



NATIONAL CENTER FOR
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION
QUALITY ASSURANCE FOUNDATION

Follow-up Report

JUNE 2024

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN ARMENIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM	2
3. EUROPEAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES (PART 3)	3
3.1. ACTIVITIES, POLICY AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE	3
3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS	7
3.5 RESOURCES	10
4. COMPLIANCE WITH EUROPEAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES (PART 2)	11
2.1. CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE	11
2.2. DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE	12
2.3. IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES	13
2.4. PEER REVIEW EXPERTS	14
2.7. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS	16

1. INTRODUCTION

During its meeting on June 10, 2022, the ENQA Agency Review Committee validated the external review report of ANQA. The Committee concluded that the report adhered to the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews and is suitable for use in applying for ENQA membership and EQAR registration. On December 13, 2022, the ENQA Board determined that the National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance, Foundation (ANQA) met the necessary requirements for renewing its full membership in ENQA, based on an external review conducted in 2021. Consequently, ANQA's membership in ENQA was renewed for five years from that date.

Additionally, on October 25, 2022, ANQA's application for EQAR registration was approved and renewed by the EQAR Register Committee, extending its registration until June 30, 2027.

After reviewing the external panel's report, ANQA developed a detailed follow-up plan to implement the panel's recommendations and observations. The plan includes not only ENQA expert panel recommendations, but also observations of EQAR Register Committee.

Hence, this report provides an update on ANQA's recent advancements, and the improvements made as a result of the recommendations from the ENQA-coordinated review and observations of the EQAR Register Committee.

2. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN ARMENIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Recent developments in the Armenian higher education system have been marked by significant reforms aimed at enhancing the quality and global competitiveness of its educational offerings. Key among these developments is the establishment of the Academic City and the creation of a new Higher Education and Science Committee.

1. **Higher Education and Science Committee:** Armenia has introduced a committee tasked with overseeing the integration and improvement of higher education and science sectors. The scope of activities of the Committee includes the functions of the former Science Committee and the Supreme Certifying Committee of the RA MESCS, as well as the Department of Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education of the RA MESCS, ensuring the implementation of the state policy aimed at the cooperation and integration of the fields of science and higher education.
2. **Academic City:** A major initiative recently undertaken is the development of the Academic City, planned near Yerevan. This project aims to consolidate various educational and scientific institutions within a single area, promoting greater collaboration and resource sharing among universities and research centers. The Academic City is expected to serve as a hub for innovation and learning, equipped with modern facilities and supported by international

partnerships. This initiative is expected to reshape the educational landscape by combining universities and research organizations into clusters such as medical, technological, arts, and educational sectors, each potentially partnered with international institutions to enhance their global engagement and quality. It is envisioned that the Academy city will be established in 2030.

These initiatives are part of Armenia's strategic vision to create a more integrated and efficient education system that supports academic excellence and prepares students for the challenges of the modern workforce.

In response to the ongoing reforms in the Armenian higher education system, the draft of the Law on Higher Education and Science is currently being revised to accommodate the new changes, including the establishment of the Higher Education and Science Committee and the development of the Academic City. These significant reforms necessitate updates to the regulatory framework to ensure that it aligns with the modernized structure and aims of the educational system.

3. EUROPEAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES (PART 3)

3.1. ACTIVITIES, POLICY AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

Recommendation:

To develop separate regulations and procedures for accreditation of HEIs and VETs to avoid possible confusion and better reflect the needs of the two sectors.

Following the implementation of a follow-up plan and recommendations from experts, ANQA has taken significant steps to refine and enhance the accreditation processes for Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). As part of these initiatives, ANQA has spearheaded the creation of distinct regulations tailored specifically to the needs of VETs and HEIs.

To facilitate this process, ANQA organized multiple discussions involving a wide range of stakeholders to gather input and insights. These discussions were instrumental in the formulation of a new statute specifically for VET accreditation. After thorough deliberations and refinements, this statute was submitted to the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport (MoECS) for official approval.

Simultaneously, ANQA has been actively engaging stakeholders in dialogue aimed at revising the accreditation criteria and standards for VETs. The outcome of these discussions has also been compiled into a document that has been forwarded to the Ministry for consideration.

Looking ahead, ANQA is preparing to amend the accreditation manual, which will serve both VETs and HEIs. This manual will incorporate all the new regulations and standards that have been developed and refined through these stakeholder discussions. These efforts underscore ANQA's commitment to continuously improving the accreditation framework in Armenia, enhancing its relevance and effectiveness in supporting quality education across different sectors.

Recommendation:

To identify ways to involve international representatives in the agency's governance.

ANQA received a recommendation to include an international representative in its governance structure. However, considering the composition of the ANQA Board, which is appointed by the RA Government, and the current limitations within the RA legislative framework regarding the direct involvement of international members on the Board (a situation that would require a legislative amendment), ANQA sought an alternative solution. To address this recommendation without necessitating legislative changes, ANQA opted to establish an international Advisory Group. Previously ANQA had an advisor to the Director. After discussions and considerations about the effectiveness of advisory roles within ANQA, the decision was made to transition from having a single advisor to the director, to establishing a formal advisory group. To formalize this initiative, a Regulation on the Composition and Operation of the Advisory Group was developed. This document outlines the structure, responsibilities, and operational guidelines of the group, ensuring clarity and efficacy in its role.

The proposed regulation was thoroughly discussed with the ANQA staff members and ANQA Board of Trustees. After deliberations, the Board of Trustees recommended appointing 1-2 advisors within this group. These advisors would be tasked with providing consultations to the Director of ANQA and the Board of Trustees on matters of strategic development, whenever their expertise was deemed necessary. They can be called upon by either the Director or the Board of Trustees to provide expert insights on specific issues.

While ANQA has introduced an advisory group to ensure an international perspective in the governance of the agency, it is important to highlight that international insights, particularly European approaches and trends, are integrated across all activities of the agency. In all accreditation processes ANQA engages international experts, who share their experience in the development of higher education system.

ANQA employees are involved in European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs), specifically in areas of Qualifications Frameworks (TPG A) and Quality Assurance (TPG C). Additionally, ANQA is represented on the ENQA Board. To demonstrate its commitment to aligning with European standards and practices in higher education quality assurance and promoting European values, ANQA has decided to involve the representatives of TPGs in the advisory group,

who will present latest developments and best practices in the EHEA to the director and the Board of Trustees and discuss potential areas of improvement at least twice in a year. International experts' involvement will be ensured in the Advisory Group, in case of receiving financial resources from the Government.

Recommendation:

To review its organizational chart and correctly reflect the current structure of the organization and display the reviewed version on the website.

List of main evidences:

ANQA organizational chart updated on the webpage

[WEB](#)

The organizational chart of ANQA was a focal point of discussion among the staff members, where they explored various possibilities for revising the chart to accurately represent the current structure of the organization. This collaborative process was crucial for ensuring that the chart would effectively reflect the operational realities and reporting lines within ANQA, thereby enhancing organizational clarity and efficiency.

Following these internal discussions, a revised draft of the organizational chart was prepared, considering the insights and feedback gathered from the staff. This draft was subsequently presented to the members of the ANQA Board of Trustees for a thorough review. The board engaged in a detailed examination of the proposed changes, ensuring that the new organizational structure would support ANQA's strategic goals and operational needs effectively. After careful consideration and deliberations, the Board of Trustees approved the revised organizational chart.

Once approved, the newly revised organizational chart was promptly published on the ANQA website.

Recommendation:

To conduct at least one pilot phase before implementing regulatory mechanisms for programme accreditation once it becomes mandatory by the law.

At the present time, the process of program accreditation remains voluntary in Armenia. However, it is anticipated that with the enactment of the new Law on Higher Education and Science, program accreditation will become a compulsory requirement. According to this new legislation, in the intervals of the six-year cycle of institutional accreditation, HEIs will be encouraged to undertake comprehensive reviews of all their academic programs to ensure ongoing quality and relevance. Currently a working group was established to finalize the new Law on Higher Education and Science.

As soon as this new law is formally adopted, it will necessitate a thorough revision of the entire accreditation framework. This will include updates to the current standards and may also lead to changes in the methodologies used for accreditation. To ensure these updates are effective and practical, new methodology will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders and pilots of new methodologies will be implemented following the revisions.

To prepare for programme accreditation, ANQA continues organizing workshops and meetings to ensure that the institutions are well-prepared for the programme accreditation. Through various methods ANQA encourages the TLIs to participate in pilots of program accreditations, aiming to enhance the engagement and readiness of educational institutions. By adopting diverse approaches, ANQA facilitates institutions in understanding and aligning with the accreditation criteria effectively. This inclusive strategy ensures that each institution can find a method that suits its specific needs and context, thereby improving the overall quality and relevance of their educational offerings. In pursuit of having their programmes recognized, HEIs have started actively applying for program accreditations internationally and locally.

Currently, two medical institutions applied for program accreditation, adhering to the existing regulations and standards set forth by ANQA. These applications are being processed under the current guidelines, which will continue to govern the accreditation until the new law is in place and the proposed changes are fully integrated into the system. This transitional phase is critical as it prepares all stakeholders for the structured and mandatory approach to program accreditation that will soon be implemented.

Recommendation:

To actively engage student representatives in QA-related discussions and increase student involvement in other relevant processes such as decision-making of accreditation, by including a student representative into the Accreditation Committee.

ANQA has been proactively continuing its efforts to engage students in various initiatives aimed at enhancing their involvement in the educational quality assurance processes. Various strategies have been implemented to ensure active student participation. These include organizing meetings with students from the education management faculty, conducting targeted training sessions designed to equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge for engagement in quality assurance activities, etc. Each year ANQA Students Voice project implements training sessions for about 70 students to prepare them for the internal and external quality assurance processes.

A notable outcome of these efforts is the inclusion of a student from the Student Voice project in the European Students' Union (ESU).

Furthermore, to address ENQA recommendation to ensure student representation in the Accreditation Committee and to revise the corresponding parts of ANQA manual and the

regulation of Accreditation Committee Composition and operationalisation, discussions with ANQA staff members and accreditation committee members were held. Following the initiatives, ANQA has updated the regulation on Accreditation Committee Composition and Operationalisation, which was subsequently approved by the Board of Trustees. In 2024, under the newly approved regulation, new members of the Accreditation Committee were selected and approved, including a student representative. The student is involved in the ESU student expert's pool.

Suggestions for further improvement:

The panel suggests the agency to continue pursuing the decision-making authorities to set the timeframe of the first, second and following cycles of institutional accreditation activity with a clear terminal point for each cycle by when all HEIs should undergo external accreditation. The same approach is suggested for programme accreditation when this process is to be implemented.

ANQA is actively communicating with the MOESCS to establish a clear timeline for small private higher education institutions to apply for accreditation. According to current regulations, these institutions retain the accreditation they received before 2006.

Several discussions were conducted with members of the Accreditation Committee too. Following these discussions, a draft proposal was prepared and submitted to the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MOECS). In this proposal, ANQA recommended that the MOECS impose a specific, non-negotiable deadline for all HEIs that have not yet completed the accreditation process. Besides the proposal, every year ANQA sends to the MOECS the list of TLIs that have not applied for the accreditation.

The intention behind this recommendation is to expedite the conclusion of the first accreditation cycle for small private universities, ensuring that all institutions are assessed according to established quality standards within a reasonable timeframe. To align with this goal, ANQA has advised setting the deadline for applying for the first cycle of institutional accreditation on the 20th of December 2024.

3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Recommendation:

The panel recommends the agency to further work on broadening the thematic analysis by selecting and analysing various relevant aspects for the higher education sector. The themes could focus not only on accreditation processes (as it is now), but also analyse good practices and trends of the tertiary education system in Armenia, including through the findings of the external review reports

ANQA puts a high value on the implementation of thematic analysis on a regular basis and provides necessary financial and human resources for it. The ANQA development policy is focused on the

support of reforms in HE and according to this goal, ANQA accumulates feedback on the system and shares outcomes with stakeholders.

The selection of themes for the analysis is based on discussions with stakeholders and tendencies identified from the accreditation processes.

The gathered data and analysis that summarizes the challenges and trends of the tertiary education system supports the development and enhancement of the policy documents both at the agency and at the system level, providing recommendations to the state authorities, and identifying directions for the different international projects. This information is of high importance in decision making at the agency and system levels.

The system-wide analyses are other mechanisms for collecting data on the impact of the accreditation on the tertiary education system.

To address the recommendation and broaden the thematic analysis, which is set as a goal in the agency's strategic plan too, since 2021 ANQA started few thematic analysis:

Year	Topic	Goal	Results
2023-2024	Credible qualification award in HE system	<p>The aim of the analysis was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study the governance approaches and qualification awarding processes in institutions, • reveal the best practices and make them accessible to internal/external stakeholders and the community, <p>Provide opportunities for educational institutions to learn from each other and disseminate the best practices.</p>	The data is gathered, and being analyzed, will be published by the end on 2024

2023-2024	Status Quo analysis of Micro-credentials in RA	<p>ANQA conducted SWOT analysis on Micro-credentials provision in Armenia. Besides, a status quo analysis is conducted within the framework of the MICRO-GEAR project.</p> <p>The goal of the analysis is to understand what the situation in Armenia in regard to micro-credentials is (the legislative framework, limitations and obligations, how the term is defined, who can provide, how it is recognized and quality assured)</p>	The outcomes are presented in Georgia and Armenia.
2024	ETF Forum Topic: Quality Assurance of employment-oriented formative assessment	VET system in general and QA of VET system were analyzed, best practices were revealed. Based on the analysis conducted, a national context report was prepared and submitted to the ETF experts. A visit followed.	National context report and feedback of the experts are published on ANQA website.
2024	A system-wide analysis in VET system.	The analysis is aimed at understanding the extent to which the QA system is embedded in VET institutions. What kind of QA infrastructure and culture is in place.	The questionnaire is developed and discussed. The analysis and outcomes will be available in 2025.
2024	Impact of AI on accreditation	ANQA initiated a thematic analysis using AI particularly CHAT GPT. The theme of research is focused on the evaluation of accreditation impact on the development of the university through analyzing the self-evaluation reports and experts reports for the 2011-2023 causing AI tools.	The analysis will be published by the end of 2024

Table 1: List of the ANQA Research studies

3.5 RESOURCES

Recommendation:

To ensure that enough resources are available to extend its activities once the new Law on Education and Science is adopted.

To further guarantee the sustainability of all the foreseen activities, it is crucial for the agency to be properly financed by the RA Government.

ANQA prioritizes financial stability and qualified human resources. Founded by the state and at the same time keeping its independence, ANQA developed and implements a financial diversification policy to ensure the agency's financial independence and stability. The financial resources diversification plan touches upon the financial planning of the accreditation process, training sessions conducted by ANQA, participation in international projects, etc.

To address the recommendation, the issue regarding the financial resources was discussed with the president of ANQA Board of Trustees. In the 2025-2027 midterm state expenditure programme submitted to the Government, ANQA proposed to increase state funding for upcoming activities and years and clearly identified and grounded them. The state funding has increased in the line of "accreditation of VET institutions", as well as salary increases for maintaining staff and attracting qualified personnel.

Besides, to ensure its financial sustainability as well as ensure professional development of its staff, during the last 2 years ANQA was involved in 5 ERASMUS + projects. As well as was involved in 5 new grant proposals, the results of which will be published later this summer.

Suggestions for further improvement:

To pursue its efforts for retaining the experienced personnel and diminish the staff turnover

ANQA has launched a process of midterm planning of the needs of staff with a view of making its activities more effective. As for the staff planning, ANQA has foreseen the necessary number of experts, coordinators and students to meet its strategic goals. The number of staff members, experts, coordinators and students needed is calculated. Another mechanism to involve necessary staff is outsourcing. If necessary, the experts, who have been involved in accreditation processes more than once, are to be trained as coordinators to ensure the effective implementation of all planned activities. In line with the necessary staff planning, a short-term plan of training for each year has also been developed. ANQA recruits its staff from Students' Voice project, students and graduates from the faculty of Education management, from participants of the training, etc.

To address the recommendation of retaining experienced personnel and reducing staff turnover, here are several activities that are regularly implemented at ANQA:

- **Employee Satisfaction Surveys:** conducting regular surveys to gather feedback on job satisfaction, work environment, and areas of improvement. Analyzing these data helps to identify specific issues that may be causing dissatisfaction and turnover,
- **Career Development Opportunities:** opportunities for professional development and career advancement within the ANQA, such as participation in international training and workshops both in Armenia and abroad. Expanding these opportunities increases employee engagement and retention.

By implementing these measures and making data-driven decisions, ANQA has been able so far to effectively work towards retaining experienced personnel and reducing staff turnover. Staff turnover for the last 2 years was very low (1 person).

4. COMPLIANCE WITH EUROPEAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES (PART 2)

2.1. CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Recommendations:

The panel recommends the agency reviews its criteria and standards in the view of addressing:

- publicly available regulations covering all the phases of the student life cycle (ESG 1.4);
- transparency of processes for recruitment and development of staff (ESG 1.5);
- communication of planned or taken actions to those concerned in the institutions (ESG 1.9);
- clear definition of the period of EQA cycle and run procedures within it covering all HEIs in Armenia (ESG 1.10).

To appropriately address the recommendation, ANQA conducted a survey among local and international experts and thoroughly reviewed their feedback, which highlighted several areas needing updates.

In its efforts to align with international benchmarks and enhance the quality of accreditation processes, ANQA undertook a comprehensive review and analysis of its institutional accreditation criteria and standards. This involved a detailed comparison with globally recognized frameworks, such as the WFME standards for medical education and various standards in the field of engineering. This exercise helped pinpoint areas requiring enhancement and highlighted strengths and unique aspects of ANQA's accreditation criteria that may differ from international practices.

Following this synopsis, a thorough analysis of expert panel reports and self-assessment reports was conducted to understand the type of information provided by TLIs under each standard and identify points that led to misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the standards.

Based on the results, a series of discussions were organized with relevant stakeholders. ANQA organized a meeting with the National Information Center for Academic Recognition and Mobility (ARMENIC). The discussion focused on the recognition process and what aspects to emphasize regarding recognition in the accreditation criteria.

The revision and adoption of new standards are planned for completion by the end of 2026.

2.2. DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE

Recommendations:

To pursue the dialogue with the Ministry of Education and Science for linking the accreditation procedures to licensing of HEIs operation on the RA territory.

To address the recommendation, as well as to strengthen the regulatory framework governing the operation of TLIs in the RA, ANQA has put forward a proposal to the MOESCS recommending that accreditation procedures be directly linked with the licensing of TLIs.

Additionally, the Government's policy on licensing has changed. ANQA proposed integrating licensing into the accreditation process through an ex-ante accreditation phase. This new approach could result in the merging of the licensing unit with ANQA.

Furthermore, the introduction of an ex-ante accreditation stage is proposed, aimed at providing a preliminary assessment mechanism to ensure programs meet minimum quality standards before undergoing the full accreditation process.

Suggestions for further improvement:

To consider merging the monitoring and follow-up procedures into one clearly defined follow-up procedure for accredited institutions, while a separate monitoring procedure could be retained for non-accredited institutions only.

ANQA has developed a regulation of the Monitoring, which clearly states how the follow-up of the accreditation processes and separate monitoring of non-accredited institutions is conducted. ANQA conducts several types of monitoring: Monitoring of follow-up plans of the accredited TLIs and thematic monitoring for all TLIs and internal quality assurance system monitoring in the TLIs that have not yet undergone institutional accreditation.

To promote the continuous development of the quality culture, as well as to collect data on the effectiveness of the quality assurance systems of TLIs, in the reporting period ANQA continued to carry out monitoring in accredited and non-accredited higher and vocational educational

institutions. In the reporting period, 34 institutional and program monitoring of HEIs were carried out by the ANQA. The quality assurance culture was observed in 25 VET institutions.

In the case of accredited educational institutions, the implementation of the follow-up plan developed by the institutions was observed. Main achievements and current challenges of the follow-up plan were at the core of the monitoring process.

Within the scope of academic program monitoring, various aspects were examined including the management of these programs. Efforts to recruit highly qualified teaching staff, as well as the effectiveness of the quality assurance system in identifying challenges within academic programs, uncovering, and disseminating best practices were also observed.

In the case of TLIs that have not yet undergone the accreditation process, monitoring activities have focused on observing the strategic development processes. These observations are particularly aimed at the efforts made towards implementing and embedding quality assurance systems. The monitoring aimed at identifying and guiding improvements in institutional practices that contribute to the advancement of quality assurance, thereby facilitating the overall development and readiness of these institutions for accreditation.

2.3. IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES

Recommendations:

To involve external experts in the follow-up process.

The matter of follow-up for the accreditation processes was thoroughly discussed with the members of the Accreditation Committee and ANQA staff. ANQA acknowledges the importance of involving experts in follow-up processes, however, the current budget allocated for accreditation activities does not include provisions for funding these follow-up measures. This oversight in budget planning has necessitated a reassessment of the financial strategies supporting the accreditation process.

In response to this financial shortfall, it was decided that a revision of the financial policy governing accreditation is essential. This revision will involve a detailed calculation of the expected expenses related to follow-up activities. The goal of this financial recalibration is to ensure that these costs are appropriately accounted for and incorporated into the overall funding framework. Once the costs are clearly defined, the plan is to integrate these expenses into the accreditation fees. This adjustment will not only cover the costs of employing external experts for follow-up but will also help to streamline the financial planning for future accreditation cycles, ensuring that all necessary processes are adequately funded and can be carried out without financial obstacles.

By taking these steps, ANQA aims to establish a more robust and sustainable financial model that supports the comprehensive scope of accreditation activities, including essential follow-up by qualified external experts. Currently ANQA has been working on the development of the draft financial policy.

Recommendations:

The panel keeps the 2017 ENQA recommendation regarding the follow-up procedure after 6 months, as it hasn't been addressed yet and is still relevant.

Aspects that should be taken into account should be:

- it is satisfactory that HEIs have to submit follow-up and improvement plan, in order to be monitored also after decision making. But the panel had concern about the time frame. The 6-month delay for the submission of the follow-up report is too short and should be reconsidered.
- To have formal decision resulting from the follow-up/monitoring process

List of main evidence:

The issues regarding the timeframes for the submission of the follow-up report and the methodology of conducting the follow-up, as well as formal decision after follow-up was discussed with the stakeholders. The amendments and changes on the respective topics were made in the draft of the new Statute of State Accreditation. However, the statute will be possible to finalize and approve, after the admission of new Law on Higher Education and Science.

As for the formal decision, within the framework of the monitoring the group conducts meetings with the management and administrative staff of the TLI, responsible people for the academic programmes, teachers, students, QA staff, etc. So far, each monitoring visit is summed up with the meeting of the TLI top management. During which strong and weak points, current challenges of the TLI revealed during the visit are presented. However, the issue was also discussed with the newly appointed Accreditation Committee members, and it was agreed to prepare a report on the outcomes of the monitoring visit and submit it to the TLIs.

2.4. PEER REVIEW EXPERTS

Suggestions for further improvement:

To consider formal training for the international experts, to loosen the intensity of the process in terms of number and length of expert group meetings during the accreditation procedure.

All expert panel members are trained before being included in the ANQA's database. Student experts are also properly trained. Training sessions are organized for all the registered students and last two months. During the training both experts and the students have the opportunity to

look in-depth at previous self-evaluation reports from institutions, analyze them, write down questions, have role-play activities, write a report, and evaluate the HEIs performance from their perspective. The feedback gathered from the experts is quite positive about the training and guidance they received from ANQA.

Regarding international experts, although they do not always receive formal training before being involved in a review, they are informally prepared beforehand. They are having several on-line meetings before the site visit and discussions about the RA tertiary education and the review process. They are presented with the procedure, standards, criteria for evaluation, what is expected from them, and what is their role in the process. At the preparatory meeting they are discussing the self-assessment report with the local experts, identifying issues to be clarified during the site visit, getting to know the template for the expert panel report, etc. Following the recommendation, ANQA has significantly increased the engagement with international experts organizing meetings and discussions with local experts where they can ask questions and clarify the context.

Suggestions for further improvement:

To consider appointing international experts also as chairs of the external review panel, not only as panel members.

ANQA's experience has demonstrated that having an Armenian chair for the accreditation process is more efficient for several reasons. Primarily, the size of the documents that need to be reviewed are in Armenian, and this poses a significant challenge when non-Armenian chairs are involved. The translation of these documents into English incurs additional expenses, which can be considerable and impact the overall efficiency of the process.

Furthermore, international experts themselves have concurred with this viewpoint. They recognize the practicality and efficiency of having a chair who is fluent in Armenian due to the language requirements. There have also been instances where international experts have declined ANQA's suggestion to serve as chairs, citing the language barrier and the associated complexities it introduces.

This feedback from international experts and the practical challenges of managing translation services underscore the importance of having an Armenian chair who can navigate the accreditation process with greater ease and less financial burden.

Besides, under the existing regulations, it is mandatory that the chair of the panel must have prior involvement in the accreditation process as an expert panel member before assuming the role of chair. This requirement ensures that the chair has a deep understanding of the process and can effectively guide the proceedings. In the case of international experts, it may cause some difficulties following the regulation, as international experts may vary from process to process.

2.7. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Recommendations:

To establish a clear and transparent complains procedure and publish it on the website.

ANQA acknowledges that the complaint procedure that has been applied so far was not formulated and described in the ANQA accreditation manual, and a separate regulation was lacking. Though the mechanisms and opportunities are in place in practice, there is an indication of it in different documents, including contracts among the ANQA and the TLI . For this purpose, a working group has been established to discuss acting cases with the process coordinators, to gather all the existing information and research the international best practices, to analyze the legislative framework of RA to understand the obligations and limitations, communicate with the relevant stakeholders and develop new complaint procedures. So far, a draft of the procedure has been developed and circulated among the ANQA staff.

After the finalization of the draft, it will be disseminated among the external stakeholders and discussed with the relevant parties. The finalization and publication of the procedure is foreseen in Autumn 2024.

Suggestions for further improvement

To ensure that students are involved in the Appeal Commissions

According to the accreditation regulations, educational institutions have the right to appeal decisions of institutional and programme accreditation made by the Accreditation Committee. Following the publication of the decision, appeals can be filed within a one-month period, according to the application format developed by ANQA. The Appeal Committee is formed by the ANQA Board of Trustees at the suggestion of the ANQA Director and consists of three members. The Appeal Committee reviews these applications to make final conclusions. The Appeal Committee consists of 3 experts. ANQA has adopted a competency-oriented approach to selecting experts in the Appeal Committee. As far as the appeal concerns the students' issues, a student representative will be involved in the panel. Following the recommendation ANQA has planned to pilot the involvement of a student in the Appeal Committee in the upcoming cases.

*15 years Gateway
to Quality*

**National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance,
Foundation**

YEREVAN 2024