over own revenues;
5. Insufficient funds for further development of the institution due to the lack of alternative sources of income;
6. Poor participation of external stakeholders in the development and implementation of the academic programmes;
7. Poor alignment of goal-outcomes, as well as teaching-assessment methods/recommendations
8. Lack of priorities set in the field of research;
9. Lack of internationalization strategy and directions;
10. Low level of teacher-student mobility;
11. Insufficient knowledge of a foreign language of the academic and administrative staff.

Main recommendations:

Mission and Purposes

- Consider the development of the SP urgent, according to the relevant indicators, involving external and internal stakeholders.
- Develop an action plan in line with the new SP, having each planned action clearly measurable and feasible.
- Develop and Introduce SP performance by assessing defined indicators.
- Activate the participation of internal and external stakeholders in the process of assessment, goals, objectives, and educational needs of the institution.

Governance and Administration

- Develop and introduce clear mechanisms for change management, clarify and emphasize structural direct links.
- Develop annual performance indicators of the institution's activities, enligning them with the newly established SP indicators of the institution.
- Develop ways to secure alternative income and free up funds to ensure the further development of the institution by assessing all possible risks.
- Increase the efficiency of financial management by linking budget allocations to performance indicators (program budgeting method).
- Operate the PDCA cycle in the management system, ensure compliance with the plans and their implementation.
- Conduct environmental analysis to facilitate data-driven decision-making.
- Define optimal, comparable standards for the calculation of KPIs.

Academic programmes

- Review existing academic programmes by conducting comprehensive labor market requirements analysis.
- Formulate and diversify the component of elective courses in MCS, taking into account the professional needs of the labor market and students.
- Ensure the harmonization of the teaching method, instruction, and resources components included in the schedules.
- Improve the evaluation system by introducing objective and end-based (knowledge, ability, skill) components.
- Increase the effectiveness of the academic programmes management by clarifying and making the functions of the academic programmes' managers feasible.
- Involve external and internal stakeholders in the development / re-development of IDPs, delimitation of outcomes.
- Review the policy of developing, approving, monitoring and reviewing academic programmes by introducing clear mechanisms for improving the academic programmes.
- Expand academic honesty measures.

Students

- Make free consultations provided to students regular and continuous.
- Expand the alumni base by assisting them in finding employment.
- Encourage student involvement in research by expanding access to information and developing students' research skills.
- Allocate a specific budget for student organizations based on the results of the programs.

Faculty and Staff

- Develop a policy of attracting and encouraging young professionals with good experience to be enrolled in the faculty.
- Fully apply the mechanisms introduced in the "Regular evaluation-rating" of the faculty of the ShSU, evaluating the effectiveness of the procedure.
- To consider the organization of professional trainings aimed at the development of professional and pedagogical capacities of the teaching-administrative staff as a priority in financial planning.
- Clarify and apply the mechanisms of the tender procedure for replenishing the faculty members.
- Develop clear criteria for the professional qualifications of the faculty based on quality indicators.

Research and development

- Clarify the main scientific directions of the institution and priorities, their adequate involvement in foreign grant programs.
- Form a working group dealing with grant programs, including specialists with relevant qualifications and capabilities.
- Develop work plans based on the policy of internationalization of research and science, with measurable indicators, performance assessments.
- Organize mandatory courses for the faculty, developing their skills of conducting science, research, applying for grants, writing scientific articles.
- Develop clear criteria for the professional qualifications of the faculty, based on quality indicators.

Infrastructure and Resources

- Clarify the priorities for acquiring resources by ensuring the technical equipment of professional classrooms, language classrooms, laboratories, and the modernization of the library fund and the electronic library.
- Implement proper resource planning for the effective organization of learning for students with special needs.
- Introduce Mulberry system for more efficient internal document management processes.
- Introduce effective mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of financial resources.

Societal responsibility

- Ensure stable operation of feedback mechanisms.
- Ensure the regularity of courses organized for students and teacher training.
- Supplement the website with foreign language information aimed at the development of international partnership relations.

External Relations and Internationalization

- Evaluate the current capacity of the institution's external relations and international cooperation and complete the international cooperation and internationalization strategy of the university, specifying the directions and areas of internationalization.
- Include the directions of the university's external cooperation and internationalization in the envisaged SP.
- Develop a realistic budget for the internationalization process of the institution.
- Activate the work of obtaining international grant programs, separating the functions of the relevant employee and the necessary professional skills.
- Expand the scope of events with international partners (involvement of international invited lecturers, participation in international webinars, organization of intercultural events by students).
- 6. Ensure the regularity of professional foreign language courses and implement mechanisms to evaluate their effectiveness.

Internal Quality Assurance System

- Review the 2013 QA policy and procedures, aligning with current realities and needs of the institution.
- Improve the questionnaires reviewing the questions and make them accessible.
- Develop clear mechanisms for including the results of the analysis in the following year's plans.
- Clarify the positions and functions of the staff of the SPQAMC
- Increase the involvement of external stakeholders in QA processes.
- Improve the professional skills of QA staff by ensuring their participation in international online training.

May 16, 2022

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Armenuhi Mheryan
Head of the expert panel

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

At the institutional level, the institution uses the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System for the implementation of academic programmes. The ShSU applies the EHEA Qualifications Framework by providing 60 credits per academic year as outlined in the EHEA qualifications framework. However, there is no indication of the number of ECTS credits for undergraduate and graduate programs. The institution also uses the concept of outcomes and credit system as tools for integration in EHEA. Unique cases of mobility of the faculty members were registered within the framework of CBHE Erasmus + (Key 2) program. There is no clear policy for internationalization in the institution, nor are there any transparent mechanisms for the ECTS credits transfer. The students, academic and administrative staff has insufficient knowledge of a foreign language, which also hinders the implementation of academic mobility.

It is necessary for the institution to clearly define the objectives of teaching, linking them to the academic programmes, clarifying their implementation and evaluation. The student-centered approach should be taken into account in the implementation of the academic programmes, regardless of the teaching method. Students should also participate in decision-making on the academic programmes with full rights for voting. Credits should be awarded when the assessment shows that the defined outcomes have been achieved at the appropriate level. It is also necessary to pay attention to the formulation of the results. The finalized outcomes should be concise, not too detailed, as well as understandable, verifiable, so that at the end of the program it is possible to assess whether the student has reached the set outcomes or not.

The internal QA process must meet ESG standards of at least 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5 in areas related to ECTS, particularly in the programme development, student-centered teaching, admission, teaching and assessment, student progress, faculty training, research and education activity cohesion.

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The external review of the institutional capacities of the ShSU was carried out by the following expert panel:

Armenuhi Mheryan - Candidate of Economics, Associate Professor, Independent expert in the field of Education, Republic of Armenia, Head of the Expert panel.
Karen Dilbaryan - Candidate of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Yerevan Medical University after M. Heratsi, Senior Lecturer of the Chair of Pharmacology, Republic of Armenia, member of the Expert panel.
Heghine Ohanyan - Candidate of Technical Sciences, Vanadzor State University after H. Tumanyan, Head of the Chair of Mathematics and Informatics, Republic of Armenia, member of the Expert panel.
Olga Safonkina - Candidate of Philosophy, Ogarev Mordovia State University, Vice dean, Erasmus + and Exchange programs coordinator, Russian Federation, International member of the Expert panel.
Karen Mastoyan, Gavar State University, Master degree student of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, department of Computer Engineering, Republic of Armenia, Student member of the Expert panel.
The composition of the expert panel had been agreed with the educational institution.
The Specialist at the Institutional and Program Accreditation Division of ANQA, Anahit Terteryan, coordinated the work of the expert panel.
Oral translation by Kristine Ohanyan.
All members of the expert group, the translator, the coordinator, have signed declarations of confidentiality and independence.

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

Application for state accreditation

In order to pass the state institutional accreditation, ShSU has submitted an application of the relevant form with copies of the license and its appendices on June 3, 2019. The ANQA Secretariat examined the data provided in the application and the attached documents. After the decision on accepting the application was made (28-06-2019), a bilateral agreement was signed between the ShSU and ANQA. A work schedule has been drawn up and approved.

Self-evaluation

In accordance with the schedule set by ANQA, the institution submitted the institutional capacity self-evaluation with a package of accompanying documents in Armenian and English. The self-evaluation of the ShSU was carried out by the working groups set up for that purpose by the order of the rector of the institution. Representatives of administrative, teaching, educational and student segments were involved in the groups. The institution had conducted a self- evaluation and submitted it to ANQA in 2019, but it was necessary to review in 2021, as the accreditation process had been postponed due to the COVID 19 pandemic and the state of emergency in the country.
The ANQA Coordinator reviewed the report to check its relevance to the technical requirements set by ANQA. The self- evaluation presented by the ShSU corresponded to the defined measurements/forms.

The revised version of the self-analysis was submitted to ANQA on 15-12-2021. Then, the self- evaluation and the attached documents, the electronic questionnaire filled out by the institution were provided to the expert panel, the composition of which had been agreed in advance with the university.

Preparatory phase

To ensure the effectiveness of the process and prepare the expert panel for the work, ANQA conducted 4 trainings on the following topics:
1. The main functions of the members of the expert panel,
2. Preliminary assessment as a stage of preparation of the expert report, the main requirements for the report;
3. The methodology of examination of the documents and resources;
4. Ethics and techniques of conducting meetings and interviews.
The expert panel, having studied the self- evaluation of the university, the package of accompanying documents, carried out a preliminary assessment by the previously set form, preparing a list of necessary documents to be further studied, as well as a list of tasks and questions, indicating the relevant departments or target groups.
Within the stipulated time, the expert group summarized the results of the preliminary evaluation, made a plan-schedule for the site visit. Guided by ANQA's "Expertise Manual", the schedule included pre-planned expert meetings with all groups, open and closed meetings, document reviews, etc.

Preparatory visit

On March 7, 2022 a meeting was held with the top management of the ShSU. During the meeting, the schedule[2]Of the site visit was discussed and mutually agreed with the university; decisions were made on the organizational, technical, and information issues, and the ethical norms of the participants. The conditions for the focus group meetings and the work of the expert panel were discussed.

[2] APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF THE SITE VISIT

Site-visit

The site visit took place on March 15-18, 2022. According to the schedule, the site visit started with a closed meeting with the international expert, the purpose of which was to discuss and agree upon the scope of the expert assessment, the issues to be studied during the visit, the strengths and weaknesses of the ShSU, the procedure of conducting focus-group meetings, also clarifying the following steps.

During the site visits, the expert panel held three parallel meetings within the framework of 3 academic programmes proposed by the ShSU: "Elementary Pedagogy - Methodology", "Informatics and Applied Mathematics", "Biology".

At the site visit there was the fully present expert panel (the international expert joined online), ANQA Coordinator and the translator. The site visit started with a meeting with the Rector of the ShSU and ended with a meeting with the top management of the institution. The participants of the focus-group meetings, which were organized to clarify necessary questions, the lecturers, students, deans, heads of the chairs, employers, and alumni, were selected from a list provided in advance by the institution. All scheduled meetings were held, except for the open meeting. The expert group carried out a study of documents[3], classes, monitoring of resources in different subdivisions[4].

During the parallel meetings, the expert group was divided, according to each expert's professional orientation. Each expert (except for the student and foreign experts, they joined the other experts) had the opportunity to have three separate professional meetings with people, responsible for the academic programmes, lecturers and students, who had been presented by the institution. Before the professional meetings, the experts examined the assignments given to students within the framework of their thematic calendar plans to understand the extent to which those assignments aim to achieve the final result defined in the program.

During the closed meeting of the expert panel held at the end of each working day of the visit, interim results of the expert evaluation were brought up, and at the end of the visit, the main results of the visit were summarized in a closed discussion. The expert evaluation was carried out within the framework of ANQA procedures of state accreditation criteria, standards, procedures which envisage a two-level evaluation scale - **satisfactory** or **unsatisfactory**.

Expert panel report

Representatives of the expert panel and ANQA coordinator prepared the preliminary version of the expert report. The international expert also prepared a separate opinion on the peer review, which was included in the text of the report. The preliminary report was submitted to the institution on 16.05.2022.

The ShSU submitted its observations to ANQA on 31.05.2022. The observations were discussed by the expert group, and on June 9, 2022, ANQA organized an online meeting of the expert group of the institution,

[3] APPENDIX 3: LIST OF THE OBSERVED DOCUMENTS

[4] APPENDIX 4: OBSERVED RESOURCES

during which the response of the expert group to the observations was presented. The final expert report was compiled and submitted to the institution on June 14, 2022.

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Anahit Terteryan
Coordinator of the expert panel
16.05.2022

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA
BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

History. Shirak State University after M. Nalbandyan (formerly Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute after M. Nalbandyan) was founded in 1934. From the very first year of its foundation, it has been carrying out to educational, scientific and cultural activities in the northern part of Armenia. In 1949, by a special decision of the Government, the pedagogical institute was named after the great Armenian enlightener Michael Nalbandyan. In 1960, the pedagogical institute became a branch of Yerevan Pedagogical Institute after Kh. Abovyan. At the beginning of its activity, the Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute had only three departments: physics and mathematics, linguistics, history, with about 100 students and 16 faculty members.

By the decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia from September 22, 2016 N 1031 -N "Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute after M. Nalbandyan" SNCO was reorganized into "Shirak State University after M. Nalbandyan" Foundation, which received state registration on December 2, 2016.

The university has already had about 30,000 graduates, who make up more than 80% of the staff in the field of general education in the Shirak region.

Education. The University has 4 faculties: Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Pedagogy, Humanities and Arts, Social Sciences and Law, 14 professional chairs (including the Military Chair with a special status), which organize the educational process with academic programmes of bachelor, master and PhD degrees. There are 35 bachelor full-time, 22 bachelor part-time, 31 master, and the PhD is realized in four areas. The institution has about 2500 students.

Since 2006, the GSPI has undergone educational process reforms aimed at facilitating integration into the EHEA by undertaking the Accreditation and Transfer System.

In the work of 14 professional chairs of ShSU are involved the following representatives: 1 correspondent member of NAS RA, about 20 doctors of sciences and professors, 200 PhD and associate professors.

Research. The aspirations of the ShSU in the field of research are presented in the 2015-2019 SP. In order to internationalize the research activities, to ensure the connection with education, the institution has set the following tasks:

1. Ensuring the implementation and development of research with long-term, medium-term, short-term activity planning,
2. Ensuring effective interconnection of educational and scientific processes;
3. Regulation and promotion of internationalization of research works;
4. Provision of material, technical and financial means for the implementation of scientific research works.

There are 3 research laboratories in the ShSU (Problem laboratory of theoretical direction for Nano and microtechnical materials and structures, X-ray research laboratory and Biotechnology laboratory), one of which is basic.
The researches carried out in ShSU are mainly of a basic nature, and their results are validated amd presented to specialists through scientific collections, monographs, periodicals, books and online means.
In order to promote the implementation of the research in the institution, internal grants and mechanisms for promoting research and scientific-methodological work of the staff of the university were introduced.
Internationalization. In the field of internationalization, the university has a vision to become an institution which activity is aimed at integration into the European educational system, internationalization of the educational system and research. In order to achieve the vision, the institution has set a task in its SP:
1. Improve the procedures and mechanisms to promote internationalization.
2. Develop and implement QA policy and procedures for the External Relations Department.
3. Review and improve the procedures governing the activities of the External Relations Department.

The processes contributing to the internationalization of the university were mainly implemented within the framework of TEMPUS, ERASMUS MUNDUS, ERASMUS + international programs. Within the mentioned programs, there have been created a rather rich material-technical base, staff has been trained, modern professions such as modern professions such as social work, development of sustainable tourism, biotechnology have been introduced. New structural subdivisions have been established.
During the last 3 years, the University has participated in 5 international cooperation programs aimed at capacity building of institutions: ARMENQA, BOOST, AbioNet, SMARTI and WBL4JOB.

Quality Assurance. The goal of the internal quality Assurance system in the ShSUis to ensure the continuous improvement of all processes and the formation of a quality culture. The QA center was established in 2011. The Center's work is aimed at the active involvement of internal and external stakeholders in QA processes. QA committees of the Chairs have been formed.

As a result of the structural change of the ShSU, the QAC has been transformed into a SPQAMC, which has been operating since May 4, 2018. It has been established on the basis of the former QAC, including some of the functions of the former Scientific Policy and External Cooperation Management Center, extending them.
Currently, there are a number of QA mechanisms and procedures in the ShSU, which are aimed at the continuous quality improvement of the administrative system and administrative structures of the university, education received at the university, professional and organizational ratings of the university, academic programmes, professional staff, teaching and support staff, administrative staff,

improvement of the quality of organizational competencies, board and administrative staff, student assessment system, pedagogical practice and learning resources.

***Source**: The source of evidence in the above areas is the documents provided by the institution (eg self-analysis, strategic plan, schedule, department plans, concepts, etc.).*

I. MISSION AND PURPOSES

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

Findings

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

"Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute after M. Nalbandyan" SNCO has changed its legal structure on 02.12.2016, becoming " Shirak State University after M . Nalbandyan" Foundation. Taking into account the fact of becoming a university and the consultations provided by the expert panel as a result of the previous accreditation process, the institution has revised its mission, which is stated in the rector's report for 2016-2017 academic year, presented at the session of the Public Board on 23.03.2018. The previous mission of the institution was to train specialists with the necessary skills and knowledge in accordance with the requirements of the national labor market. As a result of the accreditation in 2016, the expert panel had noted that the mission of the institution was too general, did not show its uniqueness.

With its revised mission, the ShSU wants to become the Armenian University of the Future, based on the common principles of scientific, educational, economic, cultural and social processes, comprehensive patriotic and humanistic values. Serve the scientific-educational, socio-economic-cultural developments of the region (Shirak region, Armenian communities of Javakhk, and in some professions also the Diaspora), ensuring the quality training of relevant specialists in accordance with the international standards of science and education development, supporting the foreign policy of the RA meeting the relevant needs. It should be noted that the revised mission is ambitious, especially in terms of meeting international standards for the development of science and education. From the site visit and meetings with the stakeholders the ShSU mainly trains specialists in accordance with the needs of the Shirak region.

The SP of the institution is intended for 2015-2019, it should be noted that the ShSU is still operating this SP. For the implementation of the SP, the institution had also developed an implementation plan-schedule, which presents the steps to be taken, schedule, responsibilities, financial allocations, etc. It should also be stated that not all the activities planned in the plan-schedule have been realized.

According to the self-analysis, as well as the information presented during the site visit, in 2017, by the order of the rector, a commission was formed to develop the RS RS, which included relevant employers - specialists in the field, and in 2018 the RS RS was approved. The concept of development, implementation and accountability. Since January 2018, a process of developing the RP has been

undertaken according to the concept. The work remained unfinished due to the processes taking place at the institution, such as the resignation of the rector.

According to the self-evaluation, as well as the information presented during the site visit, a commission was formed to develop the SP of the ShSU by the order of the rector from 2017, which included relevant employers and specialists in the field, and in 2018 the Concept for the design, implementation and reporting of the ShSU development was approved. The concept of development, implementation and accountability. Since January 2018, a process of developing the SP has been undertaken according to the concept. The work remained unfinished due to the processes taking place at the institution, as well as the resignation of the rector.
The ShSU currently provides education for Bachelor, Master and PhD degrees, in the 6th, 7th and 8th degrees of the NQF, respectively. In its activities and the implementation of academic programmes the ShSU is guided by the same characteristics of the NQF: knowledge, ability, skill. The ShSU is currently offering 39 full-time bachelor, 32 part-time bachelor and 26 master and 20 PhD programmes (according to 6 directions). The institution also has a high school and a college.

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

The needs of external stakeholders are identified at the institution through surveys, meetings, discussions. Employers are included in the board of directors and other councils. Being full members of the mentioned circles, according to the current procedures, they participate in the discussions, express their opinion, submit proposals, ensure participation in decision-making. It became clear from the site visit that the internal and external stakeholders rarely make proposals, separating the sequence of their implementation steps.
The main mechanisms for identifying the needs of the internal stakeholders of the ShSU are various surveys. Student surveys on the quality and effectiveness of teaching, the assessment of the lecturer's professional, pedagogical and organizational competencies development needs, the evaluation of the institution's administrative system and administrative units by the staff of the ShSU, etc. It should be noted that the results of needs surveys have not yet turned into strategic planning. It became clear from the expert that the development of the RS is just starting at the university, the design version is not available yet.
It should be noted that the results of needs surveys have not yet turned into strategic planning. It became clear from the site visit that the process of the SP design is just starting at the university, the project of the SP is not available yet.

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

In order to evaluate the implementation process of the SP, a schedule-implementation of the SP 2015-2019 has been designed, which was considered the long-term program of the institution. Medium-term and short-term plans have been developed based on this program. The design of the programs was carried out on the top-down principle in the following sequence: the development strategic plan of the university, schedule of the SP implementation, on which are based the working plans of the faculties, chairs and individual work plans of the lecturers. It became clear from the site visit that the ShSU considers the annual reports of the rector to be the assessment of the SP. There's no separate document with the assessment of the SP implementation in the institution. The panel mentions that it is sometimes difficult to find the connection between the implemented activities, presented in the rector's annual reports and the outcomes, presented in the plan-schedules, because there are structural differences in the documents.

Considerations : The expert panel positively assesses that on the basis of the advice provided as a result of the previous accreditation, the institution has reviewed its mission, making it more specific to the peculiarity of the university instead of the former too general mission statement. In this context, it is commendable that the institution strives to serve the scientific-educational, socio-economic and cultural developments of the region (Shirak region, Armenian communities in Javakhk, and in some specialties also the Diaspora), to provide quality training of relevant specialists according to the development trends in the international standards of science and education development and in line with the scientific-educational policy of the RA, striving to meet the relevant needs of the external and internal stakeholders. However, in the above-mentioned context, the graduates of the university mainly meet the needs of the region, taking into account the resources of the university - the provision of international standards for the development of science and education – it is considered to be an ambitious goal for the university. Thus, in case of having a more realistic mission statement, the university will be more likely to achieve its vision and accomplish the realization of its mission.

The expert panel finds it important that the institution has developed a Concept for the development, implementation and accountability of the SP, but there is a need to separate external stakeholders based on their position in the labor market.

It is disturbing that the validity of the SP 2015-2019 has expired but it still serves as a plan for the realization of the university goals, endangering the development of the HEI in accordance with the current situation.

As for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the processes defined by the SP plan-schedule, in this context the expert panel points out that not all the planned actions have been carried out, their evaluations are not available, preventing the inclusion of possible important processes not implemented in the new SP. The expert panel is full of hope that the development of the new SP, which started in 2018, will be completed, and the ShSU will expand its educational activities in accordance with the new SP.

It is positive that the ShSU realizes its activities and provides education programmes according to the 6th, 7th and 8th degrees criteria of the NQF, providing academic programmes 39 full-time bachelor, 32 part-time bachelor, 26 master and 20 PhD programmes (according to 6 directions), contributing to the education needs of the region.

The expert panel views positively that in order to identify the needs of external and internal stakeholders, the institution conducts surveys, various discussions, where opinions and suggestions are presented. However, the expert panel finds that there are few cases when internal and external stakeholders come up with separate proposals, outlining the sequence of steps of implementing them, in which case they will have a significant contribution to the implementation of the goals and objectives set by the institution. At the same time, the expert panel notes that the main mechanisms for identifying the needs of the internal stakeholders of the ShSU are various surveys, but the results of the needs-based surveys are not yet included in the strategic planning, aimed at the effectiveness of further improvement.

It is envisaged that medium-term and short-term plans have been developed on the basis of the institution's long-term plan, the SP, where the principle of top-down is maintained, contributing to the logical sequence of actions defined by the SP plan-schedule. However, at the same time, it is worrying that the performance of the RP is not available according to the established indicators. the connection between the end results. As a result, the effectiveness of the RP assessment suffers.

However, at the same time, it is worrying that there is no performance of the SP according to the stated KPIs, besides, the action plans of separate subdivisions and their performances are not enligned, moreover, it is difficult to find the links between the described performances in the reports and the stated outcomes in the action plans. As a result, the efficiency of the SP evaluation is hindered.

Summary: Given that, in general, the institution realizes its goals and objectives in the context of the defined mission, meeting the needs of the labor market in the region, the needs of internal and external stakeholders are reflected in the goals and objectives of the institution, some mechanisms exist for the improvement of the evaluation of the realization of its mission and goals, the expert panel finds that the ShSU meets the requirements of Criterion 1.

Conclusion: The expert panel assesses the compliance of the institutional capacity of the ShSU with the requirements of CRITERION 1 as **satisfactory**.

II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

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

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

The ShSU is self-governed in accordance with the RA legislation and the Charter of the ShSU. According to the Charter, the management of the University is based on its autonomy, in combination with the principles of sole collegial governance, with the implementation of the functions of the founder, the authorized body, the Board of Trustees of the University, the Scientific Board (SB) of the University. The bodies implementing the activities of the University are: Public Board, Rector, Scientific Board, Rectorate. The Public Board of the ShSU is a supreme governing body, the composition of which was approved by the decision of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia on 08-12-2021. It should be noted that, due to the termination of the powers of some members of the PB, the PB of the institution was dissolved in 18-11-2020, and for about a year the ShSU operated without the PB.

The SB is a collegial body that plans, coordinates and regulates teaching-methodological, scientific research, scientific-technical activities. In 2019, by the decision of the Public Board, the activity of the current Scientific Board was terminated prematurely, and a new staff was formed.

The Rector of the University directs the educational, scientific, production, economic, financial, international and other activities of the University, organizes the work of the Scientific Board, work of the structural subdivisions, meetings of the Scientific Board, the Rectorate, submits an annual report to the Public Board of the ShSU, provides the realization of the ShSU AC and PC decisions and other responsibilities, stated by the Charter.

The election of the Rector for the vacant position of took place on the February 19, 2022 .

The result of the election of the Rector of the ShSU Foundation was approved at the March 17 RA Government Sesion. Prior to that, the University had an Acting Rector for about 3 years.

As the SP of the ShSU had expired, during the site visit it became clear that in the aspect of the management of the institution, the rector carries out situational management, there was no long-term or short-term plan in line with the new realities.

The structural subdivisions of the University are: 4 faculties, 13 chairs, the Military Chair with a special status, 4 centers, departments, a college, a high school. During the previous accreditation, the expert panel had observed inefficient allocation of administrative resources in the operational management system, in particular, the concentration of responsibilities of the head of the educational activity, science, foreign relations management, methodological department.

In addition, the expert panel considered the lack of a scientific department to be risky for the full implementation of the mission of the institution and to provide advice on reforming the organizational structure, adapting it to the implementation of strategic tasks. Accordingly, the GSPI Institutional Accreditation Expert Report's Action Plan for the Elimination of Defects Mentioned (IAAP) provided for the establishment of a separate science and research department.

The ShSU has undergone structural changes in 2017 in the management system, in particular, some faculties and departments have been merged into the Center for Scientific Policy, Quality Assurance and Management (CSPQAM), the Center for Educational Process Management (CEPM), the Center for External Cooperation and Public Relations. (CECPR), Human Resource Management and Legal Support department has been established. It became clear from the site visit that the management of the institution sees the need for structural improvements.

The SPQAMC has been operating since 2018, which was established on the basis of the former QAC, including some functions of the former Scientific Policy and Foreign Cooperation Management Center. It should be noted that a research component has been introduced in the quality Assurance processes as a result of the SPQAMC development. According to the current structure of the SPQAMC, the positions responsible for quality Assurance, scientific policy, postgraduate education are separated, but the other employees of the center, according to their responsibilities, are accountable only to the director of the center.

Besides, the budget allocation according to the incomes and expenditures does not fully reflect the HEI's strategic directions, at the same time, the expenditures are calculated according to some directions of the operation, from which from the structural point of view of the factual performance data from 2020, the academic programmes, faculty and staff expenditures prevailed with 47, 5%, infrastructure and resources made 23,4%, governance and management-18,6%.

The other areas (students, research and development, foreign relations and internationalization, internal QA system) together make up only 10.5% of the expenses. In 2021 according to the income-expenditure data, teaching-learning expenditures increased by 7.9%, making 55.4%, and the research-development expenditures increased by about 3%. It should be noted that in 2019 the largest share of the financial outflows in terms of expenditures is allocated to the payment of work and equalized means, making approximately 80 % of the overall budget.

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

The ShSU Charter and current regulations allow the lecturers and the students to participate in the decision-making related to them. The teaching staff and students each have a 25% participation in the Public Board of the ShSU, 25% of the members of the Scientific Board are students, the youngest and the oldest doctors of science, other teaching staff members with degrees and titles. The main staff and students of the faculty have 25% representation in the faculty councils. The lecturers of the ShSU take part in the discussion of iShSUes related to the teaching-methodological, scientific-research activities of the departments. It became clear from the site visit that the same students had been involved in the Public Council and Scientific Board before and are currently enrolled in the work of different councils. The students take an active part in the sessions of the Public Board, the Scientific Board, the Faculty Council, raising the iShSUes that concern them. Lecturers are less involved in the discussion of iShSUes related to them, in the decision-making. This is evidenced by the fact that 75% of students and 44% of

lecturers are satisfied with the processes of open discussions conducted by the top management of the University.

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

As a long-term planning tool, the ShSU has developed and implemented the ShSU Development Plan 2015-2019 in accordance with its mission and goals. Moreover, the working plan of the SP is considered as a midterm plan by the management of the institution. For the implementation and monitoring of the SP of the institution the KPI of separate goals and objective are considered the basis. It should be noted that in 2015-2019 according to the work plan of the SP, the steps of their implementation, the schedule, the responsible people, the financial allocations, the expected results are separated according to the iShSUes arising from the goal. There are no quantitative-qualitative assessments or summaries of the expected results set out in the work plan.

It should be noted that in 2015-2019 according to the work plan of the SP, the steps of their implementation, the schedule, those responsible, the financial allocations, the expected results are separated according to the iShSUes arising from the goal. There are no quantitative-qualitative assessments or summaries of the expected results set out in the work plan.

Since the end of the validity period of the SP 2015-2019 until now the institution hasn't had an SP. There is no separate performance of the previous SP. The performance of the SP is evaluated and the results are presented in the Rector's annual reports of on the activities of the institution. These reports present various analyzes, results, achievements, plans, which are generally derived from the SP. There are no clear and measurable indicators of expected results.

As a result of the previous accreditation, considering the deficiencies mentioned in the expert report prepared by the institution as a kind of medium-term plan, as a result of both expert observations and site visits, it became clear that the activities towards the improvement of the Criteria of Management and Administration have mainly not been carried out, specifically risk management, evaluation of the effectiveness of management processes, enrollment of the external stakeholders in the management, activating of the inner stakeholders' activities. There are also differences between the plans and their realization. According to the "Analysis of the income, expenditure data preparation, approval and the realization of the factual data" procedure, the factual data of the previous year, economically stated predictions and calculations are taken as a basis for making an estimated budget for the current year.

Under the leadership of the Vice-Rector for Staff Management, the Department of Financial-Economic Analysis, Programming and Accounting department, which analyzes the actual data of previous years, possible developments, summarizes the results of the analysis of actual data on revenues, expenditures, the results of factor analysis. At the same time, expert research has shown that there are significant deviations in the form of overperformance and underperformance between the annual income, expenditure estimates and their actual performance, which are the operational financial plan of the institution.

The institute has visions proposed by the deans of the faculties, annual work plans of separate departments, reports. During the site visit, it became clear that, for example, the work plan of the Faculty of Humanities and Arts does not correspond to the faculty's SP, there are no performances of the faculties's action plans.

In addition, the reports, as executors of the plans, generally do not include summaries of quantitative-qualitative assessments corresponding to the work plans (to some extent, the annual reports of the Faculty of Pedagogy stand out, which include assessments summarized as a result of the analysis, clearly formulated tasks). Short-term plans are considered to be the curricula of the academic programmes, the schedules of the subjects, the effectiveness of which is not summarized.

Monitoring is carried out through lessons' observations, surveys of external and internal stakeholders, meetings with internal and external stakeholders. It became clear from the visit that the results of the analysis of all the reports presented in the above-mentioned ways, as well as all of them, are not included in the relevant plans for the next year.

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

According to the self-analysis, when considering the main factors influencing the activities of the institution, the external factors (demographic picture, opinion of external stakeholders - perception, legislative field) stand out more than internal factors (material - human resources, opinion of internal stakeholders - perception). It turns out that in the institution there is an excess of external risks affecting the activity over internal risks, which mostly emphasizes the need to identify and apply reliable data. During the site visit it became clear that the analyzes of the external environment are few.

There are clear mechanisms for collecting and analyzing information related to activities at the University. The SPQAMC of the institution conducts various researches, surveys through numerous questionnaires, calculates different KPIs (key performance indicators).

Expert studies have shown that the existing analyzes are mainly limited to recording numerical or percentage comparisons over the years, there is no causal linking, general-local assessments with positive or negative tendencies and subsequent planned solutions.

The cases of introduction of quantitative-qualitative indicators of the summarized results of the surveys in the medium-short-term plans of the next period are not visible. Next, the calculated efficiency indicators are compared on an annual basis, the analysis mainly refers to the percentage variations on an annual basis. It is not clear how the analysis of each year is used to implement the planning of each subsequent year more effectively. During the site visit it became clear that there are no optimal, comparable standards for each KPI (at the state level, at the level of the institution).

It should be noted that the focus of the university's management is on assessments of satisfaction with educational programs, faculty, classroom, library resources, management system, administrative

structures, in connection with which it is planned to develop clear indicators and review planning components.

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

Different administrative processes in the ShSU are at different stages of the PDCA cycle. 2015-2019 SP has been planned and implemented. At the end of the term of the latter, there are no summaries of the assessments of the RA, which should be made in the 2022-2027 SP of the ShSU. The expert panel considered the working version of the new SP, which did not contain the main results of the previous program. From the site visit it became clear that not all the goals from the 2015-2019 SP have been implemented, moreover, not all the activities from the expert report for the elimination of defects of 2016 have been implemented. For a certain period of time (2016-2017 academic year), some measures of the improvement program were considered unrealistic, then, in the 2018-2019 academic year, the institution adopted the previously approved version of the improvement program. It's a fact that the 2015-2019 PDCA cycle did not function regularly. The PDCA cycle of the institution's academic programmes doesn't function clearly as well, it is noteworthy that the admission isn't realized for all the academic programmes, besides, the newly introduced academic programmes engage few applicants. The expert panel emphasizes that the main emphasis in the management processes of the institution is on the planning-implementation of the processes, moreover, deviations of the performance-plans are registered in different aspects. Evaluations and improvements in management processes are not visible.

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

The design and implementation of the prosedures for the quality Assurance, monitoring, evaluation and ongoing review is a strategic priority of the ShSU. The policy for the monitoring and review of the academic programmes of the GSPI has been operating since 2013, one of which aims is the design and implementation of the academic programmes in accordance with the mission and goals of the GSPI.
That policy is outdated, besides, the processes of monitoring of the academic programmes are not highlighted. From the site visit it became clear that the policy requires to be reviewed. In 2017, by the Rector's order faculty methodological boards and committees have been formed, aiming at adapting the academic programmes to the requirements of the labor market to ensure mobility. It became clear from the site visit that the review of academic programmes does not provide a certain frequency.
The institution singles out some mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness: summarizing the students' academic progress reports, discussions of current iShSUes on academic programmes in the Scientific Board, current approaches to elaboration of internal legal acts, annual reports of the rector, reports of those centers, chairs, faculties, evaluation of work plan performance.

At the same time, the SCRC regularly reviews the questionnaires, develops new research questionnaires, and revises the reporting dimensions, including the analytical component. It became clear from the visit of the expert group that the improvements in the processes provided by the above-mentioned mechanisms do not ensure continuity and regularity, besides, the performance evaluations in the annual reports of the rector, centers, faculties, chairs are not separated. None of the 68 agenda items envisaged in the work plan of the General Assembly for the 2019-2020 academic year is related to the management processes of ICRs. Section 9 of the IAEA envisages conducting performance appraisals of management processes with the following indicator: final evaluation of management processes and performance improvement տարեկան annual reports. Those reports are not available.
At the same time, the SPQAMC regularly reviews the questionnaires, develops new research questionnaires, and revises the reporting dimensions, including the analytical component. It became clear from the visit of the expert panel that the improvements in the processes provided by the above-mentioned mechanisms do not ensure continuity and regularity, besides, the performance evaluations of the centers, faculties, chairs are not separated in the annual reports of the rector.
None of the 68 agenda iShSUes, envisaged in the working plan of the Scientific Board for the 2019-2020
Academic year is related to the management processes of the academic programmes. By the 9th point of the DEAP it had been planned to realize evaluation of the effectiveness of management processes with the following indicator: final evaluation of management processes and performance improvement annual reports. Those reports are not available.

2.7 There are objective mechanisms in place evaluating the quality of quantitative and qualitative information on the academic programmes and qualification awarded.

The information on the quality of the academic programmes of the ShSU, the qualifications awarded is made available to the public through the official website of the institution. The minutes of the SP meetings, the annual reports of the Rector on the activities of the ShSU, the minutes of the SP meetings, the reports of the centers, the research of the SPQAMC the annual reports of the faculties, chairs and the rMilitary Chair, the annual reports of the SSS տեղադր SC are posted on the website. The centers, faculties and departments of this institution post information about their activities on the Facebook page of the ShSU. SPQAMC has initiated the collection, preparation and publication of information on the success of graduates on the official website of the SHSU and on its Facebook page. The reports of the chairmen of the final attestation commissions, which, according to the data of the site visit, are not systematically introduced in the basis of the improvement of the educational programs, are considered as an important information basis for the evaluation of the qualifications awarded by the institution.

Considerations:

The expert panel highlights that the ShSU Public Board and Scientific Board's activities have been obstructed from time to time, the HEI hadn't had a Rector for nearly 3 years, the Acting rector hadn't had a long-term or short-term action plan for the management of the institution, being guided by the previous 2015-2019 SP, realized situational governing, solving the problems as they appered, based on the specific cases. The expert panel considers the development of the SP to be crucial for the ShSU and not having specified the future plans might risk the change management.

According to the current regulations of the university, the lecturers and students participate in the decision-making related to them. Recently, students have been more actively involved in decision-making, which in itself is positive, and the active participation of lecturers is not visible, to some extent hindering the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of decision-making.

Although the institution has made structural changes as a result of previous accreditation consultations, however, in the context of redistribution of functions of structural subdivisions, clarification of vertical links, there is a need to further improve the management system in the institution, which can contribute to improving the management system.

Although the institution has made structural changes as a result of previous accreditation consultations, however, in the context of redistribution of functions of structural subdivisions, clarification of vertical links, there is a need for further improvement of the management system in the institution, which can contribute to improving the management system. As there is no separate science-research department at the university, according to the DEAP, the SPQAMC includes both internal quality Assurance of the institution and scientific policy and postgraduate education spheres. The employees of both blocks report to the head of the center instead of reporting to the person in charge of quality Assurance or the person in charge of scientific policy and postgraduate education. So the expert panel is concerned that in some way the broader management functions of the center may hinder the more effective implementation and development of science and research as a strategic priority for the institution and the principles of securing independence of the quality Assurance.

The expert panel finds it positive that the ShSU provides relevant human and material resources for the managerial processes, the expances of the academic programmes, academic and eduational and support staff make a big part of the budget (55.4% in 2021) and have a tendency to grow yearly. At the same time it is disturbing that the HEI's factual incomes are formulated by the state financing with 52,5%, creating the need to aShSUre other financial sources to diversify the financial incomes of the HEI.

It is challenging that the HEI's incomes and expenditures for the remuneration of labor and the equivalent means according to the estimated budget form the 80% of the cash outflows are 80%, endangering the further development of the ShSU.

It is worrying that after the expiry of the previous SP the ShSU hasn't had a new SP as well as the separate performances of the previous SP, summaries of assessments, there are no specific and measurable indicators of the expected results. The main activities for the defect elimination action plan haven't been realized, there are significant deviations in the action plans and their factual performances, the reports generally do not contain qualitative and quantitative summaries of the

assessments , the implementation of the realized research results for the following year's action plans are not functioning clearly, the PDCA cycle doesn't function regularly, so the efficiency of the managerial processes are endangered.

The expert panel notices the prevailing of the outer factors on the inner factors on the HEI, especially having few analysis of the external environment, which hinders the identification of existing problems and the continuous improvement of the educational processes of the university.

According to the expert panel evaluation, there are clear mechanisms for collecting and analyzing information related to the activities of the University, various researches are carried out by the SPQAMC, polls are used through various questionnaires, different KPIs are calculated, but the existing analyzes are limited by yearly numericals or percentages. According to the comparisons, there are no causal links, the cases of summarizing the results are not visible, there are no optimal, comparable standards for the calculated KPIs. As a result, the more realistic analysis of the factors influencing the activity of the institution is endangered.

The panel considers that the development and implementation of quality control, monitoring, evaluation and regular review procedures and mechanisms is one of the strategic priorities of the university, but the policy for these criteria at the university is outdated and does not reflect the current realities in order to improve management.

The expert panel considers it an advantage that the information on the qualifications awarded in the current professions is available through the official website and the Facebook page, contributing to raising awareness about the institution and increasing the number of applicants. The collection, preparation and publication of information on the success of the graduates on the official website of the University, initiated on the Facebook page, will increase the trust in the University. It is worrying that the analysis of the reports of the chairpersons of the final attestation commissions, as a possible informational basis for the evaluation of the qualifications awarded by the institution, is not systematically introduced in the basis of the improvement of the educational programs.

Summary: Given that in general there is a problem with the efficiency of the management system, in particular, the situational management model is applied, the long-term and short-term planning monitoring mechanisms do not function effectively, there are significant deviations between long-term, medium-term short-term plans and their actual performance. There are no assessments of the efficiency of the management system, the analysis of the external environment, the previous accreditation consultations in the field of management and administration are generally not carried out, the expert pamel finds that the ShSU does not meet the requirements of Criterion 2.

Conclusion: The expert panel assesses the compliance of the institutional capacity of the ShSU with the requirements of CRITERION 2 as unsatisfactory.

III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

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

Findings

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

An important goal in the 2015-2019 SP of the ShSU is "to foster a student-centered environment, a quality and learning culture in order to ensure the competitiveness and compatibility of qualifications of the educational programs of the profession, to face the challenges of the external environment. In the context of the above, as a result of the reorganization of the ShSU (in 2017), there are 4 faculties and 14 chairs, with the Military Chair having a special status. The existing academic programmes at the institution were compiled from 3 NQF levels: 6th, 7th and 8th levels. In 4 faculties and the Military Chair in the period of 2015-2019 there have been 39 full-time bachelor, 32 part-time bachelor, 26 master 20 researcher's (according to 6 directions) academic programmes. In contrast to the large number of the academic programmes, there is a small number of students in certain specialties, forming small groups.

The presence of underloaded groups is a very important iShSUe for the institution. According to the Rector's 2018-2019 academic year activity report, groups of up to eight students make up more than half of the total groups. It should be noted that groups of up to eight students are not economically viable, moreover, they may not even provide self-sufficiency and be unprofitable. In this regard, the institution organizes flow courses, unification of groups of related specialties in terms of implementation of inter-university, general professional educational units, where the logical sequence of achieving the expected results in certain specialties can be violated.

A number of new academic programmes have been developed and introduced in the ShSU n the period of 2015-2019 (12 bachelor degree, 12 master degree, 3 PhD programmes). In this context, it should be noted that in 2016-2021 there have been registered no admissions both in the existing programmes and two newly implemented ones ("Journalism" , "Political Science"), and in the new "Military Psychology" programme there were few applicants. The insufficient number of applicants in the newly introduced academic programmes is in some cases due to the internal competition of the programmes, for example, "Informatics-Applied Mathematics" and "Information Technology" programmes.

The expert panel states that it had already been planned to improve the list of the academic programmes, making them meet the requirements of the labour market and closing not popular academic programmes. Within this framework, the institution has not yet taken active steps.

The academic programmes of the ShSU are described in detail, the current "Course Descriptor" has been designed taking into consideration the guide " Completion of the Curriculum Specification and Course Descriptions», designed within the program ARMENQA in whih the components of the Specificator are clearly stated as well as the the obligatory components of the "Course descriptor".

It should be noted that the academic programmes observed by the expert group are generally in line with the SP, but there are some discrepancies.

The objectives mentioned in the specificator “Informatics and Applied Mathematics” are aimed only at providing basic knowledge and the ability to acquire new knowledge, the acquisition of skills, thus not reflecting the need to develop practical skills and capacity building, which does not meet the requirements of the national labor market. The graduates will not be able to get a job in IT companies, educational institutions (the specification states that the graduate can work in the field of mathematical modeling and programming). The lack of practical skills during the site visit was also noted by both internal and external stakeholders, and as a result of the study of the assignments, testing of theoretical knowledge prevailed.

In some cases, they are incomprehensibly formulated and are not enligned with the educational outcomes of the programmes. For example, in the specificator of “”Informatics and Applied Mathematics” academic programme, the end results of the practical skills is "conducting research on a variety of situations, analyzing and presenting the results to the public", which is formed by the "Linear Algebra and Analytical Geometry", "Programming Languages (Python, C ++)" , a number of other subjects, but the subjects "Mathematical analysis", "Function research", "Digital methods" do not participate in the formation of this end result.

The criteria for selecting the subjects included in the curriculum to cover the programmes’ outcomes, for example, Mathematical Logic 1.2 does not participate in A1 "Understanding the basic concepts of the mathematical field, concepts, theories, approaches to the conclusion". A2 to "present the basic principles of programming, ideas and methods, Internet educational resources, application software, database structure - implementation in professional activities" to achieve the end result.

Also, the criteria of choosing the subjects to be included in the curricula of the academic programmes that provide meeting the outcomes, for example the subject "Mathematical Logic 1,2" does not participate in the creation of the ending result A1 which is “Understand the basic concepts of mathematics, concepts, theories and approaches related to the field", but they provide the A2 outcome “"Introduce the basic principles of programming, ideas and methods, Internet educational resources, application software, database structure and implementation in professional activities".

In the specificator of “Biology” academic programme the correlation between the academic programme and the “course descriptor” is not vivid, which brings to the problem of enligning the outcomes of the academic programme and separate courses. In different courses within the given academic programme the questions which make the test are formed in a way that they test the student’s knowledge but not their ability to analize biological phenomena, as well as the skill to realize experimental research. To sum up, the questions included in the questionnaires can not assess the end results that provide capacity. In addition, the existing instructions do not provide a complete achievement of the results, the lists of attached literature are few and outdated.

The results within the framework of the "Elementary Pedagogy and Methodology" programme specificator do not generally reflect the content of the profession. As a result of the research conducted in the given profession, the meetings held during the site visit, as well as the lessons hearings, it became clear that the courses containing methods do not emphasize the studies of methods, the best experience

and effects of their application and knowledge of specific methods and applicability expressed in specific instructions are not reflected in the course outcomes.
Observations in the 2021 reports of the attestation commission of the mentioned academic programme's full-time bachelor and master degrees have been presented on creating more modern, up-to-date topics for the research work which would derive from teaching iShSUes at modern school, and new topics, corresponding to the bachelor degree in pedagogy, paying special attention to such topics like the iShSUes of teaching mathematics and their practical application, paying much attention to the correspondence of the master thesis and the awarded qualifications in order to aShSUre quality enhancement of preparing professionals.
It must be stated that the faculty does not mainly take part in the design of the outcomes of the courses that are taught by them. Besides, the professional competences of the faculty of the ShSU with average assessment points have been decreasing within the last years – in 2018-2019 it was 4, 80, in 2019-2020 – 4,70, in 2020-2021- 4,69.
In 2017-2018 academic year there has been a content review of the curricula, related to the compliance with the labour market requirements and effectivity of resource allocation, enhancing the students' motivation in small groups, aiming to realize the education in the part-time bachelor degree together with the full-time bachelor degree programmes, which resulted in numerous challenges .
During the development of the newly changed curricula, all courses were awarded 3 or 6 credits, which hindered the efficiency of the student mobility process, the promotion of inter-university academic mobility, the implementation of student removal or rehabilitation processes. At present, a policy of step-by-step correction of the problems has been implemented in the ShSU.
The implementation of academic programmes in line with the requirements of the labor market is a significant challenge for the ShSU. It became clear from the expert meetings that in this context there is little dialogue with employers and graduates, there are no clear mechanisms for receiving feedback.

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

In the ShSU the academic programmes' specifications and schedules (thematic schedules) are created according to the designed parameters. In each specificator there's a clear aim of the programme and the expected outcomes. Teaching and learning methods are presented in the "Course Descriptions" and schedules of the academic programmes.
In the ShSU the schedules are designed by the teaching lecturer, the teaching staff member choses the learningmethods according to the expected outcomes of the programmes.

According to each topic the teaching and learning methods, recommendations, relevant literature with pages, packages of electronic lectures, a journal of practical and laboratory works with relevant pages and numbers. A methodological guide was designed in ShSU in 2017 for the design of the "Course descriptors", where the latest teaching, learning and evaluation methods are presented. However, in

different “Course descriptors” of the specificators of academic programmes observed by the expert panel mainly the selected teaching methods included lectures, seminars, practical and laboratory work, although the outcomes were different. In parallel both the teaching and learning methods are presented in terms of the lectures, seminars, practical and laboratory works. In the schedules the learning methods, tasks’ section are separated, where mainly understanding of the theoretical material is stated as a learning method, but there are no tasks presented according to the topics, mainly stating the study of the textbook sources, tasks, exercises, etc. are mentioned as tasks. During the expert meetings the teaching method was also presented in terms of lecture, laboratory or practical work, which were identified as means of organizing the learning process and learning method. It is vivid that the application of the designed guide in the design of the “Course descriptors” and schedules is only formal.

Most of the specificators’ Course Descripors of the presented academic programmes do not show a link between the stated objectives of the course and outcomes, the announced teaching and teaching methods.

The importance of creating a student-centered learning environment is stated in the ShSU 2016 SP. In December, the QA Center of the ShSU conducted end-of-course trainings on the development of labor market-tailored academic programmes, which raised the iShSUes of student-centered learning. As a result, a "Student-centered teaching methodological guide" was compiled. During the same period, TEMPUS-ARMENQA provided training for the staff of the institution, but during the expert meetings it became clear that many of the lecturers did not participate in special trainings related to the design of the outcomes. The academic programmes in the bachelor degree do not offer elective courses.

The SPQAMC conducts surveys to assess students' satisfaction with the teaching and learning methods used, and the survey results are provided to the relevant departments for conclusions and improvements. In general, about 92% of students are satisfied with the teaching-learning methods. During the expert meetings, the students stressed the need for new teaching methods and practical knowledge.

3. 3 The Institution has policy on students’ assessment according to the learning outcomes and promotes academic integrity.

The procedure for "evaluation and appeal of the results of the study of undergraduate / part-time master degree programs with credit educational programs" has been operating in the HEI since 2013 and it has been improved. The self-evaluation noted that the verbal suggestions of the faculty, the discussions held in the chairs, the questions raised during the meetings with the student staff were taken into account. It became clear from the visit that now the institution has adopted a policy of improving the student assessment system. Taking into account the remarks mentioned in the expert report during the previous institutional accreditation, the concepts of the following inspection were defined: test, midterm test, final (total) test. According to the procedure, the assessment forms in the curricula are suggested by the teaching instructors based on the educational outcomes of the course. There are 2

main assessment forms used in the ShSU: formative and final. One of the formative assessments is the evaluation of the course outcomes, which should be set out in the schedule. Not all of the schedules reviewed by the panel's assessment methods are stated. Each "Course Description" of the academic programmes' specifications specifies the course evaluation methods and criteria, and at the same time does not explicitly link the selected assessment methods to the outcomes. The observation of the intermediate test questionnaires revealed that in some cases, for example in the Informatics-Applied Mathematics programme questionnaires, questions of different complexity were presented, providing the same score.

The assessment of students at the ShSU is carried out in a written, oral and test form. From the studies of questionnaires and tests within the framework of the presented academic programmes, it became clear that during the assessment, the student's knowledge is mainly tested, and not the skills and abilities.

The regulation on "organization and conducting internships under the bachelor and master educational programs" was approved in 22.02.2021, which presents the internship evaluation system.

Surveys are conducted among students to assess the effectiveness of the assessment system in order to identify the existing shortcomings. According to the surveys, most of the students think that the lecturers have a subjective approach to the assessment process. During the expert meetings, it became clear that the written-oral examinations at the institution do not provide sufficient effectiveness, and in both cases there are risks for the purpose of objective assessment. As for the test inspections, they do not have a large specific weight in the inspections, besides, there are no necessary test databases for different specialties.

In 2015, the "Concept of Academic Honesty" was introduced in the University, in 2019, the "Anti-Plagiarism Policy" was approved by the Scientific Board, but it became clear from the expert meetings that currently there are no real mechanisms for policy implementation.

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

During the development and improvement of its academic programmes, the ShSU applied benchmarking. In 2017, the QA Center conducted a comparative analysis of curricula of the Armenian universities with the same qualifications as in the ShSU, as well as the cooperating Russian universities' programmes.

As a result, it turned out that there are substantive differences in the similar programmes in the RA. With the benchmarking form designed by the SPQAMC in 2019, benchmarking was realized in the chairs of the university regarding a number of academic programmes. It must be stated that there aren't more targeted analysis as a result of the realized benchmarking. As a result of expert panel it also turned out that as a result of benchmarking in the chairs there has mainly been a simple comparison of the course names, granted credits of the academic programmes and their enlignment, however, deeper and

contentive comparisons haven't been carried out because the benchmarking has been realized based on the free access information (posted in the universities' websites).
The procedure approved by the Scientific Board in 06.10.2020 for the organization of "Academic Mobility Programs" has been operating since then and was revised in 2021. Recognition of credits of students studying in foreign universities through academic mobility programs is carried out at the level of professional chairs, credits are accumulated through discussions in case of 75% coincidence of the content of the course and outcomes. According to the self-evaluation, the elective courses, which make 25% of the master degree programmes courses, promote mobility through greater flexibility in the curricula. In 2014-2021, 16 students and 13 teachers of the ShSU participated in mobility programs.

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

The policy of "Development, approval, monitoring and review of professional educational programs" approved by the Scientific Board has been operating in the ShSU snce 20.02.2013. The Defect elimination action plan mentioned in the previous accreditation expert report was intended to review this policy, which is enshrined in the work plan of the 2019-2020 academic year of the Student Council. It should be noted that the policy review and refinement process is not yet complete, which delays important processes to enlign the academic programmes with current labor market requirements, such as the inclusion of elevtive courses in the bachelor degree programmes.
Surveys of internal and external stakeholders are one of the important mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the academic programmes in the ShSU. These surveys are implemented by SPQAMC and have been conducted since 2017.
As a monitoring mechanism is applied the involvement of external stakeholders in the final attestation commissions, who then express their views on the competencies of the graduates.
The site visit showed that those results are analized in the professional chars, but the overall improvement process has not been realized based on those analysis. It also turned out from the experts' visit that the employees and students haven't received an offer to take part in the improvement of the academic programmes and haven't been accepted into the corresponding methodological committees.
The stakeholders state that the academic programmes have the necessity to be improved, especially in terms of increasing the practical, laboratory study hours, the internships, becausechallenge the lack of the practical skills and competences of the graduates is a huge challenge to ensure the competitiveness in the labour market.

Considerations:
The panel notes that the ShSU is committed to ensuring the competitiveness of the academic programmes and the compatibility of qualifications, there are different academic programmes, new programmes are implemented regularly, though it is disturbing that in some cases, the number of applicants in the programmes, including the newly implemented ones, is quite small, creating internal

competition between separate academic programmes. Consistently, as groups of up to eight students make up more than half of the total groups at the institution, and economically they are not profitable for the university, the effectiveness of separate programmes may be greatly jeopardized.

Although in general the institutions's academic programmes are described in detail, the specification is based on the guidelines developed under the ARMENQA program, however, there are deviations in the context of the compliance of the academic programmes' objectives with the defined outcomes, leading to the conclusions of the academic programmes and course outcomes

Most of the academic programmes' specifications in the Course Descriptors do not show a link between the stated objectives and outcomes of the course, the stated teaching, learning methods and tasks which may impede the achievement of outcomes with existing academic programmes. In addition, the lack of participation of external stakeholders amd lecturers in defining the final results of the academic programmes can sever the link between the employer, the labor market demand and the academic programme implementer and which in turn can impede the effectiveness of the academic programme.

The expert panel believes that the development of a component of elective courses in the bachelor program will contribute to the strengthening of student-centered learning and increase professional practical skills.

It is worrying that 3 or 6 credits have been awarded to all courses when developing the newly changed curricula, which may negatively affect the effectiveness of student mobility, the promotion of inter-university academic mobility, the exclusion of students, or the implementation of rehabilitation processes. At the same time, it is positive that the institution shows interested in solving this problem.

The expert panel notes that the specifications of the academic programmes in the schedules and specifications are compiled according to the developed standards, the schedules separate teaching-learning methods, assignments (tasks), resources, but it is disturbing that their inclusion in the schedules is of a purely formal nature, and in some cases not corresponding to the outcomes of the academic programmes. In addition, the course descriptions of the presented academic programmes generally do not show a link between the stated objectives of the course and the outcomes, the announced teaching and learning methods, which may lead to incomplete achievement of the results. As a result, the harmonization of the teaching method-assessment suffers.

Although the institution has adopted a policy of improving the student assessment system, the assessment body uses the final assessment criteria, however, the academic programmes' specifications do not explicitly link the selected assessment methods to the final results. Sometimes questions with different complexities are given the same score, which may to some extent jeopardize the objectivity of the assessment. In addition, during the assessment, the student's knowledge is tested, not the skills and abilities. As a result, the policy of improving the assessment may be jeopardized.

The expert panel notes that the real implementation of real mechanisms for the implementation of anti-plagiarism policies in the ShSU can significantly increase the level of academic honesty.

Although the university conducts benchmarking of academic programmes with both the leading universities of Armenia and Russia, as a result a new Master degree program has been introduced, however, the results of the academic programme improvement are not tangible, which does not clearly

express the need to improve the academic programmes. In this context, it is positive that the ICRC has developed a benchmark for the marketing, but there is no clear analysis of the coherence of the academic programmes, which can contribute to the process of continuous improvement of the academic programmes.

Considering that in 2014-2021 16 students and 13 teachers participated in mobility programs, the students who participated in that mobility program submit differences in subjects on an individual schedule, but according to the students, the number of differences is quite large. And since there are problems with the mentioned document circulation, a part of the students avoids participating in such programs, endangering the increase of mobility.

As the review of the policy of development, approval, monitoring and review of the academic programmes of the ShSU is included in the work plan of the SB of the ShSU for the 2019-2020 academic year and has not been completed by the university yet, and in parallel, the expert panel highlights the importance of the elective courses in both the transition from a teacher-centered to the student-centered approach, and the enlignment of the academic programmes' outcomes to the continuous changing requirements of the labour market, in this context the management process of the academic programmes is directly endangered.

Although the enrollment of the external stakeholders in the final attestation commissions is considered as a monitoring mechanism, however, the opinions of the attestation commissions on the competences of the graduates are limited to being discussed in the professional chairs and mostly are not implemented in the improvement processes. It is also disturbing that the employers and the alumni do not participate in the process of the improvement of the academic programmes. Within this contnect the academic programmes' improvement opportunities are limited.

Summary: Considering that there's an issue of effective management of the academic programmes in the HEI, specifically on separate academic programmes there are small groups, some newly implemented academic programmes have no or only few applicants, there are deviations between the enlignment of the goals and stated outcomes of the programmes, deviations in the accordance of the teaching, learning and assessment methods to the expected learning outcomes, the mechanisms for the academic programmes' continuous improvement do not function properly, the expert panel finds that the ShSU doesn't meet the requirements of the Criterion 3.

Conclusion: The expert panel assesses the compliance of the institutional capacity of the ShSU with the requirements of CRITERION 3 as **unsatisfactory**.

IV. STUDENTS

CRITERION 4: The Institution provides relevant student support services ensuring the effectiveness of the learning environment.

Findings

4.1 The Institution has set mechanisms for promoting equitable recruitment, selection, and admission procedures.

The admission of students is regulated by the legislation of the Republic of Armenia in accordance with the internal regulations (regulations for the admission and teaching of the Master's Degree, the regulations for the admission to the postgraduate program / application).

According to the "Admission Procedure of State and Non-State Higher Education Institutions (according to the Bachelor's Academic Program)", in the existing bachelor's education system, the institution organizes inter-institutional entrance exams "Physical Education - Sports Training", "Preliminary Military Training", "Computer Graphics", "Design", "Decorative Applied Art" specialties. Distance learning examinations within Bachelor's Academic Program are organized by the institution based on the procedure of distance learning admission to RA state higher education institutions.

ShSU admission and teaching of students with the master's and researcher's Academic Program is organized according to the regulations of the master's admission, teaching and the postgraduate/ application admission and teaching.

ShSU admission information is disseminated through the website, Facebook page, TV and weekly, and "Open Doors Days" are organized, during which prospective entrants have the opportunity to get acquainted with the academic programs and activities offered by the institution. The institution also cooperates with secondary and high schools in the region. The process of recruiting entrants is facilitated by the University High School and the University College. The university's high school organizes free courses to assist students in enrolling in a university. It became clear from the expert site that the institution also organizes professional orientation counseling meetings with students from different schools in the region.

In the 2017-2018 academic year, the university had 665 entrants with the distance learning bachelor's degree programs, 315 entrants in the 2018-2019 academic year, and 577 entrants in the 2019-2020 academic year. In the 2020-2021 academic year, the number of applicants was 676, and in the 2021-2022 academic year - 596, as the statistics show, due to the epidemic and the post-war situation, the institution did not have a sharp decrease in the number of applicants. At the same time, it should be noted that in a number of newly introduced Academic programs, admissions were not registered - "Journalism", "Political Science", and in some of them the number of admissions was insufficient compared to the defined places.

4.2 The Institution has policies and procedures for revealing student educational needs.

Since 2018, the University has been operating the "Procedure for identifying, supporting and directing the needs of students of ShSU", which regulates the processes of monitoring, studying, identifying and satisfying the scientific, educational and socio-cultural needs of students, aimed at ensuring a quality educational environment.

ShSU students are involved in the governing bodies of the university (Public Board, Student Council, and Financial Council) as well as in the student self-government bodies. Students can raise various

issues in the student council, thus finding solutions to their problems, for example, through negotiations to resolve the conflict between the student and the lecturer.

The department of SPQAMC conducts research aimed at identifying the different needs of students, in particular, surveys of quality assessment of the effectiveness of pedagogical practice by the students of the university, surveys of the assessment of the expectations of the professional-organizational processes of the university done by the students of the university. Education, professional-organizational rating assessments, students' satisfaction with the distance learning process, needs assessment surveys, etc.

According to the self-evaluation, another mechanism for identifying students 'needs is the discussions with students organized by the Student Supporters of Quality Assurance Processes, one of the purposes of which is to identify students' needs and submit them to SPQAMC. It should be noted that the effectiveness of this mechanism has not been evaluated by the institution.

The expert site showed that the administrative departments of the institution are mainly aware of the needs of the students and try to provide them with step-by-step solutions.

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

An academic counseling service organized by the Educational Counseling Center-Library, has been introduced at the University since August 2018. The center offers 4 types of academic consultations (research literacy consulting, systemic competency consulting, out-of-program consultations on individual topics in specialized Academic Programs (on a paid basis), research consultations), it should be noted that out-of-program consultations on certain topics in the professional subjects of APs do not work on a paid basis due to the fact that they are paid. Academic consultations are provided by professors, associate professors, assistants and lecturers of the issuing departments. Only 10% of students are involved in additional academic counseling, and 99% of students are satisfied with the counseling provided.

In order to increase the students' interest in educational consultations, the institution organizes informational meetings with students and academic staff, disseminates information via e-mails, spreads announcements about consultations through the Facebook page of the University.

The consultations are provided according to the set schedule.

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

There is a clear regulation for applying to the administrative staff in the institution. Each administrative unit has clearly defined admission hours, and their application schedules are posted, available to students. It became clear from the expert site that the staff was ready to answer the students' questions outside the set hours. It is also possible to contact the administrative staff through the official website and social pages. According to the results of the surveys conducted by SPQAMC, about 90% of the students are satisfied with the support and guidance provided to them.

4.5 The Institution has student career support services.

In order to provide student-promoting services, an infrastructure has been established at the institution: Student Support, University-Market Cooperation Department.

The main goal of the department is to provide the Academic Programs to the needs of labor market, to increase the competitiveness of the students and graduates of the University in accordance with the requirements of the labor market and to provide educational, social-psychological, financial and legal support to the students.

According to the self-evaluation, the institution initiates various activities in the field of graduate career planning and guidance, such as job advertisements, temporary jobs, internship programs, internship opportunities, capacity building courses, etc. It became clear from the expert site that Student Support, University-Market Cooperation Department is not active yet, great work has not been done yet.

From the expert meetings with stakeholders, it became clear that sometimes the chairs deal with alumni career issues, informing the alumni about vacancies, for example, in schools or other places. Such undertakings are individual initiatives of the lecturers.

4.6 The Institution promotes student involvement in its research activities.

The procedure for providing an inter-institutional grant for the scientific activity of the University has been introduced in the institution since 2016, according to which at least one student with a high-level bachelor's, master's or researcher degree must be included in the group as a performer. Students are also involved in science programs funded by the Science Committee and implemented at the University. Due to the inter-institutional grant programs introduced in the last 3 years, the participation of students in scientific programs has increased.

Bachelor's and Master's students carry out research work within the framework of term papers, graduation theses, master theses, the results of which are also published in relevant scientific articles.

The Student Scientific Society (SSS) operates in the institution, the aim of which is to promote the development of the scientific activity of the student body. The SSS organizes conferences, encouraging the presentation of the scientific abilities of the students of the University. ShSU Students have the opportunity to present their articles during conferences and to publish them in the scientific collection of the institution. It became clear from the expert meetings with stakeholders that students need to acquire methodological tools for conducting research.

At the end of 2020, the "Student Ranking and Encouragement Regulation" was introduced at the institution, through which the institution encourages students' scientific, research and scientific-methodological activities. It became clear from the expert site that a student with a high rating can be rewarded in the form of books and other items. It should also be noted that not all students have complete information about this regulation.

There are a number of mechanisms in the institution to ensure student involvement in research, but at the same time it should be noted that student motivation to engage in research is declining year by year. The number of students involved in research work under the bachelor's, master's and doctorate's educational programs was 122 students in 2019, 111 in 2020, and 110 in 2021.

4.7 The Institution has responsible body for the students' rights protection.

The Student Council is responsible for the protection of students' rights and the identification of their problems at the University, the activities of the Student Council are regulated by the Student Council charter. A new Student Council has been established at the University since 2020, and 300 students are currently involved in the student body. The Student Council identifies students' problems, the protection of rights. It became clear from the expert site that the annual budget does not provide financial allocations to the structure, the structure acquires the necessary items on the basis of the reports of the Rector.

It became clear from the expert site that previously the students who had provided 65% of the GPA in the last two semesters could become a member of the Student Council, and in the case of the first year only the results of one semester are considered. Currently, all students can be members of the Student Council, regardless of the GPA.

It became clear from the expert site that the Student Council organized a collection of signatures (700 people), which applied to the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport to form a Student Council at the institution, as the University did not have a Council for a long time. According to the students, it disrupted the implementation of the current work of the institution. After collecting signatures, a Public Council was formed at the institution.

In the 2020-2021 academic year, the Student Council conducted a study on the effectiveness of the financial resources management of the institution. The students most often mentioned the solution of the following problems within the framework of possible reforms of the university . Reduction of rents, giving more flexibility to the discount system, reopening of the cafeteria . building conditions especially, furnishing and improving classrooms, proper heating of the university premises, improving the quality of education, rejuvenation of the academic staff.

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

The mechanisms of quality assurance of students' educational, counseling and other services are enshrined in the concept of quality assurance and management of the university.

In order to evaluate the educational, counseling and other services provided by the students, a number of surveys are carried out at the institution: assessment of the professional, pedagogical and organizational competencies of the academic staff by the students, evaluation of the organizational ratings of the university by the graduates and students, assessment of the quality of pedagogical practice by ShSU students, effectiveness of knowledge assessment by students, assessment of professional-organizational ratings of the institution, assessment of expectations from the professional-organizational processes of the institution by the students, assessment of the students' satisfaction-needs from the process of distance learning in the university, etc.

Once a year, Quality Assurance Center conducted regular surveys by students on the assessment of the professional-pedagogical qualities of the academic staff. It became clear from the expert site that the questions in the questionnaires are sometimes difficult for students to understand. Questionnaires are

reviewed to ensure continuous improvement of surveys.

Considerations: The expert panel considers it positive that there are regulated mechanisms for student recruitment, selection and admission at the University. The process of recruiting entrants is facilitated by the university's high school and college, and the free courses organized by the university's high school make the institution more attractive and accessible for applicants.

Applicant enrollment rates suggest that student recruitment mechanisms are generally effective, but some existing academic programs, including the newly introduced ones, are not fully operational enough to conduct full recruitment. There is a need to launch new, more effective mechanisms.

HEI has a number of surveys aimed at identifying the needs of students. The expert panel welcomes the steps taken by the university to identify the needs of the students, but the fact of many questionnaires being too complex can jeopardize the full and effective operation of the tool, especially in the first year of study.

It is noteworthy that HEI has introduced an academic consultation service, which can be an effective mechanism for ensuring student progress, but there is still a need to increase student interest in these services.

On the positive side, each administrative unit of the University has clearly defined admission hours, as students and staff claim that students can apply to staff outside of those hours, allowing students to receive support and guidance at any time.

Student Support and University-Market Cooperation Department has been set up at the university, with the aim of assisting students and graduates in pursuing their careers, but there is still a need for the department to fully implement all its functions; It is commendable that faculty also assist alumni in finding employment, but this process needs to be coordinated.\

The expert panel evaluates the efforts of the institution to involve students in research work. Clear mechanisms for involving students in research have been established at the institution, and it is now necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of these mechanisms and take steps to increase students' interest in those mechanisms. Students also need to acquire research (analytical) skills that will enable them to conduct applied research and publish it, all of which will really improve the quality of the articles being published.

The expert panel considers it remarkable that a new Student Council has been formed in the University since 2020, which is the body responsible for the protection of students' rights and revealing their problems, it is also supposed to lead to students' autonomy, increasing their role in the institution. The Student Council is an initiator and it realizes its role.

On the positive side, the university has student's educational and counseling services, quality assurance mechanisms, quality assurance, various inquiries, systematic work, and regularity. Surveys help to identify students' current problems and solve them promptly.

Summary: Taking into account that the university has clear mechanisms for student recruitment, selection and admission, a process of identifying students' educational needs is carried out, and a clear schedule for applying to the administrative staff is established, there is a body responsible for the

protection of students 'rights, which has started to work actively, mechanisms for quality assessment of students' educational, counseling and other services are provided, the expert panel finds that ShSU meets the requirements of Criterion 4.

Conclusion: The expert panel assesses the correspondance of ShSU's institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 4 as **satisfactory**.

V. FACULTY AND STAFF

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

Findings

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

In its Strategic plan, Higher Education Institution aims to provide a teaching-support staff with the necessary professional qualities for the implementation of Academic Program. The categories, standards for placement of positions, the removal procedures, competition and selection and/or non-competitive appointment of a **teaching-support staff** of State University of Shirak are defined in the regulation of "formation of teaching-support staff" of "Gyumri M. Nalbandyan State Pedagogical Institute "SNCO".

The composition of the ShSU teaching and administrative staff is formulated by competitive (contract for a period of 5 years, once for a professor-associate for a period of 1 year) and non-competitive (contract for a period of 1 year) manners. It became clear from the site visit that there are no clear mechanisms for differentiating between the composition of the teaching in a competitive or non-competitive manner. If necessary, lecturers from other institutions are invited. According to 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 academic year reports of the rector, ShSU is considered the main workplace for at least 70% of the teaching-administratve staff. The majority of the teaching-administrative staff (about 58%) has a degree and / or title, about 7% of the teaching administrative staff are employer lecturers. According to site studies, the dynamic growth of newly hired lecturers has been visible in last 3 years amounting to 53 people in 2020-2021.

No competitions are held for the teaching support staff, but they are selected based on the general requirements specified in the regulations, mainly considering the educational level.

Passports for the categories of the academic and teaching support staff have been developed at the institution.

The institution did not evaluate the effectiveness of the policy of selecting the academic and teaching support staff.

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

The institution has set itself the task (2015-2019) to set requirements and criteria for the effective implementation of each academic program.

It should be noted that those requirements and criteria have not been set for the replenishment of the

academic staff so far. The primary requirement for the academic staff's vocational qualities in Shirak State University is the availability of appropriate basic professional education, the degree and / or the title are also of priority.
The final attestation procedure for master and bachelor's graduates defines the requirements for the heads of graduation papers and thesis- degree and / or title, in some cases at least 5 years of scientific and pedagogical activity, at least 3 articles published in the last five years, approved by the RA Supreme Certifying Committee. It became clear from the expert site that the mentioned demands are preserved in the institution.

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

"Regular Evaluation and Rating" procedure of M. Nalbandyan State University of Shirak" foundation operates in ShSU, which was approved in 2018 and amended in 2021. The procedure clearly indicates the indicators and components of the evaluation of the academic staff.:

- professional, pedagogical and organizational competencies,
- scientific, research and scientific-methodological activity,
- teaching-methodological, educational, educational-organizational and scientific-organizational activity;
- inter-institutional and extra-university (public) social activities.

Various tools are used to create the rating: for example, individual lecturer's work plan, lecturer reports in different formats, report on the implementation of the work plan, lecturer's annual performance evaluation rating sheet, various surveys for lecturers and students according to pre-approved class observations. According to the data obtained from self-evaluation and site meetings, the students in some cases, express a subjective-personal attitude when evaluating the academic staff. Moreover, some students are not aware that the conducted surveys affect the ranking of lecturers, and part of the Academic staff is not aware of all the components of the ranking, relying only on the results of surveys conducted by students, considering them a subjective factor.

The results of the rating can be used by the governing body as a basis for renewal, extension or termination of employment contracts of the Academic staff, competitive elections, official promotion, application of material and moral incentives, as well as training of staff.
During the visit, it was found out that no termination of the existing contracts based on the results of the lecturers' rating was registered, no cases of disciplinary punishment were registered. The existence of high rating doesn't affect the lecturers' wages.
It was noted that the results were mainly used to identify needs, improve processes, such as recording the need for training, etc. After the introduction of the ranking procedure, experimental researches were conducted to understand its effectiveness, the results have not been summarized yet.

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

Since 2013 "Training and professional qualification development of academic and teaching support staff" regulation has been introduced to ShSU according to which trainings are carried out based on the planned mandatory and / or identified needs.
In accordance with the acting conception, professional development and trainings of Academic staff

are carried in two directions: general-mandatory and special-professional. Accordingly, the trainings are carried out based on the planned mandatory and / or identified needs (according to the results of the needs assessment surveys of the academic staff, the results of the rating given to the chairs).

According to the statistical data of the institution, the Academic staff of ShSU participated in trainings, workshops, seminars organized by institutions and other organizations.

In particular, in 2018-2019, 118 lecturers were trained (63 - non-professional, 55 - professional), in 2019-2020 - 174 lecturers (127 - non-professional, 47 - professional).

The analysis of the data shows that non-professional trainings predominate in the institution and the specialized budget does not allocate separate financial means for professional trainings from the annual budget of ShSU.

The trainings of the academic staff are carried out within the framework of grant programs as well (33 employees were trained within the **framework of NORCENT program** in 2018-2019, in 2019 11 employees were trained within the framework of ERASMUS + program / ABionet "Communication skills for professionals" and "Science to start-up "/).

It became clear from the site visit that the academic staff needs a training that contribute to the development of narrow professional and foreign language (English) skills.

5.5 The Institution ensures that there is a permanent staff for the stable provision of the academic programs.

In ShSU according to the data of the 2019-2020 academic year, there are 255 lecturers, of which 148, about 58%, have a degree (17 - about 6.7%, a doctorate, 131 - about 51.4%, a PhD degree): 121 of the lecturers, about 47.7%, have scientific degrees (1 correspondent member of NAS RA, 16 professors, about 6.3%, 104 associate professors, about 40.8%). Young lecturers (under 35 years old) form 16.1% of the academic staff, middle-aged lecturers (35 to 65 years old) - 69.4%, senior lecturers - 14.5%. Compared to the 2016-2017 academic year, the percentage of senior lecturers decreased from 15.9% to 14.5%. At the same time, the number of young lecturers decreased from 18.7% to 16.1%.

In order to ensure the stability of the academic staff and implement the generation change ShSU implements certain steps in particular, directs graduates of master's degree programs to continue their education through the researcher's academic program, currently 8 employees (lecturers and representatives of teaching support staff) continue their education in the researcher's educational system.

At the same time, it should be noted that specialists with a combined and / or hourly pay status do not exceed 26% of the academic staff.

As a result of the site meetings, it became clear that ShSU needs the enlargement of younger academic staff with practical experience.

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

There are certain mechanisms for ensuring the professional development of the academic staff, in particular, for encouraging and promoting scientific-research and scientific-methodological activities in ShSU. It should be noted that the Mentorship policy has not yet been established at the institution, but experienced lecturers have consistently supported novice lecturers by providing advice and assistance in ongoing work.

The following regulations also operate as mechanisms: "Postgraduate / Application Admission Training

at ShSU", "Formation of academic and teaching support staff in ShSU", "Increase of professional qualification of the academic and teaching support staff in ShSU". During the visit, it was found out that all the above-mentioned procedures are applicable and active in the institution.
The articles in the scientific records of ShSU are published free of charge, which contributes to obtaining an academic degree and / or title.

5.7 The Institution has necessary administrative and support staffs to achieve the strategic goals.

In 2017, the institution implemented infrastructural changes, trying to optimize human resources. After the optimization, the functions of the administrative and teaching support staff were clarified, passports of the relevant position were developed.

Considerations: The expert panel positively observes that in order to involve competitive staff, the institution has a regulation for the formation of academic and teaching support staff, but there is a need to distinguish with which criteria the academic staff can be hired on a competitive basis and in a non-competitive way, which can increase the objectivity and transparency of the conditions for hiring a lecturer.
The expert panel believes that the institution needs to assess the effectiveness of the policy of selecting the academic staff, which will allow the institution to understand the extent to which these mechanisms allow it to involve highly qualified staff of the academic and teaching support staff.
It is commendable that the institution has requirements for the selection of academic staff: professional education, degree, title, etc., but the expert panel believes that being guided only by these criteria will not always allow the institution to find targeted professionals with high professional skills. The presence of invited lecturers allows the institution to be replenished with more experienced specialists, and the specialists in the practical field contribute to the development of students' practical skills.

It's commendable that graduation works and thesis in the institution can be supervised by lecturers who have a degree, title, experience in writing research work.
It is positive that ShSU conducts a pilot evaluation process of the academic staff on the basis of multifactorial assessment, but the institution should apply all the components of the ranking equally, not emphasizing only the students' assessment of the academic staff, otherwise the effectiveness of the new mechanism may be at risk and its effectiveness by the academic staff. Full use of the rating system will increase the efficiency of the teaching process at the institution.
The expert panel concludes that a number of trainings are carried out for the academic staff of the institution, using also the opportunities of external grants. It is commendable that the trainings are aimed at the development of both general and professional skills, but they need to be planned, assessing the effectiveness of the trainings, which will allow to evaluate the progress of the specialist, and consider the value of the training credible. There is a need to increase the number of professional trainings so that the academic staff can walk in parallel with professional developments.
For 70% of the academic staff, ShSU is the main workplace, which ensures the stability of the academic staff, but it also contains certain risks in terms of transferring practical skills to students, it is necessary to develop clear mechanisms for overcoming this risk.
The steps of the institution are positive for the development of its own staff, ensuring the stability of the academic staff, and the implementation of a smooth generation change, which is evidenced by the fact that 8 employees of the university are currently continuing their education in the researcher's educational system.

The institution has some mechanisms for ensuring the professional advancement of the academic staff, but it is necessary to further improve these mechanisms by contributing to the increase of the publications of the academic staff in local and international journals with high international reputation. For the implementation of its strategic goals, ShSU has the necessary administrative and teaching support staff.

Summary: Considering the fact that there are clear policy and different procedures for the selection of the academic and teaching support staff in ShSU, the order of rating of the academic staff is carried out, trainings aimed at the development of professional and general skills of the academic staff are conducted. In order to ensure the stability of the academic staff, the expert panel concludes that the institution meets the requirements of Criterion 5.

Conclusion: The expert panel assesses the correspondence of ShSU's institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 5 as **satisfactory**.

VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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

Findings

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

In the experimental report of the previous institutional accreditation, ShSU has developed an improvement action plan, which was intended to develop clear directions for the research activities of the institution. In this regard, the institution has singled out some scientific directions at the level of chairs, but it is not clear what are the scientific priorities for the institution at the institutional level, they are not defined. In recent years, the institution has allocated about 2.5% of the budget to research and development, but it has not been estimated how much funding is actually needed to achieve specific results in the research areas adopted. The chairs do not have key indicators for evaluating the implementation of scientific directions, which would make visible what success they should register in their fields. As for the scientific interests of the institution at the institutional level, it became clear from the expert site that the management staff has not yet predetermined the institution. The institution, studying the development tendencies in the field of science in the Republic of Armenia and needs and priorities of Shirak region, developed "Concept for the Development of Science and Research", where from the field of goals and problems the following emphasis were highlighted in 2019.

a. To lead the modern scientific-educational, scientific-research developments in the direction that the latter will contribute to the provision of priority in the scientific-research, economic-technological sphere of Shirak region,

b. To ensure and promote the involvement of the academic staff in the field of research, scientific-research, scientific-methodological, scientific-educational-innovative information sphere,

c) Provision of services required in the region based on scientific-research, scientific-educational, scientific-methodological, research-innovative results, as well as commercialization of those results.

In the context of the above points, it should be noted that the institution still lacks the research that

identifies the needs of the region. As for ensuring and promoting the involvement of the PD staff in research and scientific activities, it is necessary to emphasize that the employees involved in the field of science and research are basically the same persons. It should be noted that the institution has taken certain steps to address this issue (in more detail in Criterion 3). It should also be emphasized that the institution does not yet understand the ways of materializing the obtained scientific result, the costs required for commercialization, the obtained benefit and the existing risks have not been assessed.
Provision of services required in the region based on scientific-research, scientific-educational, scientific-methodological, research-innovative results, as well as commercialization of those results.
In the context of the above points, it should be noted that the institution still lacks the research that identifies the needs of the region.
As for ensuring and promoting the involvement of the academic staff in research and scientific activities, it is necessary to emphasize that the employees involved in the field of science and research are basically the same people.
It should be noted that the institution has taken certain steps to address this issue (in more detail in Criterion 3). It should be emphasized that the institution does not yet understand the ways of materialization of the obtained scientific results, the costs required for commercialization, the obtained benefits and existing risks are not estimated.

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

Problems described in the domain of Research and Development in the strategic plan (2015-2019), the institution also highlights the development, implementation of long-term, medium-term, short-term concrete programs based on the Strategic plan, as well as mechanisms for validation of the research work carried out as a result of those programs. In order to solve this problem, the institution has introduced, acquired a number of short-term, medium-term programs. Since 2016, the institution has announced a contractual themed grant competition at its own expense.

During 2016-2020, 22 applications were submitted, 6 of which were funded, and in 2021, no application was funded by the institution, as the rejected applications did not qualitatively meet the requirements.[5]:
Within the framework of the funded grants, the participants are obliged to publish at least 8 scientific, scientific-methodological articles published in professional journals recognized by the RA Supreme Certifying Committee, recognized by the RF Supreme Certifying Committee, endowed with Impact Factor or registered in Russian Scientific Citation Index. As a result of inter-institutional grant programs, 2 master's theses and 1 graduation paper were defended. It should be noted that in the procedure of the internal grant program there is no restriction to finance any specific scientific direction, at the same time there is no analysis on choosing the most profitable scientific direction. Scientific departments carry out scientific research by the departments of Mathematics and Physics and IT from RA budget, in 2016-2017 - 4, in 2018 - 5, in 2019 - 5, in 2020 - 5 scientific programs.

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

[5] THE SENTENCE HAS BEEN REWRITTEN BASED ON THE COMMENTS PRESENTED BY THE INSTITUTION

The procedure for promoting the scientific-research and scientific-methodological work of the employees has been introduced in the institution since 2014, according to which an additional payment is provided according to the types of scientific activities fixed in the procedure. This procedure describes the processes according to which additional payments are provided to the employees who have provided scientific research activities. Scientific results include publications in various journals, scientific-methodological works, monographs, having a state author's certificate of scientific invention, being a member of an international professional organization, reviewing monographs, textbooks, scientific articles. At the same time, the surcharge for the patent for a scientific invention is equal to the surcharge for membership in an international professional organization, twice less than for publications in internationally ranked journals. At the same time, the surcharge for the patent for a scientific invention is equal to the surcharge for membership in an international professional organization, twice less than for publications in internationally ranked journals.
As it has already been mentioned, the university also has a procedure for providing an inter-institutional grant for the scientific activity of ShSU, which describes in detail the provisions for applying for the grant, participating in the competition, and presenting the results.
In 2017, 189 articles were published by the staff of the University, in 2016 - 164, in 2019 - 216, and in 2020 - 169 articles. The articles were presented according to the chairs.

6.4 The Institution emphasizes internationalization of its research.

Institution approved "Science and Internationalization policy of research" in 2020, which described the steps needed to achieve the results of international strategic partnership in the field of science and its internationalization. It should be noted that these steps are not yet of a practical nature, in addition, all the steps mentioned in the policy will require significant financial resources, which the institution does not have yet.
In order to promote the internationalization of science, the institution has certain mechanisms, providing monetary contributions to authors published in international journals or periodicals. At the same time, the policy or the resulting documents do not stipulate the measurable quantitative and qualitative indicators that the institution will strive to achieve in its long-term goals.
According to the self-evaluation, the number of articles published in internationally ranked scientific journals increased from 4 to 16 during last 5 years (2016-2020/ data).
From the self-evaluation it can be stated that within the framework of scientific research activities the University cooperates with the organizations and structures of 17 European countries, 6 CIS countries and 7 Armenian research organizations by expanding the scope of cooperation to some extent.

It became clear from the studies that 14 articles with an impact factor were published by the academic staff of ShSU from 2018 to 2022. Expert studies have shown that the vast majority of scientific publications are in the field of natural science and mathematics, in fifty percent of cases the articles are combined with other research institutes, the authors of the publications are repeated, ensuring less staff involvement. The impact factor ranges from 0.4 to 3.2.
The institution as a criterion for the internationalization of scientific research activities mentions contractual agreements with foreign research organizations and centers.

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

Based on the consultations provided as a result of the previous accreditation, ShSU plans to develop

and introduce the policy and procedures for linking research with teaching in DEAP.
To achieve this, the institution has developed and implemented a procedure for providing inter-institutional grants for scientific activities, which ensures the involvement of students in research activities, besides, due to that procedure, the results of the scientific research works will be introduced in the educational process, as it became clear from the visit that they are not sufficiently represented in the educational process.
In order to increase the research capacity, some subjects were introduced in BA and MA programs of the institution: Research Methodology, Pedagogical Research Methodology, Scientific Research Methodology, etc., but during the expert site it became clear that the students lack research skills.
It should also be noted that the institution has not yet assessed the extent to which the introduced subjects contribute to the development of students' research skills and improvement of the quality of research work done by students.

Considerations: The expert panel positively assesses that after the previous accreditation, the institution, according to the provided consultations, has developed scientific directions in the chairs, but it is not clear to what extent they coincide with the priorities in the research field at the institutional level of the institution. The expert panel considers that it is necessary to indicate the specific topics for which the scientific research will be carried out for at least five years. Concentrating on specific topics is useful in terms of using resources efficiently and getting the most out of them. Only after implementing all this, it is it crucial to develop specific directions at the chair level with clear quantitative-qualitative indicators of evaluation. The indicators will make it possible to make the progress more visible, at the same time a clear commitment will be placed on the chairs in terms of ensuring results.
According to the expert panel, after elaborating the priorities of ShSU, it is necessary to have a working group or subdivision with relevant skills, which will be able to assess the relevance of the topic proposed by lecturers, scholars, students to the priorities of the instituion, as well as assess the possible financial provision. At the same time, the existence of the group will enable scientists to increase the efficiency of their work. On the other hand, this group will provide written grant proposals - direct notifications to lecturers, scholars in the form of e-mails, which will be a guide for them in choosing their topics, in choosing the topics of the thesis.
Although the procedures for promoting research at the institution and involving staff in the research have had a positive effect, the use of only "soft" tools to ensure engagement (monetary reward, free printing in the institution's collection, etc.) is not enough to achieve a sufficient result in the short term. Although the efforts of the institution in this direction are noticeable, but at the same time, not enough. There are still no subject systems and mechanisms which will make the process of doing scientific work, creating scientific value attractive and profitable for the academic staff. The expert panel believes that by introducing mandatory training courses for academic staff, the institution will have the opportunity to develop their research skills needed to carry out "valuable" research work, including language skills, considering that the created scientific value should be recognized and appreciated by the prestigious international journals and organizations.
It is a matter of concern that the existing policy on the internationalization of science at the institution is limited to the procedure of promoting the research and scientific-methodological work of the staff of ShSU. It became clear from the expert panel meetings that the lecturers' awareness and involvement of the procedure is assessed as low.
The expert panel considers the institution’s provision of inter-institutional grants positive, especially the fact that a contract / agreement is signed when submitting funding for the inter-institutional grant

program, according to which the group is obliged to publish the results implemented within the framework of the topic in at least 8 scientific, scientific-methodological articles, which will be published in professional journals recognized by the RA Supreme Certifying Committee, the RF Supreme Certifying Committee, endowed with Impact Factor or registered in Russian Scientific Citation Index. The expert panel believes that the internal grant programs would be more effective if they are based on the priorities of the institution in the field of science.
In the process of promoting the research and scientific-methodological activities of the academic staff of the Institution, a fixed amount is provided for publication in the journals with an impact point and there is no difference, for example, between the prints of 0.3 and 3.5 impact units which can negatively affect the academic staff's incentive to publish the most valuable cover article.
The institution mentions contractual agreements with foreign research organizations and centers as a criterion for the internationalization of research activities. The expert panel welcomes this fact, but at the same time notes the ineffectiveness of this cooperation, as articles and publications in jointly internationally accepted journals are extremely limited.
It is effective that the institution has an idea of what measures need to be taken to succeed in the internationalization of science, but there is no long-term, medium-term, short-term planning and the wats of their implementation. In addition, the implementation of the policy requires significant financial resources, the expert panel fears that the institution will not be able to fully implement it with the available funds. The expert panel believes that the institution should be consistent in implementing its own policy, planning specific actions over a period of time, finding and providing appropriate internal and external resources.
Although the institution is making efforts to struggle against plagiarism, but cases of plagiarism have not been identified yet, so the effectiveness of the tool needs to be evaluated and new mechanisms based on it need to be introduced. The expert panel considers it positive that the institution tries to invest the results of internal grant programs in the educational process, but being limited to those materials alone, according to the expert panel, is not enough.
It is emphasized that BA and MA degree programs include subjects that develop research skills, but the results are not evaluated, which may hinder students' full acquisition of research skills and application in research work.
Summary: Considering that the ShSU doesn't have set research priorities at the institutional level and their evaluation indicators, the necessary resource provided to science is not evaluated, mid-term and short-term programs are considered only internal grant programs in the institution, there is no experience and skills to apply for international grant programs, as well as the dissemination of that experience among the academic staff and there is only a policy for the internationalization of scientific research, but it has not yet turned into concrete steps, The expert panel finds that ShSU does not meet the requirements of Criterion 6.
Conclusion: The expert panel assesses that the correspondence of ShSU's institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 6 unsatisfactory.

VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

CRITERION: The institution has necessary resources to create learning environment and to effectively support the implementation of its stated mission and objectives.
Findings
7.1 The institution has an appropriate learning environment for the implementation of academic programs.

Continuous improvement of the educational and working environment in accordance with the requirements of the educational programs was one of the tasks of ShSU's Strategic plan in ShSU (2015-2019). ShSU has buildings with an area of 22039 square meters, moreover, the volume of buildings increased by 5819 square meters in 2016-2017. The institution operates in two buildings. The main educational building is 10002.87 m², and the second building is 1125.87 m². Since 2017, the main building has been renovated and replenished with a conference room (Life-long learning center (Education Center)), "Key to Intelligence" club, "External cooperation and public relations center", "Life-long learning recourse center", Library- Academic consultations, innovations and IT center, "Office of Academic Consultations" as well as "Buffet". "Conference hall", "Resource center", "External cooperation and public relations center" are equipped with appropriate equipment for distance learning. It should be noted that the replenishment of resources was carried out mainly by the financial income from international programs in ShSU. Internet access is provided in the main building of the institution with the help of 17 WiFi-Routers and 36 Switches installed in the "Server Room". The institution has classrooms with projectors and screens, some classrooms are also equipped with SmartBoard whiteboards, and at the same time there are also portable projectors (2 pieces) with screens. The number of laboratories of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences is 10, which are equipped with equipment. In 2019, on the scope of ERASMUS + ABioNet program Biotechnology Laboratory with relevant equipment was established at the faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. The Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences also has a "Repository of Chemicals", where all the safety rules are ensured. The institution has a center of language, it became clear from the expert site that it does not work, the institution was planning to establish a new one. There are 2 gyms in the main building, which are furnished with appropriate equipment. In the 2nd building of the institution, the educational process of military specialties (except for university subjects) is mainly implemented, starting from 2016. Prior to that, the educational process was organized in unfavorable building conditions. There are 2 computers with printers in the military platoon, as well as access to the Internet and the internal network. The institution also has a renovated guest house, provided with the necessary conditions. According to the self-evaluation, in all educational buildings the educational process is organized in two shifts. The reading room is equipped with personal computers. At the end of the 2018-2019 academic year, the number of books was 60362, and at the end of the 2019-2020 academic year, 60657. From the expert site and meetings with the stakeholders, it became clear that the library has a lack of modern professional literature, especially for the relatively new academic programs. The e-literature http://library.shsu.am sub-section of www.shsu.am website contains e-books according to different sections. The literature included in the database, according to the sections, is mainly a small number and in Armenian, a limited number of books are available in Russian, and only 4 books in English.

ShSU also has a TV studio, which was designed to cover the activities of the institution, as well as it is effective for students of Journalism and other specialties to gain experience, but at present the technical equipment of the TV studio needs to be updated, it is not fully operational.

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

The financial resources of ShSU has been developed from budgetary and extra-budgetary revenues, of which about 52.5% of revenues and expenditures for 2020 has been developed from finances from state funding, 46.8% from tuition fees, 0.7% from other revenues. Other sources of funding for the budget

of the institution are not significant, they are come from training.
The distribution of funds by the institution's income and expenditure budget is generally not carried out according to strategic priorities, in particular, they have the following areas of distribution: management and administration, Academic programs, academic staff and teacing support staff, students, research and development, international relations and internationalization, Quality assurance internal system.
ShSU plans its annual budget in the form of revenue and expenditure estimates, there is also the annual budget execution. It should be noted that, according to 2020 institution's revenue and expenditure performance items, expenditure items have deviations in the form of overpayments or underpayments, in particular, with the articles of management and administration - about 15.3% underspending, Academic program, academic staff, teaching support staff under the article - about 10.2%, students - about 31.5%, research and development - about 27.3%, external relations and internationalization - about 89%, QA internal system-about 80.8%. Only in the article of Infrastructure and resources, overpayment was recorded - about 23.9%.
During the expert meetings, other priorities were raised by the internal stakeholders to increase the computer saturation, to update the software. From the expert studies it became clear that according to the expenditure items of the institution, the expenses of the remuneration and the equivalent means prevail, making 79.9%, in addition, the incentive and financial support expenditure item is 5.6% (according to 2019 revenue and expenditure estimates). Significantly financial means are allocated for research activities -about 2.4% of the budget, for foreign relations and internationalization - about 0.14%, for QA internal system - about 0.19%.

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

"Shirak M. Nalbandyan State University" Foundation's procedure for preparation of revenue, expenditure budget, approval, analysis of factual data (performance) in ShSU, which was approved by Science Council (31.01.2018). The distribution of financial resources in ShSU, according to the expenditure items, is carried out according to the approved financial budget, which is based on pre-calculated revenues, total expenses to be incurred, in particular, claims on needs from the relevant departments. The calculation of the amount of funds needed to meet the needs and financial management in general and monitoring is carried out by the Department of Financial and Economic Analysis, Programming and Accounting.
The Department of Financial-Economic Analysis, Programming and Accounting, during the implementation of its activities, is based on ShSU regualtion, "Law on Foundation of the Republic of Armenia", considering the the priorities and existing needs of the institution outlined in "Stategic plan" of ShSU.
It should be noted that the effectiveness of the current policy of planning and distribution of funds is not assessed by the institution.

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

According to the self-evaluation, the process of resource allocation in the university is coordinated by the rector, the departments of financial and economic analysis, programming, accounting, economic activity, and procurement coordination, based on the strategic goals of the institution. Resource

planning and acquisition is mainly done according to the number of students. Admission to the institution is organized according to the pre-planned number, the institution has registered that there are no sharp deviations between the required "acquired resources". It can be noted that the institution acquires the resources that imply a large financial burden mainly through grant programs. It became clear from the meetings of resource monitoring and stakeholders that at the moment there is an urgent need to upgrade the computers: software, to create a lingophone cabinet. It should be noted that neither at the level of the subdivisions, nor at the level of the institution, the terms of moral depreciation of the property are not planned in the long run - the acquisition of a new one.

7.5 The institution has a sound policy and procedure to manage information and documentation.

The processes of information and documentation in the institution are carried out in accordance with the deparment on General Affairs which allows to share the information with different subdivisions. Internal documentation is carried out with the help of Internal computer network of ShSU as well as with a platform for internal operation created on the server. Since March 2019, the Mulberry electronic document management system has been introduced in the institution, which provides communication with the RA Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports. From 2019, the letters from the department on General Affairs are also sent through the mentioned system, due to which the movement of the document and the change of status are visible.

The new website of the ShSU (shsu.am) has been launched since 2017, the website consists of subdivisions of ShSU Regulation, Strategic Plan, existing procedures, reports and other basic documents.

According to the self-evaluation, an electronic database of students' academic data has been introduced in the institution since 2007. It is a multifunctional system of organization and control of the educational process, due to which it is possible to get out the student's GPA, academic certificate, academic credit debts, etc. On the beginning of 2020-2021 academic year, databases containing the contact details of the Academic staff and students have been created. Archiving and preservation of documents in the institution, as well as scientific and technical development, registration, use and storage of archival documents are carried out by the Archive in accordance with the Regulation of the Archive.

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

There is an aid station in the institution with the necessary medicine for first aid and medical instruments. The position of nurse has been occupied, but there is vacancy for a doctor.

For serving the stakeholders of Art and Military Chair, Scientific Policy, Quality Assurance and Management Center has highlighted the need to open an aid station in the 2nd building of the institution, which has been met.

According to self-evaluation, compulsory medical examination is carried out for the applicants in the field of “Physical Education and Sports Training”, and “Initial Military Training”, as well as the first year students of the institution with the participation of an invited cardiologist. Compulsory medical examination is carried out for the employees of ShSU through cooperation with Gyumri Polyclinic N2 named after Melikyan.

For people with special needs, the main building of the University has ramps, through which it is possible to enter only the first floor, the exterior doors of “Exterior and Intelligence Key Club” in the central building are adapted for people with disabilities.

The number of students with special needs at the institution has increased after the war.

There is a round-the-clock security and safety regime in the educational buildings, a part of the main building is monitored by cameras. Public order in the main building is provided by the relevant specialists of the Gyumri Security Department of the General Department of State Protection of the RA Police.

Emergency evacuation schemes are posted in the educational buildings of the institution, there are essential measures to prevent the spread of fire. Each part of the main building is provided with a fire exit. According to self-evaluation, up to 2021 only the hall of the institution and "Intelligence Key Club" was provided with an automatic fire alarm system, and a complete fire alarm system was installed in the main building in November-December 2021.

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

One of the mechanisms for evaluating the applicability, availability and effectiveness of the resources provided is the surveys conducted by Scientific Policy, Quality Assurance and Management Center (SPQAMC), the discussions and studies conducted by the quality support-students.

The satisfaction of the stakeholders with the methodological, material-technical-human resources is assessed through the surveys conducted by the SPQAMC. According to self-evaluation, only students participated in the resource assessment surveys until 2019, and the researchers and the representatives of the academic staff participated from the 2019-2020 academic year. According to the results of the research, about 82.7% of the students, and 63% of the researchers and academic staff are satisfied with the resource provision of the institution.

In resource inquiries, stakeholders generally indicate the areas for further improvement: laboratory equipment upgrades, stock upgrades, modernization of the library fund and more.

Considerations: The expert panel finds that in general, the necessary resources, well-equipped educational environment provide conditions sufficient for realizing ShSU mission and strategic goals.

On the positive side, the educational environment of the institution has recently been improved: the main building has been replenished with a Conference hall, a "Key to Intelligence" club, "Life-long learning resource center", "External cooperation and public relations center", "Academic consultation center" and "Biotechnology laboratory" equipped with essential devices. The gyms have been renovated and furnished, which creates more favorable conditions for both the students and the administrative and academic staff of the institution.

Despite the available educational resources, there is a need to re-equip laboratories, upgrade the existing computer base, replenish the library fund and the electronic library with modern professional literature, which will increase the efficiency of the educational activities of the institution.

The vast majority of financial resources are state-funded tuition fees (other financial income is about 1% of financial resources), and heavy reliance on the latter can further jeopardize the institution's financial stability. In the current situation, ShSU, as a foundation, needs to find mechanisms to create an inflow of additional sources of funding. This, in turn, will require more significant financial investment in other key areas: science, research, and internationalization.

It is disturbing that the largest part of the budget of the institution is allocated for salary (79.9%) and incentives (5.6%), as a result of which insufficient funding is provided for other areas. On the one hand, the expert group positively assesses that the salary has a significant share in the total expenses of the university, on the other hand, it is worrying that the insignificance of other expenditure items may hinder the further development of the institution.

Each year, the planning of the necessary resources for the implementation of the educational process and the quality of education in ShSU is carried out on the principle of necessity, based on the requirements of the subdivisions for the needs for the organization of current activities, which are taken into account in the revenue and expenditure estimates, but the subdivisions generally do not carry out long-term resource planning, which would allow more optimal planning of the university's budget.

The expert panel positively assesses that there is a policy of planning and distribution of financial resources in the institution, which is aimed at increasing the efficiency of financial management.

The effectiveness of the current policy of planning and distribution of financial resources needs to be assessed, as evidenced by the fact that there are significant differences between the budget and actual performance, which jeopardizes the process of effective planning and use of financial resources.

It is positive that the information circulation and documentation processes at the university are carried out through an internal server and the Mulberry system, which allows the institution to conduct more systematic document circulation, but if the institution's internal document circulation is ensured through the Mulberry system, it will also be possible to control the movement of documents and status changes.

Steps towards health, safety and security of the educational environment are visible in the Institution, but there is still a need to improve the learning conditions of students with special needs.

The expert panel notes that the University conducts surveys to assess the applicability, availability and effectiveness of resources not only among students but also among faculty, which allows the institution to identify the needs of potential internal stakeholders to provide current solutions.

Summary: Considering that generally ShSU provides an educational environment essential for the implementation of academic programs, the resource base in its turn enables the implementation of academic programs, there are procedures for managing the process of information and documentation, services for sustaining academic environment assurance, health and security, expert panel finds that ShSU satisfies the requirements of CRITERION 7.

Conclusion: The expert panel assesses the correspondence of ShSU's institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 7 satisfactory.

VIII. SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY

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

Findings

8.1 The Institution has clear policy on institutional accountability.

ShSU uses a multi-level accountability mechanism, which became clear during the expert site. A multi-level accountability system ensures a bottom-up approach to accountability. Reports are presented by the heads of the chairs, the deans, the head of the centers, Student Scientific Society (SSS) and the rector. The reports are discussed in the chairs, faculty councils, Academic Council and published on the website of the institution. The rector presents a report annualy to Board of Trustees and is also posted on the university website.

During the previous accreditation, the expert panel provided advice on developing the analytical component in the institution's internal accountability system. In the context of the above, during the

examination it became clear that the reports available at the institution have a set form, the analytical component is provided, and to some extent they also reveal problems

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

Transparency of the procedures and processes available at the University and Access to the public on the electronic platform is ensured via the university's website, social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube) and e-news coverage.

Besides, information is disseminated through regional and republican TV companies, radio companies and newspapers. The announcements are posted on the walls of the university, which were noticeable during the expert site. The results of the surveys show that 88.5% of the respondents are mainly satisfied with the access to information via the website and social networks. It should be noted that the website of ShSU also contains information in Russian and English, which, from the point of view of summary information, is not completely translated.

During the expert site, it was found out that there is a "University Newspaper" program in the University, through which the videos are published on the official YouTube channel of the University. The expert panel observed that the number of views of those videos is not large. It is noteworthy that the election of the rector was carried out by live broadcast in 2022.

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

External Cooperation and Public Relations Center (ECPRC) is responsible for the the work in terms of disseminating information about the University's activities and building a positive rating is by providing feedback to journalists, the media and other external stakeholders.

Feedback to the public is provided both through the feedback section of the website and through the university's social networking sites. The number of visitors to the university's website has increased by about 1000 year by year, making an average of 5300 monthly visits in 2021, but the most effective means of feedback is the social network Facebook, which has about 8500 active followers.

The use of Instagram is also growing rapidly, constantly increasing the number of followers. ECPRC collects, studies, and analyzes media coverage of university activities, as a result of which it has become clear that there are few press conferences. During the expert site, it became clear that ECPRC staff within the scope of the ERASMUS+ BOOST program participated in the training which aimed to develop a communication strategy for internationalization and increase communication skills.

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

During the expert site it became clear that the institution organizes courses for the students of the basic schools, helping them to prepare for the enterance exams, and provides professional orientation advice. The university provides professional consultations, involving the internal beneficiaries of the institution. As stated in the self-evaluation, these courses, consultations do not provide a certain frequency, continuity, in some cases are not based on the study of public demand, nor are the observations and suggestions of the beneficiaries considered through feedback.

Book discussions are organized in ShSU with the participation of internal stakeholders, in particular, at the suggestion of students and with the participation of "Fairytale" analytical club in 2018-2019. Discussions of fairy tales were organized, which were considered in order to promote the application of professional knowledge.

The expert panel singles out that in 2021 pre-attestation trainings for about 100 teachers of general education institutions of Shirak region were conducted at ShSU, the University participated in and won the competition announced by the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports. The mentioned training provided additional financial incomes for the Institution. The university plans to carry out similar courses in the near future.

Considerations: It is positively assessed by the expert panel that a multi-level accountability mechanism is used in the University, ensuring a bottom-up approach. On the positive side, the reports have a set form, contain a research component, are discussed in various circles, and are published on the institution's website. As a result, the institution's accountability system benefits.
It is crucial that the institution has a website, social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube), provides coverage of electronic media, at the same time, there is information dissemination through regional, national TV, radio and newspapers, ensuring the accessibility and transparency of the university's activities to the public. The expert panel notes that the website translated into English and Russian will contribute to the development of the university's international relations.
It is commendable that the institution carries out works aimed at building a positive reputation of the university, disseminating information about its activities, in particular, providing feedback with external stakeholders, launching a feedback section of the website, disseminating information through social networks.
The expert panel notes that there are few press conferences, the views of the videos published on the official YouTube channel are not large, to some extent hindering the provision of feedback. It is positive that ECPRC staff within the scope of ERASMUS+ BOOST program participated in the training which aimed at the development of an international communication strategy and enhancement of communication skills.
It's noteworthy that the institution organizes courses for the students of the basic schools, helping them to prepare for the enterance exams, and provides professional orientation advice. The universityrais provides professional consultations, involving the internal beneficiaries of the institution. But these courses and consultations do not provide a certain frequency and continuity and aren't aimed at raising the rating of the institution.
The expert panel positively mentions that pre-attestation training courses for teachers of Shirak region have been conducted at the University, the continuous implementation of which is planned by the institution. In this case, the institution can provide additional financial income.

Summary: Considering that the institution uses a multi-level accountability mechanism, the accountability includes an analytical component, which are debatable and public, in general, the institution ensures the transparency of procedures, processes and public access. In terms of building a positive rating of the university, huge work is being done and some feedback mechanisms are applied, so the expert panel finds that the institution meets the requirements of Criterion 8.
Conclusion: The expert panel assesses the correspondence of ShSU's institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 8 as **satisfactory**.

IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

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

Fiindings

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

The amended and approved regulation of "External Cooperation and Public Relations Center" operated in ShSU in 2021, which defines the goal of the center as the organization, coordination, and implementation of the process of ensuring external cooperation, internationalization of the university, public responsibility and visibility. The regulation defines 6 tasks, 12 functions, which ensure the implementation of the center's goal. Not all the objectives mentioned in Strategic plan were fully implemented, in particular, ensuring the level of professional foreign language proficiency of internal stakeholders, introducing foreign language courses offered to foreign students in Academic programs, and implementing the quality assurance policy procedure (2015-2019). During the expert site it became clear that the institution does not have a policy on international cooperation.
For a long time (about 25 years), ShSU has been involved in the work of the EU-funded TEMPUS program, which has been a platform for the university to develop a culture of cooperation, internationalization and exchange of experience with partners. In terms of the internationalization of the institution, the University allocates ERASMUS+ "Marketing Promotion Strategy for the Internationalization of Higher Education in Armenia" - BOOST program, by which the preliminary version of the National Strategy for Internationalization of Higher Education and Research was developed by partner institutions, including other organizations, on the basis of which institutions should formulate their strategic plans for internationalization. In this context, the strategy of international cooperation and internationalization of the University, the procedures arising from them are still under development.

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

ShSU ECPRC has been operated since 2018. Before that, in 2005 the External Relations and Reform Department was formed, in 2013 it was transformed into the Department of Foreign Relations, in 2017 - the Center for Scientific Policy and Foreign Cooperation. Through these structures, the University has participated in more than 10 international cooperation programs (within the framework of TEMPUS, ERASMUS MUNDUS, ERASMUS+ programs). As a result of the implementation of these programs, new professions have been formed (social work, sustainable tourism development, biotechnology), there are few cases of mobility, the "Biotechnology" educational program laboratory has been established, the university-employer cooperation center has been established (Student Support, University-Market Cooperation Department), QAC (SPQAMC), Educational Center for Social Work.
ECPRC has a head and 7 employees, who carry out the functions defined by the center's regulations. The center does not have a separate budget. The center is currently coordinating the SMARTI program to support innovative English teaching methodologies, approaches, and tools, the WBL4JOB program, which aims to introduce work-based learning in Armenia and Moldova. The employees of the University participated in various trainings and workshops with the mentioned 2 programs. It became clear from the expert site that the trainees in the European partner universities passed their experience

to the staff and students of ShSU and universities of Gyumri.

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

The institution has collaborations within the framework of ERASMUS MUNDUS, ERASMUS + programs. Since 1997, the institution has implemented several international programs within the framework of the TEMPUS program. International cooperation programs implemented by ARMENQA in 2013-2016 and within the framework of ERASMUS+ "Creation of a network of Armenian excellence in bio-products and technologies" - ABioNet program, as a result of which the "Biotechnology" master's degree program was developed, the necessary equipment of the biological laboratory was acquired. In this context, it should be noted that there were 6 applicants for 10 licensed positions for the 2020-2021 academic year.

ShSU participates in the ERASMUS + KA1 academic mobility exchange program, in the framework of which it cooperates with the universities of Cluj Napoca, Ioan Cuza, Suceava (Romania) and the Universities of Granada, (Valladolid, Spain) and Kiel, (England). It should be noted that so far within the framework of the mentioned programs the university has had 17 students with outgoing mobility, 15 academic staff and 5 administrative staff members, with incoming mobility - 1 student, 2 academic staff members. It became clear from the expert site that within the framework of cooperation based on international agreements, the institution does not carry out other international cooperation activities with international partners except providing mobility, teaching and research.

The expert panel singles out the cooperation of the institution with the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia, within the framework of which the activities of the "Military Chair" of the University are regulated, NORCENT program- "Ensuring regional balanced development through diversification of educational services" - (financed by the World Bank, coordinated by the "Center for Educational Programs" PIU of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport), 15% of the budget is co-financed by the university.

It became clear from the expert meetings that at the regional level the institution has a wide range of partnerships with the schools of the region, supporting the implementation of the "Pedagogy" educational program. There are also cooperation with Embassy of the United Arab Emirates and China in Armenia. Besides, the winners of republican-international competitions, prize-winners study and teach in the “Chair of Theory and Methods of Physical Training” by strengthening foreign cooperation with international organizations within the given profession.

According to the data provided by the institution, the university signed cooperation agreements, memoranda with universities of 20 European, 8 CIS, 14 Armenian countries, 8 different organizations in the last 3 years.

During the expert site it became clear that these agreements and memoranda do not provide active cooperation in all cases. International conferences with the participation of the representatives of foreign partner universities were organized at the University in 2018 and 2021.

The expert panel stated that during the 2020-2021 academic year, according to the webinars ” with the announcements of 6 conferences disseminated by “Scientific Policy Quality Assurance and Management Center only one employee from the University participated in 2 webinars.

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

According to the data provided by the University about 60% of the academic staff, 90% of the administrative staff, 70% of the teaching support staff, 80% of students speak foreign languages.
It became clear from the expert site that in general the level of knowledge of a foreign language (English) at the university is not in good condition. There were foreign language academic programs in the University (2014-2019), there are only 7 foreign students.

It should be noted that these students speak Armenian, and the courses are mainly organized in Armenian. The only student from Romania was involved in a foreign language education program in those years.
The expert site revealed that foreign language courses are organized at the university, but the effectiveness of those courses is not regularly evaluated. As for professional foreign language courses, (English), such are not organized at the university. In parallel, the bachelor's educational program of the university envisages the "Foreign language in the professional field" course, the effectiveness of which is not assessed. In addition, a rating point is provided for knowledge of foreign language through regular assessment and rating of the academic staff of ShSU.

Considerations: The expert panel evaluates it positive that the University has a structural subdivision coordinating the international relations work, represented by ECPRC, which activities are regulated by the regulations of the "External Cooperation and Public Relations Center" (2021), aiming to serve the defined tasks and functions for the further development of internationalization in the University.
At the same time it is worrying that not all the objectives mentioned in Strategic plan were fully implemented. In addition, the lack of a policy on international cooperation in the institution hinders the further development of the center.
It is commendable that the University participation in ERASMUS + "Marketing promotion-marketing strategy for higher education in Armenia" - BOOST program (2016-2019), which developed the initial version of the national strategy for internationalization of higher education-research in Armenia.
It is worth to mention that the strategy of international cooperation and internationalization of the university, the procedures arising from them are being developed, the application of which will allow the institution to clarify and make the internationalization strategy realistic. At the same time, the expert panel evaluates the sustainable impact of participation in international programs, as a result of which separate centers, material-technical base and experienced staff have been formed in the University. In addition, the existence of international grant programs funded by the Government of the Republic of Armenia, various foreign organizations, foundations, and the diversification of their fields can increase the cooperation opportunities of the institution.
It is positive that the trainees from the European partner universities, within the framework of various programs, have transferred their experience to the staff of ShSU and other universities of Gyumri, contributing to their professional progress.
The expert panel singles out the scope of wide regional cooperation of the institution, cooperation with the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia, various cooperation with international institutions, however, the number of international events approved by international cooperation agreements, including academic mobility, is unsatisfactory. Apart from the ERASMUS+ program, there is no academic mobility of students, academic and teaching support staff. In addition, the scope of international events with the international partners of the University is narrow. In case of expanding them, in particular, attracting international invited lecturers, promoting and developing intercultural and international skills (both online and on an existing scale), the internationalization of the institution will significantly benefit.

It is positive that the university has signed cooperation agreements, memoranda with universities of 20 European, 8 CIS, 14 Armenian countries, 8 different organizations, these agreements and memorandum do not provide active cooperation in all cases. If they are fully implemented, the university can provide higher results in the field of internationalization.
It is worrying the students, academic and teaching support staff's the insufficient level of knowledge of foreign languages, in particular English, scarcity of foreign students. In this context, the expert panel strengthens the position of the institution aimed at raising the level of foreign language proficiency (organization of foreign language courses, undergraduate courses), however, regular courses for teachers and students to increase their professional foreign language skills, as well as the development of mechanisms to evaluate their effectiveness, will increase the effectiveness of further educational cooperation. The expert panel points out that expanding the scope of participation in international webinars can have a positive impact on the intensification of internationalization processes which itself will increase the effectiveness of further educational cooperation. The expert panel points out that expanding the scope of participation in international webinars can have a positive impact on the intensification of internationalization processes.

Summary: Taking into consideration that the work on international cooperation and internationalization in the ShSU is generally coordinated and regulated, the institution has wide regional partnerships, active international cooperation, the goals and potential of the university are visible in the context of internationalization, the expert panel concludes that ShSU meets the requirements of Criterion 9.

Conclusion. The correspondence of ShSU institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 9 is assessed as **satisfactory**.

X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

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

Findings

10.1 The Institution has internal quality assurance policies and procedures.

The documented basis of the quality assurance policy of the University is Quality Assurance Policy and its procedures (2013), ShSU regulation of SPQAMC, Quality Assurance and Management Concept (2019), the Guide to the Internal Quality Assurance System (2014) Internal Quality Assurance System Guide (2014), Design Version of the Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (2019).
The purpose of the internal quality assurance system is defined by the Strategic plan (2015-2019) which is the continuous improvement of all processes of the institution and ensuring the formation of quality culture, the problems of achieving the goal are defined.
The concept of Quality Assurance and Management (ShSU) includes the main principles of the quality assurance policy of the university: systemic approach, centralized regulation, decentralized

implementation of processes, self-assessment, improvement. 6 goals and 6 tasks are defined by the internal quality assurance system.
The Quality Assurance and Control Center has been operating in the Department of External Relations and Reforms since 2011. A year later, it became an independent structural unit, being renamed the QA Center. As a result of the change in the structure of the university, the QA center was renamed Quality Assurance and Management Center , expanding its functions and operated until 2018. Next, as a result of another structural change, SPQAMC has been operating in the University since 2018 and, it became clear from the expert site that the institution, initially, intended to carry out research conducted by the center on a scientific basis, developing and promoting scientific research in the future. It became clear from the expert site that SPQAMC had introduced the research component in the QA processes, and comprehensive research packages had been developed. The goals of the center are defined by the regulation of SPQAMC, 14 issues arising from the goals. 30 functions are defined for SPQAMC. It became clear from the expert visit that SPQAMC operates in accordance with the goals and objectives set by it, and at the same time, it is a multifunctional subdivision.
There are different quality assurance mechanisms and procedures in the University. During the expert site it became clear that these mechanisms and procedures are generally working, problem-solving, aimed at the continuous improvement of the educational process. The expert panel considers it necessary to mention that various questionnaires have been developed by SPQAMC, various surveys are carried out, including: a questionnaire for the assessment of the professional, pedagogical and organizational competencies of the academic staff, Institution's organizational rankings assessment questionnaire done by the students and graduates, etc.
At the same time, the members of the administrative and administrative staff of the University are confused about the objectivity of the results of those surveys, which was confirmed during the various meetings of the expert site. In particular, 2018-2019 2019, 2019-2020 reports of the Faculty of Pedagogy include the results of the students' assessment of the academic staff of the chair of Theory and Methods of Physical Training are not perceptible for students, in connection with which the dean and the heads of the chairs have concluded continuously for 2 years that the obtained results cannot be considered objective for various reasons, many questions are not clearly formulated, are not perceptible for the students. In addition, the 2018-2019 report of the faculty states that the presented report does not fully reflect the activities of the faculty, and statistical data is mainly required, a number of important issues are left open, for example, educational and organizational work with students, analysis of disciplinary issues at the faculty, etc.
The expert panel concludes that SPQAMC has developed and implemented procedure for regular evaluation and rating of the institution's academic staff established in 2018. The results of the disciplinary action are not ensured in the sense that as a result of the ranking defined by the discipline, no cases of renewal, extension, termination, encouragement of lecturers' employment contracts were registered.

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

SPQAMC has 8 positions in the University: Quality Assurance Officer, Research Analysis Coordinator, Research Implementation Coordinator, Computer Operator-Clerk, Scientific Policy, and Postgraduate Education Officer, Coordinator of Research Activities of Academic and Administrative Staff, Coordinator of the Academic and Administrative Staff Training Processes, Postgraduate Education Coordinator. According to the expert panel, the positions of Research Analysis Coordinator, Research

Implementation Coordinator, Scientific Policy, Postgraduate Education Coordinator are almost identical, and certain functions repeat each other with the position passports.

The faculties and chairs have QA coordinators, QA committees operate in the chairs, which also include and SC and SSS representatives. It became clear from the expert site that these commissions do not invest their full potential in the improvement of QA processes. The center has the necessary technical means to carry out the processes, and the employees of the center have participated in training and workshops. During the expert site, it became clear that the management of the University's staff is pursuing the further professional development of the center's staff, and the trained staff have transferred the acquired skills to other staff. SPQAMC has work plans, annual reports. The funds envisaged for the internal system of QA based on the income and expenditure estimates of the institution are quite small (in 2018, 2019, 2020 - 10 million AMD, which is about 1% of the university budget). In 2020 the actual performance deviated from the planned index: 1.9 million AMD were allocated instead of 10 million AMD.
The means envisaged for the internal system of QA according to the estimated cost and income of the institution are 10 million AMD (excluding salary) for 2018, 2019 and 2020, which is about 1% of the university budget. 2020 The actual performance deviated from the planned index: 1.9 million AMD were allocated instead of pre-planned 10 million AMD.[6]:
During the expert site, the Department of Financial and Economic Analysis, Programming and Accounting commented in writing that the decline in actual expenditures related to the internal quality assurance system in 2020 is mainly due to the negative impact of the epidemic.

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

QA processes involve mainly students, academic teachers and administration workers at departments implementing QA tasks. Internal and external stakeholders participate in surveys conducted by SPQAMC questionnaires, in particular, questionnaires of students and teachers' satisfaction from the scientific library, questionnaires on the evaluation of the efficiency of the management system and administrative structures, questionnaires of students' satisfaction with pedagogical practice, students' assessment of professional, pedagogical-organizational competencies of the academic staff, surveys on graduates' satisfaction with their university education, etc. Within the framework of QA processes at the university, opinions are collected from graduates on the level of employers' satisfaction, opinions on the teaching of internships by students and teachers, external beneficiaries are involved in the final attestation committees, student needs assessment surveys are conducted.
At the same time, it became clear from the visit of the expert panel that the external stakeholders show less participation, are less involved in the QA processes of the university. In addition, suggestions from outside stakeholders are not always included in the university's improvements.

10.4 The internal quality assurance system is periodically reviewed.

ShSU QA policy aims to ensure continuous and sustainable improvement of the quality of teaching, learning, assessment processes in line with the needs of students and labor market.
Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute's QAP and its procedures, which define the goals, objectives, QA

[6] THE SENTENCE WAS REWRITTEN BASED ON OBSERVATIONS SUBMITTED BY THE INSTITUTION

policy implementation procedure has been operated in the university since 2013. According to the mentioned document, the basis of the QA policy are the real capabilities of GSPI and the toolkit for the implementation of specific actions, which are not in line with the current realities of the ShSU.

During the expert site it became clear that the university is continuously improving the QA system, in particular, the QA processes are generally regulated, subject to monitoring, have a periodicity of review, the research component is introduced in the QA processes, by which the studies are more grounded and data-based. There are SPQAMC year-over-year reports written within the 10 Criteria for Institutional Accreditation. Expert studies have shown that these reports are more comprehensive studies than reports that should evaluate the expected results of the activities and the causal links by combining the quantitative, qualitative data characterizing the university's activities. In addition, the results of evaluation and improvement in the reports are not systematic.

The questionnaires, the functions of the quality assurance coordinators of the departments, faculties, etc. are continuously reviewed by SPQAMC. From the study of the questionnaires, at the same time from the meetings with the stakeholders, it became clear that there are certain complaints about the availability of the content of the questions included in the questionnaires and the objectivity of their evaluation. It should be noted that the SPQAMC is taking some steps to make the questionnaires more accessible.

The mechanisms of reviewing articles, master's theses, graduation works are regularly reviewed. Content analysis of the opinions of the final attestation commission is carried out by the SPQAMC, which, according to the data of the expert site, are not included in the plans for further improvements of the academic programs. In particular, there are considerations in the recommendations for further improvement of the quality of training of the specialists of the report of the final attestation commission in the specialty of Elementary Pedagogy and Methodology of the (2021) in connection with the selection of more up-to-date topics for graduation theses, modern school teaching issues, as well as in the report of the final attestation commission for the defense of master's theses of the same specialty, some deviations were registered. through the qualification given.

There is a suggestion in the report that in the process of further improving the quality of training of specialists, the master's theses should be fully in line with the qualification of the awarded master.

As a result of the expert studies, it is clear that the activities envisaged by Deficiency Removal Actions Program have been sufficiently implemented: procedures have been developed, mechanisms have been applied to ensure the participation of external beneficiaries in the quality assurance system, the internal quality assurance system has been improved, the job descriptions of the quality assurance system specialists have been developed, to some extent the trainings aimed at the professional development of the quality assurance representatives have been carried out, the inquiry system has been improved. It became clear from the expert site that the quality assurance staff needs professional training.

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

ShSU has the second experience of conducting institutional capacity self-evaluation (the first time Self-evaluation carried out in 2015). In 2017, a new reporting scale was developed and introduced according to the 10 Criteria for Institutional Accreditation, where the analytical component is available. Both the report of the rector and the reports of all the subdivisions were fully aligned with the self-evaluation scale. In this way, SPQAMC aims to develop a culture of self-evaluation, to include a report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan. The self-evaluation was carried out by a separate committee on

each criterion, which included heads of departments, lecturers, students, graduates, employees of the administrative staff. The self-evaluation was carried out by a separate working group. The expert panel notes that the conducted self-evaluation is generally data-based, the analytical component is emphasized. SPQAMC highligts the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) calculation-input of all processes to ensure comparability over the years. In this regard, as a result of expert meetings, it became clear that there are no optimal, comparable standards for KPI calculated.

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

SPQAMC has its own section on the website of the University, regularly fills the relevant section on the website of the University, the Facebook page, where the events and processes are covered. The reports of SPQAMC are regularly published on the website of the institution. The department of success of the graduates of the University has been replenished. The university uses electronic questionnaires to evaluate the activities of the university, through which the opinion of the stakeholders on the activities of the university is examined, and some feedback is provided to the graduates. It became clear from the expert site that the results of the questionnaires are discussed in the faculties, chairs, with separate lecturers.

Considerations: The expert panel positively assesses that the quality assurance process in the University has the necessary documentary basis, the vector of the quality assurance policy is the continuous improvement of all the processes of the institution and the provision of quality culture, contributing to the increase of QA efficiency in the university. The expert panel also considers it positive that SPQAMC has introduced a research component in its analysis, aiming to put forward solid conditions for the improvement of the university QA process.

It is commendable that the quality assurance mechanisms and procedures of the University are generally working and problem-solving, which can have a positive impact on the further improvement of the university's educational process. In this context, the expert panel considers it disturbing that the representatives of the administrative and academic staff of the University are confused about the ambiguity of the questions regarding the results of the surveys. As for the implementation of the order of regular evaluation and rating of the academic staff of the University, so in this context, the expert panel has also its consideration that there are no cases of renewal, extension, termination, encouragement of lecturers' employment contracts. The application of the ranking results can create a competitive environment in terms of improving the professional capacity of the teaching staff, aimed at improving the quality of education.

The expert panel positively observes that there are human, material and financial resources for the management of internal quality assurance processes in the University, in particular, relevant staff, resources, a certain budget. In terms of human resources, it is commendable that 8 staff members are involved in the implementation of QA policy, but the expert panel fears that these positions and their functions may in some cases duplicate each other, causing inefficiency.

At the same time, it is not positively perceived that the resources provided to the internal QA system based on the institution's income and expenditure budget are limited (about 1% of the budget), more in 2020 the actual performance deviated from the planned indicator, allocating rather less funds than planned. The expert panel ensures the continuity of the funds allocated to the center.

It is positive that the teaching and administrative staff and students of the University have their

participation in QA processes. Various surveys are conducted among internal and external stakeholders, opinions are collected, and student needs assessment surveys are conducted. The expert panel notes that the introduction of proposals from external stakeholders and the use of their full potential can significantly improve the institution's QA processes.

It is commendable that ShSU QA policy is aimed at the continuous, sustainable improvement of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment processes, lecturers, administrative staff, students participate in the QA processes of the university, QA processes are generally regulated, subject to monitoring, have a periodicity of review, the research component is introduced in the QA processes, by which the studies are more grounded and data-base. However, the current "GSPI QA policy and its procedures" doesn't follow the current realities of the university, causing a deviation from the "existing processes" of the current procedure, as a result of which the regulated implementation of QA processes may suffer. The expert panel positively assesses the existence of different subdivisions, according to the reports of the years, at the same time noting, as comprehensive researches, the data of the evaluation, improvement cycles in those reports are not systematized. As a result, the QA management process may be jeopardized.

Although there are reports from different years written under 10 Accreditation Criteria done by SPQAMC, such as comprehensive surveys, revised review mechanisms and substantive analysis of the final attestation committee, the summary estimated the expected results are not clearly visible in the plans, so it may hinder the continuous improvement of the university QA process.

The expert panel positively emphasizes that the activities envisaged by the IACS have been sufficiently implemented, the inquiry system has been improved, contributing to the spread of quality culture in the University, the rooting of QA processes. However, the inquiry system still needs to be improved, aimed at simplifying questionnaires and regulating QA processes, and improving the professional skills of employees will have a direct impact on effective process management. The expert panel positively emphasizes that the activities envisaged by Deficiency Removal Actions Program have been sufficiently implemented, the system of inquiries has been improved, contributing to the spread of quality culture in the university, the rooting of QA processes.

However, the inquiry system still needs to be improved, aimed at simplifying questionnaires and regulating QA processes, in addition, improving the professional skills of employees will directly affect the effective management of processes. It is noteworthy that in order to ensure comparability over the years, SPQAMC uses the calculation and implementation of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for all processes. In this regard, the expert panel emphasizes that there are no optimal, comparable standards for the Key Performance Indicators, which can serve as a basis for measurable assessments of the effectiveness of the university.

SPQAMC has its own section on the website of the University, regularly fills the relevant section on the website of the University, the Facebook page, where the events and processes are covered by ensuring the provision of information and transparency on the quality of the institution's processes.

Summary: Taking into consideration that the quality assurance process of the university has the necessary documentary basis, the implemented quality assurance policy is aimed at increasing the quality assurance efficiency of the university, the institution's quality assurance mechanisms and procedures are applicable and problem-solving, there are human, material and financial resources to manage the internal quality assurance processes, the activities envisaged by Deficiency Removal Actions Program have been sufficiently implemented, the expert panel finds that the institution meets the requirements of Criterion 10.

Conclusion: The expert panel concludes that the correspondence of the Institution's institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 10 is **satisfactory**.

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

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

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Armenuhi Mheryan

Chair of Panel

16 May 2022

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1.CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

Armenuhi Mheryan graduated from Armenian State University of Economics with a major in Faculty of Finance. She was a post-graduate student at ASUE Chair of Finance and Credit in 2004. Candidate of Economic Sciences, Associate Professor. She worked as a lecturer at ASUE chair of Finance from 2006 to 2021. Armenuhi participated in a number of trainings: Data processing, statistical analysis and presentation through SPSS statistical package, "Training on capacity building for implementing bologna reforms", "Information systems mastery-improvement", "Financial accounting, analysis-external review", "Economic-mathematical methods" model development and application etc. She has been employed as a lecturer at the European University since 2022.

Olga Safonkina received her Diploma in Linguistics in 2002 (Ogarev Mordovia State University), and graduated from "Society and Politics" master's degree program in 2003 (Central European University / Lancaster University (Hungary / UK)). In 2009 she received an Academic degree of Candidate of Sciences. She worked as a program manager at the Language Center of Ogarev Mordovia State University from 2006 to 2013. Since 2004 she has been teaching at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of the same university, at the same time he has been the Vice-Dean of the same faculty and coordinator of Erasmus + exchange programs since 2011.

Karen Dilbaryan was a post-graduate student at the Department of Pharmacy of YSMU within the 2007-2010 period. He is a candidate of pharmacy sciences. He was the director of YSMU College from 2016 to 2017. He has been a senior lecturer at the chair of Pharmacy of YSMU since 2010. He has been the coordinator of "GLOBUS" program of YSMU since 2017. He has been the head of the pharmacy of Sisian Military Hospital since 2018. He is the author of 13 scientific works. He has received several diplomas during his work.

Heghine Ohanyan graduated from the Faculty of Computational Mathematics and Cybernetics of the Lomonosov Moscow State University in 1991 and completed her postgraduate studies at the same faculty in 1994. She worked at the Central Bank of Armenia as a programmer from 1994 to 1995. She was a lecturer in the chair of Geometry and Algebra of Vanadzor State University within the 1995-1999 period and a senior lecturer in the chair of Informatics, Economic-Mathematical Methods and Modeling within the 1999-2007 period. She was an associate professor in the chair of Natural Mathematics and Informatics of the same university from 2020 to 2021, and she has been the head of the chair of Mathematics and Informatics since 2021.

Karen Mastoyan studied undergraduate education in Computer Engineering in the faculty of Natural Sciences at Gavar State University (2016-2020). He has been studying in the Master's degree program in Computer Engineering at the Faculty of Natural Sciences Since 2020. He has been working for Lusin mobile company as a Web developer since 2019.

APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF THE SITE VISIT

Expert Site for the purpose of Assessment of Institutional Accreditation to M. Nalbandyan State University of Shirak

Zoom
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88308497641?pwd=cGk3dGo1RkU4UllDVUVublByU1piUT09

Meeting ID: **883 0849 7641**
Passcode: **018171**

	15.03.2022	Start	Finish	Duration
•	Meeting ShSU Rector	09:30	10:30	60 minutes
•	Meeting the representatives of Board of Trustees	10:40	11:40	60 minutes
•	Meeting with the Vice-Rector-Director of the Educational-Methodological Process Management Center, Vice-Rector-Chief of Staff, Head of External Cooperation and Public Relations Center	11:50	13:00	70 minutes
•	Break, panel discussions	13:10	14:10	60 minutes
•	Meeting faculty deans	14:20	15:10	50 minutes
•	Meeting with the heads of departments (Department on General Affairs, Department of Financial-Economial Analysis, Programming and Accounting, Department of Personnel Management and Legal Provision, Department of Student Support, University-Market Cooperation, Department of Economic Activities, Purchase Coordination)	15:20	16:20	60 minutes
•	Meeting with employers	16:30	17:30	60 minutes
•	Document review, closed panel meeting	17:40	19:00	80 minutes

15.03.2022–18.03.2022

	16.03.2022	*Start*	*Finish*	Duration
•	Meeting with the working group which conducted the self-evaluation	09:30	10:20	50 minutes
•	Meeting with teaching staff representatives (10-12 people)	10:30	11:30	60 minutes
•	Meeting with the heads of chairs (10-12 people)	11:40	12:40	60 minutes
•	Break, panel discussions	12:50	13:50	60 minutes
•	Meeting with Student Council, and Student Scientific Council representatives (10-12 people)	14:00	14:45	45 minutes
•	Meeting bachelor and master student representatives /full time, (10-12 people)	14:55	15:45	50 minutes

•	Meeting with bachelor student representatives/ part time (10-12 people)	15:55	16:45	50 minutes		
•	Document review, Closed panel meeting	16:55	19:00	125 minutes		

	17.03.2022			*Start*	*Finish*	*Duration*
•	Meeting with the representative(s) of "Elementary Pedagogy and Methodology" academic program	Meeting with the representative(s) of "Informatics and Applied Mathematics" academic program	Meeting with the representative(s) of “Biology” academic program	09:30	10:40	70 minutes
•	Meeting with the lecturers of "Elementary Pedagogy and Methodology" academic program	Meeting with the lecturers of "Informatics and Applied Mathematics" academic program	Meeting with the lecturers of “Biology” academic program	10:55	12:05	70 minutes
•	Meeting with the students of "Elementary Pedagogy and Methodology" academic program	Meeting with the students of "Informatics and Applied Mathematics" academic program	Meeting with the students of “Biology” academic program	12:20	13:10	50 minutes
•	Break, panel discussions			13:20	14:20	60 minutes
•	Meeting with graduates			14:30	15:40	70 minutes
•	Open meeting			15:50	16:40	50 minutes
•	Document review and closed panel meeting			16:50	19:00	140 minutes

	18.03.2022	*Start*	*Finish*	*Duration*
•	Meeting with the representatives of Scientific Policies, Quality Assurance Management Center	09:30	10:30	60 minutes
•	Meeting the staff chosen by the expert panel	10:40	11:30	50 minutes
•	Document review and closed panel meeting	11:40	12:50	70 minutes
•	Break, panel discussions	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
•	Document review and closed panel meeting	14:10	15:20	70 minutes
•	Meeting with the Rector and management team	15:30	16:00	30 minutes

APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

N.	Name of the Document	Criterion
•	Strategic plan for Faculties / Faculty Development Programs / Concept presented by the Dean	1
•	Financial council forms, Protocols (last 3 years)	1
•	Position Passports of the head of Scientific and Research Department and SPQAMC	1
•	Employees Complaints Procedure and Orders of the Head of the Relevant Department and Orders on Complaints	2
•	Conclusions of the studies conducted by SPQAMC and to what extent the academic staff ensures the efficiency and high quality of the educational-pedagogical process	2
•	Statistics on activities of external and internal stakeholders' involvement by the responsible department	2
•	Documents or certain data-norms proving the study of proper, safe, health-safe working conditions defined by law	2
•	Assessment of communication between departments at different levels of government, as well as the academic staff and students	2
•	Strategic Plan Implementation (2015-2019), provided the reports of rector and subdivisions	2
•	Annual Plans of Chairs / Faculties /2020-2022/	2
•	Annual Reports, Analysis and Conclusions / Protocols provided	2
•	Inter-institutional acts, formed by external stakeholders	2
•	Summary Survey Evaluations and Analysis	2
•	Protocols, Rector's orders related to the results of surveys among external and internal stakeholders discussed at the meetings of the Scientific Board and Financial Council	2
•	Supporting documents on regular review of ShSU procedures and policies (in which all departments participate, ensuring transparency and rapid response to problems)	2
•	Relevant conclusions of the review of the academic programs	2
•	Annual reports of evaluation of the efficiency of management processes and improvement	2
•	Annual reports on the activities of the faculties and chairs, which contain information on the quality of the qualifications awarded	2
•	Assignments given to students within 3 academic programs and Timetable and Plan	3
•	The package of the implementation of the newly launched academic program	
•	List of lecturers who have received professional trainings outside the university	3
•	In IT specialties: /061105.01.6/, /061101.02.7/, /021201.04.6/, /011401.06.6/, 2015-2019 Admission statistics / in absolute numbers /	3
•	Examples of transition plans	3
•	Curriculum development procedure	3

•	Results of the improvement of Academic programs (2021-2022)	3
•	Comparative sheets of 3 academic programs presented	3
•	Benchmarking Policy	3
•	List of lecturers trained within the framework of TEMPUS-ARMENQA program	3
•	Percentage of students studying on the Moodle platform, statistics expressing the use of the Moodle platform	3
•	Comparative statistics: the results of comparison of online and offline exams n percentages within the same course / student grades	3
•	Schedule of change of teaching-learning methods for 3 Academic programs/ Timetable and Plan	3
•	Analysis of surveys evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and teaching methods / last 3 years /	3
•	Analysis on effectiveness of the student assessment system / Protocols	3
•	Cases of appeals for graduation works and statistics of re-marking	3
•	Analysis of surveys evaluating the effectiveness of the grading system	3
•	Monitoring and effectiveness of the evaluation analysis of the Academic programs/ one example was sent within the framework of the program	3
•	Analysis of teaching and learning effectiveness during the epidemic	3
•	List of subjects taught in a foreign language and Relevant licenses	3
•	Employment of graduates by specialties	3
•	List of students studying from the Diaspora	3
•	Bachelor's academic program for Informatics and Applied Mathematics, Timetable and Plan Programming languages and methods, Operating systems 1, 2, Programming Language 1, 2 (Python), Programming Language C, Programming language CVV 1,2, theory of coding and information Academic programs for Informatics and Applied Mathematics, Timetable and Plan: Database Design, Methods for Solving Equations Using Spreadsheets, Mathematical Modeling of Natural Problems, Programming in Java Platform	
•	Examples of written answers to questions raised by students / Rectorate decisions /	4
•	List of encouraged students: ShSU student rating and incentive regulations	4
•	ShSU rector's order to form a student rating and incentive committee	4
•	SSS collection of articles	4
•	Analysis of research conducted by the Student Council	4
•	In the framework of 5 Academic Programs proportion of practitioners and theorists by specialties	5
•	Statistics on how many teaching assistants are attached to the professor, associate professor or assistant to carry out practical-laboratory trainings, course work and project management	5
•	Formula or mechanism for calculating lecturer rating	5
•	Results of rating	5
•	Analysis of Academic Staff questionnaires / conclusions for further steps /	5
•	Completed copy of the annual rating evaluation sheet representing the effectiveness of the lecturer's activities in the chairs	5
•	Recent inter-institutional training programs, list of lecturers, data of facilitators, efficiency indicators, training content	5

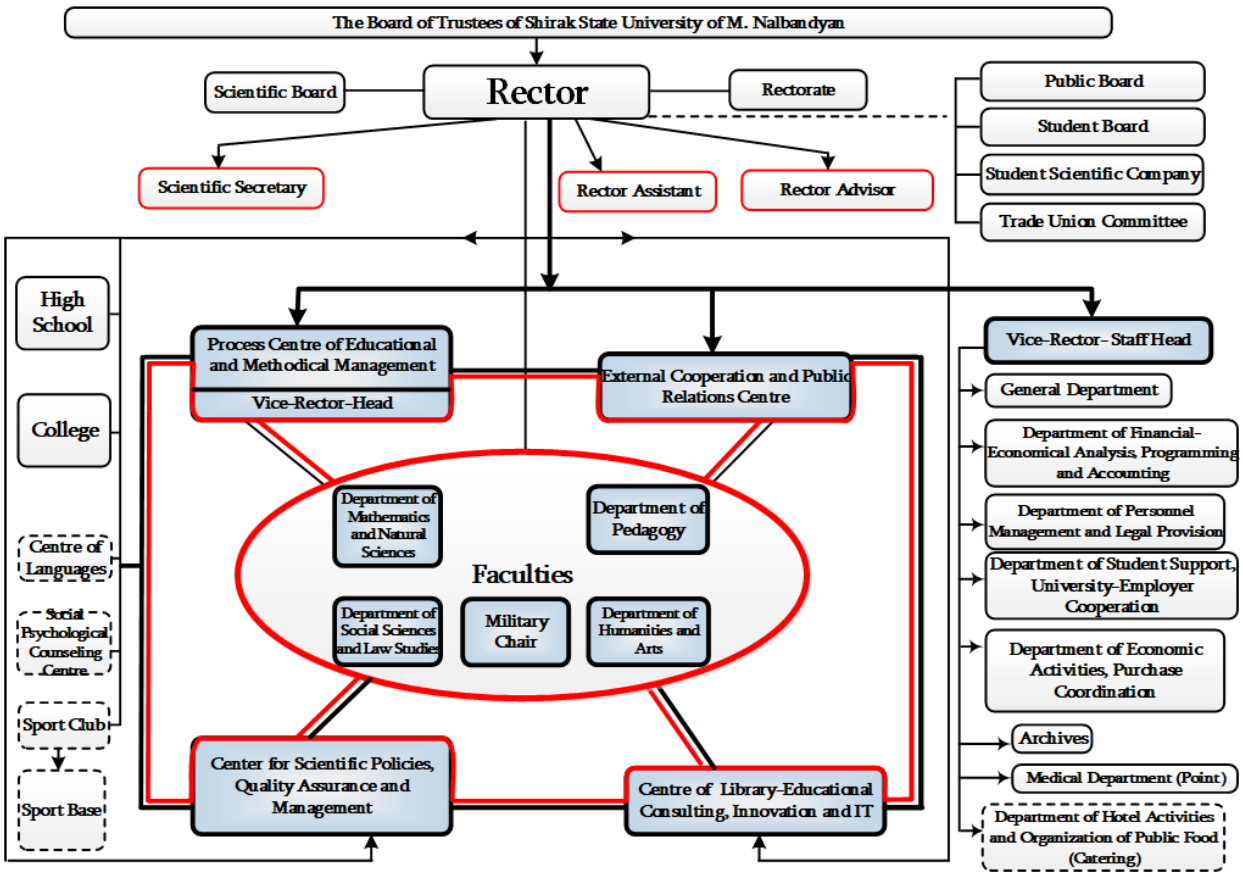
•	Budget allocated for training -%	5
•	List of professional trainings and participation statistics	5
•	Relevant documents on the procedure of ShSU inter-institutional granting	5
•	ShSU incentive fund data	5
•	Design version of the novice teacher mentoring policy	5
•	Analysis of all inquiries (conclusions) on administrative and teaching-support staff	5
•	List of online webinars for the academic staff	
•	Research that demonstrates scientific priorities	6
•	Decisions that set scientific priorities	6
•	Research effectiveness and results studies	6
•	Research topics in all specialties of the university	6
•	The list of the academic programs, where the results of scientific research are included	6
•	Efficiency Analysis of Funded Internal Grants / Results /	6
•	Topics of 2 master theses and 1 graduation work defended as a result of inter-institutional grant programs	6
•	List of articles published by Inter-institutional Impact Factor with their links	6
•	Student theses with their references and Impact Factor publications related to 3 theses with their references implemented within the framework of the program	6
•	List of scholars published in prestigious journals, articles	6
•	List of external reviewers of scientific articles	6
•	List of topics of scientific seminars organized by the chairs	
•	Surveys, protocols, lecturers' signatures etc. that the staff of the University is aware of the procedure for promoting scientific-research, scientific-methodological works, the assessment of the professional, pedagogical-organizational competencies of the academic staff	6
•	According to the procedure of promotion of scientific-research and methodological works, statistics of the surcharge provided for the types of fixed scientific activities, list of scientists according to the chairs, topics of scientific works	6
•	Document on discussion, decision-making and evaluation of the results of the survey on the needs for the development of professional, pedagogical and organizational competencies of the academic staff	6
•	Analysis of the effectiveness of the implementation of the sub-items defined in the internationalization policy, in addition to quantitative, also qualitative results	6
•	Descriptions of courses that develop research skills/ in Master's academic programs	6
•	List of teachers who received surcharges	7
•	Relevant agreements on the possibility of free use of swimming pool and gym equipment (if available)	7
•	Any resource usability, efficiency and availability assessment package	7
•	External Stakeholder Training Program, List of Trainees	9
•	Biological Laboratory Activity Report for the last 2 years	9
•	List of grant programs applied to by the institution after 2018 (separate which ones won and which ones did not)	9
•	Name, surname, position of the persons coordinating the work of the following three programs: ERASMUS, BOOST, SMARTI	9

•	Relevant documents on the academic mobility, capacity building and exchange activities carried out within the framework of TEMPUS, ERASMUS MUNDUS, ERASMUS programs, names of lecturers, specialties, students and faculties	9
•	The names of the professors included in the internal grant program and the awards received by them	9
•	Events done as a result of the cooperation with EU, RA and RF universities, several organizations	9
•	Academic staff/ Certificate/ and analysis of the effectiveness of the English language assessment system of the student body	9
•	Any example when any function was developed and introduced as a result of survey analysis aiming at the improvement of the quality	10
•	Summaries of questionnaire evaluations	10
•	An example of research in which students identify problems on their own	10

APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED

- Departments (Scientific Policy, Quality Assurance and Management Center (SPQAMC), Department of Financial, Economical Analysis, Programming and Accounting, Legal Provision, Process Centre of Educational and Methodical Management, Department of Personnel Management and Legal Provision, General Department, Public Relations and Information Department),
- Classrooms (Organization of linguistic, computer and current courses),
- Intelligence Club, Red Room,
- Laboratories (geography),
- First Aid Center
- Gym (2),
- Chairs,
- Library,
- Archives,
- Reading and academic counseling room.

APPENDIX 5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION



APPENDIX 6. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ECPRC-External Cooperation and Public Relation Center

KPI- Key Performance Indicator

CSD-Concept of Science Development

SB-Scientific Board

GSPI-Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute

SPQAMC-Scientific Policy, Quality Assurance and Management Center

EHEA- European Higher Education Area

DEAP-Defect Elimination Action Plan

TP-Timetable and Plan

BT-Board of Trustees

GPA-Grade point average

I-Institution

AP-Academic Program

ShSU-Shirak State University

QA-Quality Assurance

NQF- National Qualifications Framework

NCPEQAF- National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation

AS-Academic Staff

PIGB-Planning, implementation, evaluation and improvement

SP-Strategic Plan

TSS-Teaching Support Staff

PCEMM-Process Center of Educational and Methodical Management

SSS-Student Scientific Society

SC-Student Council