



## **Report on Line 1: Internal Quality Assurance**

**Yerevan/The Hague, 28 November 2012**

*Universities need to approach quality assurance as an event (not a thing), as an ongoing process not without a struggle. Key factors for success are quality culture and the notion of keeping it simple and doing more with less.*

*Paul Rullmann (Delft), National Stakeholders' Conference – October 2012*

ANQA<sup>1</sup> and NVAO<sup>2</sup> are engaged in a World Bank project for technical assistance as stipulated in a contract between CfEP PIU<sup>3</sup> and NVAO (27 April 2011). This project goes under the name of ARQATA: Armenia Quality Assurance Technical Assistance. According to this contract, this report deals with the outcomes of Line 1 of the project. This line is completed mid October 2012.

This report relates the outcomes of the first of the five lines of the project: internal quality assurance (IQA) in Armenian higher education institutions (HEIs). All activities and issues related to IQA and discussed in the first stage of the project are dealt with. A toolkit on (internal) quality assurance for further use by the universities is the main outcome of Line 1. The report also commends on the pilots in eight universities and includes additional recommendations for the further training of HEI staff in IQA matters. This report is therefore written primarily for the universities from the point of view of quality enhancement and programme improvement rather than focusing on a culture of accountability and reporting.

It is unavoidable that there will be overlap between the reports on the various activities within the project because all five lines are intertwined. Many IQA topics have indeed been the subject of previous reports. In this report all HEI related IQA issues have been brought together, and a first draft of a QA Toolkit is being presented.

This report on Line 1 includes:

1. An executive summary;
2. An overview of the activities;
3. Key findings;
4. Recommendations;
5. Evaluation of activities in Line 1.
  - Annex Part I on Line 1;
  - Annex Part II with QA Toolkit.

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<sup>1</sup> ANQA = National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation

<sup>2</sup> NVAO = Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie

<sup>3</sup> CfEP PIU = Center for Education Projects Project Implementation Unit

## 1 Executive Summary

*A jump into the European Higher Education Area is important for Armenian universities. You might want to consider taking two jumps.*

*Karl Dittrich (NVAO), National Stakeholders' Conference – October 2012*

All activities, issues and outcomes of the project until so far are the result of a close collaboration with all universities in Armenia and especially with the eight universities (or HEIs) participating in Line 1 on internal quality assurance. All HEIs have shown a keen interest in quality assurance (QA) matters during the various workshops and training sessions, and they have put considerable effort in the tasks assigned to them. Discussions with HEIs were often animated and always constructive.

This report on internal quality assurance is therefore written primarily for the further use by universities. They can benefit from the outcomes of Line 1, they can develop a quality assurance (QA) policy plan including all stakeholders, they can design a QA handbook fit for purpose, and they can complete the QA matrix. In short, HEIs are able to take QA matters into their own hands by building on existing good practice and making good use of the QA Toolkit resulting from the activities in Line 1.

A few concerns have become apparent during the various ARQATA subprojects and in discussions with representatives of different universities. These concerns have already been touched upon on multiple occasions; they are also included in previous reports on the project:

1. Higher education in Armenia is putting a lot of effort in preparing itself for the European Higher Education Area. But the **ambitions and expectations** are high if not unrealistic within the foreseen time frame. It is therefore essential to prioritize in consultation with the politicians and the rector's conference. Too many, too far-reaching goals might lead to disappointments which can easily be avoided by setting attainable targets. Although this is not on the present list of priorities, it might be worthwhile to consider the evaluations of the programmes, for instance in the sciences. These assessments require less effort and have immediate results in terms of quality enhancement at programme level. It would also allow HEIs to demonstrate the quality of their educational programmes while building on more substantial quality improvements at institutional level.
2. It remains unclear in how far 'academic leaders' fully support the development of internal and external quality assurance. The 'sense of urgency' within the **academic leadership** seems rather modest. The quality assurance staff of the universities, however, are well motivated and eager to take the necessary steps towards quality enhancement. The apparent lack of academic leadership and ownership of quality assurance within universities is a threat to the implementation of quality assurance systems in Armenian higher education. The actual support and commitment of the academic leaders – rector, vice rectors, deans and deans – are prerequisites for the acceptance and the success of these systems. Without their explicit engagement and open support there is a considerable risk for failure despite all efforts and good intentions of quality assurance staff involved in the various international projects. It is essential for universities to seriously contemplate this issue and to take appropriate actions. ANQA could be helpful in initiating the dialogue but in the end the responsibility for adapting a true quality culture lies with the universities.
3. The present situation makes the position of HEIs both crucial and vulnerable. On the one hand, HEI need to adapt to a rapid changing society with more openness, more autonomy, more demands; on the other hand, HEIs need to comply with (inter)national quality assurance standards they cannot yet fully meet. The ARQATA project, therefore, focuses on the further development and implementation of an **internal quality assurance** system. Indeed, internal quality assurance will always be the leading principle. External quality assurance will always follow and refer to the internal processes. Especially the teaching staff and the students have a vital role in these internal quality processes. The ownership of quality lies with them, not with the quality assurance professionals. Without the commitment and input of teaching staff and students, an important opportunity for improvement will be missed. And that brings us to the quality assurance at programme level. Focussing on intended and achieved learning outcomes, and on the quality of

the teaching and learning environment is essential to any quality assurance system. That should be at the heart of education, that should be the focus of attention in quality assurance. This quality message – the importance of content over procedures, of internal over external quality assurance – has been conveyed at all meetings, and also at the National Stakeholders' Conference in October 2012.

4. Quite a number of HEIs are actively involved in the ARQATA project, and they also collaborate with other international projects and experts. So many projects, so many different inputs, so many different opinions and visions can be confusing instead of being helpful. Once clear and well-founded choices have been made, processes and procedures have to be made **fit-for-purpose**, taking into account the Armenian context. Only then the actual implementation of quality assurance can be successful.

## 2 Activities including results

*Being involved in quality assurance we managed to create an open climate and to work as a team facing the same challenges and sharing the same goals.*

*Margarita Shahverdyan & Eduard Hakobyan (HEIs), National Stakeholders' Conference – October 2012*

Line 1 of the project focuses on internal quality assurance. The aims of this line as stipulated in the contract are threefold:

1. To further develop the IQA systems of the universities;
2. To carry out pilots on IQA in eight universities;
3. To train staff in IQA matters, and to further develop training and training material.

Activities in Line 1 include:

- a) Analysis of IQA in Armenian tertiary education, and an implementation plan (12SUB01)
- b) A seminar with stakeholders including HEIs (12SUB02)
- c) A 3-day training of HEIs on IQA (12SUB03)
- d) A workshop with HEI on handbook IQA (12SUB04)
- e) Pilots on IQA in eight HEIs (12SUB15)
- f) A national stakeholders conference (12SUB09)
- g) A 2-day training of HEIs on IQA implementation (12SUB10)
- h) Training of HEI staff in QA matters (various)
- i) QA Toolkit including training material (12SUB06)

Results are included in the respective reports either as annexes (e.g. tools, training material, results pilots) or incorporated in the text (e.g. understanding of IQA, vision on IQA).

Ad a

In the initial phase, the implementation of the project met with some difficulties which resulted in a delay and consequently, some adjustments in the contract as laid down in Amendment 2 (January 2012). In order to make the re-launch of the project a success, and because some major developments have been taken place since the submission of the project proposal (November 2010) and the Inception Report (June 2011), it was felt necessary to **analyse** the present situation again. An accreditation manual including a framework and guidelines is available, pilots for institutional audits are being conducted, and the information system for tertiary education management is about to be installed. These are examples of progress already made.

During a three-day working session (2 -4 February 2012) in Yerevan, the details of the project were again discussed in depth with all parties concerned. The various meetings and discussions provided input for an **implementation plan**. This plan includes a description of the activities, methods, project

team and timetable within the framework of the contract. Amendment 3 to the contract (June 2011) covers the necessary changes.

Result<sup>4</sup>:

- 11REP01 – Inception Report, June 2011
- 12REP01 – Re-launch of the A(R)Q(U)ATA Project, February 2012

Ab b

At the first **IQA seminar** (1-3 March 2012) with all stakeholders, good practice was presented in IQA from both Europe and Armenia. The focus of this seminar was on tools for IQA such as an evaluation matrix. The evaluation matrix is a basic QA instrument that helps to clarify aims and objectives of QA, and to further develop a system. It appears that most HEI have already several ongoing QA activities. Less clear is how these fit into a system and to what extent a quality culture is the leading principle throughout the organisation. Also during the seminar it became clear that the participation of students, alumni and the labour market needs further improvement.

Result:

- 12REP02 – QA: Good Practice and Tools, March 2012

Ad c

Following the seminar with stakeholders, some 40 key persons of eight HEIs attended the first day of the **three-day training on IQA**. During this first training, participants were guided through the various steps of writing a self-evaluation report (SER). In concurrent sessions, the Armenian framework at both institutional and programme level was looked at in more detail. HEIs worked on criterion 1 of the framework for institutional accreditation and criterion 6 on the programme level.

During the second IQA training (22 March 2012), eight HEIs were given feedback on the first drafts of their SERs. Despite the fact that these were written in the form of summaries mainly due to lack of time, the documents provided enough information for the trainers to give feedback in a more general way. Feedback in detail was less obvious given the limited amount of text produced. The training session also dealt with the requirements regarding the actual content of the report. By the end of the seminar, HEIs were trained to write a SER on three criteria (I, III and X) to be finished by 15 May 2012.

Result:

- 12REP03 – Work in Progress: Writing SER and Handbooks QA, April 2012

Ad d

The **IQA workshop** with HEI (23 March 2012) focused on the development of a handbook to be used by HEIs as a guide for setting up and monitoring IQA. The seminars on IQA and both training sessions on writing a SER provided the basic material for working on the outlines for a handbook. After an introduction and a general outline of a handbook on QA external experts (Groningen) presented and discussed various tools as good practice. By the end of the workshop, HEIs started composing their own handbook taking into consideration (1) tools already used, (2) tools elaborated on during the workshop and previous training sessions, and (3) tools to be developed in due course. It goes without saying that both the handbook and the tools should be made fit for purpose. Composing and updating a handbook on QA is an ongoing process.

Result:

- 12REP03 – Work in Progress: Writing SER and Handbooks QA, April 2012

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<sup>4</sup> All reports are to be found on the ARQATA website: <http://www.anqa.am/arqata/Documents.aspx>

#### Ad e

Eight HEIs (and not three as originally planned) participated in a **pilot** on writing SERs. In May 2012, a panel of NVAO-experts (Leiden, Delft, and Brussels) reviewed the draft SERs on three of ten criteria written by eight HEIs. The experts have been asked to scrutinize the SERs, and to provide general observations, three positive aspects and three major points for improvement. The outcomes of this exercise have been discussed during the expert panel meeting in The Hague.

During the third day of the IQA training with HEIs, the feedback of the expert panel was discussed in more detail. HEIs also reflected on the SER written by their colleagues. In this final training session good and perhaps not-so-good practices were presented as well as tools for writing a SER. This training focused primarily on lessons learned and analytical skills with reference to the SER of the so-called Chatham University. Analytical skills were further practised in role plays.

#### Result:

- 12REP04 – September Visit: Training HEI on IQA, September 2012

#### Ad f

During the **National Stakeholders' Conference** (9-10 October 2012) stakeholders including HEIs having participated in Line 1 shared their views and experiences. Also the outcomes of the pilots on writing SERs were presented. The conference was concluded with round table discussions. International experts and HEI representatives reflected on quality assurance issues in four parallel sessions: management, faculty, students and quality assurance coordinators/units. These round table discussions proved a success with 50 to 70 participants per session.

#### Result:

- 12REP06 – Q-week, November 2012

#### Ad g

Following the conference with stakeholders, some 15 key persons of two HEIs – Yerevan State University (YSU) and Yerevan State Medical University (YSMU) – attended a **two-day training on IQA**. The training session focused on internal quality assurance at programme level and on the organisational aspects of an institutional audit. As such, day 2 of the training marked the transition from IQA to EQA to be continued in Line 2.

#### Result:

- 12REP06 – Q-week, November 2012

#### Ad h

Key persons of eight HEIs have been trained in IQA matters at various stages of Line 1. Also included in the training are students, experts and secretaries. The **training** will continue in Line 2 on external quality assurance, and is obviously intertwined with Line 4 on quality culture. In the QA Toolkit a separate session deals with training and training material. For the successful implementation of a QA system, it is important to start working with HEI staff motivated and interested in change; at a later stage, their efforts will have a broader impact and involve (all) colleagues. Equally important is to make sure that all training material is made fit for purpose.

#### Result:

- 12REP07 – Report on Line 1: Internal Quality Assurance, November 2012

#### Ad i

Activities in Line 1 resulted in various tools for implementing quality assurance resulting in a so-called **QA Toolkit**. HEIs have been working with concepts and formats making them fit for purpose. At a later stage, HEIs have been guided in the process of designing a QA handbook and actually writing it. In

doing so, HEIs have been preoccupied with developing their own handbook for both internal and external quality assurance.

Also the advantages of a digital handbook have been put forward. Annex Part II gives an overview of tools including training material with reference to the ARQATA website on which all relevant documents are posted.

The various training sessions and workshops in which HEIs participated, provided the input for the further development of custom-made material. As the training sessions with HEIs (and ANQA) are spread over the length of the project, a more complete set of tools and training material will be available at the very end of the project. Obviously there are links to the training sessions of ANQA staff and the outcomes of E-train (Line 3), and the international visits in which representatives of HEIs participated (Line 4).

Result:

- 12REP07 – Report on Line 1: Internal Quality Assurance, November 2012
- ARQATA website (<http://www.anqa.am/arqata/Documents.aspx>)

### 3 Key findings<sup>5</sup>

*“If the wheels in other spheres work with some problems, the wheels of education are always flat.”  
The good news: the wheels in Armenian tertiary education started to move.*

*Susanna Karakhanyan (ANQA), National Stakeholders' Conference – October 2012*

- The main observations are listed on pages 1-2, and concern:
  1. Ambitions and expectations;
  2. Academic leadership;
  3. First IQA, then EQA;
  4. Fit-for-purpose.
- HEIs seem to have a solid foundation for quality education. It should enable them to develop an internal quality assurance fit for purpose.
- The core business of any HEI is delivering good education. Internal quality assurance is a means to achieve that goal. As such, internal and external quality assurance plays a subservient role. Putting quality assurance first holds the risk of hindering the common objectives of quality enhancement.
- HEIs recognise the importance of internal quality assurance as a leading principle and external quality assurance as an ensuing notion. Even so, due to external forces, emphasis is rather on external than internal quality assurance.
- The further development of the internal quality assurance system and its implementation rely on team work within each HEI. Board members, deans, teaching staff and students need to join forces in order to make the internal quality assurance system work as it is intended: to enhance the quality of the individual programmes in a systematic way.
- Quite a number of good practices regarding internal quality assurance in HEIs have been identified. This can be very stimulating for the further development of a internal quality assurance system.
- It is good to notice that some HEIs explore far-reaching ambitions regarding the quality of their programmes (e.g. centre of excellences). A good functioning quality assurance system will certainly contribute to achieve these goals.
- Especially teaching staff and students encounter difficulties in accepting the ownership of an external quality assurance system that has largely been developed without their direct

<sup>5</sup> As included in previous reports (12REP05 & 12REP06)

involvement. The apparent lack of clarity of purpose and of transparency at times hampers the implementation.

- HEIs 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 the lack of clearly defined responsibilities.
- HEIs encounter difficulties to gather data and need assistance in that area. This is however beyond the scope of ARQATA. Even so, IT possibilities for collecting and managing relevant data need to be looked into. [As it is, the Tertiary Education Management Information System (TEMIS) project is running.]
- HEIs show a great interest in exploring the possibilities of working with intended and achieved learning outcomes. Although the expertise in and experience with defining learning outcomes are limited, some interesting initiatives have been taken.
- Another concern is student assessment. Some HEIs lack the expertise to develop reliable student assessments. At several occasions, HEIs have expressed the need for assistance.
- Financial means to appoint and equip a quality assurance team are not abundant. Even so HEI made a start with setting up quality assurance 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. And a special QA unit is by no means necessary if only quality assurance tasks are clearly delineated and allocated. Again the organisation of internal quality assurance within HEIs should be fit for purpose. Another issue is the further professionalization of the quality assurance staff.
- HEIs are not familiar with curriculum committees and boards of examiners. It would be worthwhile to elaborate on the specific tasks of these bodies and their role in quality assurance, also in an Armenian context.
  
- All stakeholders including HEIs have to work through an ambiguous situation: on the one hand, accreditation procedures are considered time-consuming with little added value; on the other, audits and assessments are expected to consolidate one's position. Especially the established HEIs hope to benefit from accreditation although they also seem to be somehow lacking in a self-critical attitude. Against this background, it is regrettable that the State Engineering University of Armenia (SEUA) does not continue in Line 2 of the ARQATA project as there is evidence of good practice.
- It remains unclear how well the smaller and private HEIs are prepared for the process of accreditation. During Q-week they remained somewhat aloof. This is definitely the case with private HEIs which feel uncertain about what to expect.
- Faculty still seem to operate in relative isolation and with a large degree of freedom. In order to make quality assurance a success, faculty needs to work as a team. They should be open for necessary changes, student evaluations, curriculum evaluations etc.
- Quality assurance staff are very involved and eager to participate in the ARQATA project. They certainly are crucial in the further development of an Armenian quality culture but their efforts are fruitless without the full commitment of the academic leaders.
- The National Qualifications framework is potentially confusing to reviewers and HEIs, since it does not seem to reflect the Dublin descriptors. It is markedly different in format from other NQFs, and also includes references to staff and to linguistic skills which do not seem entirely appropriate in a document of this kind, but this might well be a cultural matter.

## 4 Recommendations<sup>6</sup>

*Quality assurance can become the driving force in the necessary reformation of HEI management.*

*Ruben Topchyan (ANQA), National Stakeholders' Conference – October 2012*

- The main recommendations are listed on pages 1-2, and concern:
  1. Ambitions and expectations;
  2. Academic leadership;
  3. First IQA, then EQA;
  4. Fit-for-purpose.
  
- Refocus quality assurance activities on the further development of internal quality assurance to better align with HEIs overall quality objectives. In due time, these efforts will give the necessary input for external quality assurance and the self-evaluation reports.
- Focus on the ANQA standards and criteria for institutional and programme accreditation in the further development of a quality assurance system. The ultimate goal should be that programmes are in line with the ambitious level of the Armenian qualification framework. This framework sets the standards at a high European level.
- Ensure the organisational structure of quality assurance is fit for purpose. Given the stage of development HEI might want to opt for an institutional quality assurance unit but that is by no means necessary.
- Promote student participation in all quality assurance matters. In fact, all relevant stakeholders need to be actively involved.
- Collaborate with other HEI to learn from each other in quality assurance matters. Consider establishing a network of HEI staff engaged in quality assurance.
- Explore and adopt good practices within each HEI and across HEI.
- Collect the data that is relevant and deliver that data in a format best fit for purpose, be it internal or external quality assurance. If need be, seek assistance from colleagues or consultants.
- Contemplate on the tasks and roles of a curriculum committee and a board of examiner at programme level as part of an internal quality assurance system.
  
- Academic leaders should make good use of the external force of circumstances (accreditation) to carry the HEIs through the inevitable changes resulting from quality assurance (quality enhancement). Now is the momentum for change.
- Faculty need to be responsible for the quality assurance at programme level with reference to earlier comments on academic leadership. As a consequence, faculty should also take the lead in writing the self-evaluation report on programme level. Reference can be made to the self-evaluation report on the institutional level to avoid overlap.
- It is clear that HEIs have still much to work on policy and procedures, assessment of students, QA of teaching staff, and information systems. Therefore it seems logical to concentrate efforts (either within or outside of ARQATA) on these issues.
- In working with the HEIs it should be emphasised that international practices can be useful to look at but should always be adapted to the local context. It can be harmful if an international practice is taken out of context to legitimise a certain choice within the HEI.
- More attention may be needed to foster a self-critical attitude in some HEIs as became apparent in some training sessions.

### *Training suggestions for the further implementation of quality assurance in HEIs*

- Develop a training policy for HEI staff;
- Make the training material in the QA Toolkit and possibly from other sources fit for purpose for further training according to the HEI's training policy;
- Develop a knowledge circle within HEI with representatives of all programmes;

<sup>6</sup> As included in previous reports (12REP05 & 12REP06)



- Train the representative of the knowledge circle on quality assurance with the HEI's own training materials;
- Use internal audits (on programme level) as an instrument
  - to improve the quality of the programmes and
  - to professionalize the participants of the audits;
- Train the participants of the internal audits on audit skills;
- Organize a network of HEI quality assurance coordinators;
- Rely on the strength of HEI staff (and not solely on ANQA staff) but stay in close contact with ANQA;
- Make good use of shadowing of institutional audits and programme assessments within Armenia (and possibly) abroad;
- Be selective in participating in international training sessions on quality assurance for HEI staff;
- Be actively involved in quality assurance: learn by doing it.

## 5 Evaluation of Line 1

*ARQATA is a joint project involving universities, national and international experts, the ministry of Education and the World Bank, ANQA and NVAO. We work together in good partnership. All parties are well motivated to play their respective part, and they do so with vigour and perseverance.*

*Michèle Wera (NVAO), National Stakeholders' Conference – October 2012*

As mentioned before, subprojects have been implemented in good rapport with and in close collaboration with the universities (and other stakeholders). HEIs are very eager to invest in the various activities, and a lot of time and energy is being put in the realisation of the subprojects. HEIs and ANQA also work closely together in the various subprojects. As such, the project has a positive effect on the team building not only within HEIs and ANQA, but also between HEIs and ANQA.

It is essential though that HEIs keep working on quality assurance and continue encouraging a quality culture making full use of lessons learned through ARQATA. Products and tools presented and discussed on various occasions must be made fit for purpose. This can only be done by investing largely in terms of time (and money). If not, the impact of ARQATA will fade away.

Based on the results of the surveys of the subprojects and the individual feedback, HEI participants are positive about the general approach of training sessions and workshops: separate group assignments, practical exercises, intermediate group discussions and group evaluations, setting targets on specific products, direct involvement of international experts both from quality agencies and HEIs. Negative comments relate to the tight time schedule for the assignments, the limited and untimely feedback on the draft SERs, and the language constraints.

The Interim Report (12REP05) includes some additional comments on Line 1. These concern the delay of the implementation of the project, and the choice of HEIs involved in the project.



# **ANNEXES**

## **PART I** **(project)**



## ANNEX I.1 Activities<sup>7</sup>

VISIT	ACTIVITY	DATE
1	Introduction	June 2011
2	Re-launch project	2-4 February 2012
3	<b>Seminar</b> on IQA Training HEI on IQA (day 1/3)	29 February – 3 March 2012
4	Workshop ANQA on Professionalization (days 1-2/3) Workshop ANQA on Handbook QA (day 1/2) Training HEI on IQA (day 2/3)	21-23 March 2012
5	Training ANQA staff Training HEI on IQA (day 3/3)	11-13 September 2012
	<b>Study tour</b> (Netherlands & Flanders)	17 – 21 September 2012
6	<b>National Conference</b> on IQA Training HEI in IQA Implementation Training HEI and ANQA on EQA (day 1-2/3) Train the Trainer (E-train Project)	8-12 October 2012
	<b>Study tour</b> (Switzerland)	29 October – 2 November 2012
7	Training HEI and ANQA on EQA (day 3/3) Workshop ANQA on external review	18-20 December 2012
8	<b>Pilots</b> 4 HEI (2 institutional audits & 2 programme assessments) Final preparation ANQA for external review Review Information System	9 - 22 June 2013
9	<b>Roundtable Conference</b> on EQA	June 2013
10	<b>Proof ENQA review</b>	September 2013
11	<b>National Conference</b> on QA	December 2013

<sup>7</sup> As justified in Amendment 4 (draft November 2012).

**ANNEX I.2 Time & Activity Line**

Separate attachment (dated 28 November 2012).

## **ANNEX I.3 Overview of Activities<sup>8</sup>**

### **Meeting 11COM01**

Visit NVAO, June 2011

### **Meeting 12COM01**

Visit NVAO, 1-5 February 2012

### **Meeting 12COM02**

Visit NVAO, 29 February – 3 March 2012

### **Meeting 12COM03**

Visit NVAO, 22 & 23 March 2012

### **Meeting 12COM04**

Visit NVAO, June/July > 11 September 2012

### **Meeting 12COM05**

Visit NVAO, 8-12 October 2012

### **Meeting 12COM06**

Visit NVAO, Nov/Dec > 18-21 Dec 2012

### **Report 11REP01**

Inception Report, 28 July 2011

### **Report 12REP01**

Implementation Plan, March 2012 (draft)

### **Report 12REP02**

Implementation Plan, March 2012

### **Report 12REP03**

Report on visit, April 2012

### **Report 12REP04**

Report on visit, July > September 2012

### **Report 12REP05**

Interim Report, July > September 2012 (draft)

### **Report 12REP05**

Interim Report, July > October 2012

### **Report 12REP06**

Report on visit, October 2012

### **Report 12REP07**

Report on Line 1: IQA, October 2012

### **Report 12REP07**

Presentation Report on Line 1: IQA, December 2012

### **Report 12REP08**

Report on Line 4: international visits, December 2012

### **Report 12REP09**

Report on visit, December 2012

### **Amendment 12AME02**

Amendment 2, 10 January 2012

### **Amendment 12AME03**

Amendment 3, April > June 2012

### **Amendment 12AME04**

Amendment 4, December 2012

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<sup>8</sup> Activities directly related to Line 1 are highlighted.

**Subproject 12SUB01**

Website

**Subproject 12SUB02**

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

**Subproject 12SUB03**

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

**Subproject 12SUB03**

Training HEI on IQA, 22 March 2012 (day 2/3)

**Subproject 12SUB03**

Training HEI on IQA, June/July > 11 – 13 September 2012 (day 3/3)

**Subproject 12SUB04**

Workshop HEI on Handbook QA, 23 March 2012

**Subproject 12SUB05**

Training ANQA staff, 22 & 23 March 2012

**Subproject 12SUB05**

Training ANQA staff, June/July > 11 – 13 September 2012

**Subproject 12SUB05**

Training ANQA staff, 8-12 October 2012

**Subproject 12SUB06**

Handbooks & Training Material

**Subproject 12SUB07**

International visit, June > 17 – 21 September 2012

**Subproject 12SUB08**

International visit, 29 October – 2 November 2012

**Subproject 12SUB09**

National Stakeholders' Conference, 8 & 9 October 2012

**Subproject 12SUB10**

Training HEI on IQA Implementation, 10 & 11 October 2012 (2 days)

**Subproject 12SUB11**

Training HEI and ANQA on EQA, 11 & 12 October 2012 (days 1-2/3)

**Subproject 12SUB11**

Training HEI and ANQA on EQA, Nov/Dec > 18-21 Dec 2012 (day 3/3)

**Subproject 12SUB12**

E-train: Train the Trainer, 11 & 12 October 2012 (2 days)

**Subproject 12SUB13**

Training ANQA staff on external review, Nov/Dec > 18-21 Dec 2012

**Subproject 12SUB14**

Review information system ANQA

**Subproject 12SUB15**

Pilots in HEIs on writing SER

**Subproject 13SUB01**

Pilot institutional audit YSU

**Subproject 13SUB02**

Pilot institutional audit YSMU

**Subproject 13SUB03**

Pilot programme assessment YSU

**Subproject 13SUB04**

Pilot programme assessment YSMU



#### **ANNEX I.4 Overview of Universities**

The following universities have been involved in Line 1:

- 1 Armenian State Agrarian University (ASAU)
- 2 Yerevan State Linguistic University after Bryusov (YSLU)
- 3 Northern University
- 4 State Engineering University of Armenia (SEUA)
- 5 Yerevan Gladzor University
- 6 Yerevan State Conservatory after Komitas (YKSC)
- 7 Yerevan State Medical University (YSMU)
- 8 Yerevan State University (YSU)

## **ANNEX I.5 Overview of International Experts**

The following international experts have been involved in Line 1:

### **1 Hiltje Burgler-Feenstra**

HEI                Hanze Hogeschool Groningen, University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands  
Position         Senior Policy Advisor  
Subprojects     Training HEI on IQA (2 visits)

### **2 Yvonne Eppink**

HEI                Hanze Hogeschool Groningen, University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands  
Position         Senior Policy Advisor  
Subprojects     Training HEI on IQA (2 visits)

### **3 Klaas van Veen**

HEI                Leiden University, Netherlands  
Position         Associate Professor  
Subprojects     Expert panel SER

### **4 Paul Garré**

HEI                Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussels, Belgium  
Position         Director Quality and Education  
Subprojects     Expert panel SER

### **5 Jenny Brakels**

HEI                Delft University of Technology, Netherlands  
Position         Senior Policy Advisor  
Subprojects     Expert panel SER & Training HEI on IQA (1 visit)

### **6 Paul Rullmann**

HEI                Delft University of Technology, Netherlands  
Position         Member of the Executive Board  
Subprojects     National Stakeholders' Conference (October 2012) (1 visit)

# **ANNEXES**

## **PART II (Results)**

## **ANNEX II.1 Quality Assurance Toolkit for HEIs**

Material included in this QA Toolkit comes from different sources, and is basically being used by HEIs in the Netherlands and Flanders. Other point of reference are Swiss HEIs and NVAO. For the successful implementation of a quality assurance system with a focus on course enhancement rather than accountability and reports, it is essential for each individual Armenian HEI to design its own QA handbook, and to make tools fit for purpose. The QA Toolkit merely presents samples of tools.

All documents listed below are posted on the ARQATA website. ([www.anqa.am/arqata](http://www.anqa.am/arqata))

### **TOOLS**

#### **1 Internal Quality Assurance**

- Evaluation matrix
- Procedure instrument Tool 2
- Evaluation matrix in relation to stakeholders
- Evaluation matrix in relation to instruments
- Basic structure for the Quality Handbook for integral quality assurance TU Delft

#### **2 External Quality Assurance**

- Elaboration of the accreditation framework criterion II, Governance and administration; relation between the institutional and the programme level
- Elaboration of the accreditation standards for criterion III. Academic programs; relation with the TLI's mission and purpose
- Elaboration of the Armenian accreditation standards for criterion V. Faculty and Staff; relation between the institutional and the programme level

#### **3 Writing Self-Evaluation Reports**

- SER in 10 steps
- Writing SER
- Taking writing SERs to the final step

#### **4 Training Material**

- Evaluation matrix
- Good practice IQA related to Plan-Do-Check-Act Cycle
- Elaboration of the accreditation standards
- Assignment role stakeholders
- Assignment strategic plan
- Strategic plan
- Assignment Writing SER
- Assignment on IQA and QA handbook
- Analytical skills
- Quality enhancement on programme level
  
- Glossary QA – part 1: standards, principles & criteria
- Glossary QA – part 2: assessment & evaluation
- Glossary QA – part 3: stakeholders
- Glossary QA – part 4: policy, mission strategy and procedures

## APPENDICES

- Student assessment. NVAO guideline for the assessment of final projects by panels during site visits for the purpose of (initial) accreditation (8 July 2011)
- Questionnaire NSE 2012 (National Student Survey, Netherlands)
- Learning Outcomes (NVAO, September 2012)
  
- Questionnaire Integration moment TU Delft (Delft University of Technology, Netherlands)
- Questionnaire Project TU Delft
- MSc course survey TU Delft
- Questionnaire Internship TU Delft
- Internal degree-programme audit TU Delft
- TU Delft assessment and examination policies
- Questionnaire Alumni TU Delft
- Pedagogical Work at Federal Polytechnic Lausanne (Switzerland)
- Self-evaluation of faculties outline Université de Lausanne (Switzerland)
  
- Critical reflection Chatham university
- Panel Report NVAO
  
- Outline SER
- Documents SER
  
- Outcomes Line 1 on IQA (NVAO, October 2012)

### **1 On the assignment**

HEI were asked to deliver a SER on criteria 1, 2 and 10, in text or in an English summary. All HEI delivered summaries. Some HEI managed to deliver a text in full but these SER were very brief; other SER were incomplete but contained more detailed information. HEI pointed out more than once that the SER was only a summary and that the full text obviously would contain more information.

### **2 Working with the formats provided**

The **formats** were used and therefore a systematic approach was clearly visible. The recommended **sequence** – first de document analyses and then the description of the standards – was scarcely followed. As a result, the documents were named but rarely cited in de descriptions of the standard.

**Ambitions** were not always formulated: one should do so to give direction to the facts and findings. There was some discussion about how ambitious or realistic ambitions should be formulated.

**Facts and findings** were in general very brief with more facts than findings. It is essential to address this matter properly. Indeed, this is the start for the later mentioned strong and weak points. The real thing about self-evaluation is to be clear about your own observations and to state qualifications on your own achievements.

The **SWOT** was often critical but more often not very systematic in approach. It is recommended to prioritise and to address the things that can be altered or improved.

The **documents** were listed properly, most of them with a short summary. It was clear that some were important (key-documents), others less but that was not always shown in the listing. It is advised to do so. Especially in cases of documents that are vital, mandatory or dictated by government rules the status of these documents should be absolutely clear.

There was some discussion whether the same documents should be repeatedly named with the different standards. It is advised to give the summary only once, and to simply refer to it when dealing with other aspects.

It was clearly visible, but only in a few cases, that documents were used as input for the description of the standard. This method is certainly good practice.

### **3 In general**

There seems to be a general understanding of the criteria and standards although it is more difficult for the smaller HEI to make a clear distinction between institutional and programme level. This is quite understandable when, in some cases, the level is almost identical especially for HEI which are mono-disciplinary. In general, the institutional standards are more fitting to the larger universities.

It is recommended to add a chapter in the introduction to explain the actual situation of the HEI, and add specific background information so that the information provided in the criteria can be fully understood.

Another recommendation is to add overviews, schedules, pictures and examples for further quick orientation, and to highlight special achievements.

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<sup>9</sup> As included in Interim Report (12SUB05)

## 4 Criteria

### *Criterion 1*

When describing criterion 1, it is rather problematical to start with the HEI's ambition. Usually a mission statement includes this ambition. It is therefore recommended to start with a summary of the content of the mission, and to illustrate and elaborate on this in the facts and findings concerning the three standards. For the reader of the self-evaluation report it is very important to know from the beginning what the institution really aims at, really stands for. Also information about basic facts should be provided. When have the mission and the strategic plan last been reviewed? What is the scope in years?

### *Criterion 3*

In criterion 3 the ambition is very important. Education (and research) is the core business of each HEI. Important statements about the quality of education were already mentioned in the mission (criterion 1). Of course there must be a connection between criterion 1 and 3, but in criterion 3 the ambition concerning education should be further specified and elaborated.

And of course, it is difficult to distinguish between the institutional level and the programme level. One should stay close to general guidelines and procedures, but be also specific about them. A statement such as "programmes are in line with national regulations" is clear but not specific enough for a self-evaluation. So content needs to be added and more detailed explicitation. One should not too easily assume that the reader – the assessor – will understand. This criterion is all about content. So take this chance and make the reader understand just what you want him to understand about education in your HEI. Some typical illustrations or good practices of general guidelines taken from the programme level can be very helpful.

### *Criterion 10*

Most HEI have several aspects of a QA system in place. However, a complete structure with fixed elements is often missing, and not working throughout all the levels of the organisation. Some HEI set up a QA department, and started assigning tasks and responsibilities. Other HEI started with the paper work and made books with rules and regulations. All are in the midst of developing a quality culture. The crucial question is: how to get the relevant stakeholders really involved? And yes, building a quality culture is an ongoing process.

### **Review Self Evaluation Reports (SERs)**

The panel received SERs and summaries of SERs by the following institutions:

- 9 Armenian State Agrarian University (ASAU)
- 10 Yerevan State Linguistic University after Bryusov (YSLU)
- 11 Northern University
- 12 State Engineering University of Armenia (SEUA)
- 13 Yerevan Gladzor University
- 14 Yerevan State Conservatory after Komitas (YKSC)
- 15 Yerevan State Medical University (YSMU)
- 16 Yerevan State University (YSU)

These SERs have been reviewed by three experienced experts on Institutional Audits from the Netherlands and Flanders. In addition, two NVAO policy advisors reviewed the SERs.

External experts

- 1 Klaas van Veen, associate professor ICLON Leiden University;
- 2 Jenny Brakels, senior policy advisor Delft University of Technology;
- 3 Paul Garré, director quality and education at Hogeschool-Universteit Brussel.

NVAO

- 1 Irma Franssen, senior policy advisor;
- 2 Frank Wamelink, senior policy advisor.

The experts have been asked to study the SERs (each SER by one expert) and to come up with general observations and three weak and three strong points on each SER. The results have been discussed during one session. The feedback on the SER given below is a report of this discussion.

Two questions have been answered in the review:

- 1 Does the SER provide sufficient information at an appropriate level for a committee to start its assessment?
- 2 What are the strong and weak points of the individual self evaluation reports? Report in September.

The first question resulted in several general remarks. The main points are:

- Some SERs definitely need a revision on English
- Lack of a self critical approach/attitude

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<sup>10</sup> As included in Interim Report (12SUB05)



- Emphasis too much on vision, plans and future policy
- Affirmation of compliance is not substantiated by facts
- Formulate clear and realistic priorities
- Give more context on the institution and the process of writing of the SER

These points are elaborated below:

- The committee members want to emphasise that the SERs demonstrated a great willingness and drive to develop an appropriate internal quality assurance system.
- If it is the intention to include external experts, from abroad, these experts will need more information on the institution. There is however no need for extensive information on the institution. A factsheet and organisational chart will be sufficient.
- Provide the external experts also with clear definitions of the central concept in QA. Formulate clear and realistic priorities.
- Most of the SERs show that there is still lot of work to be done to implement the internal quality assurance system and to build acceptance and participation.
- The experts doubt if the time span for implementation of the quality assurance system will be sufficient.
- Development of a sustainable quality assurance system will take a considerable amount of time.
- A number of the SERs need revision on the English language. Argumentation is obscured by poor English, words and concepts seem to be inappropriately used, the intention of the author of the document is at moments very difficult to grasp.
- The most important data must be part of the text of the SERs.
- The emphasis is too much on vision and future plans. Factual information on the realisation is lacking. Peers will not be able to establish if the TLI complies with the standard.
- It might be helpful to start writing from what is in place.
- The argumentation should be concise and to the point. The SER should demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance. This starts with clarity of the objectives and a self critical analysis of their achievement, based on a condensed presentation of the analysis of results.
- Some of the SWOTs show the appropriate self-critical attitude and are a good example of how to reflect on the criteria. In some cases the SWOT clarifies the text. Sometimes it could be helpful to start with the SWOT, since it provides the sort of information that a committee member will be looking for.
- The tone of the SERs could be more sober emphasising matter-of-fact information.
- Present: what is in place, what is still needed, what has to be done and when that will be achieved.
- Be clear about what is lacking in relation to the standards. Committee members will consider it as an indication of an inappropriate quality assurance system if weaknesses seem to be hidden or not addressed. A good internal quality assurance starts with a self-critical attitude.
- Avoid verbose rhetoric, it will give the committee members the impression that the actual facts are not addressed. This will jeopardise a positive assessment by the committee of experts. Quality cannot be demonstrated by policy documents only!
- A good SER will direct the committee members in their assessment. Be clear on what the HEI intends to achieve, what are the goals? Demonstrate that these goals are in line with expectations of external stakeholders, the national qualification framework and other relevant standards. Do not forget to be clear about the specific context and difficulties that might arise from this context. Demonstrate that the institution is fit for purpose by the presentation of analysed and to the point results.

- Internal quality assurance systems, as presented in the SERs, seem to lack general support and participation of staff and students (and other stakeholders) within the institutions. This makes the internal quality assurance rather theoretical and technocratic. Quality culture also touches on shared values and concepts.
- In these situations the complexity of the instruments might hinder participation. Simple and straightforward principles and feedback mechanisms might help to increase the participation.
- The SER should be the result of an internal dialog on quality.
- Be realistic on what can be achieved within a certain period of time.
- Although most of the institutions established specific units dedicated to the internal quality assurance, the stage of development of internal feedback mechanisms differs widely. In some institutions the systematic and periodic evaluation of results is still lacking or meagre or just starting. These institutions will have serious problems to prove that the quality assurance is fully cyclical (PDCA).
- Units for quality assurance seem to be rather understaffed in some cases.
- Although it is important to define and describe working processes as a part of quality assurance, in some SERs the emphasis is too much on the presentation of a plethora of policy documents on all sorts of aspects. Any convincing arguments on a successful implementation are lacking.
- Pilots are not yet proof of a sustainable quality assurance system.
- Institutions do not demonstrate that they are in compliance with the appropriate level of the National Qualification Framework. Especially the requirements for the achievement of the master level (level 7) seemed to be not in place by several institutions.
- Some new concepts are avowed/affirmed: like student centred learning and intended learning outcomes, there is however very little indication that these concepts are assimilated in the design and development of the educational programmes and the delivery of teaching. Taking aboard of these concepts is important for the modernisation of education.
- There is little information on professional development and research and other academic activities of the teaching staff.
- If the concept of intended learning outcomes is adopted then there should also be a method to establish if they are achieved.

Additional remarks:

- The reviewers found some of the standards not very clear. The assessment framework also results in redundant argumentation.
- Examples are: 1.3 which seems to be very similar to criterion 10: Internal Quality assurance. "Achievement" might be replaced by "appropriateness" (in relation to recent developments in the context of the institution). 10.6 could be reformulated to match the intention of the ESG better: Institutions should provide up to date, impartial and objective information of their programmes.
- It is unclear to what extent the institutions implemented the two cycles: bachelor and master system. ECTS are adopted, but institutions are not clear on how to position a master programme.
- In the text in the SERs the perspective of the institution and the perspective of the programme mix.