

**Report of the External Proof Review of the  
National Center for Professional Education  
Quality Assurance Foundation  
ANQA**

**November 2013**

1	Executive Summary .....	4
2	Introduction .....	5
3	The Review Process.....	6
3.1	The Review Panel.....	7
3.2	Self-evaluation report.....	8
3.3	Site visit.....	9
4	Context of the review .....	10
4.1	The Higher Education System in Armenia .....	10
4.2	The quality assurance system.....	11
4.2.1	Legal framework.....	12
4.2.2	ANQA.....	12
4.3	Activities of ANQA.....	16
5	Compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) .....	17
5.1	ESG 2 European standards and guidelines for the external quality assurance of higher education.....	17
5.1.1	ESG 2.1 - Use of internal quality assurance procedures.....	17
5.1.2	ESG 2.2 - Development of external quality assurance processes.....	18
5.1.3	ESG 2.3 - Criteria for decisions .....	20
5.1.4	ESG 2.4 - Processes fit for purpose.....	21
5.1.5	ESG 2.5 – Reporting .....	22
5.1.6	ESG 2.6 - Follow-up procedures .....	23
5.1.7	ESG 2.7 - Periodic reviews .....	23
5.1.8	ESG 2.8 - System-wide analysis.....	24
5.2	ESG 3 European standards and guidelines for external quality assurance agencies .....	24
5.2.1	ESG 3.1 - Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education .....	24
5.2.2	ESG 3.2 - Official Status .....	25
5.2.3	ESG 3.3 - Activities .....	25
5.2.4	ESG 3.4 - Resources.....	26

5.2.5 ESG 3.5 - Mission statement .....	27
5.2.6 ESG 3.6 - Independence.....	28
5.2.7 ESG 3.7 - External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies .....	29
5.2.8 ESG 3.8 - Accountability procedures.....	30
6 Conclusion.....	31
Annexes: Terms of Reference, Site-visit agenda, List of participants, ANQAs comments regarding the draft report of the external proof review	

## **1 Executive Summary**

In the context of the Armenia quality assurance technical assistance (ARQATA)–project a “proof review” of The National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation of Armenia (ANQA) was conducted in September 2013 in Yerevan against the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) by an independent expert panel in order to develop the quality assurance system in higher education in Armenia.

Unlike to usual standard review procedures of agencies against the ESG this report provides no binary yes/no-judgements of the standards but instead comments, observations and advice; this approach was agreed upon due to the youth of ANQA and the QA system in general in Armenia. With only pilot procedures conducted so far and not all intended bodies within the QA system yet set up – it is too early to judge.

The panel was impressed what had already been reached by ANQA, launching quality assurance in higher education in a very challenging political, regional and economic situation. The time is right for the implementation of a QA system, and the panel observes a very good start of ANQA.

However the system of external quality assurance is not yet established nor have all the intended processes been implemented. Most importantly, no decision has been made as of yet. Naturally, building institutions and trust takes time. The panel advises ANQA to take its time to continue the path set out.

## 2 Introduction

The National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation of Armenia (ANQA)<sup>1</sup> was established in 2008 with the primary aim to provide quality assurance services for tertiary education in the Republic of Armenia.

The quality assurance (QA) system in higher education in Armenia both internal and external to the higher education institutions (HEI) is in a build-up-phase. Armenia is on the way to integrate in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), and accordingly it is its ambition to become a full member agency of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) in the medium term.

ANQA and the Accreditation Organisation of The Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) are engaged in a World Bank project for technical assistance: Armenia quality assurance technical assistance (ARQATA). One objective of this project is to carry out a *proof external review* of ANQA against the membership criteria of ENQA and thereby the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The aim of this proof review is to evaluate whether ANQA meets the ESG regarding both its external evaluation processes and its internal quality assurance and thus the membership criteria of ENQA. The panel is deliberately not passing judgments on the actual fulfilment of the standards; the main objective of the review is to offer ANQA commendations and recommendations for quality improvement through peer review and thus supporting the agency in its further development. Panel members understand themselves as critical friends rather than assessors. The idea is one of mutual learning and to some extent (also this will not be the case in a real review) coaching<sup>2</sup>.

On these grounds this report is also written in the spirit of learning. Although reproducing the style and structure of a real ENQA review, it

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.anqa.am/en/>

<sup>2</sup> see terms of reference, Annex 1, where the idea and procedure for this proof external review was fixed.

does not provide final yes/no judgements. Through staying away from condensed but always shortened and mostly binary judgements the panel hopes to grasp the actual complexity of ANQA's and the Armenian higher education sector's reality as a whole better in order to be able to make some observations and comments that may be helpful to ANQA for the further development and strengthening of quality assurance in higher education in Armenia.

### **3 The Review Process**

As the Proof Review Process is part of the ARQATA-project, NVAO as one of the project partners took the organisational role for the review. The NVAO project manager of ARQATA triggered together with ANQA the whole process and was an important link between panel of experts and ANQA before but as well during the site-visit. This is not common practice in international external reviews, but in this particular case and given the specific circumstances of ANQA as well as the higher education system in Armenia it proved to be a good approach, as the preconditions for quality assurance are different from those in western European countries. The NVAO project manager had no vote in the panel's findings, but contributed with a good overview on the frame and was helpful in understanding specific situations and constellations.

NVAO appointed the expert panel for this review in November 2012. The Board of ENQA was informed about the review in December 2012. In January 2013 the panel member met for the first time in Vienna with the project manager from NVAO. Aim of this meeting was to reach a common understanding about the objectives, the framework, the terms of reference and the schedule of the review.

In the following months NVAO and ANQA came to an understanding about the terms of reference of the review and the document was signed in May 2013.<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> Annex 1

A first draft of the Selfevaluation Report (SER) of ANQA was sent to the panel in June 2013 for comments. This approach deviates from a standard ENQA-review-procedure, but was chosen here as part of the envisaged learning process by ARQATA.

The main points of feedback were:

- the report should be more analytical, not only descriptive
- Weblinks to the published documents should be checked
- the panel needs as much evidence as possible in English
- to include a SWOT-analysis, and to describe the challenges lying ahead
- to add a list of all institutional audits and programme accreditations so far with explanation how far the procedures are; positive/negative decisions so far; appeals
- to add a list with all international projects ANQA is involved in at the moment
- to describe what developments there were since 2009 regarding rules and procedures

Within the process of organising the review there were delays regarding terms of references and the schedule for the site-visit, the deadlines for the draft SER and the final SER were met.

In July 2013 the secretary of the panel had to step back from her position due to personal reasons. A replacement was found very quickly so the review could go ahead as previously planned.

### **3.1 The Review Panel**

- *Helmut Konrad* (chair), dean Faculty of Arts and Humanities, and former rector Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, Austria, and former president of the Austrian Accreditation Council
- *Elisabeth Fiorioli*, secretary general Austrian Rectors' Conference, and former managing director Austrian Accreditation Council, Austria
- *Olav Øye*, student at the Free University of Brussels (ULB) and former representative of the European Students' Union, Norway (graduated in September 2013, after the site-visit)

- *Stephanie Hering* (secretary from July 2013 on), scientific collaborator at the Swiss Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education (OAQ), Switzerland;
- *Stephanie Maurer* (secretary up to July 2013), scientific collaborator at the Ministry of Education Canton Basel and former scientific collaborator at the Swiss Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education (OAQ), Switzerland;

*Michèle Wera*, Senior Policy Advisor NVAO and project manager ARQATA, was present during all interviews and meetings.

### **3.2 Self-evaluation report**

As mentioned above the panel received in June 2013 a draft-version of the SER. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of August the final version of the report together with annexes was sent to the panel. Disappointingly to the panel, the feedback given in May 2013 on the first draft had not been sufficiently taken into account by ANQA. Most importantly the comments of the panel regarding the need for analytical reflection and for ANQA to provide the panel with more evidence were not sufficiently followed up.

Nonetheless the panel found the SER to be well presented. It followed a common and comprehensible structure and mentioned all relevant ESGs. The language was clear and professional.

However, in the text there were not always clear links to the annexes. Some of the evidence and examples were missing in some cases for statements (also due to the fact that the intention to deal with procedures in a certain way is stated, but there is not yet a corresponding practice and reality).

Some documents mentioned in the report have not been annexed to the report for the reason that they were only available in Armenian. However, ANQA in preparation for the site-visit organised a translation of some of these documents.

Although evidence was lacking across the SER the report provided the panel with a description of the plans of ANQA. Already from reading the



SER it was evident to the panel that for most standards it was too early to judge them as the quality assurance system in Armenia is in the process of development. So naturally providing evidence was in many cases difficult if not impossible for ANQA. During the site visit the panel requested more documents, and these were provided by the very engaged ANQA staff.

### **3.3 Site visit**

The review team visited the office of ANQA in Yerevan from 8<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> of September 2013. A preparatory meeting was held in the afternoon of the 8<sup>th</sup> of September before and as well after the first interview meeting at 1 pm with the Prime Minister of Armenia, who is the acting President of the Board of Trustees of ANQA, and the other members of the Board of Trustees.

During the 5-day-visit the panel met with different stakeholder groups for ANQA's work and had interviews to learn about their perspective and ask questions in order to find evidence and get a picture of the practices in the work of ANQA.

Besides the rearranged meeting with the Board of Trustees and Prime Minister, all meetings were held according to the agreed schedule<sup>4</sup>. On request of the review team some interviewees attended different meetings than originally planned. Some few people had to cancel their attendance, even fewer did not attend the meeting without prior notification. For example (and this is the only example) the panel could not talk to the representatives of the Employers Union. Also on request of the review team an additional interview session was arranged with representatives from the vocational sector as the latter is as well a field of activity for ANQA.

The review team is grateful for the excellent organisation of the visit. ANQA staff was around in the office the whole time and available for requests for further documents, additional information or minor changes.

---

<sup>4</sup> see Annex 2: Programme of the visit

The review panel valued the open and warm welcome it received by the director of ANQA and its staff.

On the last day of the visit the review team came together for a working session in order to sum up the findings so far, and to reflect on conclusions on the compliance with the standards. The panel reached a consensus very soon and already agreed on the most important commendations and recommendations. After this closed meeting the review team met with the entire ANQA office for a debriefing session. The chair of the panel summed up the panels impressions and conveyed in a condensed format the most important commendations and recommendations.

#### **4 Context of the review**

##### **4.1 The Higher Education System in Armenia**

Higher education in Armenia is provided by public, private and intergovernmental higher education institutions (HEIs); there are two major types of institutions: universities and other institutions such as institutes, academies, foundations and a conservatorium. Altogether there are 40 universities (11 public, 26 private and 3 intergovernmental) and 25 other institutions (10 public, 14 private and 1 intergovernmental) in Armenia.<sup>5</sup>

Armenia joined the Bologna Process in 2005 and introduced the two-cycle degree system. In the third doctoral level there are two types of degrees: Kandidat Nauk and Doktor Nauk.

Within the HEIs the establishment of internal quality assurance systems only began recently<sup>6</sup>.

A World Bank Report published in early 2013, „Addressing Governance at the Center of Higher Education Reforms in Armenia“, comes to the conclusion that although the Armenian government and HEIs have made significant process in reforming since joining the Bologna Process the

---

<sup>5</sup> see ANQA SER, p. 4

<sup>6</sup> see ANQA SER, p.5

higher education system is underperforming<sup>7</sup>. The public perception of higher education governance is named to be poor and corruption in the higher education system is mentioned as a challenge.<sup>8</sup> The authors recommend to place university governance and management at the heart of system-wide higher education reforms.<sup>9</sup> The review panel agrees, and would at the same time like to stress that governance is more than Quality Assessment, although it is an important cornerstone.

## **4.2 The quality assurance system**

There was a first attempt in establishing a system of quality assurance and accreditation in 1999 – a unit within the Ministry of Education and Science started accreditation and licensing of universities; this did not work successfully: only private universities underwent this procedure and no kind of follow-up was foreseen.<sup>10</sup>

A new system was introduced after joining of the Bologna process: one important step here was the establishment of ANQA in 2008.

The review team is aware that the environment for ANQA and the establishment of quality assurance systems in HE in Armenia are challenging; dealing with the legacy of being an ex-Soviet-country and exposed to a difficult regional situation Armenia is still (and will be for several years) very much in transition. The dominance of top down governance and the lacking of a tradition of individual responsibility and participation in governance processes need to be changed both by the sector's political and organisational establishment as well as by the young generation.

---

<sup>7</sup> see [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSPContentServer/WDSP/IB/2013/05/23/000442464\\_20130523175510/Rendered/PDF/776690WP0P127300governance000final.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSPContentServer/WDSP/IB/2013/05/23/000442464_20130523175510/Rendered/PDF/776690WP0P127300governance000final.pdf), p. 1

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* p.4

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.* p.1

<sup>10</sup> see SER, p.6

Building trust under these circumstances is not easy, and it is even less easy if the system is just emerging. The review team was to some extent surprised that the interviewees were always unanimously convinced that the hard and stony way to implement a QA system is the best “for the sake of the country”, and that not a single doubt was raised against this approach and the ambitious time schedule to accomplish the first round of institutional accreditation by 2016.

#### **4.2.1 Legal framework**

ANQA’s legal basis is:

- RA Government Decree No.1486N from November 27, 2008. The charter<sup>11</sup> for the National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance defines goal, function and organisational structure of ANQA.
- RA Government Decree N 978 – N from July 30, 2011, The Statute on State Accreditation of Tertiary Level Institutions and Academic Programmes in the Republic of Armenia<sup>12</sup>
- Law of the Republic of Armenia on Education<sup>13</sup> (adopted by the National Assembly on 14 April 1999)

#### **4.2.2 ANQA**

The functions of the ANQA foundation are defined in the charter<sup>14</sup> as follows:

1. Develop criteria and procedures for accreditation and other external quality assurance activities of tertiary level institutions (TLIs) and academic programmes on a regular basis;

---

<sup>11</sup> Annex 3 of SER

<sup>12</sup> see Annex 10 of SER

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.* p.2

2. Implement accreditation and other external quality assurance activities, take independent decisions and grant ANQA accreditation/quality assurance seal.
3. Publish the results of accreditation and other external quality assurance activities and thus log the TLIs and academic programmes in the RA Register for Accredited Institutions/Academic Programmes;
4. Maintain the RA Register for Accredited Institutions/Academic Programmes;
5. Provide recommendations to TLIs and academic programmes with the purpose of further development and enhancement;
6. Develop and publish ranking indicators for TLIs and academic programmes;
7. Raise public awareness on the state of arts of quality assurance of TLIs and academic programmes;
8. Promote integration into European Higher Education Area, thus internationalizing the Armenian tertiary level education;
9. On a regular basis produce system-wide analyses describing the general findings of the accreditation and other quality assurance activities carried out at tertiary level education.

The organisational structure of ANQA consists of the Board of Trustees, the Accreditation Committee, the Advisory Board and the operational units that are managed by the director of ANQA.

The *Board of Trustees* governs ANQA, appoints the director, approves the strategic and action plans as well as budget and monitors ANQAs performance. It is not supposed to be involved in daily business or take part in decision making on individual cases<sup>15</sup>. The Board of Trustees consists of 11 members, representing the main stakeholders of ANQAs work (the minister of Education and Science, 4 teachers from state and private tertiary education institutions, 1 student from state or private tertiary education institution, 1 representative from the Union of Employers of Armenia, 1 representative from the Union of Banks of Armenia, 1 representative from the "Luys" foundation, 1 representative from the National Competitiveness Foundation of Armenia) and is

---

<sup>15</sup> see SER, p.9 and ANQA charter

presided by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia<sup>16</sup>. The staff of the Board is to be approved by the Prime Minister.

The *Accreditation Committee* is the independent, collegial, permanent decision making body for programme and institutional accreditation procedures and advises ANQA on improvement of accreditation procedure and methodology. It consists of 7 members. These can be nominated by tertiary level institutions, employers and other professional associations and the National Students' Association. The final composition is approved by the Board of Trustees<sup>17</sup>.

Intended, but not yet elaborated is also an *Advisory Board* with a consultative function to the ANQA Board and the director<sup>18</sup>.

The *operational part* of ANQA with the secretariat, 3 different subdivisions and support staff consists of 23 employees.

The expert<sup>19</sup> panels are not part of the ANQA organisation, but appointed case by case to perform their duties independently for each institutional or programme accreditation<sup>20</sup>.

The organisational structure of ANQA summed up in a chart provided by ANQA in SER as Annex 2:

---

<sup>16</sup> see SER, p.23

<sup>17</sup> see SER, Annex 11 ANQA ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE FORMATION AND OPERATION, p.1

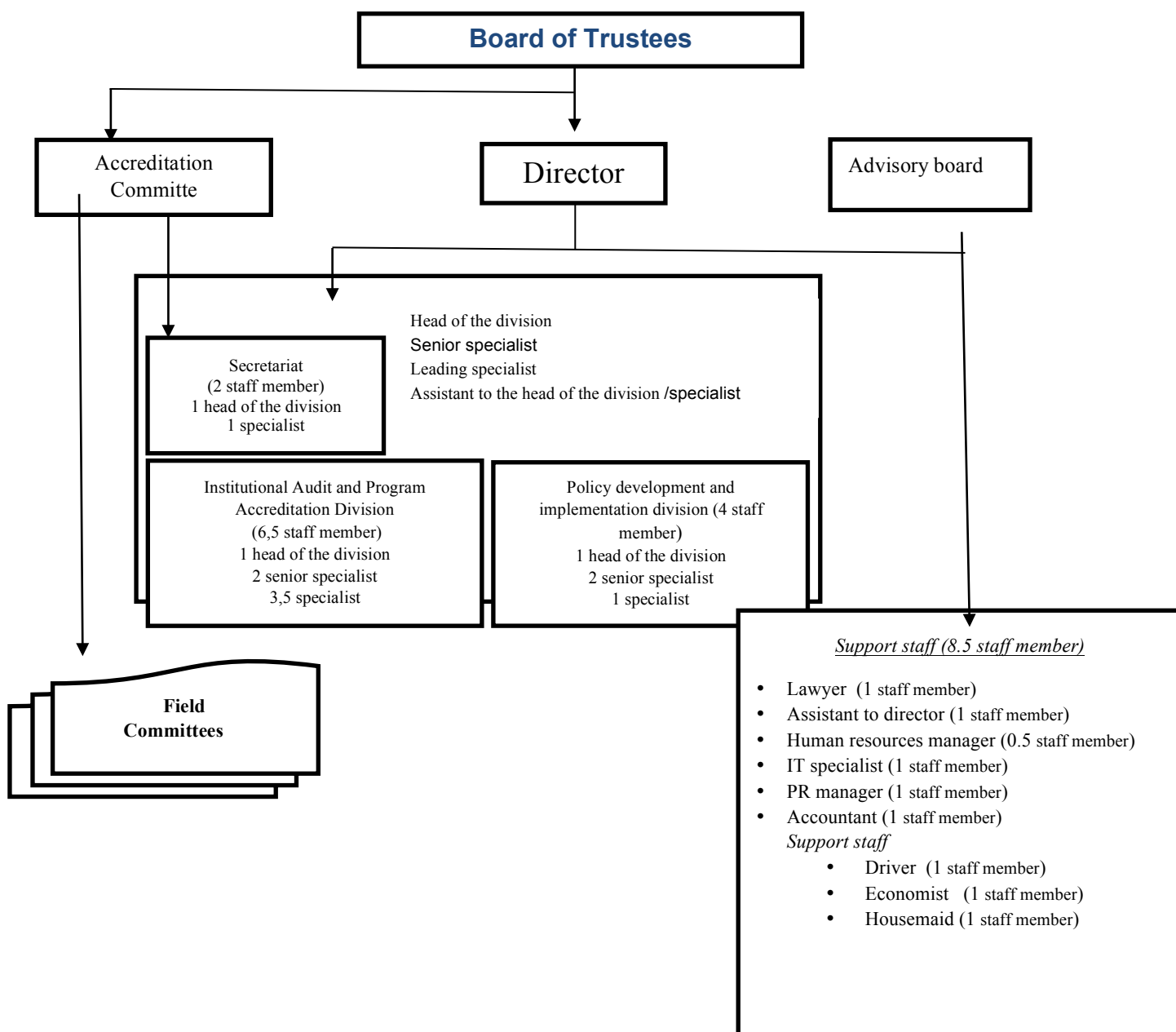
<sup>18</sup> as described in SER, p.9; „intended“ because the Advisory Board is mentioned in SER, but in no other documents, nor was the Advisory Board an interview group presented or mentioned during the site visit.

<sup>19</sup> The experts are selected by ANQA coordinators and director, the names are presented to the HEI (see Annex 8, Manual), finally the Accreditation Committee approves the panel (see Annex 11)

<sup>20</sup> see SER, p.10

## ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

### National Centre of Professional Education Quality Assurance, Foundation



### 4.3 Activities of ANQA

ANQA describes in the SER its activities around the following major aspects<sup>21</sup>:

- *Establishing an external quality assurance framework and its operationalization;*
  - *Development of regulatory documents, including:*
    - *a quality assurance framework that includes mandatory institutional accreditation and voluntary academic programme accreditation;*
    - *criteria and standards for institutional and academic programme accreditations;*
    - *procedures for institutional and programme accreditation.*
  - *Conducting institutional and academic programme pilot accreditations.*
- *Guidance on the set-up of internal quality assurance systems at tertiary level institutions;*
  - *Organization of workshops and round table discussions;*
  - *Delivery of trainings and consultations.*
- *Professionalization of ANQA*
  - *Establishment of internal quality assurance system of ANQA;*
  - *Capacity building through*
    - *World Bank projects;*
    - *Other international projects (Tempus, Twinning).*
- *Internationalization of ANQA*
  - *Active participation in ENQA and INQAAHE activities;*
  - *Participation in Tempus projects: DIUS, PICQA, INARM, MAHATMA, ARARAT, HEN-GEAR aimed at establishment of both external quality assurance and internal quality assurance systems for higher education institutions, master programme in higher education management with a focus on quality assurance, establishment of cooperative links*

---

<sup>21</sup> following paragraph quoted from SER, p.7



## **5 Compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)**

### **5.1 ESG 2 European standards and guidelines for the external quality assurance of higher education**

#### **5.1.1 ESG 2.1 - Use of internal quality assurance procedures**

External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

Internal quality assurance systems or even processes are not yet established in all Armenian HEIs. As the evolution of these systems just started, ANQA chose as one of its core activities during the last years to provide “guidance on the set-up of internal quality assurance systems at tertiary level institutions”<sup>22</sup>.

ANQA clearly motivates and provides advice on the establishment of QA processes within higher education institutions (HEI) through a close cooperation with the institutions. This cooperation includes for example the organisation of workshops, round-table-discussions, trainings and consultations. Given the fact that the internal QA systems need to be built up from scratch, this is a very good course of action. However, it can be problematic when the contribution of ANQA in the establishment of the QA systems is too dominant; there is a danger of imposing ANQA’s internal systems on the institutions. On the one hand that could in the long run affect the sense of ownership and identification within the HEIs with their own internal QA procedures; on the other hand ANQA could be confronted with the challenge of evaluating and checking externally its own creation. But there appears to be few realistic alternatives.

During the interviews with the stakeholders from the HEIs, the review team heard that ANQAs counselling regarding the establishment of internal QA processes is very much appreciated within the sector.

It seemed that – although for the review team surprisingly – top-down-processes for change within HEIs are accepted and work well in the Armenian context. This can also be a chance for a quite fast and efficient

---

<sup>22</sup> SER, p. 7

implementation of a general cultural change and also closing the generational gap. However, the review team would like to point out that the realisation of cultural change usually takes time and also needs a lot of movement from the bottom. There is also the fact that a large share of persons responsible for QA in the HEIs the panel met do not have sufficient linguistic proficiency in English. This contributes to a monopolistic position of ANQA in developing internal QA processes and minimizes the important learning opportunities for HEIs to participate themselves in the international discourse and developments of QA issues.

The review team observed that a good deal of work has already been done in the establishment of documents and guidelines – which is good and without doubt an important basis for QA – internally and externally. The formation of a real quality culture within the institutions is another and next step, which sometimes goes alongside.

ANQA's procedures could appear to take into account the effectiveness of internal quality assurance, but the development that already happened is triggered by ANQA itself. So it could be the case that at the end ANQA is checking the results of its own work. In the future a clear and distinctive line between assessing and coaching should be drawn up for the whole range of activities of ANQA. Awareness of this issue has to be raised on the part of ANQA as well as by the HEIs.

The panel commends ANQA for its work of constructing a system of external evaluations. Now it is important that the procedures are put into practice and come to life. Universities should now write their own self-evaluation reports without the help of ANQA. Even if the procedures are once established it will take time to get the implementation done with the involvement of all staff and to reach the level of practice. There are so far elements of internal QA systems, but no fully established system yet.

#### **5.1.2 ESG 2.2 - Development of external quality assurance processes**

The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those
---

responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.

The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes are determined in the Statute on State Accreditation<sup>23</sup> and in the ANQA Accreditation Manual<sup>24</sup>.

All relevant stakeholders were reportedly involved in these processes and consulted several times; it became clear in the interviews that all stakeholders interviewed by the review team considered themselves as satisfactorily involved and recognise ANQA as reliable partner.

Nevertheless there are no real procedures with decisions until now – so there is no evidence to evaluate if and how the procedures really work. There were some pilot procedures, but no decisions were made as of yet. Moreover the panel detected an ambiguity in the interpretation of the pilot procedures: for a good portion of the interview partners “pilot” in this context indicates the temporal dimension as being the first or debut procedures of the newly introduced accreditation system; for others, including the review team, “pilot” denominates a test phase applying defined rules and procedures (on paper so far) to a clear object in order to learn from this phase (in practice) and revise and improve the rules and procedures accordingly. Such a pilot phase should have a clear starting point defined as well as a clear deadline.

In the existing pilot phase there was at least a first and a second phase – in the latter rules were already adapted – which means that rules were changed in the middle of the game. This could happen as there was no end of the pilot-phase defined and no procedure how to analyse the findings and deal with them in order to improve the process for the coming “real procedures”.

The status of the pilots remains unclear to the review team. There should be a deadline for the closure of the pilot phase defined and an idea and

---

<sup>23</sup> RA Government Decree N978, 30 July 2011

<sup>24</sup> see SER, Annex 8

timeline how to analyse the results in order to improve the rules and procedure.

There seems to be an intention to convert the pilot procedures into real procedures, and this is in the view of the review team no way to go, although the review team understands the pressure of running the procedure a second time within a very short period. The review team was told by the Prime Minister that all HEIs have to undergo institutional accreditation successfully by 2016, otherwise they will be closed.

The accreditation committee was until mid-September 2013 (after the site-visit) not yet installed, there was no decision until now and no plan yet how to proceed with the pilot procedures; there is no follow up procedure foreseen yet, so there is not enough evidence at the moment to judge. On the last day of the site visit the committee had its starting meeting but only with the decision on internal formal questions.

The review team had the impression that for the vocational sector the definition for rules and procedures is not yet broadly considered. As ANQA is responsible for the accreditation procedures in this sector as well, it should take measures also here and in order to allow a good start in the future.

### **5.1.3 ESG 2.3 - Criteria for decisions**

Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.

In the ANQA accreditation manual<sup>25</sup> the projected decision-making procedure is published. But so far (at the moment of the site-visit in mid-September 2013) there has not been any decision and the Accreditation Committee was not yet formed and did not start its work so far. Therefore it is impossible to judge at the moment if everything will work as intended.

---

<sup>25</sup> SER, Annex 8

The review team noticed that there were some different ideas and opinions around among different interviewees about which body finally will take the decision – it seems that the decision making process is not clear and perceived in the same way by all parties involved.

Regarding consistency in the decisions nothing can be said at this stage. The panel recommends taking the outcomes of the pilots as a chance to discuss and develop decision making rules on a very broad level to ensure consistency. This should be one of the primary tasks of the Accreditation Committee.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the questionnaires developed by ANQA to get feedback and measure satisfaction<sup>26</sup> from stakeholders with its procedures is not a sufficient methodology to measure and ensure consistency of procedures and decision making in the future.

#### **5.1.4 ESG 2.4 - Processes fit for purpose**

All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them.

Again, stating something substantially regarding fitness for purpose is impossible as there is yet no evidence from real procedures. The review team recommends to make the most out of the analysis of the pilot procedures in an open discussion to ensure the fitness of the processes to achieve the aims and objectives.

Due to the fact that most of the processes and standards were transferred directly from foreign systems, they look well designed at first glance. However the panel is concerned about whether they are sufficiently adapted to the challenging context of the Armenian HE system: During the interviews it became clear that some QA standards conflict with guidelines and requirements from the ministry. Also the corruption and obvious presence of political influence within university bodies are not tackled by the system.

---

<sup>26</sup> as mentioned in the SER, p.18

Furthermore there are no specifically tailored standards or procedures yet designed for the vocational sector, and the sector is not represented in the accreditation committee. ANQA and the vocational institutions should together reflect on this to see if the same QA approach is in fact appropriate for all tertiary institutions.

Regarding the selection of experts for QA processes it is not clear if and how mechanisms work. Although Armenia is a small country it is preferable to involve real peers for an accreditation procedure. As qualified good experts are at the heart of an effective external QA system, ANQA should take the background check and selection process for experts very seriously. Apparently there is a system of HEIs nominating their experts – which is not satisfactory. The Prime Minister formulated a clear interest in foreign experts as peer leaders in all procedures. Even if this is not realistic, at least one international expert should be part of any team.

The process to prepare and instruct the expert group before a procedure seems to be demanding regarding time resources of the involved panel (usually there are several weekly meetings before the site-visit). ANQAs instruments should be designed in order to be easily accessible and also to save precious time for the experts. To improve the efficiency and fitness for purpose is for sure an organisational long-term learning experience.

In recent years, ANQA has invested a lot in the development of its internal quality assurance system. During the development of these processes the usefulness and efficiency of these processes should be checked simultaneously.

#### **5.1.5 ESG 2.5 – Reporting**

Reports should be written in a style which is clear and readily accessible to its intended readership. Any decisions, commendations or recommendations contained in reports should be easy for a reader to find.

ANQA has as of yet no experience with the publication of reports. The reports of the pilot projects are intended to be published. The panel has seen some examples of experts reports from the pilot procedures. The panel commends ANQA for its plans on publication of the reports. Judging from the reports that are available the panel is of the opinion that there

is room for further improvement, especially with regard to the readability, consistency and traceability of the reports. For example, ANQA reports should take care to accurately reference its sources. For each piece of subjective assessment, a report should make it clear whether the authors are simply quoting from a SER, or whether they are making an independent assessment.

If ANQA wants to work in a more international context, reports should ideally be in English. The panel understands the difficulties this might entail for ANQA. All agencies face the same difficulties trying to find a balance between meeting national demands and international aspiration.

#### **5.1.6 ESG 2.6 - Follow-up procedures**

Quality assurance processes which contain recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan, should have predetermined follow-up procedure which is implemented consistently.

As ANQA is still in a pilot phase with its procedure, no follow-up procedures have as of yet been conducted. ANQA has the intention to introduce systematic follow-up procedures, but the panel has not seen any evidence that outlines such procedures.<sup>27</sup>

For this reason this standard cannot be judged by the panel.

#### **5.1.7 ESG 2.7 - Periodic reviews**

External quality assurance of institutions and/or programmes should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.

According to the self-evaluation report cycles of six years for institutional accreditation and of five years for programme accreditation are planned.

---

<sup>27</sup> SER, p. 20 - and the intention was also confirmed in some interviews.

Although a cycle of six years is comparable to international standards, the panel considers this too long for a quality assurance system that is in development. ANQA should consider shortening the first cycle in order to assess if the accreditation system is working and has an impact. Six years compares to international standards, and for a second cycle this is a realistic timeframe for an institutional accreditation.

#### **5.1.8 ESG 2.8 - System-wide analysis**

Quality assurance should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments etc.

Although ANQA is only in its fifth year of existence and has no completed accreditation procedures so far to analyse, it has already conducted its first system-wide-analysis-report. Focus of this report is the success so far in installing internal QA procedures in Armenian HEIs. The report cites questionnaire results when it presents the HEI's perceived impact of ANQA's impact. The discussions in the report also show that ANQA is aware of both discourse and practices in international quality assurance. When commenting on the needs for ANQA's and the HEIs' future efforts, the report repeatedly stresses quality enhancement over quality control. The review team supports this approach.

Regarding the process of the next system-wide analysis, the team encourages ANQA to circulate drafts of future assessment reports to stakeholders, in addition to holding meetings and carrying out surveys with various stakeholders and individuals.

### **5.2 ESG 3 European standards and guidelines for external quality assurance agencies**

#### **5.2.1 ESG 3.1 - Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education**



The external quality assurance agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance procedures described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

Overall this Standard cannot be judged at present time. With only five years in existence and no accreditation procedures concluded, it is too early to make a judgement. ANQA has yet to complete the implementation of its system.

#### **5.2.2 ESG 3.2 - Official Status**

Agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdiction within they operate.

ANQA acts on the basis of the *Law of the Republic of Armenia on Education* (adopted by the National Assembly on 14 April 1999) and derived from that on the basis of the RA Government Decree No.1486N from November 27, 2008. The charter<sup>28</sup> for the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance and RA Government Decree N 978 – N from July 30, 2011, The Statute on State Accreditation of Tertiary Level Institutions and Academic Programmes in the Republic of Armenia<sup>29</sup>

It is evident to the panel that ANQA operates on a clear legal basis and is recognised by the responsible public authorities.

#### **5.2.3 ESG 3.3 - Activities**

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis.

---

<sup>28</sup> Annex 3 of SER

<sup>29</sup> see Annex 10 of SER

As mentioned already, ANQA has only been active for five years and is now in the process of building up a system of external quality assurance for Armenian Higher Education. ANQA has so far only conducted some pilot procedures. No decisions were made, and the pilot phase is still running. Therefore it is too early to judge this standard. A pilot phase is by definition a preparation to test the procedures. Accordingly the procedures so far undertaken by ANQA do not qualify as regular activities. Activities planned for the future are: institutional accreditation (every six years) and programme accreditation (every five years).

ANQA has put a lot of work into the planning of the cycle and the panel is of the opinion that the plans are realistic.

However, ANQA should first determine the status and consequences of the pilot procedures before proceeding with further planning. The review team is strongly of the opinion that “pilots” should not be taken as “real” accreditation procedures with all consequences.

It is conspicuous that ANQA’s activities were until now very focused on the university sector in the Yerevan region. However, ANQA is also responsible for the HEI outside of Yerevan in other parts of the country, and for the whole vocational sector.

#### **5.2.4 ESG 3.4 - Resources**

Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective manner with appropriate provision for the development of their processes and procedures.

With 23 employees for its operational business ANQA is – compared to most other European agencies – well equipped. As the QA in higher education in Armenia emerged only recently, recruitment of already trained and professional staff in this field is not easy. Therefore ANQA trains its new staff extensively in-house. Another challenge is to retain the workforce in the long run. Although there is a HR-responsible designated in ANQA, the review team did not see so far a clear long-term HR strategy for recruiting personnel and developing it systematically. It is also visible that the majority of the workforce consists of very motivated

recent graduates, whereas senior staff with profound and long work experience is rare. A broader diversity in this regard in the composition of personnel is in the long term desirable.

The panel recommends to invest in the development of a tool to plan HR resources and check regularly if the actual capacity matches the needs of the agency. The panel has seen the HR protocol for quality assurance but no further evidence as to its implementation.

Regarding financial resources the review team did not see a long-term financial planning, and it remained unclear whether the budget of ANQA will be secure and sufficient in the next decade. However, no financial concerns were raised during the interviews, and the review team saw a strong commitment from political decision-makers to continue ANQA.

The panel was also impressed that ANQA successfully attracted so many international cooperation projects. However, projects have by definition a limited life-span and that could be challenging for a sustainable financial planning after the period of foreign financing.

Cooperating in international projects also implicates commitments to manage and administrate these projects – writing reports, meetings, travelling etc. – which can be demanding and definitely binds resources that cannot be applied in the core business of an organisation at the same time.

Infrastructure of the ANQA office seems sufficient.

#### **5.2.5 ESG 3.5 - Mission statement**

Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, set down in a publicly available statement.

ANQA has a mission statement that is also published on its website. The mission statement is very broad and general, and it is not clear to the review team how exactly the various parts of the mission are translated in and connected to the strategy and management plan of ANQA. The mission statement uses broad and general terms like “equity” and “competitiveness”. The panel is of the opinion that a definition of these terms with regard to the work of ANQA is needed. If ANQA wants its

mission statement to be of real guidance, a more concrete breakdown of the general declarations into specific objectives is needed in order for the mission statement to be meaningful and a realistic support for the organisation that is ANQA as well as for its external stakeholders.

ANQA has also established an action plan that relates to its mission statement. However, the action plan the panel received seemed to be out-dated and to the panel it was not clear if the plan had been elaborated by ANQA management or if the task had been delegated to an external expert for quality assurance.

#### **5.2.6 ESG 3.6 - Independence**

Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.

As it is often the case in international reviews of quality assurance agencies, the question of independence is a very difficult and sensitive issue. On the one hand this issue relates closely to national structures and legislation, on the other hand in order for an agency to fulfil its tasks independence from external stakeholders such as ministries and higher education institutions is of the utmost importance.

As mentioned above the Prime Minister is the president of the Board of Trustees. This in itself is a clear contradiction with the standard. ANQA is well aware of this problem, but assessed this arrangement nonetheless for the time being as important and right. Most interviewees seemed convinced that the fact that the Prime Minister presides the Board is the only guarantee that the accreditation system can be efficiently implemented and ANQA gains recognition from stakeholders and society and even independence from pressure groups. Due to the specific circumstances of the country in transition with a different cultural frame and the HE system being in a transformative phase as well, the panel can to some extent understand this approach. There was clear evidence that the power of ANQA is built on this construction. If ANQA aims at fulfilling

the European Standards and Guidelines for QA Agencies, however, it is also clear that political involvement in the ANQA Board of Trustees has to be limited in time and should be changed as soon as the transformative phase will reach some stability, although this could be a long way to go.

The panel found the description of the decision-making process in the manual somewhat misleading regarding the question of independence. However, the Accreditation Committee, the body that will be responsible for the decisions, only met for the first time in September 2013. It is just beginning its work, and therefore no judgement can be made about whether the implementation of the decision-making processes as they have been defined in the manual fulfils the criteria of independence.

In the center of any procedure is the expert. The independence of the expert panel is vital for any procedure in order for it to be recognised. Therefore any agency needs a selection process for its experts that guarantees their independence and impartiality. Although in ANQA's case there is a selection process for experts, it remained unclear to the review team exactly how the independence of experts is ensured. In order for ANQA's procedures to be internationally comparable, the panel finds that ANQA should try to involve international experts in all of its procedure.

ANQA has developed quality standards for its procedures. However, the panel could not find out who has the ownership of these standards. Also in the interviews the views on how these standards were developed were not consistent among the interviewees. With regard to the independence of the procedure, the question of ownership of the standards and the procedures is very important.

#### **5.2.7 ESG 3.7 - External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies**

The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include:

a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance processes;

an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s) and site visit as decided by the agency;

publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;

a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.

ANQA has developed processes and criteria for all its procedures. All documents are contained in a manual that is publicly available. An appeal procedure does not yet exist.

The review team encourages ANQA to publish institutional and programme evaluation reports as soon as they are finished. But the panel finds that ANQA is well underway regarding this issue.

#### **5.2.8 ESG 3.8 - Accountability procedures**

Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.

ANQA understands its accountability procedures two-fold: On the one hand ANQA informs, via the annual reports, the Board of Trustees and the general public (as the reports are published on its website) on ANQAs activities. On the other hand ANQA has developed and continues to to develop it further a system on internal quality assurance.

The review team commends ANQA for its efforts in this area. The review team recommends to push further and to include financial documentation and accountability procedures for the quality of the work done and promote non-conflict-of-interest mechanisms for external experts.

It is also part of this accountability standard to check the effectiveness and efficiency of the procedures.

## **6 Conclusion**

The panel fully recognises the quantity and the quality of the work ANQA has carried out in the past five years. ANQA had to deal with the challenge of building up an agency under a challenging political and economic situation. ANQA has mastered the first important steps in building up a system for the external quality assurance of higher education institutions and programmes in Armenia. ANQA already seems to be well established within the higher education sector, and it is also recognised by external stakeholders. In the interviews, the panel heard only positive comments on the work of ANQA. The panel encourages ANQA to continue the discussions and the work with its external stakeholders in order for it to be a trusted partner in the higher education sector.

However, the system of external quality assurance is not yet established nor have the processes been fully implemented. Most importantly no accreditation decision has been made as of yet. For this reason, obviously no follow-up procedure has been carried out.

The implementation of the processes and procedures after the pilot phase will be a core issue for the agency in the next years. In order to be comparable to other European agencies, ANQA needs to establish clear and defined processes for its decision making, the publication of reports, the selection of experts, the follow-up procedures as well as to establish an firm appeal procedure.

As a matter of priority ANQA needs to further reflect and discuss its organisational structure with regard to the Board of Trustees. The panel is aware that national legislation and political realities might limit the agency's possibilities for change in this area. The panel nevertheless urges ANQA to actively seek this discussion, and in particular to come to an understanding with the Prime Minister about his role in the Board of Trustees with regard to the independence of the agency.

ANQA now has a window of opportunity to establish and develop its procedures and processes according to the best international standards. However, in order for any panel to be able to judge if ANQA complies with the ESG and thus the membership criteria of ENQA, ANQA needs to further establish and implement its processes and procedures. Most

importantly it is vital that decisions and reports of the first accreditation procedures (that are not pilot procedures) exist and can be evaluated.

For this reason the panel believes that ANQA is still in a developmental phase, and considering all the evidence it is of the strong opinion that ANQA should wait with an application for ENQA membership until all the ESG Standards can be judged and enough evidence for its processes and procedures can be furnished. Nevertheless the panel was impressed by the work of ANQA, and is confident that it will face the challenges ahead with the same level of professionalism and commitment as it has done until now.





Proof external review of the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation of Armenia (ANQA) by the Accreditation Organisation of The Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO)

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

May 2013

### **1 Background**

The National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation of Armenia (ANQA) and the Accreditation Organisation of The Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) are engaged in a World Bank project for technical assistance as stipulated in a contract between CfEP PIU<sup>1</sup> and NVAO (27 April 2011). This project goes under the name of ARQATA: Armenia quality assurance technical assistance. According to this contract, NVAO will organise a proof external review of ANQA as part of the procedures to join European associations of quality assurance.

ANQA<sup>2</sup> is a quality assurance agency established in 2008. Its primary aim is to provide quality assurance services for tertiary education in the Republic of Armenia. It strives to promote public trust, social cohesion, equity, responsibility and competitiveness through enhancement of tertiary level education provisions.

It will do so by:

- being receptive to the needs of the national stakeholders through its mandatory institutional audits and voluntary programme accreditation;
- complying with international standards for quality assurance;
- ensuring visibility at international level thus contributing to a stronger positioning of the Armenian tertiary education with Europe;
- valuing close cooperation with stakeholders in the process of developing a quality assurance system.

### **2 Aim**

In accordance with the ENQA membership criteria laid down in the Membership Provisions of ENQA, member agencies are required to undergo external reviews against the membership criteria, and thereby the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The aim of this proof review is to establish whether ANQA meets the ENQA standards with regard to both its external evaluation processes and its internal quality assurance. The review is a type A whose sole purpose is to fulfill the periodic external review requirement of ENQA membership.

Being a proof review it will evaluate the way in which and to what extent ANQA fulfills the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus evaluate the degree of compliance with each ESG part 2 and 3, but it will not pass judgments on the actual fulfillment of the criteria. Its main objective is offering commendations and recommendations for quality improvement through peer review. Panel members are to be perceived as 'critical friends' rather than assessors. The idea is one of coaching (panel) and learning (ANQA).

---

<sup>1</sup> CfEP PIU = Center for Education Projects Project Implementation Unit

<sup>2</sup> Cf. ANQA Accreditation Manual (December 2011)

### 3 Organisation

The proof review will be co-ordinated by an international quality assurance organization: NVAO.

The panel members have expertise in and practical experience of evaluation of higher education. They are independent of both NVAO and ANQA. The panel includes international experts on quality assurance in higher education including accreditation, a student and a secretary. The panel aims at an equal gender distribution.

The language used throughout the review process is English. However, a professional translator/interpreter needs to be available at all times.

### 4 Process

The review process is based on the principles and criteria established by ENQA as documented in *Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area* and *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area*.

The review procedure consists of the following steps:

- formulation of the Terms of Reference and protocol for the review;
- nomination and appointment of the review panel;
- self-evaluation by ANQA including the preparation of a self-evaluation report;
- comments by the review panel on the draft self-evaluation report;
- a site visit by the review panel to ANQA;
- preparation and completion of the final review report by the review panel;
- feedback session by the review panel on the outcomes;
- follow-up of the panel's recommendations by the agency.

#### *Self-evaluation and self-evaluation report*

ANQA is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-evaluation process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- The self-evaluation is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders.
- The self-evaluation report is broken down by the topics of the evaluation: background description of the current situation of the agency; analysis and appraisal of the current situation; proposals for improvement and measures already planned; a summary of perceived strengths and weaknesses.
- The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which ANQA fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the ESG.

A draft version of the self-evaluation report is submitted to the review panel by mid-May 2013. The panel's comments will be available early June 2013. The revised self-evaluation report is submitted to the panel a minimum of four weeks prior to the site visit; it should reach the panel by 1 August 2013.

#### *Site Visit by the Review Panel*

ANQA will draw up a draft proposal of schedule of the site visit to be submitted to the review panel at least three months (15 June 2013) before the planned dates of the visit. The schedule includes an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit, the duration of which is 4 days. The approved schedule shall be given to ANQA at least two months (1 July 2013) before the dates of the visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by ANQA in arriving to Yerevan, Armenia.

The site visit will close with an oral presentation of the major issues of the evaluation between the review panel and ANQA.

---

### *Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report*

On the basis of the review panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the review panel. The report will take into account the purpose and scope of the evaluation as defined under 2.

A draft will be submitted for comment to ANQA within two months (mid-November 2013) of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If ANQA chooses to provide a statement in reference to the draft report it will be submitted to the chair of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report. Thereafter the review panel will take into account the statement by ANQA, finalise the document and submit it to ANQA and NVAO.

The report is to be finalised within three months (by 1 December 2013) of the site visit and will not exceed 40 pages in length.

## **5 Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report**

ANQA will consider the expert panel's report and discuss with NVAO its plans to implement any recommendations contained in the report. Subsequent to the discussion of the evaluation results and any planned implementation measures with NVAO, the review report and the follow-up plans agreed upon will be published on the ANQA and ARQATA website.

## **6 Indicative Schedule of the Proof Review**

The evaluation is scheduled according to the following planning:

ANQA begins self-evaluation	January 2013
Appointment of review panel members	
Briefing of review panel members	
Agreement on terms of reference and protocol for review	April 2013
Draft self-evaluation report	15 May 2013
ANQA self-evaluation completed	1 August 2013
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	15 June 2013
Approval site visit schedule	1 July 2013
Review panel site visit	8-12 September 2013
Draft of evaluation report to ANQA	10 November 2013
Statement of ANQA to review panel if necessary	20 November 2013
Submission of final report to ANQA and NVAO	1 December 2013
Publication of report and implementation plan	January 2014

Yerevan/The Hague, 22 June 2013

---

## Proof External Review Site Visit Agenda



**9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> September 2013**

Monday, September 9 <sup>th</sup>			
Start	End	Activity	Venue
8:30	10:15*	Meeting with ANQA review committee	ANQA
11:00	11:30	Meeting with minister of Education and Science	MoES
11:45	12:30	Meeting at the Ministry of Education and Science	MoES
13:00	14:00	Lunch	ANQA
14:00	15:00	Meeting with student representatives	ANQA
15:15	16:00	Meeting with ANQA management	ANQA
16:15	17:00	Meeting with ANQA coordinators	ANQA
17:00	18:00	Review team meeting	ANQA
	19:00	Dinner	TBD
Tuesday, September 10 <sup>th</sup>			
Start	End	Activity	Venue
8:30	9:00	Review team meeting	ANQA
9:00	9:45	Meeting with ANQA supporting staff	ANQA
10:30	11:15	Meeting with Rectors' Council	YSU
11:45	12:30	Meeting with teaching staff	ANQA
12:45	13:30	Meeting with Employers' Union	ANQA
13:30	14:30	Lunch	ANQA
14:30	15:15	Meeting with HE representatives (international projects run by ANQA: World Bank, Tempus)	ANQA
16:00	16:45	Meeting VET representatives	ANQA
17:15	18:00	Review team meeting	ANQA
	19:00	Dinner	TBD
Wednesday, September 11 <sup>th</sup>			
Start	End	Activity	Venue
8:30	9:00	Review team meeting	ANQA
9:00	9:45	Meeting with the Accreditation Committee	ANQA
10:00	10:45	Meeting with national expert panel chairs	ANQA
11:00	11:45	Meeting with national expert panel members	ANQA
12:00	12:45	Meeting with HEI that have undergone institutional accreditation (top management)	ANQA

\* Coffee breaks are not included in the agenda. Refreshments will be available at all times in the meeting rooms.

## ***Proof External Review – Site Visit Agenda***



<b>12:45</b>	<b>13:45</b>	Lunch	ANQA
<b>13:45</b>	<b>14:30</b>	Meeting with HEI that have undergone institutional accreditation (QA staff)	ANQA
<b>14:45</b>	<b>15:30</b>	Meeting with HEI that have undergone institutional accreditation (students)	ANQA
<b>15:45</b>	<b>16:30</b>	Meeting with HEI that have undergone institutional accreditation (teaching staff)	ANQA
<b>16:45</b>	<b>17:30</b>	Meeting with HEIs that have not participated yet in institutional audits (top management)	ANQA
<b>17:30</b>	<b>18:30</b>	Review team meeting	ANQA
	<b>19:00</b>	Dinner	TBD
<b>Wednesday, September 12<sup>th</sup></b>			
<b>Start</b>	<b>End</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Venue</b>
<b>8:30</b>	<b>9:00</b>	Review team meeting	ANQA
<b>9:00</b>	<b>9:45</b>	Meeting with HEIs that have not participated yet in institutional audits (QA staff)	ANQA
<b>10:00</b>	<b>10:45</b>	Meeting with HEIs that have not participated yet in institutional audits (students)	ANQA
<b>11:00</b>	<b>11:45</b>	Meeting with HEIs that have not participated yet in institutional audits (teaching staff)	ANQA
<b>12:00</b>	<b>13:00</b>	Review team meeting	ANQA
<b>13:00</b>	<b>14:00</b>	Lunch	ANQA
<b>14:00</b>	<b>16:00</b>	Review team meeting	ANQA
<b>16:00</b>	<b>17:15</b>	Closing meeting – debriefing, Review team and ANQA representatives	ANQA
	<b>19:00</b>	Dinner	TBD

List of abbreviations:

MoES - Ministry of Education and Science  
YSU – Yerevan State University  
YSUAC - Yerevan State University of Architecture and Construction  
YSLU - Yerevan State Linguistic University after V. Brussov  
YSMU - Yerevan State Medical University after M. Heratsi  
YSAFA - Yerevan State academy of Fine Arts  
SEUA - State Engineering University of Armenia  
ASAU - Armenian State Agrarian University  
ASPU - Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan  
YSITC - Yerevan State Institute of Theatre and Cinematography  
ASUE - Armenian State University of Economics  
ERICTA - European Regional Educational Academy  
GSU – Goris State University  
PAARA - Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia  
ASIFC - Armenian State Institute of Physical Culture  
YSC - Yerevan State Conservatory after Komitas  
Gavar SU - Gavar State University  
VSPI - Vanadzor State Pedagogical Institute named after Hovhannes Toumanyanyan  
GSPU - Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute after M. Nalbandyan

## List of Participants

### Meeting with ANQA review committee

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Ruben Topchyan	Director	ANQA
2	Susanna Karakhanyan	Research and Development	ANQA
3	Ani Mkrtchyan	ANQA IQA responsible	ANQA
4	Anushavan Makaryan	Audit division	ANQA
5	Meline Harutyunyan	Assistant to Research and Development	ANQA
6	Luisa Militosyan	Coordinator	ANQA
7	Tatevik Sargsyan	Student	ANQA

### Meeting at the Ministry of Education and Science

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Armen Ashotyan	Minister	MoES

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Karine Harutyunyan	Deputy Minister for Higher Education	MoES
2	Robert Sukiasyan	Head of Higher Education Division	MoES

### Meeting with student representatives

	Name	Position	Affiliation
	<i>Armenia National Student Association</i>		
1	Sargis Asatryan	Deputy director	ANSA
2	Anna Martirosyan		ANSA
3	Haykanush Nersisyan		ANSA
4	Eranuhi Manukyan		ANSA
5	Armine Yaralova		ANSA

### Meeting with ANQA staff

#### ANQA management

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Ruben Topchyan	Director	ANQA
2	Susanna Karakhanyan	Research and Development	ANQA
3	Anushavan Makaryan	Head of Audit Division	ANQA
4	Anahit Utmazyan	Head of Secretariat	ANQA

#### ANQA coordinators

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Anushavan Makaryan	Coordinator	ANQA
2	Alina Khachikyan	Coordinator	ANQA
3	Anna Karapetyan	Coordinator	ANQA
4	Mkrtich Aivazyan	Coordinator	ANQA
5	Luisa Militosyan	Coordinator	ANQA
6	Ani Mkrtchyan	Coordinator	ANQA
7	Varduhi Gyulazyan	Coordinator	ANQA

## ANQA supporting staff

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Varduhi Gyulazyan	Assistant	ANQA
2	Norair Balayan	Lawyer	ANQA
3	David Navasardyan	Human Resources	ANQA
4	Henrikh Badalyan	IT responsible	ANQA
5	Lilit Ghazaryan	Assistant to head of the secretariat	ANQA
6	Lilit Pipoyan	Reesponsible for translations and organisation of trainings	ANQA

## Meeting with Rectors' Council

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Aram Simonyan	Rector	YSU
2	Arshaluys Tarverdyan	Rector	ASAU
3	Hovannes Toqmajyan	Rector	YSUAC
4	Gayane Gasparyan	Rector	YSLU
5	Michael Narimanyan	Rector	YSMU
6	Aram Isabekyan	Rector	YSAFA
7	Ara Avetisyan	Rector	SEUA
8	Ruben Mirzakhanyan	Rector	ASPU

## Meeting with teaching staff participated in ANQA developments (first pilots)

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Petrosyan Hayk		ASPU
2	Gevorgyan Rita		ASPU
3	Martirosyan Angin		YSUAC
4	Armen Kostanyan		YSU
5	Hakobjanyan Hrachya		YSITC
6	Hakobyan Aghavni		ASUE
7	Sargsyan Vahan		ASPU

## Meeting with Employers' Union

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Arsen Ghazaryan	President	Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen(Employers ) of Armenia
2	Gagik Makaryan	President	Employers Union
3	Seyran Sargsyan	Vice-President	Union of Banks of Armenia
4	Gurgen Minasyan	Director	Union of builders

## Meeting with HE representatives (international projects led by ANQA)

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Hasmik Ghazaryan	Director	MoES PIU
2	Ruben Aghgashyan	Vice-rector	SEUA
3	Aleksandr Grigoryan	Vice-rector	YSU
4	Konstantin Yenkovyan	Professor	YSMU
5	Tigran Ajvazyan	Vice-rector	ASPU



**Meeting with the Board of Trustees**

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Tigran Sargsyan	President of the Board, Prime Minister	RA Government
2	Vache Gabrielyan		
3	Armen Khachaturyan	Executive director	National Competitiveness Fund
4	Jacquiline Karaaslanian	Executive director	Luys Foundation
5	Hovhannes Poghosyan	Director	Institute For Political and Sociological and Consulting
6	Vigen Qocharyan	Head of Chair	Chair of European and International Law
7	Gevorg Margarov	Head of Chair	Chair of Department of Security Software and Information
8	Arsen Ghazaryan	President	Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen(Employers ) of Armenia
9	Samvel Chzmachyan	President	Union of Banks of Armenia
10	Armen Ashotyan	Minister	MoES
11	Vigen Sargsyan	Head of President Staff	

**Meeting with Accreditation Committee**

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Samvel Shuquryan	Scientific director	Educational and Research Center for Information technologies of YSU
2	Vardan Urutyan	Director	International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education
3	Samvel Avetisyan	Professor	Yerevan Northern University
4	Sharistan Melkonian	Director	Accreditation Center of American University of Armenia
5	Nelly Hovhannisyan	Associated professor	YSU Faculty of Biology
6	Ashot Saghyan	Head of Chair	Chair of Pharmaceutical Chemistry
7	Yuri Sargsyan	Head of Chair	SEUA
8	Anahit Utmazyan	Head of Secretariat	ANQA

**Meeting with national expert panel chairs**

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Harutyun Marzpanyan	Head of Department	YSU Idjevan branch
2	Eduard Ghazaryan	Director	the institute of Maths and High Technology at the Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University
3	Eduard Hakobyan	Head of Chair	SEUA
4	Vachik Brutyan	Rector	Mkhitar Gosh university
5	Marinka Baghdasaryan	Head of Chair	SEUA
6	Lilit Zaqaryan	Head of department	Yerevan Northern University
7	Karine Nalchagyan	Professor	ERICTA
8.	Sos Khachikyan	Director	ASUE Branch

**Meeting with national expert panel members**

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Arevik Sargsyan	Associated professor	ASUE
2	Tigran Tovmasyan	Project manager	UNESCO
3	Arevik Ohanyan	Head of QA Center	Eurasia International University
4	Samvel Pipoyan	Head of Department	National Security Council
5	Vahan Sargsyan	Head of Chair	ASPU
6	Elena Erznkryan	Head of Chair	YSU
7	Aghavni Hakobyan	Associated Professor	ASUE
8	Yuri Suvaryan	Advisor to the Rector	ASUE

**Meeting with HEI that have undergone institutional accreditation (top management)**

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Alexander Grigoryan	Vice-Rector	YSU
2	Bella Margaryan	Vice-Rector	YSLU
3	Ruben Aghgashyan	Vice-Rector	SEUA
4	Samvel Avetisyan	Vice-Rector	YSMU
5	Tigran Ayvazyan	Vice-Rector	ARMSPU
6	Smbat Daveyan	Vice-Rector	ANAU
7	Boris Makichyan	Rector	Northern University

**Meeting with HEI that have undergone institutional accreditation (QA officers)**

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Lilit Zaqaryan	QA head of staff	Northern University
2	Hasmik Vardanyan	QA head of staff	Gladzor University
3	Aram Hairapetyan	QA officer	YSMU
4	Armen Budaghyan	QA head of staff	YSU
5	Robert Khachatryan	QA head of staff	YSLU
6	Irina Hovhannisyan	QA officer	SEUA

**Meeting with HEI that have undergone institutional accreditation (teaching staff)**

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Hovhannes Mkrtchyan	Lecturer	Northern university
2	Vardan Vardanyan	Associated professor	ANAU
3	Muradyan Atom	Associated professor	YSU
4	Marina Balasanyan	Head of Chair, Professor	YSMU
5	Markarov Vahan	Associated professor	SEUA
6	Gayane Markosyan	Associated professor	YSLU
7	Adrine Manaseryan	Lecturer	Gladzor Universiy

**Meeting with HEI that have undergone institutional accreditation (students)**

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Zaruhi Sargsyan		Gladzor University
2	Sergey Qocharyan		ASAU
3	Srbuhi Janjuxazyan		ASAU
4	Mariam Eghyan		YSU
5	Areg Khachatryan		SEUA
6	Laura Simonyan		YSU
7	Liana Sargsyan		Northern university

**Meeting with HEI that have not undergone institutional accreditation (top management)**

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Koryun Atoyan	Rector	ASUE
2	Yuri Safaryan	Rector	GSU
3	Arsen Lokyan	Rector	PAARA
4	Ruzanna Hakobyan	Rector	Gavar SU
5	Gurgen Khachatryan	Rector	Vanadzor SPI
6	Vahram Araqelyan	Rector	ASIFC
7	Shahen Shahinyan	Rector	YSC

**Meeting with HEI that have not undergone institutional accreditation (QA officers)**

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Nune Minasyan	QA head of staff	YSAFA
2	Avet Gevorgyan	QA head of staff	PAARA
3	Narine Avetisyan	QA head of staff	YSC
4	Nelly Kutuzyan	QA head of staff	GSU
5	Margarita Shahverdyan	QA head of staff	VSPI
6	Arayik Gyoalyan	QA head of staff	ASIPC
7	Arevik Ohanyan	Head of QA Center	Eurasia International University

**Meeting with HEI that have not undergone institutional accreditation (teaching staff)**

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Nune Aghbalyan	Professor	YSAFA
2	Lilit Martirosyan	Professor	YSC
3	Narine Sargsyan	Associated Professor	YSITC
4	Armen Ezekyan	Associated Professor	PAARA
5	Anush Gevorgyan	Associated Professor	VSPI
6	Anahit Harutyunyan	Associated Professor	ASIPC
7	Grigor Nazaryan	Associated Professor	ASUE

**Meeting with HEI that have not undergone institutional accreditation (students)**

	Name	Position	Affiliation
1	Gor Salnazaryan		YSC
2	Arpine Mkrtchyan		YSLU
3	Arus Harutyunyan		ASUE
4	Suzanna Sahakyan		Gyumri SPU
5	Ani Sargsyan		ASUE
6	Ani Mesropyan		Haybusak university
7	Armine Gevorgyan		Haybusak university

**ANQA reflections  
on  
the Report of the External Proof Review conducted within the frames of  
ARQATA project**

**Foreword**

ANQA underwent an external proof review within the frames of ARQATA project and this document reflects on the draft report submitted by the peer-review panel.

Overall, most commendations and recommendations provided by the peer-review panel are acceptable. However, at some points there was a perception that the peer-review panel's recommendations proposed some of the approaches, policies and procedures that are well embedded in ANQA's policies and procedures (e.g. inclusion of an international expert in the peer-review panels, 5.2.6, p.29).

Further, multiple repetitions of the same idea in different and sometimes in the same paragraph/article creates an impression that the panel had preconceived judgments, which it tried to convey.

Next, the panel seems to also be evaluating ANQA against corruption reduction criterion, which is not a criterion for evaluating an agency. Corruption is an outcome, this is not the reason for the phenomenon, and through promoting establishment of a quality culture, as well as institutionalization of internal quality assurance mechanisms ANQA does capacity building for the institutions, and actually, creates a good background that would contribute to eradicating corruption.

Last, but not least, the panel seems to be unaware of the cultural peculiarities that the system under review holds. In particular, the peer-review panel took little consideration of the fact that ANQA aims at enhancing the system and, actually, acts as a driver for reforms in the Armenian HE. Thus, it is advisable, in further cases, to involve an international expert that would be more or less familiar with the context and peculiarities that it holds to ensure better and deeper understanding of the system in development.

Below is one by one reflection on the points that ANQA finds difficulties to agree with. With the rest of report ANQA does agree and will take steps towards improvement and enhancement.

ANQA also believes that it would be more useful if the panel came up with a set of specific and practical recommendations to follow up.

## ANQA reflections

1. The report states that ANQA has had multiple delays with the deadline. This must be confusion with the poof evaluation that the universities were undergoing. In the process of ANQA proof review there was only one delay with the deadline of August the 1<sup>st</sup>, which was delayed till August the 5<sup>th</sup> and this happened only with prior consent of Stephanie.
2. In part 3.2 the panel argues that ANQA did not follow the panel's recommendation to support the statements with more evidences. In the same chapter the panel contradicts itself by acknowledging the QA system was in the development phase and naturally providing evidences in some cases was impossible.
3. On page 14 there is misunderstanding of the term "field committees". It is confused with the "expert panels". Field committees refer to the fields that specializations belong to (e. g. IT, natural sciences, social sciences and the like). The field committees are responsible for managing issues related to programme accreditation: expert selection and programme accreditation.
4. 5.1.1 blames ANQA for a top-down approach in establishing a system and in the meantime acknowledges that there are few realistic alternatives for this. ANQA considers that this is the case the panel, while judging, should consider the cultural and contextual peculiarities and have a good understanding of post-Soviet systems. Further, in the same point, ANQA has been accused of its monopolistic position. But, ANQA's efforts in supporting, guiding and, consequently, building on the capacity of universities (through creating opportunities for the HEIs for first hand exposure to learning from foreign systems through grants that ANQA has developed) are undervalued and all totally neglected. Last, but not least, the same points states that universities should write their self-evaluation reports without ANQA. ANQA has only provided guidance on how this should be done, which is normal in a new developing system that has few good examples to draw on. The same was evidenced within ARQATA, when the ARQATA international peers reflected on the draft report for capacity building aims.
5. 5.1.4 states that processed and standards were transferred from foreign systems. ANQA, like all other systems, prior to developing its own criteria had a review of all acceptable approaches as well as had a deep investigation of the Armenian system and needs. Thus, the procedures and criteria that ANQA has adopted are developed based on the needs of the Armenian HE system and reflect the aspects of importance as well as enhancement elements. We should not forget that this is a post-Soviet system and a lot of things are to be revised to meet the market needs. As for the compliance with the Ministry standards, the Ministry is currently revising both its legal framework as well as NQF and all the developments in QA will be well integrated into the new one. Thus, it was not logical to develop a system to fit the old standards and in a year or two revise it to fit the new ones.

6. 5.1.4 on page 22 the panel states that during the pilot at the agricultural university there was no peer expert, which is not true, because the agricultural profile is multidimensional and includes engineering, economics and one of experts was specialist in animal biology (fish).
7. On page 22 the panel states that the selection of experts is not clear and refers to a procedure proposed by NVAO per se within the frames of ARQATA (the system of HEIs nominating their experts). This is not one of ANQA approaches, it is an approach piloted within the frames of ARQATA on advice of NVAO. In the same paragraph the panel recommends ANQA to have an international expert – an approach well embedded in all ANQA procedures.
8. In 5.2.3 page 26, the panel states that ANQA is mostly focused on universities in Yerevan and not in the regions. ANQA is of a belief that this is not true since all the universities in the regions are actively involved in QA processes. Branches of YSU and SEUA were involved in WB pilots. “Mkhitar Gosh” was involved in first preparatory pilots and now is in process of WB pilot accreditation process. Eghegnadzor and Gyumri branches of ASEU are under review too. Besides, all the projects run by ANQA ensure there is regional coverage in it.
9. On page 27 the panel states that ANQA attracts international projects and questions their long-term financial stability. To be more precise, ANQA attracts international projects only for capacity building aims and not financial allocations.
10. In 5.2.5 the panel reflects on the mission statement of ANQA and how it is disconnected from the ANQA strategies. ANQA, in developing its strategic plan heavily drew on its mission, which is consistent with ANQA Charter, and was developed and refined with the feedback of international experts.
11. On page 28 the panel assumes that the action plan of ANQA is developed not by ANQA management but is delegated to an external expert. This statement is not true. If the panel had got to know all the details of ANQA management and planning in particular, there are at least three documents reflecting ANQA activity plans: a three-year action plan developed with joint efforts of WB experts and ANQA. This is followed by activity plans for 2012 and 2013 developed solely by ANQA management.