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THE QUALITY SEAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The States of Arts in Quality Assurance in Armenian  
Tertiary Education  
ANQA II Biennial Stakeholder Conference  
8th-9th October, 2012  
Yerevan State Medical University

„A Glance at ANQA State of Arts: Reflections of an  
ENQA expert“

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Administration Accreditation (FIBAA)

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# About FIBAA



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THE QUALITY LEADER IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- Internationally acting non-profit foundation for quality assurance in higher education and science since 1994
- Recognized by the German Accreditation Council and the respective bodies in Switzerland and The Netherlands
- Member of ENQA and INQAAHE, included in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) since 2009
- Services:
  - Programme accreditation (focused, not limited on business administration, economics, law, social sciences)
  - Institutional audit and evaluation
  - Certification of academic continuing training courses
  - Certification of Corporate Universities
  - Consulting

# Background



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Invitation of an “ENQA expert” within the “ENQA-GIQAC project - consultancy visits to Central Asia/Eastern Europe” in February 2012 by the European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA) for a consultancy visit to Armenia. This was in accordance with the Armenian National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA). Visit of the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance (ANQA) from 1st – 5th of May 2012.

ANQA is currently ENQA-member with affiliate status. Affiliate bodies are e.g. agencies with a demonstrable interest in the quality assurance of higher education.

# Mandate



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As ANQA is considering to apply for ordinary membership of ENQA, the agreement between ENQA and ANQA regarding the visit was to find out, **if and to what extent** the existing documents

- Charter of the foundation (appendix to RA Government decree No. 1486N),
- Statute on State Accreditation of Tertiary Level Institutions and Academic Programmes (appendix RA Government Decree N978-N),
- Procedure on ANQA Accreditation Committee Formation and Operationalization (draft), and the
- Organigram (draft)

**are in compliance with the ESG.**

# Mandate



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Main objectives were to find out, if and to what extent EFMD QUALITY SEAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- independence according to ESG, Standard III,6 is given, in particular regarding independence from the Armenian government, higher education institutions (HEI) and third parties, and
- Transparency according to ESG, Standard III, 5 and others is given.

# Procedure



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The documents just mentioned were discussed among the Director of ANQA, its Head of the Policy Development and Implementation Unit and the ENQA-expert taking into consideration the respective ESG. There were additionally discussions with the respective minister and members of the Board of Trustees.

# Findings



From the view of the ENQA-expert, the main results can be summarized as follows:

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1. The documents (including the Strategic Plan 2010-2015) show convincingly, that Armenia, the government as well as the involved people, is very committed to developing a system of quality assurance in its higher education area. The ESG are used as an umbrella framework and are taken into consideration when developing further local context.
- ANQA has published articles at international level and has already reached a visible international reputation representing significant achievements within three years. The announcement, that the next ministerial meeting in 2015 will be held in Armenia, may be an additional impetus to push further implementation.



# Findings and Recommendations



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2. With regard to transparency and independence from government, HEIs and third parties, the documents mentioned may nevertheless raise some questions and discussions with the ENQA reviewer team, when ANQA will apply for membership in ENQA in 2014-2015.

## ***a. Charter:***

According to the ANQA Charter the ANQA Board of Trustees is made up of stakeholders who are equally represented ensuring balance of representation. However, the fact that the Prime Minister ex officio is the President of the Board undermines its independence. Instead, a possible solution might be to make the position of the Board President an elective one.

# Findings and Recommendations



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- The final decision upon awarding the accreditation certificate lies with the government and not with the Accreditation Committee. Due to the current legal situation, the government may change or interfere the Accreditation Committee's decision.
- Necessary independence of the whole accreditation process (including final decisions) includes, that there is no possibility from government, HEIs and third parties to interfere the procedures or to change the decisions of the Accreditation Committee. This is a crucial point for membership of ENQA.

# Findings and Recommendations



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- It is recommended to ensure independence of the Accreditation Committee by authorizing it to award the accreditation certificate. To ensure independence of the Accreditation Committee from the government the law on higher education might include respective regulations.



# Findings and Recommendations



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- Accreditation Committee should be embedded in the Charter and should be regulated by two major documents:
  - the Statute on the Accreditation Committee Formation, to serve as the main policy document. The Accreditation Committee Statute should describe the criteria and procedures for the members' selection. And a
  - Manual on the Accreditation Committee Operationalization – to serve as the main procedural document.

# Findings and Recommendations



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- The Charter is to be elaborated upon to include the competences of the Accreditation Committee.
- In case the Charter will be changed in order to align it with the ESG and to improve the extant weaknesses, it is recommended to consider its current content and structure in order to differ between essentials and rather procedural issues, which may be regulated in an additional manual.
- If there will be a change, it is recommended to use it simultaneously to clarify expressively independence of the Accreditation Committee in order to enhance transparency in that respect again.

# Findings and Recommendations



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- A Manual for the Board of Trustees operationalization should also be developed to specify
  - The officer in charge for the development of the ANQA Strategic Plan and similar documents;
  - The suspension of the authorities from the Board of Trustees;
  - Criteria for the ANQA Director election;
  - The functions of the secretariat to take care of the Accreditation Committee functioning.

# Findings and Recommendations



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## ***b. Statute on State Accreditation of Tertiary Level Institutions and Academic Programmes:***

Independence is touched upon in different chapters; the same issues - already mentioned - are concerned:

- The decisions of the Accreditation Committee sent to the minister for approval as an individual legal act.
- Signature of the certificate by the respective minister as final decision.

It is recommended to ensure independence of the Accreditation Committee transparently by authorizing it to award the accreditation certificate and to pay particular attention to the coherence of all documents/statutes.

# Findings and Recommendations



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## ***c. Procedure on ANQA Accreditation Committee Formation and Operationalization (draft)***

The draft is already a good starting point. Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement as already mentioned.

Considering the change in the Charter and organigram aiming to include the Accreditation Committee some reshuffling of already developed policies, procedures and criteria including development of new ones is recommended.

In particular, respective changes should be made to delegate the Accreditation Committee the start and closure of the accreditation procedure.



# Findings and Recommendations



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With this regard the following is recommended:

Two major documents – as already mentioned - are to be developed:

- the Statute on the Accreditation Committee Formation, to serve as the main policy document, and a
- Manual on the Accreditation Committee Operationalization – to serve as the main procedural document.

The Accreditation Committee Statute and Manual should describe the policies, criteria and procedures

- For the Accreditation Committees members' selection;
- Regulations for the expert pool formation - procedures and criteria – including training of experts (already in existence but in need of revision and refinement due to the changes);

# Findings and Recommendations



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- Procedures and criteria specifying the selection for expert panels should also be developed and be included in the Accreditation Committee's Manual (already in existence but in need of revision and refinement due to the changes);
- Guidelines for the experts, criteria and statements of impartiality and confidentiality (already in existence but in need of revision and refinement due to the changes);

# Findings and Recommendations



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- ESG III.7 requires “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”. The follow-up procedure should be referred to in the Accreditation Committee Statute and elaborated upon in the respective Manual.
- For an appeals committee acting as a mediating instance;
- Other relevant aspects.

# Findings and Recommendations



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## *d. Organigram*

- The ANQA organigram is to be adapted according to a new situation (Accreditation Committee and its main functions);
- An advisory board (rights and duties?) might be useful. Its operationalization may promote coherency and inter-nationalization of ANQA.
- An internal quality assurance procedure is under development. Regarding the methodology to be used it is recommended to come up with a workable one.

### 3. Final Remark



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This report refers to the currently existing documents and to the information given during the meetings. Taking into account the feedback of the two board members, there is good reason to believe, that there will be essential progress in further developing a quality assurance system in Armenia, making it possible to meet the European Standards and Guidelines.





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*Thank you for your  
interest and attention*

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