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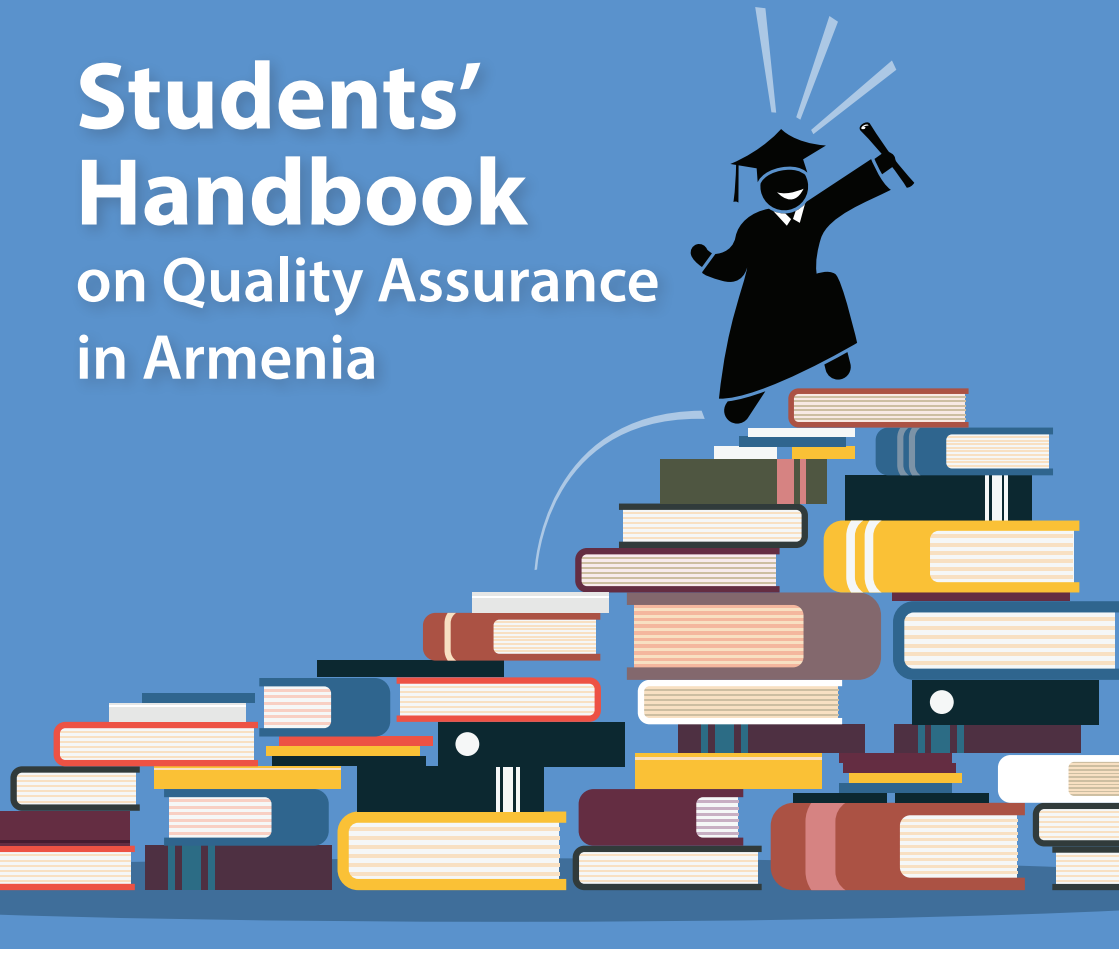
Students' Handbook

on Quality Assurance in Armenia



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Students' Handbook on Quality Assurance in Armenia

Co-funded by the European Commission.

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This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

In this publication the name "The European Students' Union (ESU)" is being used to refer to "ESIB - The National Unions of Students in Europe" Belgian asbl BE0890.019.936, due to the fact that both legal entities are going through a merging process. Likewise the visual identity of ESU is being used instead of the one from ESIB.

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Photo credits Cover image and inside graphics: Shutterstock.com, picture collage page 47 : espaq.eu

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Preface

This handbook explores what is meant by quality, provides an overview of quality assurance and enhancement practices in higher education and then looks at internal and external quality processes and arrangements and the role of national bodies such as the Armenian National Centre for Professional Education and Quality Assurance (ANQA) and the Armenian National Students' Association (ANSA).

Further, it provides a useful context for student engagement in Armenian higher education and can be used in conjunction with the **"Student Guide to improving the learning experience"** which details a range of useful training materials to develop the skills of student representatives engaged in quality assurance and enhancement work.

The audience for the Handbook is primarily students and student representatives; however, it will be of use to staff working in HEIs particularly those working on quality assurance and quality enhancement activities.

This handbook is designed to complement the extensive work undertaken under the auspices of the EU funded Tempus Project - ESPAQ (Enhancing Student Participation in Quality Assurance in Armenian Higher Education). For more information on the ESPAQ Project work specifically, go to www.espaq.eu

The project has focused on one of the core challenges of Armenian higher education, that is the development of a culture of student engagement within universities and the establishment of a set of practices to engage students with quality assurance processes and learning and teaching enhancement activities. It has taken a holistic approach to respond to the current needs of students, their HE institutions and the Armenian higher education system by:

- Supporting students to engage at all levels in enhancing their learning experience;
- Supporting the development of practices and activities in HEIs and their local students' associations that encourage student engagement;
- Supporting student engagement with national decision-makers and relevant agencies (such as the national quality agency ANQA and the national student body ANSA);
- Encouraging the development of a culture of student participation in Armenia.

Introduction

Student engagement in quality assurance and quality enhancement has increasingly been a key element in the development of quality processes throughout higher education institutions within the European Higher Education Area and in the design of the European Standards and Guidelines in 2005 and their subsequent revision in 2015.

Not long after the first European Standards and Guidelines were published, Peter Williams, then President of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) wrote:

"In recent years, the role of students in the quality assurance of higher education has become recognised, across Europe, as being both necessary and desirable. Students have increasingly become involved in the improvement and enhancement of their own learning experiences. Whether it be through providing feedback on the courses they have taken, contributing to the development of learning and teaching in their subject area, participating in university decision making processes, or representing student views in any number of ways through a student union or other representative body – students' voices are today being heard loudly and clearly and, ever more often, their views are being taken seriously." Student involvement in the processes of quality assurance agencies. ENQA Workshop Report 4, 2006.

Since 2005, many countries within the European Higher Education Area have introduced a range of practice guides and quality codes for ensuring the quality assurance and quality enhancement of higher education and embedding the role of students in those processes.

It should be noted that the challenges for student engagement in quality processes in Armenian higher education was recognised back in 2010 in a document produced under the auspices of the Education, Audio-Visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the EU. "Higher Education in Armenia" (EACEA, 2010) recognised that amongst a range of development areas there was:

- Marginal participation of students in the management of institutions;
- A lack of incentives for quality enhancement among academic staff and a traditional orientation towards getting directions from "uppers";
- A lack of understanding in students of their own role in the education process and an absence of independent student bodies.

What do we mean by quality in the context of higher education?

There is no simple explanation of what quality is in higher education or indeed in any context. Much has been written on how to assure quality in production processes and service delivery but rather less on what we mean by the word quality.

Almost all publications on quality in higher education have noted that quality is a "flexible" concept. Quality is "multi-dimensional, multi-faceted and dynamic (Vlasceanu et al., 2004, 46) and a "poorly defined and loose concept (Stensaker, 2007, 100). Until the 1980s, quality, for the majority of universities, was much more non-interventionist, with governments limiting themselves to planning the overall provision of higher education, having some influence over entry qualifications and the broad role of staff (Neave and Van Vught, 1998); in the main however, there was an implicit understanding that universities knew what they were doing and how to do it (Trow, 1996). In the 1980s however, there was a change in approach, with much more of a focus on governments exercising control by requiring institutions to account for their work including the quality of their work.

Harvey and Green (1993) have suggested that quality is relative in two ways. First, quality is subjective and in the eyes of the beholder. Different stakeholders will (and do) have differing views on what constitutes quality in higher education. Teaching staff may focus on the content of a course and the research profile of the staff, governments may well look to student success rates and therefore value for money, whereas students are likely to argue that the quality of the overall learning experience is what is most important. Harvey and Knight (1996) found that students and staff emphasised the quality of the student experience, employers were interested in the employability of the graduates and governments focused on quality as a measure of control. Second, quality is relative to the standard one maintains. In other words, quality in a very practical sense is only meaningful if measured against benchmarks.

Taking these two elements together, the authors suggest five concepts of quality (Harvey and Green, 1993; Harvey 2007):

- Quality as **exceptional**: quality is distinctive, quality is achieved when implicit standards have been surpassed;
- Quality as **perfection/consistency**: quality is focused on process, meeting specifications and getting it right first time;
- Quality as **fitness for purpose**: quality is measured against the objectives or purpose with a focus on effectiveness;
- Quality as **value for money**: quality is focused on efficiency and accountability;
- Quality as **transformational**: a focus on change and enhancement but difficult to measure against pre-determined standards.

These five concepts have been used extensively to clarify various rationales of quality assurance. For example, if a government's principal focus is on accountability it is probable that the quality assurance focus will be on fitness for purpose and value for money; have objectives been met and resources used efficiently? If the focus is on improvement, it is likely that quality will be seen as exceptional or transformative. The other notion of quality as perfection and consistent is founded on assumptions that benchmarks and standards are meaningful and capable of being objectively measured against those benchmarks.

Why is student representation important?

The UK national agency for quality assurance in higher education's (Quality Assurance Agency) Quality Code states that:

"It is widely accepted that the views of students, individually and collectively, should inform quality systems with the purpose of improving the student educational experience both for current and future cohorts. Student involvement in quality can have a positive influence on the delivery and development of any aspect of the student educational experience, whether implemented by the higher education provider, a faculty, a department, or an individual member of staff.

Aspects of the educational journey into which students can offer insight include:

- application and admission
- induction and transition into higher education
- programme and curriculum design, delivery and organisation
- curriculum content
- teaching delivery
- learning opportunities
- learning resources
- student support and guidance
- assessment.

All students should have the opportunity to be involved in quality enhancement and assurance processes in a manner and at a level appropriate to them. In considering approaches, it is important that higher education providers create a culture and environment where students are encouraged to take up the opportunities on offer."
Quality Assurance Agency, Quality Code Chapter 5, 2012

This thinking and approach is being similarly replicated across quality assurance agencies across Europe and beyond and are very much aligned with the thinking behind the European Standards and Guidelines, 2005 and 2015.

> *"All students should have the opportunity to be involved in quality enhancement and assurance processes"*

At the operational level within a university student engagement is important because it:

- Provides a forum for students to contribute to their education;
- Encourages students to have a sense of ownership over their education;
- Helps to ensure that student views are considered in all decisions made within the university;
- Facilitates the collection of student views on a regular basis to ensure students are satisfied with their education;
- Gives students an opportunity to critically comment on their learning and teaching experience;
- Promotes the idea of a university culture of partnership among the various stakeholders (i.e. the university, academic staff, students, student representatives and the Students' Council);
- Facilitates interaction and enhances constructive debate about learning and teaching between the various stakeholders;
- Acts as an important channel of communication from staff to students and back again.

These ideas will be explored in more detail when we look at the various ways in which students can play a key role in the enhancement of the quality of learning and teaching within a university at internal and external reviews.

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education

(often referred to as the European Standards and Guidelines or ESG)

Much of the work on quality assurance and enhancement in Armenia will be guided by the alignment of Armenian quality assurance processes and systems with the approaches outlined in the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), agreed to by all institutions within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). As students, it is important that you understand the content of the European Standards and Guidelines.

The Guidelines were first published in 2005 and revised in 2015. They were agreed by Ministers responsible for higher education in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in May 2015. They are designed to contribute to the common understanding of quality assurance for learning and teaching across the EHEA and among all institutions, including students and staff, as well as external stakeholders such as employers and any external partners of an institution.

They have played and will continue to play an important role in the development of national and institutional quality assurance systems across the EHEA and the promotion of cross-border cooperation. Engagement with quality assurance processes, particularly the external ones, enables European higher education systems to demonstrate quality and increase transparency, helping to build mutual trust and better recognition of their qualifications and programmes.

The ESG are a set of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in higher education. They are not standards for quality, and they don't prescribe how the quality assurance processes are implemented in any specific country, but they provide guidance, covering the areas which are considered essential for successful quality provision and learning environments in higher education.

They are based on the following four principles for quality assurance agreed across the EHEA:

- Higher education institutions have primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance;
- Quality assurance responds to the diversity of higher education systems, institutions, programmes and **students**;
- Quality assurance supports the development of a quality culture;
- Quality assurance takes into account the needs and expectations of **students**, all other stakeholders and society.

As you can see, the needs and expectations of students are a key element in the thinking behind the ESG.

The full publication, **Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)** can be found online at: http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf.

The standards for quality assurance have been divided into three parts:

PART 1: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE - internal quality assurance is essentially what processes your university has in place to ensure that the institution and its programmes are of an acceptable standard

PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE is essentially the process by which a team of people external to the university review the institution or programmes and are satisfied that the internal quality assurance processes (Part 1) are effective and that the institution/programme is of an acceptable standard

PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES are the usually national agencies responsible for ensuring that quality assurance processes are in place and effective.

It should be kept in mind, however, that the three parts are interlinked and together form the basis for a European quality assurance framework. External quality assurance in Part 2 recognises the standards for internal quality assurance in Part 1 thereby ensuring that the internal work undertaken by institutions is directly relevant to any external quality assurance that they undergo. In the same way, Part 3 refers to Part 2 and therefore all three parts complement each other.

What is the role for students in both internal and external quality assurance as set out in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)?

The following are clear examples of the role that students should expect to play in quality processes. Not all standards are included here. The standards which have the most direct relevance for student involvement have been listed.

PART 1: Standards for internal quality assurance

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

"Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders."

These internal stakeholders will of course involve students.

1.2 Design and approval of programmes

"Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area."

Students should expect to contribute to the design and enhancement of their programmes.

1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

"Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach."

It is self-evident that students have an interest in this and therefore a role.

1.6 Learning resources and student support

"Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided."

Students should have input to the quality of services such as libraries, computing facilities and other support services.

1.7 Information management

"Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities."

Inherent in this is the student role of providing feedback on satisfaction data, though of course a student role for analysis of that data and planning the resultant actions as well should also be considered.

1.8 Public information

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

Students should have access to data on the performance of the institution and its programmes.

1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

"Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken, should be communicated to all those concerned."

This illustrates that students are at the heart of programme review, as it is in their interests that they are kept fully informed. There is, of course, a key role too for students to be contributing to the review and analysis and therefore adding to that continuous improvement too.

PART 2: Standards for external quality assurance

2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

"External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement."

There is a clear role for students in designing and improving external QA – meaning there needs to be active and informed national representation on national bodies which determine external QA methods, for example ANQA.

2.3 Implementing processes

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published.

They include

- a self-assessment or equivalent;
- an external assessment normally including a site visit;
- a report resulting from the external assessment;
- a consistent follow-up.

Students should be involved in any post-report institutional actions

2.4 Peer-review experts

"External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include student members."

This demonstrates not only that students are key to the activity of review, but that they are regarded inherently as experts. Training should be provided for members of external expert panels.

2.6 Reporting

"Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report."

If students are among those experts, then they should have a key role in contributing to the writing and publishing of those full reports.

PART 3: Standards for quality assurance agencies

3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

"Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work."

As students are key stakeholders, they should be a part of both the work and governance of the agencies, as well as just the individual reviews.

3.4 Thematic analysis

"Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities."

If students are a part of the work and governance of the agencies, that assumes student involvement in these thematic analysis reports.

3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

"Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities."

Again, if students are a part of the work of the agencies, then they need to be involved in reviewing the agencies' effectiveness.

ANQA, (Armenian National Centre for Professional Education and Quality Assurance) which is the Armenian Quality Assurance Agency has produced a useful document which demonstrates their own mapping of the Armenian internal quality process (Part 1) to the European Standards and Guidelines. It can be found in the link here and mirrors some of the points made in the section on ESG.

Pages 16-37: http://www.anqa.am/en/accreditation/accreditation-process-and-documents/mapping-of-the-ra-institutional-and-programme-accreditation-criteria-and-standards-towards-part-1-of-esgs-2015/

PART 1: Standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

Guidelines:

Policies and processes are the main pillars of a coherent institutional quality assurance system that forms a cycle for continuous improvement and contributes to the accountability of the institution. It supports the development of quality culture in which all internal stakeholders assume responsibility for quality and engage in quality assurance at all levels of the institution. In order to facilitate this, the policy has a formal status and is publicly available.

Quality assurance policies are most effective when they reflect the relationship between research and learning & teaching and take account of both the national context in which the institution operates, the institutional context and its strategic approach. Such a policy supports

- the organisation of the quality assurance system;
- departments, schools, faculties and other organisational units as well as those of institutional leadership, individual staff members and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance;
- academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud;
- guarding against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff;
- the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.

The policy translates into practice through a variety of internal quality assurance processes that allow participation across the institution. How the policy is implemented, monitored and revised is the institution's decision.

How ANQA criteria address the ESG Part 1

Institutional accreditation standards

- **MISSION AND PURPOSE.** The Tertiary Level Institutions' (TLIs) policy and practices are in accordance with its mission, which is in accordance with the Armenian National Qualifications Framework.
  - The TLI has a clear, well-articulated mission that represents the institution's purposes and goals as well as is in accordance with the ANQF. (1.1)
  - The TLI's mission, goals and objectives reflect the needs of the internal and external stakeholders. (1.2)
  - The institution has approved mechanisms and procedures to evaluate the achievement of its mission and purpose and to further improve them. (1.3)
- **GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION.** The TLIs' system of governance, administrative structures and their practices are effective and intend to the accomplishment of its mission and purposes by keeping the governance code of ethics.
  - The TLI's system of governance ensures regulated decision-making process in accordance with defined code of ethics and has efficient provision of human, material and financial resources to accomplish its educational and other purposes. (2.1)
  - The TLI's system of governance provides students and teachers opportunity to participate in decision-making processes directed to them. (2.2)
  - The TLI develops and implements short, mid, and long term planning consistent with its mission and purposes and has clear monitoring and implementation mechanisms. (2.3)
  - The management of the policies and the processes draws on the quality management principle (plan-do-check-act). (2.5)
- **STUDENTS.** The TLI provides relevant student support services ensuring the effectiveness of the learning environment.
  - The TLI has evaluation and quality assurance mechanisms of student educational, advisory and other services. (4.8)
- **FACULTY AND STAFF.** The TLI has a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff to accomplish the institution's mission and to implement the goals set for academic programmes.
  - There is necessary technical and administrative staff to achieve the strategic goals. (5.7)

- **INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE.** The TLI has an internal quality assurance system for promoting establishment of a quality culture and continuous improvement of all the processes of TLI.
  - The TLI has internal quality assurance policies and procedures. (10.1)
  - The TLI allocates sufficient time, material, human and financial resources to manage internal quality assurance processes. (10.2)
  - The internal and external stakeholders are involved in quality assurance processes. (10.3)
  - The internal quality assurance system is periodically reviewed. (10.4)

Programme accreditation standards

- **QUALITY ASSURANCE.** The programme has internal quality assurance system that promotes its maintenance and continuous improvement.
  - The quality assurance is designed and operated to follow the societal needs and students' requirements, as well as to evaluate its activities. (7.1)
  - There are well-established policies and procedures for programme internal quality assurance. (7.2)
  - The internal and external stakeholders of the programme are involved in the quality assurance processes. (7.4)

1.2 Design and approval of programmes

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Guidelines:

Study programmes are at the core of the higher education institutions' teaching mission. They provide students with both academic knowledge and skills including those that are transferable, which may influence their personal development and may be applied in their future careers.

Programmes

- are designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes;

Institutional accreditation standards

- **ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES.** The programmes are in concord with the institution's mission, form part of institutional planning and promote mobility and internationalization.
  - The academic programs are thoroughly formulated according to the intended learning outcomes, which correspond to an academic qualification and are in line with the institution's mission and the state academic standards. (3.1)
  - The TLI has a policy that ensures alignment between teaching and learning approaches and the intended learning outcomes of academic programs promoting student-centered learning. (3.2)
  - The TLI has policy on students' assessment according to the learning outcomes and ensures academic integrity. (3.3)
  - The academic programmes of the TLI are contextually coherent with other relevant programmes and promote internationalization and mobility of students and staff. (3.4)

- are designed by involving students and other stakeholders in the work;
- benefit from external expertise and reference points;
- reflect the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (cf. Scope and Concepts);
- are designed so that they enable smooth student progression;
- define the expected student workload, e.g. in ECTS;
- include well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate;

are subject to a formal institutional approval process.

Programme accreditation standards

- **ACADEMIC PROGRAMME DESIGN AND APPROVAL.** The academic programme is in concord with the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (ANQF), national qualifications descriptors, and state academic standards as well as is in line with the institution's mission.
  - The goals and objectives of the academic programme are in line with the institution's mission and purpose. (1.1)
  - The academic programme forms part of institutional planning and resource allocation. (1.2)
  - The academic programme is thoroughly formulated, according to intended learning outcomes. (1.3)
  - The academic programme is in line with the ANQF, national qualifications descriptors, and state academic standards. (1.4)
- **TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES.** The teaching and learning practices used within the academic programme ensure the achievement of intended learning outcomes.
  - The academic programme clearly defines the teaching and learning approaches necessary to achieve the intended learning outcomes. (3.1)
  - The academic programme ensures the implementation of progressive approaches accepted at international level. (3.2)
- **RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT.** The programme ensures links between learning and research and creative activities.
  - The programme has a long-term strategy and medium and short-term programs that address its research interests and ambitions. (5.1)
  - The programme promotes development and innovation through sound policies and procedures. (5.2)
  - The programme emphasizes internationalization of the research activities. (5.3)
  - The programme has well established mechanisms for linking and improving research and creative activities with education process. (5.4)

1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

Institutional accreditation standards

- **ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES.** The programmes are in concord with the institution's mission, form part of institutional planning and promote mobility and internationalization.
  - The TLI has a policy that ensures alignment between teaching and learning approaches and the intended learning outcomes of academic programs promoting student-centered learning. (3.2)

Guidelines:

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. This means careful consideration of the design and delivery of study programmes and the assessment of outcomes.

The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching

- respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths;
- considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate;
- flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods;
- regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods;
- encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher;
- promotes mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship;
- has appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.

Considering the importance of assessment for the students' progression and their future careers, quality assurance processes for assessment take into account the following:

- Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field;
- The criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published in advance;
- The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process;
- Where possible, assessment is carried out by more than one examiner;
- The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances;
- Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures;

A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.

1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

- The TLI has policy on students' assessment according to the learning outcomes and ensures academic integrity. (3.3)

- **STUDENTS.** The TLI provides relevant student support services ensuring the effectiveness of the learning environment.
  - The TLI has policies and procedures for revealing student educational needs. (4.2)
  - The TLI promotes student involvement in its research activities. (4.6)

Programme accreditation standards

- **TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES.** The teaching and learning practices used within the academic programme ensure the achievement of intended learning outcomes.
  - The academic programme clearly defines the teaching and learning approaches necessary to achieve the intended learning outcomes. (3.1)
  - The academic programme ensures the implementation of progressive approaches accepted at international level. (3.2)
- **STUDENT ASSESSMENT.** The academic programme provides assessment system that allows ensuring the students' progress as well as the formation and achievement of intend learning outcomes.
  - The academic programme applies precise and reliable system that assesses the formation of intended learning outcomes the standards of which are available to learners and teaching staff. (4.1)
  - The academic programme has clear mechanisms that ensure the achievement of intended learning outcomes aimed at awarding a qualification. (4.2)
  - There are set mechanisms for the improvement of student assessment system. (4.3)
  - The institution treats students fairly and equitably through clearly stated policies and procedures, taking into account the students' responsibilities and appeals. (4.4)
  - The academic programme has clearly articulated policies promoting academic integrity and tracking for plagiarism. (4.5)

Institutional accreditation standards

- **STUDENTS.** The TLI provides relevant student support services ensuring the effectiveness of the learning environment.

Guidelines:
Providing conditions and support that are necessary for students to make progress in their academic career is in the best interest of the individual students, programmes, institutions and systems. It is vital to have fit-for-purpose admission, recognition and completion procedures, particularly when students are mobile within and across higher education systems.

It is important that access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner. Induction to the institution and the programme is provided.

Institutions need to put in place both processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression.

Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on

- institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention;
- cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country.

Graduation represents the culmination of the students' period of study. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.

- The TLI has set mechanisms for promoting equitable recruitment, selection, and admission procedures. (4.1)
- The TLI has policies and procedures for revealing student educational needs. (4.2)
- The TLI has student career support services. (4.5)

1.5 Teaching staff

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

Guidelines:
The teacher's role is essential in creating a high quality student experience and enabling the acquisition of knowledge, competences and skills. The diversifying student population and stronger focus on learning outcomes require student-centred learning and teaching and the role of the teacher is, therefore, also changing (cf. Standard 1.3).

Institutional accreditation standards

- **FACULTY AND STAFF**. The TLI has a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff to accomplish the institution's mission and to implement the goals set for academic programmes.
  - The TLI has policies and procedures promoting recruitment of a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff capable of ensuring programme provisions. (5.1)
  - The teaching staff qualifications for each programme are comprehensively stated. (5.2)
  - The TLI has well established policies and procedures for the periodic evaluation of the teaching staff. (5.3)
  - The TLI implements teacher professional development in accordance to the needs outlined during regular evaluations (both internal and external). (5.4)

Higher education institutions have primary responsibility for the quality of their staff and for providing them with a supportive environment that allows them to carry out their work effectively. Such an environment

- sets up and follows clear, transparent and fair processes for staff recruitment and conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching;
- offers opportunities for and promotes the professional development of teaching staff;
- encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research;

encourages innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies.

- The TLI ensures the sustainability of the teaching staff according to academic programmes. (5.5)
- There are set policies and procedures for the staff promotion. (5.6)

Programme accreditation standards

- **TEACHING STAFF.** The academic programme ensures teaching staff with necessary professional qualifications to realize the goals of the academic programmes.
  - The teaching staff qualifications for the programme are comprehensively stated and there are policies and procedures promoting recruitment of a highly qualified teaching staff. (2.1)
  - There are well-established policies and procedures for periodic evaluation of the teaching staff that foster to reveal and develop the professional needs of teaching staff. (2.2)
  - The academic programme fosters the development and professional progress of teaching staff. (2.3)
  - The permanent teaching staff ensures the sustainable implementation of the academic programme. (2.4)

1.6 Learning resources and student support

Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

Guidelines:

For a good higher education experience, institutions provide a range of resources to assist student learning. These vary from physical resources such as libraries, study facilities and IT infrastructure to human support in the form of tutors, counsellors and other advisers. The role of support services is of particular importance in facilitating the mobility of students within and across higher education systems.

The needs of a diverse student population (such as mature, part-time, employed and international students as well as students with disabilities), and the shift towards student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources and student support.

Support activities and facilities may be organised in a variety of ways depending on the institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all resources are fit for purpose, accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them.

Institutional accreditation standards

- **GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION.** The TLIs' system of governance, administrative structures and their practices are effective and intend to the accomplishment of its mission and purposes by keeping the governance code of ethics.
  - The TLI's system of governance ensures regulated decision-making process in accordance with defined code of ethics and has efficient provision of human, material and financial resources to accomplish its educational and other purposes. (2.1)
- **STUDENTS.** The TLI provides relevant student support services ensuring the effectiveness of the learning environment.
  - The TLI has policies and procedures for revealing student educational needs. (4.2)
  - The TLI provides advising services, opportunities for extra-curricular activities supporting students' effective learning. (4.3)
  - The TLI has set regulation and schedule for students to receive additional support and guidance from the administrative staff of the faculty. (4.4)
  - The TLI has student career support services. (4.5)
  - The TLI has responsible body for the students' rights protection. (4.7)

In delivering support services the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competences.

- **INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES**. The TLI has necessary resources to create learning environment and to effectively support the implementation of its stated mission and objectives.
  - The TLI has an appropriate learning environment for the implementation of academic programmes. (7.1)
  - The TLI provides appropriate financial resources with necessary equipment and facilities as needed to achieve its mission and objectives. (7.2)
  - The TLI has sound financial distribution policy and capacity to sustain and ensure the integrity and continuity of the academic programmes offered at the institution. (7.3)
  - The TLI's resource base supports the implementation of institution's academic programmes and TLI strategic plan, which promotes for sustainability and continuous quality enhancement. (7.4)
  - The TLI creates safe and secure environment through health and safety mechanisms that also consider special needs of students. (7.6)

Programme accreditation standards

- **LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.** The programme promotes the quality educational provisions by creating an environment conducive to learning.
  - There are necessary resources for the implementation of the programme, which effectively support the implementation of its stated mission and objectives and create an environment conducive to learning. (6.1)
  - The programme ensures that all students receive useful and regular information and advice to promote learning. (6.2)
  - The programme has necessary methodological resources in accordance with its content. (6.3)

1.7 Information management

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

Guidelines:

Reliable data is crucial for informed decision-making and for knowing what is working well and what needs attention. Effective processes to collect and analyse information about study programmes and other activities feed into the internal quality assurance system.

Institutional accreditation standards

- **GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION.** The TLIs' system of governance, administrative structures and their practices are effective and intend to the accomplishment of its mission and purposes by keeping the governance code of ethics.
  - The TLI conducts environmental scanning and draws on reliable data during the decision-making process. (2.4)
  - The management of the policies and the processes draws on the quality management principle (plan-do-check-act). (2.5)
  - There are mechanisms in place ensuring data collection on the effectiveness of the academic programmes and other processes,

The information gathered depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the institution. The following are of interest:

- Key performance indicators;
- Profile of the student population;
- Student progression, success and drop-out rates;
- Students' satisfaction with their programmes;
- Learning resources and student support available;
- Career paths of graduates.

Various methods of collecting information may be used. It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.

analyses and application of the data in decision-making. (2.6)
  - There are impartial mechanisms evaluating the quality of quantitative and qualitative information on the academic programmes and qualification awards. (2.7)
- **STUDENTS.** The TLI provides relevant student support services ensuring the effectiveness of the learning environment.
  - The TLI has policies and procedures for revealing student educational needs. (4.2)
  - The TLI has evaluation and quality assurance mechanisms of student educational, advisory and other services. (4.8)
- **FACULTY AND STAFF.** The TLI has a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff to accomplish the institution's mission and to implement the goals set for academic programmes.
  - The TLI has well established policies and procedures for the periodic evaluation of the teaching staff. (5.3)
- **INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES.** The TLI has necessary resources to create learning environment and to effectively support the implementation of its stated mission and objectives.
  - The TLI has a sound policy and procedure to manage information and documentation. (7.5)
  - The TLI has mechanisms in place for the evaluation of the effectiveness, applicability and availability of resources given to the teaching staff and learners. (7.7)
- **SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY**. The TLI is accountable to the government and society for the education it offers and the resources it uses as well as for the research it conducts.
  - The TLI has sustainable feedback mechanisms for establishing relations with society. (8.3)

Programme accreditation standards

- **TEACHING STAFF.** The academic programme ensures teaching staff with necessary professional qualifications to realize the goals of the academic programmes.
  - There are well-established policies and procedures for periodic evaluation of the teaching staff that foster to reveal and develop the professional needs of teaching staff. (2.2)
- **TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES.** The teaching and learning practices used within the academic programme ensure the achievement of intended learning outcomes.
  - There are set mechanisms evaluating quality of teaching and learning approaches. (3.3)
- **QUALITY ASSURANCE.** The programme has internal quality assurance system that promotes its maintenance and continuous improvement.

- The programme collects reliable information about the implemented processes through feedback mechanisms, which is evaluated for the improvement programme's goals and processes. (7.3)

1.8 Public information

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

Guidelines:

Information on institutions' activities is useful for prospective and current students as well as for graduates, other stakeholders and the public.

Therefore, institutions provide information about their activities, including the programmes they offer and the selection criteria for them, the intended learning outcomes of these programmes, the qualifications they award, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students as well as graduate employment information.

Institutional accreditation standards

- **SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY.** The TLI is accountable to the government and society for the education it offers and the resources it uses as well as for the research it conducts.
  - The TLI has clear policy on institutional accountability. (8.1)
  - The TLI ensures transparency of its procedures and processes and makes them publicly available. (8.2)
  - The TLI has sustainable feedback mechanisms for establishing relations with society. (8.3)
  - The TLI has mechanisms that ensure knowledge transfer to the society. (8.4)
- **INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE.** The TLI has an internal quality assurance system for promoting establishment of a quality culture and continuous improvement of all the processes of TLI.
  - The internal quality assurance system ensures the transparency of the processes unfolding in the TLI through providing information on the quality of the processes to the internal and external stakeholders. (10.6)

1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

Guidelines:

Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes aim to ensure that the provision remains appropriate and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students. They include the evaluation of:

- The content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline thus ensuring that the programme is up to date;
- The changing needs of society;
- The students' workload, progression and completion;
- The effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students; The student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme;

Institutional accreditation standards

- **ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES.** The programmes are in concord with the institution's mission, form part of institutional planning and promote mobility and internationalization.
  - The academic programmes of the TLI are contextually coherent with other relevant programmes and promote internationalization and mobility of students and staff. (3.4)
  - The TLI has policy ensuring academic programme monitoring, effectiveness assessment and improvement. (3.5)
- **STUDENTS.** The TLI provides relevant student support services ensuring the effectiveness of the learning environment.
  - The TLI has policies and procedures for revealing student educational needs. (4.2)
  - The TLI has evaluation and quality assurance mechanisms of student educational, advisory and other services. (4.8)

- The learning environment and support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme.

Programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date. Revised programme specifications are published.

Programme accreditation standards

- **ACADEMIC PROGRAMME DESIGN AND APPROVAL.** The academic programme is in concord with the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (ANQF), national qualifications descriptors, and state academic standards as well as is in line with the institution's mission.
  - The programmes of the TLI are contextually coherent with other relevant programmes and promote mobility of students and staff as well as internationalization. (1.5)
  - The programme learning outcomes meet the needs of the students and other stakeholders. (1.6)
  - There are set mechanisms and procedures in place to ensure development, approval, monitoring and periodic review of the academic programme. (1.7)
- **TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES.** The teaching and learning practices used within the academic programme ensure the achievement of intended learning outcomes.
  - There are set mechanisms evaluating quality of teaching and learning approaches. (3.3)
- **QUALITY ASSURANCE.** The programme has internal quality assurance system that promotes its maintenance and continuous improvement.
  - The programme collects reliable information about the implemented processes through feedback mechanisms, which is evaluated for the improvement programme's goals and processes. (7.3)
  - The programme ensures dissemination of good practice to other relevant programmes. (7.5)

1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

Guidelines:

External quality assurance in its various forms can verify the effectiveness of institutions' internal quality assurance, act as a catalyst for improvement and offer the institution new perspectives. It will also provide information to assure the institution and the public of the quality of the institution's activities.

Institutions participate in cyclical external quality assurance that takes account, where relevant, of the requirements of the legislative framework in which they operate. Therefore, depending on the framework, this external quality assurance may take different forms and focus at different organisational levels (such as programme, faculty or institution).

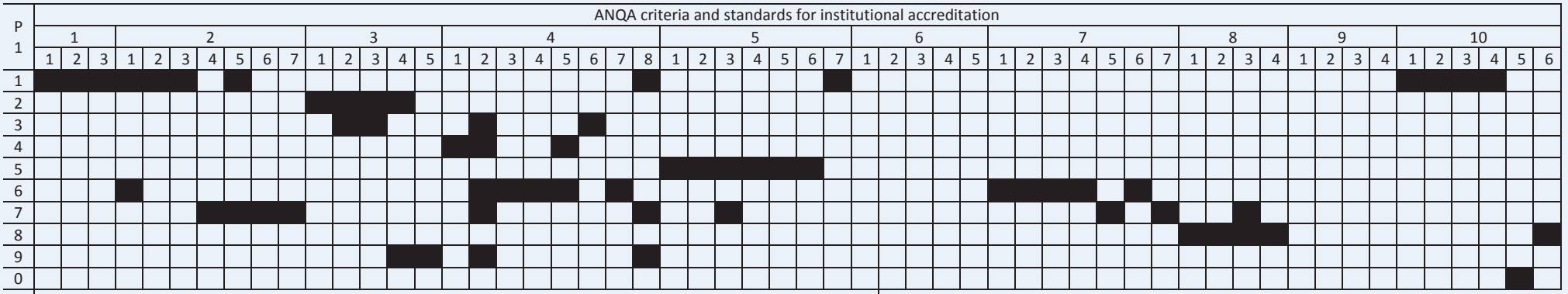
Institutional accreditation standards

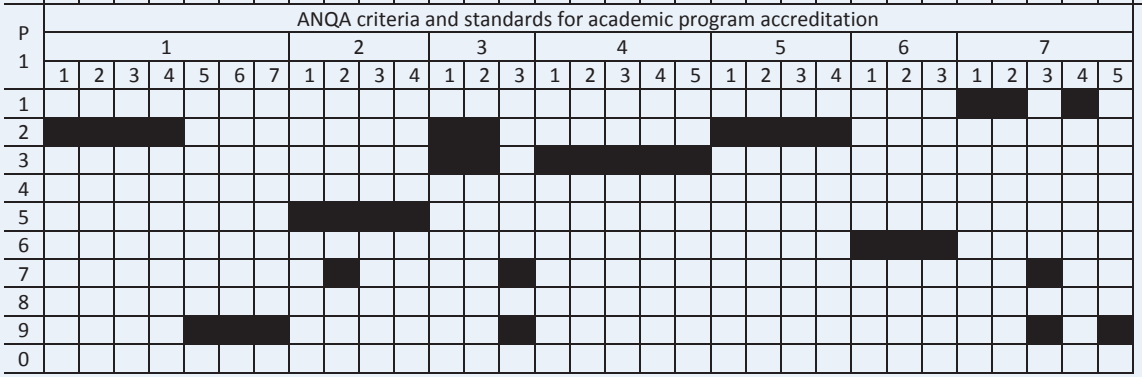
- **INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE.** The TLI has an internal quality assurance system for promoting establishment of a quality culture and continuous improvement of all the processes of TLI.
  - The internal quality assurance system provides valid and sufficient background for the success of the external quality assurance processes. (10.5)

Quality assurance is a continuous process that does not end with the external feedback or report or its follow-up process within the institution. Therefore, institutions ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.

Mapping

ANQA criteria and standards for instiutional accreditation





How does internal and external quality assurance work in Armenia and what is the role of students in the process?

Internal Reviews

Internal Quality Assurance (IQA henceforth) of HEIs is a key element of the Armenian quality assurance system. Internal quality assurance processes should be an integral part of the HEIs academic performance and should provide a basis for its enhancement and reinforcement.

The internal quality assurance policy is therefore of utmost importance; it should reflect the basic mechanisms of the internal quality assurance system and promote the institution's accountability. In addition, it will help to create and foster a quality culture, and at the same time promote the full participation of internal and external stakeholders, particularly students in quality assurance processes. The policy is based on the principle of continuous quality enhancement, which includes four main operations; these make up the driving principle of continuous quality enhancement:

- Plan
- Do
- Check
- Act

This is a principle through which an HEI assures itself and its stakeholders that it has consistently reached the highest standards possible in all aspects of its activities. In the context of accountability, internal quality assurance is used as an academic performance monitoring mechanism.

It is of no less importance that HEIs ensure the high quality of their academic programmes. They must have programme development, implementation, and monitoring processes. Academic programmes should be consistent with the institution's mission and have clearly defined learning outcomes. It is important that all stakeholders be involved in programme development and review processes. HEIs should give primary focus to students' **active participation** in the implementation of academic programmes. A student-centred approach to learning is important, specifically with regard to the subsequent rise in students' motivation and their active involvement in their learning. Lecturers occupy a substantial role in providing students with a high-quality education. Consequently, HEIs must have transparent mechanisms for academic staff recruitment and professional development. Great importance is attached to student admission, progression, qualification awarding and recognition processes as well as documents outlining and regulating all these processes. It is important that the existing regulations be consistent with the institution's mission and objectives.

The role of students in internal quality assurance is crucial. On a basic level, the student input is required to provide students' collective approach on the quality assurance processes. This might be conducted in many ways:

- Results of surveys, focus groups or other information-gathering sessions.
- Papers or other evidence provided by student representatives.
- Relevant statistics on academic outcomes, such as recruitment (how many students start the course), retention (how long students stay on a course) and attainment (the marks students achieve).
- Individual perspectives given verbally by students to the panel which is undertaking the relevant view.

The students are members of self-assessment teams in the HEIs. This means being an equal member of teams, alongside teaching staff, support staff, managers and external experts. Here, the student is expected to work with and inform fellow reviewers by providing a student perspective on deliberations and ensuring the interests of students are at the heart of all discussions and outcomes.

External Reviews

The external review process is managed by a national quality assurance agency. The **Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)** state that national quality processes should look at assessments, teaching staff, learning resources and student support, information management and public information. National arrangements might cover other aspects as well. In Armenia, the body responsible for the conduct of external reviews is ANQA.

ANQA highlights:

- Strong relations with national and international stakeholders and trust towards the agency.
- Provision of reliable information on thematic studies and research in different sectors.

- Students' role in the implementation of quality assurance processes.
- Internationalisation of its activities.

ANQA also supports the **"Students' Voice"** programme (launched in 2011 by ANQA) urging students to have a stronger input to the quality enhancement of their education.

The "Students' voice" programme strategy is designed:

- to increase students' awareness on educational reforms,
- to reveal the main issues of concern for students via research,
- to replenish the student-expert database and provide student-experts for accreditation processes through continuous trainings,
- to establish a student network for collecting and studying their opinions and presenting the results.

Recruitment of student experts - the Student Voice

ANQA recruits participants for the student expert pool using the following methods:

- disseminating an open call among online student-friendly platforms, social networks and mailing lists;
- through the Armenian National Students' Association – ANSA asking for the nomination of member students;
- through HEIs asking for nominations from deans/vice-rectors/rectors.

The "Student voice" program training to become a student expert takes about 2-3 months with weekly meetings and discussions with the representatives and trainers of ANQA. A key element of the training is designed to enable the student expert participants to learn how to analyze a self-evaluation report of an institution, to check whether its activities match up with defined criteria and standards, as well as how to conduct themselves in panel meetings and how to contribute to the writing of a report.

Usually this kind of training is provided annually during the summer months. After completion of the training students are rewarded with a certificate which gives them the accreditation to be involved in future external reviews. They become part of an external review panel at the request of ANQA, who plan and co-ordinate higher education institutional external reviews. The accreditation period of student experts is not limited, but is confined in any case to students who are enrolled in any level/form of higher education studies. Up until now ANQA has trained around 100 students out of which 20 have participated in an external review as a panelist.

Student representation in external reviews

In Armenia students are represented in external review processes as "student expert" members of an external review panel and are equal partners with other national and international expert members. There are three general phases or steps in the accreditation process:

1. Self-evaluation is an evaluation procedure of the institution or its academic programme, which is followed by a written report based on the standards adopted by the Government of the Republic of Armenia.
2. External Review is a process whereby an expert panel carries out desk review, which involves examining the self-evaluation report and all other important documents submitted by the institution. Student expert together with the other expert panel members analyse and discuss each standard of the report, drawing out all the strong, weak points and the main problematic areas of the institution. This is followed by a site visit, during which the expert panel members meet with institutional representatives in person: administrative and academic staff, students, graduates, employers and as an outcome, the panel prepares a written report, which includes recommendations on the areas to be improved.
3. Decision-making is a process of fact reviewing, decision-making and indication of areas.

The future

The challenge therefore, is to increase the student expert input to both internal and external review processes. Throughout the timescale of the ESPAQ Project considerable progress has been made to embed student participation in quality processes; the publication of an Agreement between the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia and the partners of the ESPAQ Consortium which to date includes ANQA, ANSA and the five HEI institutions embeds student engagement this further and commits all partners to ensure that student participation is enhanced and is effective.

That Agreement makes clear that:

Strengthening of the role of student participation in the quality assurance in higher education institutions as proposed by the EU Tempus grant program "ESPAQ - 544261-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-BE-TEMPUS-SMGR" served as a basis for this agreement, under the scope of which the Ministry, Higher Education Institutions, the Armenian National Students' Association and the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance express their willingness to undertake their responsibilities of carrying out necessary mutual work arising from this Agreement, with the purpose of implementing the Project objectives and goals. ***Specifically, parties of the contract agree to recognize the authority of the National Student Experts (NSE) pool,*** *established as an outcome of the above-mentioned project. The NSE pool will not be a separate organizational unit, but an independent structure within the Armenian National Students' Association. In this regard,* ***all the academic partners agree to inform the operational body of the NSE pool at the point that they are required to conduct QA related activities with NSE pool member(s), as well as undertake their rights and responsibilities*** *mentioned below.*

Therefore, it is clear that there is a commitment to ensure that there is an independent and national student expert pool which will be responsible for providing students to take part in internal and external QA review.

The challenge is to ensure that the work of the ESPAQ project continues to be a catalyst for further and deeper student involvement in quality processes and embeds its ambitious aims into everyday practice:

- Supporting students to engage at all levels in enhancing their learning experience;
- Supporting the development of practices and activities in HEIs and their local students' associations that encourage student engagement;
- Supporting student engagement with national decision-makers and relevant agencies (such as the national quality agency ANQA and the national student body ANSA);
- Encouraging the development of a culture of student participation in Armenia.

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Appendix 1

Armenian National Students' Association – ANSA

The Armenian National Students' Association, commonly referred to as ANSA is an umbrella organization of 20 local student unions from all over Armenia. Through its members, ANSA represents 80% of students studying at Armenian institutions.

Being the largest representative of the student body at a national level, our organization aims to advocate, promote and protect the educational, social, economic, cultural interests and the rights of students both on national and international level.

ANSA's mission is to promote and protect students' rights by forming an effective student body of students which is able to campaign for and the advancement of student interests.

ANSA works for students having access to stable, affordable and quality higher education.

The ESPAQ Project has enabled ANSA to represent the student perspective and their voice alongside the HE reforms.

Within the ESPAQ project ANSA was delighted to lead the formation of the Student Expert Pool for Quality Assurance. This is a new achievement for the student movement in Armenia, making the student voice more independent and representative. In cooperation with the National Quality Assurance Agency – ANQA, QA pool members will be provided with extensive training and afterwards they'll become accredited experts to be used to carry out QA activities.

The purpose is to have a self-regulating Student Expert Pool which will mainly operate by a three-person steering committee appointed from the pool members by the General Secretariat of ANSA. Representation, advocacy and dissemination about the QA pool will also be assured by ANSA through its various networks. With the creation of this pool the student movement will have more impact on both internal and external QA procedures.

Appendix 2

Armenian National Centre for Professional Education and Quality Assurance (ANQA)

The National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA) is an independent organization founded by the Government of the Republic of Armenia in 2008. ANQA implements quality assurance processes through institutional and programme accreditation in preliminary, vocational and higher educational institutions. Its goal is to support tertiary level institutions to create a quality culture in accordance with the legislation of Republic of Armenia. ANQA fosters the assurance of tertiary education quality standards and ongoing quality enhancement, supporting the autonomy and accountability of HEIs.

While performing its activities, ANQA represents the public interest, strives to increase the competitiveness of TLIs and their graduates and is guided by the following principles:

- Public trust. This principle is based on democracy and its idea of the public holding real power and determining its own future. By its activities, ANQA guarantees public trust to tertiary education.
- Social cohesion and responsibility. One of the main goals of education is socialization, i.e. development of respect for norms, values, and principles of democratic society, which will ensure social cohesion. In this regard, the role of quality assurance is to increase the awareness of the society regarding its right to receive good-quality education, which is typical for democratic societies. A sustainable and independent system of quality assurance will safeguard society against low-quality education by making the services of tertiary education publicly transparent.
- Equity. ANQA strives to ensure equal opportunities for every social stratum through its approach to all the stakeholders of tertiary education, particularly equal treatment for public and private institutions.

ANQA is proactive in the quality assurance arena internationally being a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (CEENQA). ANQA's international visibility is also ensured through its active initiation and implementation of a variety of the World Bank and European Commission projects, which successfully tackle a diversity of challenges related to the higher education reforms in Armenia.

Appendix 3

List of commonly used abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
ANQA	Armenian National Centre for Professional Education and Quality Assurance
ANSA	Armenian National Students' Association
BFUG	Bologna Follow-Up Group
BWSE	Bologna with Student Eyes
BA	Bachelor's degree
B-learning	Blended learning
CEENQA	Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies
CHEA	CHEA
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EHEA QF	European Higher Education Area Qualifications Framework
EI	Education International
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
ESU	European Students' Union
EU	European Union
EUA	European University Association
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
QF	Qualification Framework
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for higher education
E4	Stakeholders' group integrated by institutions, EUA and EURASHE; students, ESU; and quality assurance agencies, ENQA.
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LO	Learning Outcomes
MA	Master's degree
MOOC	Massive open online course
NESET	Network of Experts on Social Aspects of Education and Training
NESSIE	Network of Experts on Student Support in Europe
NUS	National Union of Students
NQF	National Qualification Framework
PLA	Peer learning activity
QA	Quality Assurance
RPL	Prior Learning Recognition
SCL	Student-Centred Learning
sparqs	Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland

ENHANCING STUDENTS PARTICIPATION IN QUALITY ASSURANCE IN ARMENIAN HIGHER EDUCATION (ESPAQ)

The ESPAQ project is looking at one of the core challenges of Armenian higher education (quality of its provision and outcomes), by engaging the students into processes of quality assurance (QA) and enhancement of their learning experience. With the help of project consortium, it will be explored the motivation and barriers for Armenian students to partake in QA on various levels. Project aims to improve the conditions for engagement by raising awareness on the importance of students' say within the academic community providing capacity building support and by suggesting relevant changes in the legislation/HEI regulation.