



QA: Good Practice and Tools

Yerevan/The Hague, 14 March 2012

Meeting 12COM02

Visit 3 – NVAO, 29 February – 3 March 2012

Report 12REP02

Report on visit, seminar and training, March 2012

Subproject 12SUB02

Seminar stakeholders and ANQA on IQA, 1 & 2 March 2012

Subproject 12SUB03

Training HEI on IQA, 3 March 2012 (day 1/3)

LINE 1 – IQA / LINE 3 – ANQA

Subproject 12SUB01

Project Website

ALL LINES

Amendment 12AME03

Amendment 3, April 2012

Some 70 stakeholders participated at the 3-day event for HEI. The programme and the material for both the seminar and the training sessions are published on the project website. The programme is also to be found in annex. Also included are an update of the time and activity line, brief reports of the various meetings, and a draft programme for upcoming events.

The two-day seminar (1-2 March 2012) on IQA was opened by the Minister of Education and Science. Quality assurance in Armenia is an ongoing learning process, and he welcomes the technical assistance as offered by the ARQATA project. He emphasises the importance of meeting the criteria as laid down in the new accreditation framework. He has good faith that HEI will meet the minimum requirements so as to fully integrate in the international i.c. European higher education area. In the next phase, however, HEI should focus on raising the level of education and research. The ministry welcomes reforms to reach these quality driven goals. At the same time, the ministry will be very strict and rigid in the execution of the accreditation procedures.

At the seminar (12SUB02), good practice was presented in IQA from both Europe and Armenia. The focus was on tools for IQA such as an evaluation matrix. In concurrent sessions, the recently adopted Armenian framework at both institutional and programme level was looked at in more detail. It appears that most HEI have already several ongoing activities regarding quality assurance. Less clear is how to fit these into a system. The evaluation matrix as a basic QA tool might help to clarify aims and objectives of QA, and to further develop a system. Important is to consult relevant stakeholders on this, and to opt for a QA system fit for purpose.

Following the seminar with stakeholders, some 40 key persons of 8 HEI – and not 3 HEI as initially intended – attended the first day of the three-day training session on IQA (12SUB03). Day 2 of the training takes place on 23 March; day 3 on 27 June 2012. During this first training, participants were guided through the various steps of writing a self-evaluation report (SER). HEI worked on criterion 1 of the ANQA framework for institutional accreditation. To conclude, a tool was presented: SER in 10 Steps.

In three sessions on the glossary special attention was paid to quality assurance jargon which is particularly hard on non-native speakers. These sessions often led to an animated discussion. Also in both programmes, key factors to a successful quality culture in HEI (line 4) were made explicit.

ANQA staff members attended the seminar as observers. During the training of HEI on writing a self-evaluation report, ANQA coordinators had a more active role to play. They offered guidance and reported back on the outcomes of the first assignment. In this way, a beginning is made with the further professionalising of ANQA staff. Prior to the seminar and training, ANQA was assisted in organising preparatory meetings with HEI at management level.

At the occasion of the seminar, the ARQATA project website (12SUB01) was launched. In less than three weeks, ANQA managed to design and set up the website. The website includes information on the project, documents, partners and participants, and news items such as events. Communication on the website is basically in English but the forum and surveys also allow for Armenian. Most documents used for training purposes are available in both English and Armenian.

At the end of both the seminar and the training, participants were invited to fill in the evaluation forms on line. The aim is to sensitize stakeholders to the challenges of evaluation and computerized surveys. The results of the surveys are not available yet; they will be analysed at the next meeting with ANQA (12COM03).

Observations

- At present, QA seems to focus on documents and legal commitments (self-evaluation reports, handbook, accreditation decision etc.) rather than on QA itself i.e. enhancement of the quality of educational programmes. Reports and formal decisions are certainly important and necessary steps in the process of QA but not the only steps. Getting a driving licence is a prerequisite for driving a car; the actual driving, however, provides the freedom and pleasure that comes with it.
- Stakeholders participate in QA but not in a systematic way. Especially the labour market and alumni lag behind.
- Financial means to appoint and equip a QA team are not abundant. Even so HEI made a start with setting up QA units. A major point of attention is the position of this unit within the HEI structure given the history of a top-down approach in management. Another issue is the further professionalization of the QA staff.
- HEI make use of the PDCA-cycle for improvement purposes but in a rather fragmental way. The main obstacles seem to be the lack of data and analyses, and of clearly defined responsibilities.
- It is good to notice that some HEI explore far-reaching ambitions regarding the quality of their programmes (e.g. centre of excellences). A good functioning QA system will certainly contribute to achieve these goals.
- Terminology – both in English and Armenian – is not always transparent. During all ARQATA events, the glossary will be discussed as it is essential to agree on a common QA language.
- A cd with the documents as distributed after the event might not be conducive for the use of the project website as interactive medium.

Recommendations

- Students need to be considered as the most important stakeholders. It is therefore crucial to involve students in all QA activities, and therefore in all ARQATA activities. Both HEI and students need to sit together in order to define their role in the QA system, and to develop mechanism for active and continuous student involvement. It is a positive sign that some student bodies are in contact with sister organisations abroad. Also their active involvement in the 3-day ARQATA event was encouraging.
- Good use should be made of the momentum as to give an impulse to QA. However, HEI should be allowed reasonable time to further develop their QA system.
- In order to overcome possible resistance from HEI less acquainted with recent development in QA and less involved in quality culture, it is necessary to broaden the scope of the project towards these HEI. In the end, all HEI in Armenia should benefit from the project.
- In due time, one might want to consider to launch a project on defining learning outcomes.
- Another interesting project to contemplate is student assessment as an important part of the teaching and learning process. Obviously, the assessment of students is a key issue for most Armenian HEI.
- ANQA coordinators are involved in the organisation of various activities. During the training sessions, however, they should not be preoccupied with organisational matters so as to allow them to fully benefit from the training.
- International experts need to be aware of the Armenian context. Good practice should not be overemphasised as it might hinder the further development of their QA system. At all times, HEI should be encouraged to improve their system and the quality of the programmes.
- International experts are expected to deal with all issues raised by the participants. Experts are also expected to show how to fill the gaps in the QA system i.e. the evaluation matrix. Identifying the shortcomings is the first step; providing tools to overcome these shortcomings however is the most important step.

ANNEX 1 – Time and Activity Line

ANNEX 2 – Brief reports on the meetings (12COM02)

1 Meeting ANQA – NVAO Yerevan, 28-29 February 2012

As is the standard procedure, ANQA and NVAO meet at the occasion of every event (12COM02).

Purpose:

- a) to prepare the seminar (12SUB02) and the training (12SUB03) in more detail;
- b) to discuss the implementation plan (12REP01);
- c) to further discuss the international visits (12SUB08 & 12SUB09);
- d) to discuss the project website (12SUB01);
- e) to prepare the next events (end March 2012: 12SUB03 & 12SUB04 & 12SUB05 & 12SUB06).

Ad a

- Not 3 but 8 HEI participate in the seminar and the training. Of these 8 HEI, only 3 HEI are full partners in the project. This makes the number of representatives of HEI considerably larger (40) than anticipated for (24). The great interest in quality assurance is certainly something to value but it also puts pressure on the effectivity of the training. Indeed, the working forms require small(er) groups. Even so, with three trainers being available it should not be too problematic.
- All stakeholders will be present except for the labour market. The number of representatives per stakeholder differs though from what was intended.
- Some training material still needs to be translated. Of some documents there appears to exist different versions. Also some documents are meant to be distributed after the meeting. An extra check is, therefore, necessary to make sure the folder contains the correct material.
- All ANQA coordinators will attend the three-day event.
- Also the allocation of tasks between ANQA and NVAO at the seminar and training has been specified.

Ad b

- ANQA fully agrees with the implementation plan. Two additional activities are discussed:
 - E-train project: NVAO would find it useful for two (future) trainers to attend the E-train project dissemination conference in Madrid in June 2012. A subproject in October 2012, will be a two-day training session on the same subject: train the trainer. It is evident, that the outcomes and material of the ECA-project will be used in the October training.
 - Internships: ANQA would be interested in an internship at the NVAO office in The Hague for one of its junior staff members. The ARQATA contract mentions internships and study leaves (line 3: Professionalization ANQA) but no funds have been allocated yet.
- Two activities need to be rescheduled as to give HEI more time to prepare for the institutional accreditation: the site visits will take place in March 2013 (instead of February); the roundtable conference on EQA in May 2013 (instead of April/May).
- The initial idea was to select 3 HEI (out of 6 HEI) for the pilot IQA after the first training. Those 3 HEI have already been appointed though by the minister: Yerevan State University (YSU), Yerevan State Medical University (YSMU) en de State Engineering University of Armenia (SEUA). All three are prestigious and strategically important HEI. NVAO regrets that no private HEI will participate in the pilots as these institutions meet with different concerns.
- The minister also wants the same 3 HEI to participate in the pilot EQA although the ARQATA contract mentions only 2 HEI for institutional and 2 HEI for programme accreditation. Given the larger investment in capacity (NVAO, trainers and peers) when dealing with 3 institutional pilots, NVAO will not be able to comply with the request.
- Also the option of replacing 2 programme accreditation pilots with an additional institutional pilot cannot be considered. The project focuses on quality assurance on both programme and institutional level as they are essential elements of each HEI's QA system. Only in combination, the Armenian framework for QA complies with the ESG. Besides the ARQATA contract clearly stipulates both type of pilots: programme and institution.

- It remains unclear which programmes will be participating in the pilots EQA. For efficiency reasons one might opt for the same HEI undergoing the institutional audit. Involving other HEI at programme level, however, will definitely have a broader impact.

Ad c

- Students are preferably included in the international visits to Europe although neither ANQA nor PIU seem to feel the urgency. Also, student participation is not budgeted for.
- ANQA management will opt for the October visit to Switzerland (?); two ANQA coordinators will travel to The Netherlands/Flanders in June. ANQA management might accompany its staff members on the June visit at own expense.
- NVAO would like to know in advance the exact composition of the delegation so as to fit in the specific concerns and interests.

Ad d

- The project website will be launched at the first seminar. A short presentation is given, and some suggestions are made both on the design and the content. NVAO will also provide additional text for the home page and the forum. The evaluation on line (via survey monkey) is demonstrated. All in all, the result is impressive.
- ANQA will monitor the website and encourage HEI to make good use of the various possibilities (information about events, documents, forum etc.).
- Documents used for the 3-day event will be posted afterwards.

Ad e

- Dates for the next visit will be Wednesday 21 March until Friday 23 March 2012.
- The general outline for the programme for the next event has been discussed and agreed upon. See annex 4.
 - Training HEI on IQA (day 2/3) – Subproject 12SUB03
 - Workshop HEI on Handbook IQA – Subproject 12SUB04

Other issues raised:

- E-train project: ANQA management is invited to provide a list of future trainers – some 12 in total – to participate in the 2-day training in October 2012 (12SUB12). It is advisable that ANQA management is involved as well.
- NVAO tool: NVAO urges peers to write down their (objective) findings and (subjective) considerations before the first meeting of the assessment panel. This method allows peers to provide input on an individual basis. A grid is used to this purpose. This tool will be presented in a next training session.
- ANQA reports: the first assessment reports both on programme and institutional level are being written by ANQA coordinators in Armenian. At a later stage, these reports are translated into English. It would be helpful for the training of ANQA secretaries to receive these reports so as to establish the competency level.
- ANQA conference: ANQA will host the national conference on higher education in October 2012. For half a day, the conference provides a forum for HEI to hear about the latest outcomes of the ARQATA project.

2 Meeting CfEP PIU – ANQA – NVAO
Yerevan, 29 February 2012

Outcomes:

- Amendments to the contract are acceptable as justified and approved by ANQA. This applies to all items in the contract i.e. activities, timeline and members of the NVAO team. An official request for Amendment 3 is required, and can be sent by mail to PIU. It will take another 2 to 3 weeks to process the Amendment.
- The minister would like to include a third HEI in the pilot EQA. Therefore, PIU asks for an estimate for an extra institutional pilot as soon as possible. If approved, the additional pilot will be part of Amendment 3.
- E-train project: at this point, no funds are available to allow two Armenian trainers to attend the Madrid event in June 2012.
- Internships: again, no funds are available within the project. Other possibilities will be explored.
- International visits: student participation has been discussed previously. NVAO would like to include students in the visits but no funding is available within the contract. Now it seems that PIU cannot provide any financial support either.
- Again PIU will take care of the logistics including translators for the next training sessions in March and June 2012.
- PIU will also attend the 3-day event on IQA.
- Another meeting with PIU is scheduled for end March 2012 in order to finalize Amendment 3.

Issue raised at the occasion of the seminar:

- NVAO's jurisdiction is restricted to The Netherlands and Flanders. Therefore, NVAO cannot accredit institutions or programmes outside these boundaries. International recognition of institutions or programmes is based on assessments by independent panels preferably including international peers, and accreditation decisions by agencies complying with ESG.
- Pilots are tests facilitating the learning process. Pilots on institutional and programme accreditation are meant to help Armenian stakeholders to implement an effective QA system. The pilot procedures will be similar to the official accreditation procedures, but there will also be major differences. For instance the panel will visit the HEI only once (instead of twice), and there will be no audit trails. The pilots will result in assessment reports of a partial accreditation procedure. Therefore, the reports cannot be used as a basis for a formal accreditation decision. However, generous transitional arrangements can be extended to HEI having participated in the pilots.

ANNEX 3 – Programme seminar stakeholders (12SUB02) and training HEI (12SUB03)

Internal Quality Assurance

March 1-3, 2012

AGENDA

Start	End			
Thursday, March 1, 2012 (Aghveran Hotel Resort)				
10:00	10:45	Registration		
10:45	11:00	Opening speech RA Minister of Education and Science – Armen Ashotyan		
Chair: Ruben Topchyan				
11:00	11:15	Presentation ARQATA project (ANQA & NVAO – Ruben Topchyan and Michèle Wera)		
11:15	11:30	Launch project web-site (ANQA – Ruben Topchyan and Sargis Mkrtchyan)		
11:30	12:30	Good practice IQA related to Plan-Do-Check-Act Cycle (NVAO – Irma Franssen)		
12:30	13:00	Good Practice IQA as outcome of peer assessment (SEUA – Eduard Hakobyan)		
13:00	14:00	LUNCH		
14:00	15:45	Internal Quality Assurance <i>Part 1. "Evaluation Matrix"</i> (NVAO – Hiltje Burgler)	Internal Quality Assurance <i>Part 1. "Evaluation Matrix"</i> (NVAO – Yvonne Eppink)	Internal Quality Assurance <i>Part 1. "Evaluation Matrix"</i> (NVAO – Irma Franssen)
15:45	16:15	Coffee break		
16:15	17:30	Glossary QA: standards, principles and criteria – part 1 (ANQA & NVAO – Ruben Topchyan and Irma Franssen)		
17:30	18:00	End of programme (ANQA – Ruben Topchyan)		
19:00		DINNER		

Friday, March 2, 2012

8:00	8:50	BREAKFAST		
		Chair: Susanna Karakhanyan		
9:00	9:30	Glossary QA: assessment and evaluation – part 2 (ANQA and NVAO – Susanna Karakhanyan and Irma Franssen)		
9:30	11:00	Good practice IQA related to writing process self-evaluation report (NVAO – Hiltje Burgler and Yvonne Eppink)		
11:00	11:30	Coffee break		
11:30	12:50	Internal Quality Assurance Part 2. “Programme Level” (NVAO – Hiltje Burgler)	Internal Quality Assurance Part 2. “Programme Level” (NVAO – Yvonne Eppink)	Internal Quality Assurance Part 2. “Programme Level” (NVAO – Irma Franssen)
12:50	13:00	Assignment Stakeholder (NVAO – Hiltje Burgler and Yvonne Eppink)		
13:00	14:00	LUNCH		
14:00	15:30	Internal Quality Assurance Part 3. “Institutional Level” (NVAO – Hiltje Burgler)	Internal Quality Assurance Part 3. “Institutional Level” (NVAO – Yvonne Eppink)	Internal Quality Assurance Part 3. “Institutional Level” (NVAO – Irma Franssen)
15:30	16:00	Coffee break		
16:00	16:30	Outcomes workshops and discussion (NVAO – Hiltje Burgler and Yvonne Eppink)		
16:30	17:00	Glossary QA: stakeholders – part 3 (ANQA and NVAO – Susanna Karakhanyan and Irma Franssen)		
17:00	17:15	End of programme (ANQA – Susanna Karakhanyan)		
17:15	18:00	Evaluation on-line (ANQA – Susanna Karakhanyan)		
19:00		DINNER		

		<i>Saturday, March 3, 2012</i>		
8:00	8:50	BREAKFAST		
Chair: Irma Franssen				
9:00	9:15	Presentation aims and objectives training SER Institutional Level (NVAO – Irma Franssen)		
9:15	9:30	Entry-level test 10-steps to write a SER		
9:30	10:15	Training SER Institutional Level – part 1 Standard 1		
10:15	10:30	Glossary QA: policy, mission, strategy, procedures – part 4 (ANQA and NVAO – Susanna Karakhanyan and Irma Franssen)		
10:30	10:45	Coffee break		
10:45	12:15	Training SER Institutional Level – part 2 Writing SER (NVAO – Hiltje Burgler, Yvonne Eppink and Irma Franssen)		
12:15	13:00	LUNCH		
13:00	14:30	Part 3: Training SER institutional Level (NVAO – Hiltje Burgler)	Part 3: Training SER institutional Level (NVAO – Yvonne Eppink)	Part 3: Training SER institutional Level (NVAO – Irma Franssen)
14:30	14:45	Coffee break		
14:45	15:30	Assignment writing SER (NVAO – Irma Franssen)		
15:30	15:45	Final test		
15:45	16:30	Presentation SER in 10 steps (NVAO – Irma Franssen)		
16:30	16:45	End of programme (ANQA and NVAO - Ruben Topchyan and Michèle Wera)		
16:45	17:00	Evaluation on-line (website) (ANQA)		
17:30		Departure		

ANNEX 4 – Draft programme visit 4

ANQA-Meeting (12COM03)

NVAO: Rudy Derdelinckx & Irma Franssen

Wednesday 21 March 2012 (afternoon)

- brief introduction director NVAO to ANQA staff;
 - to evaluate 3-day event with HEI (early March);
 - to agree on steps to be taken for development handbooks;
 - to discuss the project website;
 - to prepare the next event (June 2012).
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- to take stock of needs regarding the ANQA information system (IT) and discuss further actions (*during dinner*)

Meeting CfEP PIU – ANQA – NVAO

NVAO: Rudy Derdelinckx & Irma Franssen

Wednesday 21 March 2012 (afternoon)

- brief introduction director NVAO to PIU;
- to discuss and finalize Amendment 3.

Training & Workshop HEI on IQA

University of Applied Science, Groningen: Hiltje Burgler-Feenstra & Yvonne Eppink

Wednesday 21 March 2012 (afternoon)

[Reading SER assignment]

Thursday 22 March 2012

Subproject Training HEI on IQA, day 2/3 (12SUB03)
Participants 8 HEI – 3 to 4 members of the SER writing team (24 to 32 pp) (*on invitation only*)
Observers 2 ANQA – 1 junior and 1 senior ANQA coordinators
Translator 1
Trainers Hiltje Burgler-Feenstra & Yvonne Eppink

Training HEI on IQA (day 2/3) – Subproject 12SUB03
> feedback on SER assignment and further elaboration

End of March 2012, day 2 of the 3-day training session with HEI on all aspects of IQA (12SUB03) takes place. During this session, HEI get feedback on their first assignment, and continue working on writing a self-evaluation report. This training also deals with the requirements regarding the actual content of the report, and includes another session on the glossary. By the end of this day's training, HEI should be able to write a SER on 3 criteria (I, II and X) to be finished by 15 May 2012. ANQA staff members attend this training as observers to continue their further professionalization.

Friday 23 March 2012

Subproject Workshop HEI on Handbook QA (12SUB04)
Participants 8 HEI – 2 to 3 quality assurance coordinators (16 to 24 pp) (*on invitation only*)
Observers 2 ANQA – 1 junior and 1 senior ANQA coordinators
Translator 1
Trainers Hiltje Burgler-Feenstra & Yvonne Eppink & Irma Franssen (introduction)

Workshop HEI on Handbook IQA – Subproject 12SUB04
> introduction and general outline handbook (IF) & workshop on tools (HF, YE)

The workshop with HEI focuses on the development of a handbook (12SUB04) to be used by HEI as a guide for setting up and monitoring IQA. The seminar on IQA (12SUB02) and both training sessions on writing a SER (12SUB03) should provide the basic material for working on the outlines for a handbook. Again ANQA staff members attend the workshop as observers.

Essential components of both the training and the workshop: evaluation (on line), glossary, and elements of quality culture made explicit. Also good practice from the other ongoing pilot projects will be included when relevant.

Training & Workshop ANQA on QA

NVAO: Rudy Derdelinckx & Irma Franssen

Subprojects	Workshop ANQA on Professionalization (12SUB05) Workshop ANQA on Handbook QA (12SUB06)
Participants	8 ANQA – management (2) and (assistant-)coordinators (5) and legal advisor
Translator	1
Trainers	Rudy Derdelinckx & Irma Franssen

The further development of the professionalising of ANQA is the main goal of the workshop with ANQA management and staff (12SUB05). To this purpose, different sessions are organised to identify the needs and concerns, and to define a shared approach for professionalization. During the course of the workshop, the outlines should be clear for the design of a handbook (12SUB06) and the development of training material for ANQA staff (12SUB07). By the end of the workshop, parts of the handbook are completed making use of the material developed for the 3-day event with HEI (early March) and new tools presented during the present workshop.

Thursday 22 March 2012

- 9 – 10.30 Meeting ANQA management on professionalization
> plan de campagne: procedures (protocol) and handbook IQA/EQA
- 11 – 13 Workshop ANQA staff on professionalization
> assessment of achieved learning outcomes i.c. final papers, products, thesis)
- 14 – 18 Workshop ANQA staff on Handbook QA
> introduction to handbook & domains & example: evaluation matrix (IF)
> discuss and complete matrix for 3 domains: HRM, Finances, Public Relations, Legal Matters

Friday 23 March 2012

- 9 – 13 Workshop ANQA staff on Handbook QA
> programme accreditation procedures
- desk research re. applications for accreditation (analysis assessment report);
 - decision-making process re. accreditation (prepare accreditation report);
 - effective troubleshooting tools: additional questions, meeting with panel, etc.
- 14 – 18 Workshop ANQA staff on Handbook QA
> discuss and complete parts of handbook with what has been discussed in previous workshop and training session on IQA with HEI (training material HEI re. self-evaluation report)
> discuss and complete parts of handbook with what has been discussed in previous sessions on IQA with ANQA (assessment of final papers, evaluation matrix, programme accreditation procedure)

Essential components of both the training: evaluation (on line), glossary, and elements of quality culture made explicit. Also good practice from the other ongoing pilot projects will be included when relevant.