

**“NATIONAL CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE”
FOUNDATION**



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
GORIS STATE UNIVERSITY**

Yerevan 2021

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of Goris State University (hereinafter as GSU or the University) was carried out based on the application submitted by the University. The accreditation process was organized and coordinated by the “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” Foundation (hereinafter as ANQA).

The ANQA was guided by the regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Institutions Implementing and Their Academic Programs” approved by the RA Government decree N978-N as of 30 June 2011 as well as by the RA Government decree N 959-N on "Approval of RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation" as of 30 June 2011.

The expertise was carried out by the independent expert panel formed according to the requirements of the ANQA regulation on “Formation of the Expert Panel”. The expert panel consisted of 1 international and 4 local experts.

The institutional accreditation is aimed not only at external evaluation of quality assurance but also at continuous improvement of the quality of the University’s governance and academic programs. Hence, two issues were put forward to the experts:

- 1) to carry out an expertise of institutional capacities in accordance with the RA standards for state accreditation;
- 2) to carry out an expert evaluation from the perspective of the University’s compliance with the international development and its integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), aimed at quality improvement.

This report reflects the results of the expertise of GSU’s institutional capacities in accordance with the RA state accreditation criteria and with the international expert’s peer-review observations from the perspective of the University’s integration into the EHEA.

CONTENT

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION	4
EXPERTISE OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO THE ACCREDITATION CRITERIA OF RA PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION	4
PEER-REVIEW FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE INSTITUTION'S INTEGRATION INTO THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA	12
DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW	16
BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION	19
I. MISSION AND GOALS	21
II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION	24
III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMS	32
IV. STUDENTS.....	39
V. TEACHING AND SUPPORT STAFF.....	46
VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT	52
VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES.....	59
VIII. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	67
IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION.....	71
X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM	77
EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA	83
APPENDIX 1. CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS	84
APPENDIX 2. TIME-SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT	86
APPENDIX 3. LIST OF REVIEWED DOCUMENTS	89
APPENDIX 4. OBSERVED RESOURCES	94
APPENDIX 5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE INSTITUTION.....	95
APPENDIX 6. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	96

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION
EXPERTISE OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO THE ACCREDITATION
CRITERIA OF RA PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

The expertise of GSU's institutional capacities was carried out by the independent expert panel¹ which was compiled according to the requirements set by the ANQA regulation on "Formation of the Expert Panel". The evaluation was carried out according to the 10 criteria for state accreditation, approved by the RA Government decree N 959-N as of 30 June 2011.

In the evaluation the expert panel took into consideration that GSU is a higher education institution (hereinafter as HEI) the main mission of which is:

1. to implement educational-research programs and services in compliance with the regional educational, cultural, industrial, legal and service sector needs and development opportunities in accordance with the labor market requirements; to prepare competitive specialists and to ensure proper level of implementation of cooperation projects;
2. to formulate culture of cooperation and accountability with internal and external stakeholders which will foster the enhancement of education quality and the transparency of educational services provided by the University;
3. to ensure the compliance with the requirements and criteria set for the exchange of leading practice, international cooperation, education content and quality in the field of education;
4. to promote the advancement of higher education through reforms and integration of innovation.

The expert panel took into consideration GSU's (as a higher education institution) relations with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia (hereinafter as RA ESCS Ministry) as well as its role and significance both for the Syunik region and for the RA. At the same time, the expert panel also took into account the fact that GSU undergoes the accreditation process for the second time and it has had a plan for the elimination of shortcomings developed as a result of the previous accreditation process.

The professional academic programs (hereinafter as APs) of the University are compiled on the basis of the outcomes of the RA National Qualifications Framework (hereinafter as NQF), a number of structural reforms of APs have been made, and some steps have been taken to ensure selection of methods of teaching and assessment of students' knowledge in line with anticipated learning outcomes (hereinafter as LOs). The University also gives importance to the maintenance of academic honesty and it has taken steps in this direction. However, the stakeholders' involvement in the processes of development and improvement of APs is poor, and these processes are not clearly institutionalized. Although GSU highlights the importance of mobility of teachers and students, it still lacks mobility opportunities.

GSU has a documentary base for the formation of teaching and support staff, and there are mechanisms of ensuring their advancement. The teaching staff is diverse; there are many highly experienced residents and newly engaged leading specialists, young teachers full of readiness to integrate the novelty as well as practitioners. Due to this, GSU mainly ensures necessary teaching

¹ APPENDIX 1. CVs OF THE EXPERT PANEL

staff for the implementation of APs. The absence of mentoring policy and imperfection of the process of recruitment of young teachers hinder the fluent generation change. Although the University practices some mechanisms for evaluating its teaching staff, the process of comprehensive evaluation and needs assessment is not fully implemented, and the process of organizing activities based on analyses of the mentioned process is not clear either.

The University uninterruptedly and continuously carries out activities in the direction of enhancement of its building facilities, replenishment and development of resources. In spite of the scarcity of financial means, GSU manages to make targeted allocations from its budget for this purpose and, at the same time, the external projects have also contributed to the enhancement of the resource base. Meanwhile, the University makes attempts to draw the state governing bodies' attention to the issues relating the goals directed to both enhancement of its resources and security assurance. As a result, GSU generally succeeds in ensuring respective educational environment. Although the University has a policy on distribution of financial resources, its link with the strategic planning is not clearly reflected. The process of replenishment with resources is poorly linked to the processes of evaluation of resources and services provided to students and teachers and improvement activities.

GSU implements different APs, including those which are not guaranteed to be continuous. However, in this row there are some APs in the field of Natural Science which are given significance to at the state level and for the implementation of which the University makes all the possible efforts. However, the expert panel finds that the steps taken in this direction need to be institutionalized more, and in this regard, the investment and operation of state mechanisms are highly important.

In spite of some issues related to the APs, teaching and support staff, material and financial resources, the expert panel finds that the University mostly ensures the reliability of awarded qualifications, and the existing problems and risks are surmountable.

GSU has an important role in the region in terms of both meeting the labor market demand set for higher education and ensuring the educational, scientific and cultural development in the region. However, the University needs to clarify its role in accordance with the opportunities and challenges and respectively to ensure clear processes.

The University has a clear set governance system which mainly has necessary human and material resources, and it regularly carries out activities in the direction of their enhancement. GSU gives importance to the strategic management and some steps taken towards this are visible. Nevertheless, the interlink between the short-term, mid-term and long-term plans and the accountability system is not clear yet. Respectively, the clearly interlinked functionality of processes of planning, implementation, evaluation and improvement is not visible, and there is a gap among them. The University highlights the importance of quality assurance (hereinafter as QA) processes, there is a respective structural unit, some activities have been carried out aimed at creating a documentary base related to QA processes, and surveys are conducted by the University. However, the internal QA system is not clearly formulated yet, and its impact on decision making and improvement is poorly displayed. In addition, the role of internal and

external stakeholders in the mentioned system is not clear either, and their involvement in QA processes is still poor, and the impact of their involvement is weak.

Based on the above mentioned, the expert panel concludes that the governance system of the University is quite institutionalized, and preconditions have been created to ensure the development. However, it is not sufficiently stable as far as the impact of the QA system is not guaranteed yet.

GSU has a clearly set policy of recruitment and selection of students and it has a sufficient number of students, and among them those involved in the part-time (correspondence) study dominate. The staff of the University has the willingness to support students, and the support is mainly provided without mediation. The role of the Student Council as a functional unit is not visible. GSU is willing to provide support to students for their career development, and in the relevant structural unit a position has been created, however, the impact of the University on assurance with employment of its graduates and students is not visible yet. Students are poorly motivated to be involved in research activities.

GSU has a clear policy of accountability to its internal and external stakeholders, and it has also taken steps towards content improvement, but the analytical component is poorly reflected. The University practices a number of mechanisms to make its activity more transparent and available as well as to transfer knowledge to the society. However, the scope of these activities needs to be expanded and improved. There is a need to take steps in the direction of improving the mechanisms of feedback with the society.

GSU has defined priorities and ambitions in the fields of research and internationalization, however, the gap between them and ensured outcomes is significant. The University lacks analyses and substantiations grounding the fact that its strategic ambitions derive from their capacities, and conditioned by the registered results, there are no guarantees to ensure their availability. There are respective infrastructures in both directions (research and internationalization) the activities of which are regulated. Since 2010 GSU implements the scientific grant project on “The Material and Spiritual (Non-Material) Heritage of Syunik”. It should be noted that although there are mechanisms of interrelating learning and research, the results of application of those mechanisms indicate the low level of efficiency. The absence of indicators on academic mobility of students and teachers in the last 4 years and the lack of suchlike opportunities are worrisome.

Hence, the expert panel concludes that GSU strives to ensure its long-term development, has taken steps in this direction and has created preconditions for that, however, the achievements reached in the fields of research and internationalization have not yet created sufficient guarantees for the long-term development.

The strong points of the University are as follows:

- 1) The structure of APs which contains detailed description in accordance with awarded qualifications and anticipated LOs.
- 2) The existence of mechanisms ensuring formation and advancement of teaching and support staff; the assurance with respective teaching, administrative and support staff.

- 3) The existence of respective academic environment; the strive for continuous improvement of resource base and assurance of safe environment for the fulfillment of goals of the APs.
- 4) The irreplaceable place of the University in the region and, conditioned by this, its significance for the regional labor market.
- 5) The regulated governance system, the assurance with main necessary resources and the strive for the investment of strategic management system.
- 6) The importance given to QA processes by the University and the existence of respective structural unit and specialists.
- 7) The existence of clear mechanisms of student recruitment and selection; the willingness to provide support and consultancy to students.
- 8) The continuous implementation of the project on “The Material and Spiritual (Non-Material) Heritage of Syunik” funded by the “Maintenance and Development of Infrastructure of Scientific and Scientific-Technical Activities”.
- 9) The existence of a structural unit acting as a scientific center.
- 10) The existence of clearly set mechanisms of accountability to internal and external stakeholders; the willingness to ensure the transparency and availability of activities.
- 11) The existence of the Chair of Foreign Languages and a respective infrastructure responsible for external relations recruited with specialists with respective experience; the existence of experience of implementing international projects.

The weak points of the University are as follows:

- 1) The absence of a clear polity on monitoring, efficiency evaluation and improvement of APs; the poor involvement of internal and external stakeholders in the processes of development and improvement.
- 2) The imperfection of mechanisms ensuring the comprehensive evaluation and needs assessment of teaching staff and the organization of outcome-based activities.
- 3) The imperfection of mechanisms of financial resource distribution in accordance with the Strategic Plan (hereinafter as SP).
- 4) The weak link between the processes of evaluation of resources and services provided to students and teachers and the processes of improvement.
- 5) The poor involvement of stakeholders in the formulation of goals & objectives and internal QA processes and, respectively, their low motivation to be involved in the mentioned processes.
- 6) The imperfection of mechanisms evaluating the implementation of the goals, conditioned by their poor planning.
- 7) The poor link between studies and decision making & improvement.
- 8) The imprecise structure of internal QA system and its poor impact on decision making.
- 9) Poor motivation among students to be involved in research activities and the absence of promotion mechanisms; the low level of efficiency of mechanisms linking the learning and research.

- 10) The absence of clearly set operational policy directed to the development of research (including the field of internationalization); the imperfection of strategic management in the mentioned sphere; the incompliance of ensured outcomes with ambitions specified in the field of research.
- 11) The imperfection of the link with the SP and the analytical component reflected in reports.
- 12) The incompliance between the strategy of internationalization and opportunities; the absence of academic mobility opportunities.
- 13) The incomplete current external relations aimed at assurance of outcomes defined by the SP.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Mission and Purposes

1. To form a strategic development plan which will be in compliance with the new situation and will derive from the real opportunities, by reviewing and re-evaluating the University's role in the region as well as taking into consideration GSU stakeholders' expectations and needs.
2. To ensure a clearly defined feasible and measurable action plan by including key performance indicators (hereinafter as KPIs), to improve the mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation of the SP.

Governance and Administration

3. To invest mechanisms ensuring motivation and active involvement of stakeholders involved in governing bodies.
4. To improve the strategic planning by linking it to mid-term and short-term plans, as well as to invest a system based on the results of their monitoring.
5. To clarify the main factors influencing the activity of the University and to condition the planning and improvement processes by their complex and comprehensive analyses.
6. To ensure parallel development of governance and administration processes based on the PDCA cycle.
7. To ensure the improvement of mechanisms for data collection, analysis and evaluation of publication, based on studies and analyses.

Academic Programmes

8. To invest mechanisms for studying labor market requirements by using the data both in the investment and review of APs (including their course content).
9. To ensure a wide scope of involvement of internal and external stakeholders in the development and improvement of APs by ensuring the clear interrelatedness between the outcomes of APs and those of courses, as well as the identification of documents and practical processes.
10. To improve teaching, learning and assessment methods ensuring the formulation of practical competences and skills.

11. To invest the mechanisms of evaluating the efficiency of teaching, learning and assessment methods by ensuring parallel improvement.
12. To ensure academic mobility opportunities and approaches leading to the study of leading (national and international) practice (of APs and methods), by also using the collaboration links with employers, to foster respective activities.
13. To invest a clear policy on monitoring, efficiency evaluation and improvement of APs based on comprehensive analyses and studies of constantly changing development tendencies of the labor market as well as leading practice.

Students

14. To apply diverse mechanisms of identifying the needs of students and alumni, taking into consideration the peculiarities of students involved in the part-time study.
15. To activate the involvement of the Student Council in the processes related to the awareness and protection of student rights at GSU.
16. To invest mechanisms and toolset to foster students' participation in scientific-research activities.
17. To ensure the alumnus-university-employer link and respective frame of cooperation, directed to the implementation and development of coordinated processes fostering students' career, as well as to the efficient enrollment into the labor market.

Teaching and Support Staff

18. To ensure competition-based positioning of teaching staff as well by giving importance to the requirements in accordance with APs.
19. To regulate the process of inviting leading specialists and employers by setting clear standards and, upon opportunity, by involving international specialists.
20. To expand the scope of cooperation with employers and to ensure full involvement of invited teachers in the University's processes, aimed at teaching staff improvement (including practice exchange).
21. To condition the integration of new mechanisms (in particular, program of teacher training and qualification enhancement, staff members responsible for the given AP) with research outcomes, by reducing the risks and problems conditioned by the investment as well as by clarifying the expectations from the investment.
22. To ensure the process of comprehensive evaluation and needs assessment of teaching staff, aimed at parallel development and improvement of in-use mechanisms (including mechanisms ensuring progress and generation change).
23. To ensure the complex of activities based on the needs assessment by evaluating their efficiency.
24. To institutionalize the mechanisms of remuneration, promotion and advancement of teaching, support and administrative staff by conditioning them by the SP priorities and predefined standards acknowledged by the University's stakeholders, by evaluating the efficiency of integrated mechanisms.

Research and Development

25. To ensure strategic management in the field of research according to defined priorities and the SP by conditioning the latter by available material, financial and human resources, capacities, ensuring the distribution of clearly defined responsibilities and making them feasible and measurable.
26. To specify the role of the Scientific Center and to ensure its impact on the development of scientific-research processes.
27. To develop and invest a policy on internationalization of the scientific-research activity by ensuring continuous development of processes directed to the mentioned sphere.
28. To expand the scope of cooperation in the scientific-research field by serving it for the implementation of research activities within the frame of internships by using of employers' resources.
29. To ensure the effective operation of mechanisms interlinking learning and research processes by evaluating the outcomes and improving them.
30. To ensure students' involvement in scientific-research activities by investing promotion and motivation mechanisms (including by motivation of teachers).

Infrastructure and Resources

31. To ensure the interrelatedness between the distribution of financial resources and implementation of the SP goals, to invest a mechanism for replenishing and enhancing resources by involving stakeholders.
32. To ensure the diversification of financial inflows aimed at assurance of financial stability.
33. To ensure the policy and institutional mechanisms guaranteeing the continuity of APs (especially those being significant for the state and the region), based on complex analyses (in this regard the state support and respective policy are important).
34. To invest mechanisms of improving the processes of documentation circulation and information dissemination, based on stakeholders' needs and current requirements.
35. To make regular evaluation of resources and services provided to students and teachers in compliance with the SP goals and the requirements of APs.

Societal Responsibility

36. To ensure the link with the SP and the analytical component in reports of all levels, to make evaluation of efficiency of accountability mechanisms.
37. To evaluate the efficiency of mechanisms of feedback with the large-scale society, to improve them, including the information of the official website of the University by reflecting upon the feedback analyses and mechanisms through which the selection of materials in foreign languages is made.
38. To expand the mechanisms of knowledge (values) dissemination among the society by means of additional programs, courses and consultancy centers, based on expectations of the society and on the University's capacities, as well as to evaluate their efficiency.

External Relations and Internationalization

39. To re-evaluate the ambitions defined in the field of internationalization, based on the University's own context by ensuring clear process and mechanisms of evaluation of efficiency, also including the integration of the mechanism of analytical reports.
40. To clarify the policy of external relations by expanding the scope of cooperation and ensuring the compliance with the University's SP, needs, opportunities and regional peculiarities. To observe the Diaspora as a separate opportunity, based on the studies.
41. To create opportunities of mobility for students and teachers, thus fostering experience exchange and development.
42. To ensure efficient process of development and internationalization through experience exchange, study of leading practice and upgrade of foreign language knowledge proficiency by investing promotion and motivation mechanisms; in the process of upgrade of language proficiency to give importance to the studies of and targeted approach to the potential and opportunities, conditioned by the objectives of the process.

Internal Quality Assurance System

43. To clarify the internal QA system and the role of respective units (including the Quality Assurance and Student Career Support (EQ & SCS) Division) by ensuring respective documentary base and their compliance with the processes.
44. To ensure clear planning of QA processes by also providing resources and responsible staff members.
45. To invest mechanisms for needs assessment and evaluation of efficiency of resources allocated to QA processes by ensuring outcome-based processes of enhancement and improvement.
46. To ensure the motivated involvement of internal and external stakeholders in internal QA processes.
47. To ensure the PDCA-based implementation of processes.
48. To make current comprehensive studies (including regular conduction of surveys) and respective analyses as well as to ensure efficient application of outcomes.
49. To ensure the availability of information (including the results of studies and analyses) on quality of procedures and processes to stakeholders.

PEER-REVIEW FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE INSTITUTION'S INTEGRATION INTO THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

General remarks

GSU is a small university which fulfills its activity in difficult conditions caused by the isolated geopolitical location of the Syunik region. Recently the armed conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic have disrupted the functioning of the University. Despite such exceptional difficulties, GSU realizes that the establishment and internationalization of external relations are an integral part of the University's activities, and therefore the University continues to give importance to the provision and development of external relations and internationalization in line with EHEA. GSU education is offered within the framework of the three cycles of higher education in accordance with the Bologna system. The articulation of LOs is part of the educational framework in line with the RA NQF. GSU works with a credit point system and is dedicated to student-centered learning.

Mission and Strategic Priorities

The GSU mission derives from the Bologna principles. GSU identifies itself as the leading higher education institution in the Syunik region of the Republic of Armenia whose mission is to prepare highly qualified specialists in Bachelor's and Master's degrees that will be able to face the challenges in the spheres of higher education, economy, industry and information technologies. As far as could be determined from the self-assessment report, integration into the EHEA is not an explicit part of the strategy of GSU. Integration into the EHEA may be understood in distinct ways. One way is to adhere to the same principles of structure, culture and practice of higher education institutions as are applied in other parts of the EHEA, such as the three cycle structure, explicit quality assurance, student-centered learning and the ECTS system. GSU does profess to adhere to these principles and can be seen to make efforts in that direction. Another way is to increasingly become part of an open and interconnected system of HE institutions, in which students and academic staff have real opportunities to move freely throughout the area and in which active inter-institutional collaboration helps universities to serve their constituencies in the best possible way. GSU does profess to adhere to this objective of the EHEA as well. But the actual circumstances pose formidable obstacles to significant achievements to this end and raise the question if the objective should indeed have an important place in the strategy. It is unclear to what extent the GSU leadership feels compelled to profess adherence to this second objective of the EHEA by external forces.

Academic Programs, Teaching and Learning

Education at GSU is characterized to a significant degree by the large proportion of part time students. It is not fully clear to what extent this characteristic of the student populations requires a tailored approach in the education offered as well as in the student services. GSU does show signs of such a tailored approach, but could be more explicit in the reasons and objectives of the differentiation between full-time and part-time students and base such differentiation more

clearly on an analysis of the part time student population. Are their part time studies integrated in their current employment, are they aimed to improve their employment prospects, are they related to the cost of full time studies?

GSU has potential for further improvement of the articulation of LOs, particularly in the domain of meta-cognitive (general academic) and non-cognitive (personal) competencies. Improved articulation of such meta-/non-cognitive LOs also offers potential for improved integration of teaching/learning activities that help develop these specific LOs.

Teaching Staff

The University indicates that there is a need for a more diverse composition of academic staff. It could be more explicit in explaining the sense in which diversity needs to be enhanced, like gender, age, social or cultural stratification, number of international staff members, number of Armenian academics from the Diaspora.

The University highlights 'teamwork' and 'creative skills' as relevant competences for hiring academic staff. While it is commendable to look also for such personal characteristics in addition to pure subject-related competences, GSU could be more articulate about why these specific characteristic were chosen – and how they are assessed in the recruitment process.

Research

Although research is given a formal priority in the SP, it is the least developed area of GSU's activity and the gap with foreign universities is large. This is understandable in the light of the geopolitical and socio-economic conditions of the Syunik region and GSU. Given these circumstances, the strategy and policy for research at GSU could profit from a more elaborate articulation of the specific functions of research in HE &R institutions in general and in GSU in particular. Research can be important as a means

- to contribute to the creation of new knowledge (not yet existing anywhere):
- to apply and/or tailor already existing knowledge to the specific context and needs of the GSU constituency:
- to help develop the academic competences of GSU academics and students, or:
- simply as a given because A University needs to have research.

GSU may narrow the existing gap between strategy and reality in terms of research by a clear choice of the function or functions of research that are more appropriate for GSU. It would be helpful to do this both for the present situation and for the Mid-Term and longer term future.

Internationalization

Internationalization is indeed part of the GSU strategy. It is unclear to what extent this international strategy flows from the vision and analysis of the GSU leadership, and to what extent it flows from the perceived need to comply with norms and expectations that exist within the Armenian higher education political context. This Armenian political context seems to require and prescribe an internationalization strategy, but without a clear articulation of what seem appropriate levels and ambitions of internationalization for universities in Armenia and how

this might be differentiated according to the specific context and profile of individual Armenian tertiary education institutions. A successful internationalization strategy for GSU requires that it is based on the GSU vision and mission – choosing a specific position within the overall context of norms and expectations for internationalization of HEIs in Armenia.

Quality Culture

The strategy and practice of quality assessment at GSU seems to be focused more on procedures and the undertaking of prescribed activities, than on the contribution of quality assurance mechanisms and activities to the achievement of the ulterior objectives with education, research, and service to society of the University. The apparent shared vision and values between leadership, academics and administrators at GSU could be made more visible as leading the QA processes. It may serve GSU in its achieved quality to use the following core concepts/ questions as beacons for the purpose of the quality assurance system:

- Relevance: “are we doing the right things”?
- Effectiveness: “are we actually achieving what we aim for”?
- Efficiency: “Are we doing this in a smart, resource-effective way?”
- Impact: “Do we see signs that the achievements also have a positive impact beyond those immediately involved in the activities?”
- Sustainability: “Can we be confident that the achievements will last over time?”
- Coherence: “Does the total of our activities make sense, with positive cross-fertilization and the avoidance of cross-impediments?”

Recommendations

1. To distinguish the efforts of integration into the EHEA between adherence to similar principles on the one hand and integration into an open mobility and collaboration space on the other hand.
2. To finetune the international ambitions to the context in which GSU has to operate and to be realistic about the extent to which integration in the EHEA is desirable and achievable.
3. To be more explicit in the reasons and objectives for differentiation between full time and part time students and to base such differentiation more clearly on an analysis of the part time student population.
4. To improve the articulation of LOs, particularly in the domain of meta-cognitive (general academic) and non-cognitive (personal) competencies as a basis for improved integration of teaching/learning activities that help develop these specific LOs.
5. To become more explicit in explaining the sense in which academic staff diversity needs to be enhanced, in terms of e.g. gender, age, social or cultural stratification, number of international staff members, number of Armenian academics from the Diaspora.
6. To articulate better why and how non-cognitive specific characteristics are used as criteria in staff recruitment.
7. To articulate better which specific function or functions of research are best suited to GSU in its present situation as well as in the Mid-Term and Long-Term strategic perspective.

8. To relate its internationalization strategy better and more explicitly to its specific situation.
9. To rebalance its QA strategy and practice to the overarching objectives of the University and to profit more and more explicitly in the QA practice from the apparent shared vision among leadership, academics and administrators.
10. To assess if and how the core questions of Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, Sustainability, and Coherence can be instrumental.

Date: 23 July 2021

Armenuhi Sargsyan
Chair of the expert panel

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF THE EXPERT PANEL

The external review of the University was carried out by the following expert panel:

1. **Armenuhi Sargsyan** - PhD in Physics and Mathematics, Associate Professor, Head of Scientific Policy, Quality Assurance and Management Center at Shirak State University
2. **Kees Kouwenaar** - Doctor of History, Chief Secretary of Aurora European University Alliance, Netherlands
3. **Narine Kirakosyan** - PhD in Economics, Associate Professor, Head of Chair of Management at European University
4. **Narine Sirakanyan** - PhD in Pedagogy, Expert at the Department of Risk Management, Inspection Planning, Analysis and Evaluation of the Education Inspection Body of the Republic of Armenia
5. **Grigor Bejanyan** - 2nd-year MA student of the Department of Law, Northern University

The composition of the expert panel was agreed upon with the University and was appointed by the decision of the ANQA Director.

The activities of the expert panel were coordinated by Meri Barseghyan, Specialist at the ANQA Division of Policy Development and Implementation.

The translation was provided by teachers of Brusov State University - Vardanush Baghdasaryan and Ani Shahinyan.

The members of the expert panel, including the translators and the coordinator, signed declarations of confidentiality and exception of conflict of interests.

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

Application for state accreditation

GSU applied to ANQA for institutional accreditation by submitting the application form, the copies of the license and respective appendices.

The ANQA Secretariat examined the data presented in the application form and the attached documents.

After making decision on submission of the application, a bilateral agreement between ANQA and the University was signed. The time-schedule of activities was compiled which was later changed, conditioned by the COVID-19 pandemic and the state of emergency, afterwards - by the martial law declared in the RA.

Self-evaluation

Within the set deadlines and according to the form set by the ANQA, the University submitted its self-evaluation report (hereinafter as SER) in Armenian and English and the package of attached documents.

The SER of the University was made by the work group which was particularly compiled for self-evaluation based on the order of the GSU rector. The work group involved members of the University's administrative, academic, teaching and support staff.

ANQA examined the report to check its technical compliance with the ANQA requirements. The SER of GSU was not compliant with the defined unified form; there were technical, form and content related shortcomings. The SER was returned to the University which, within the set deadlines, eliminated the shortcomings and made the report in compliance with the ANQA form. The mentioned report was submitted to ANQA on 06.04.2020. Afterwards, the SER, the package of attached documents as well as the electronic questionnaire filled in by the University were provided to the expert panel the composition of which was agreed upon with the University in advance and was approved by the order of the ANQA director.

Preparatory phase

In order to train the expert panel for the upcoming activities and to ensure the efficiency of processes, ANQA conducted 4 trainings on the following topics:

1. main functions of expert panel members,
2. preliminary evaluation as a preparatory phase of the expert panel report, as well as the main requirements set for the report,
3. methodology of examination of documents and resources,
4. ethics and techniques of conducting meetings and inquiries.

Having observed the SER and the package of attached documents of the University, the expert panel made a preliminary evaluation according to the set form by also preparing the list of necessary documents for additional review as well as questions and issues for clarification by also mentioning respective structural units or target groups. During the previous evaluation the members of the expert panel also took part in online classes and class observations organized by the University.

Within the set deadlines the expert panel summed up the preliminary evaluation results and compiled a time-schedule for the site visit².

In accordance with the ANQA manual on expertise, the time-schedule comprised planned meetings with all the groups, close and open meetings, review of documents, etc.

Preparatory visit

On 19 April 2020 an online (Zoom) meeting with the leadership of the University was organized. During the meeting the time-schedule of the site visit was discussed and agreed upon with the University, the list of additional documents for further examination was presented, the organizational, technical and informational issues, the code of conduct and ethical norms of participants were discussed and respective mutually agreed decisions were made. The conditions for focus group meetings and the activity of the expert panel were discussed, and the rules of the online meetings were clarified.

² APPENDIX 2. TIME-SCHEDULE OF THE SITE VISIT

Site Visit

The site visit was initially planned to be carried out within three days, however, in the online format the three-day site visit lasted four days by maintaining the workload of the expert panel. The site visit was made in the period of 26-29 April 2021. According to the time-schedule, the activities of the site visit launched with the closed meeting the aim of which was to have a discussion with international expert Kees Kouwenaar and to come to an agreement on the frame of the expertise, issues subject to examination during the site visit and GSU's strong and weak points per criteria, the procedure of focus groups meetings as well as to clarify further steps.

All the members of the expert panel, the coordinator and the translator participated in the site visit.

The online site visit launched and completed with the meetings with the leadership of GSU. The representatives of the University's teaching staff, students, deans, heads of chairs, employers and alumni were selected from the list which was provided by the University in advance. All the meetings, except for the open meeting (because of the failure of registration of participants) were held in accordance with the time-schedule. The expert panel made a review of documents³, observation of resources⁴ and had focus group meetings in the online format.

In the closed meeting of the expert panel held at the end of each working day of the site visit, the interim results of evaluation were put forward, and the main results of the site visit were summed by the closed discussion upon the end of the site visit.

The expertise was made within the framework of the state accreditation criteria and standards as well as ANQA procedures according to which the evaluation has two levels – **satisfactory/meets** and **unsatisfactory/does not meet**.

Expert Panel Report

The expert panel made a preliminary evaluation based on the electronic questionnaire filled in by GSU, the SER, results of observation of attached documents, online class observations and the site visit observations as a result of regularly organized meetings. Based on the results of observations made after discussions, the expert panel and the ANQA coordinator prepared the draft of the expert panel report. The international expert also prepared a separate opinion on the peer-review. The documents were translated and provided to the expert panel. The opinion of the peer-review opinion was fully integrated into the report. The draft report of the expert panel was provided to the University on 25.06.2021.

The University provided its feedback on the report to ANQA on 15.07.2021. By examining the draft of the expert panel report, GSU did not provide any remark or objection. The expert panel compiled the final report which was approved by the expert panel on 23.07.2021.

Meri Barseghyan

Coordinator of the Accreditation Process

23 July 2021

³ APPENDIX 3. LIST OF REVIEWED DOCUMENTS

⁴ APPENDIX 4. OBSERVED RESOURCES

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

HISTORY

On 1 October 1967 the Board of Ministers of the Armenian SSR made a decision to establish a branch of the Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan in Goris specializing in Physics and Mathematics. The establishment of the mentioned institute was aimed at ensuring the schools of the Syunik region with specialists holding higher education qualification. According to the decree N 382 as of 25 June 1984 made by the Board of Ministers of the Armenian SSR, the Goris branch of the Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan was re-organized into the branch of Yerevan Polytechnic University, afterwards, in 1991 - the branch of State Engineering University of Armenia. By the decree 2400-N of the Government of the Republic of Armenia dated 6 October 2005, on the basis of the Goris branch, the "Goris State University" state non-profit organization was established which acted as an independent HEI.

Goris State University aims is to prepare comprehensively developed, competitive and highly qualified specialists in Bachelor's and Master's degrees who will be able to face the challenges in the spheres of higher education, economy, industry and information technologies by means of implementation of professional academic programs and services, as well as to create a student-centered environment that is characterized by flexible academic programs, developed courses and modern teaching and learning methods which are in compliance with the educational and technological needs of the society.

EDUCATION

Goris State University has a two-level system of education (Bachelor's and Master's degrees). The curricula of Bachelor's degree are organized in accordance with specializations and are implemented in 14 areas for the 4 years of study. The curricula of the second, i.e. Master's degree are organized for the period of 2 years (in case of part-time studies -2.5 years) which are compiled according to current specializations (majors) and specialties (minors).

One of the main directions of GSU's strategic development is the development of new professional APs and the revision of current ones which will contribute to the preparation of graduates meeting the requirements of the labor market. With this aim, the anticipated LOs have been made in compliance with the descriptors of the RA NQF in the last two years. Currently the University takes activities to ensure stakeholders' involvement and to invest new educational technologies. GSU gives importance to the increase of efficiency of organization and implementation of internships as well as to the maintenance of academic honesty.

RESEARCH

In order to ensure continuous implementation of the research activity in GSU and the link between research and learning, the following objectives have been defined by the GSU SP:

- implementation and development of research through clear policy and procedures,

- assurance of material-technical and financial means for the implementation of scientific-research activities,
- promotion to internationalization of research activities,
- assurance of efficient interrelatedness of research and educational processes.

INTERNATIONALIZATION

With the aim to ensure the efficiency of internationalization and to foster the modernization of the University, the following objectives have been set by the GSU SP 2019-2023:

- to create an environment that will foster practice exchange, development and internationalization,
- to ensure regulated operation of infrastructure,
- to efficiently cooperate with local and international institutions,
- to ensure the necessary level of foreign language proficiency of internal stakeholders.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

The modernity of the problem relating the QA of the University QA is conditioned by the processes that are currently being practiced in the RA higher education system, i.e. the development of provisions of the Bologna process, promotion of their implementation and guidance towards European QA standards:

- increase of responsibility of the University towards QA by means of enhancement of the internal QA system,
- revision and modernization of respective syllabi/ in compliance with the requirements and needs of knowledge-based economy and the labor market.

The above mentioned processes serve as a basis for the development of strategic development directions and respective strategic plans in the QA sphere, and their main goal is to formulate an internal QA system.

***Source:** The facts extracted from the above mentioned areas are based on the documents provided by the University which have served as sources (e.g. SER, Strategic Plan, time-schedule, plans of structural units, concepts, etc.).*

I. MISSION AND PURPOSES

CRITERION: The policies and procedures of the institution are in accordance with the institution's mission which is in line with ANQF.

Findings

1.1. The institution has a clear, well-articulated mission that represents the Institution's purposes and goals and is in accordance with National Qualifications Framework (hereafter NQF).

GSU is the only state HEI in the Syunik region. The mission and goals of the University are stipulated in the GSU Strategic Development Plan (SP) 2019-2023. According to the mentioned SP, the mission of GSU is to implement educational, research programs and services in compliance with the needs and development opportunities of the educational, cultural, industrial, legal and service fields of the region and in line with the labor market requirements; to prepare competitive specialists, to formulate culture of accountability and cooperation with internal and external stakeholders; to ensure exchange of leading practice, international cooperation and concordance with the requirements and standards set for the education content and quality; as well as to develop the sphere of higher education by means of integration of innovation.

After the previous accreditation GSU has developed a new strategic plan in which it has defined the priorities, goals and respective objectives.

According to the GSU SP 2019-2023, the following strategic goals are defined:

- to develop APs in different directions and at different levels ensuring the sequence of education in compliance with the state educational standards,
- to create necessary conditions for the application of modern learning and teaching methods,
- to expand the scope of cooperation among the University, employers and the labor market,
- to involve external stakeholders in the activities of development of curricula and syllabi, taking into consideration their needs in the preparation of specialists,
- to establish stable mechanisms of preparation and training of specialists having high qualification,
- to identify general socio-economic and scientific-technical factors in order to clarify the current process of implementation of APs.

According to the SER, GSU SP describes the objectives that are set for the fulfillment of the strategic goals, taking into consideration the regional peculiarities and current requirements. As it turned out from the site visit, the University gives importance to the fulfillment of goals defined by the SP, putting special emphasis on the processes ensuring high quality of education, the importance of implementation of international projects and steps directed to the development of research.

It should be noted that the time-schedule compiled for the fulfillment of main actions reflected in the GSU SP is not a complete document; it does not provide a precise track for the

fulfillment of the SP goals, the responsible units in charge of fulfillment of actions, the distribution of resources & budget as well as the KPIs are not specified in the document.

GSU also has mid-term strategic plans of faculties and chairs the planning formats of which, in terms of their structure, are more precise but the formulations again contain some uncertainties.

As the site visit showed, the University is willing to develop KPIs of the SP, the action plan according to responsible units and clearly defined outcomes as well as short-term and mid-term plans which will derive from the strategy.

GSU implements 25 APs in Bachelor's and Master's degrees in compliance with the RA NQF descriptors. According to the results of the self-evaluation and the site visit, GSU plans to invest the Researcher's (PhD) AP for the third level of education.

As it turned out from the site visit, all the stakeholders admit the irreplaceable role of GSU in the region and at the same time recognize that conditioned by the new situation emerged in the region, the mission and goals of the University need to be reviewed by clearly evaluating the opportunities, threats and GSU's capacities.

1.2. The mission statement, goals and objectives of the Institution reflects the needs of the internal and external stakeholders.

The main stakeholders of GSU are students, teachers (including invited teachers and employer-teachers), alumni, employers and applicants.

The GSU SP is discussed in the Scientific Council and in the University Board, the latter approves it and the mid-term strategic development plans of faculties and chairs - in the faculty and chair sessions, respectively.

Internal and external stakeholders are involved in the GSU Board and in the Scientific Council. As the site visit showed, stakeholders are mainly unaware of the highlights of planned development specified in the SP.

Besides internal stakeholders (heads of chairs, members of teaching staff, student representatives), external stakeholders have also been involved in faculty councils. The site visit showed that stakeholders are not motivated to be involved in the processes of development of strategic development plans.

In addition, as it turned out from the site visit, among external stakeholders there are some teachers who simultaneously act as internal stakeholders. The University has initiated the conduction of surveys among employers, however, the process of survey analysis followed the process of development of the SP.

The University has conducted surveys among students and teachers as well but the site visit again stated that the surveys did not have any impact on the formation of the SP.

The University functions a Student Career Support Division, however, as the site visit showed, it still makes attempts to establish a database of alumni.

In general, it should be noted that the formulations articulated in the GSU SP are too generic, they are partially compliant with the formulations of criteria and standards of the institutional self-evaluation and they do not fully reflect stakeholders' needs.

Nonetheless, the site visit showed that the leadership of the University gives importance to its stakeholders' needs and in indirect ways (such as meetings, talks), though not through complex analyses, it somehow gets information on their needs and takes them into consideration.

1.3. The Institution has set mechanisms and procedures to evaluate the achievement of its mission and goals and further improve them.

The main mechanism of evaluating the results of the implementation of GSU mission and goals is considered to be the reports of structural units and the rector. The formats of reports have been revised with the aim to integrate the analytical component. The rector's annual report, according to the GSU Charter, includes the results of the University's activities in all directions, including the financial and economic sphere. The rector's report comprises all the directions of GSU's activity which is mainly a description of processes fulfilled in the current academic year, also involving numerical indicators. However, these reports are not directly linked to the strategic plans.

The actions presented in the time-schedule set for the implementation of actions of the SP 2019-2023 mainly have general character; they do not contain clear planning, the responsible units, financial allocations and KPIs are not specified.

Based on the recommendations provided in the previous accreditation expert panel report, in particular, to compile a council or a committee in charge of strategic issues that will monitor the whole progress of the strategy, inform about obstacles, identify the ways of their elimination, make proposals on revision of problems. In November 2019 GSU compiled a committee in charge of monitoring the SP with the aim to fulfill the mentioned functions. In 2020 the mentioned committee made a report. The latter provides a description of general activities fulfilled in the given direction in accordance with some sections of the SP and it does not contain analyses.

CONSIDERATIONS

GSU has an irreplaceable role and significance in the region, and GSU alumni are to some extent out of competition of the current labor market. GSU has managed to make the directions of its activity more precise in the SP and more compliant with the NQF, however, the SP is not fully operational yet. The expert panel gives importance to the irreplaceable role and significance of GSU, as an education institution, in the region but at the same time the panel finds that GSU should analyze and scan the situation in a realistic way by clarifying its role and probably gaining more significant and influential significance for the region to make sure that all the above mentioned derives from internal and external opportunities, and to take into consideration the threats.

The expert panel appreciates the University's efforts and willingness to involve its stakeholders in the planning process of the SP through different mechanisms, by involving them in councils and committees. However, their involvement is poor, and they are not motivated to be involved. At the same time, there are no mechanisms yet through which all the stakeholders could be involved.

The culture of strategic planning and evaluation of results is still in the phase of investment at GSU. The mechanisms of feedback with internal and external stakeholders still have shortcomings and need to be improved. It is also important to take into account that the preliminary strategic planning and improvements made in the phase of investment should be based on the SWOT analysis which can ensure the smooth development of processes. It must be noted that the imperfect mechanisms of needs assessment of internal stakeholders and the low level of involvement of external stakeholders may hinder and slow down the fulfillment of strategic goals of the University.

GSU highlights the importance of organizing strategic processes based on the logic of the PDCA cycle. This can be stated by the actions aimed at improvement of accountability mechanisms. However, it should be noted that reports have a descriptive informative nature, and their structure and content are not in compliance with the SP provisions, moreover, the evaluation and analyses of obtained results, the discussions on the issues raised at the GSU Board and the Scientific Council are missing. Hence, it is not possible to ensure PDCA-based implementation of strategic processes.

SUMMARY

Taking into consideration the fact that after the previous accreditation GSU has re-defined its mission and goals, has ensured their compliance with the NQF, has made the first attempt to develop a strategic plan and takes steps towards involving its stakeholders in the strategic planning process, has invested some mechanisms in the process of evaluation of results and to some extent has improved the existing ones, the expert panel finds that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 1.

CONCLUSION

The compliance with the institutional competences of GSU with the requirements of the Criterion 1 is evaluated **satisfactory**.

II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

CRITERION: The institution's system of governance, administrative structures and their activities are efficient and are aimed at the accomplishment of mission and goals of the institution preserving ethical norms of governance.

Findings

2.1. The Institution's system of governance ensures structured decision-making process, in accordance with defined ethical rules and has efficient provision of human, material and financial resources to accomplish its educational and other purposes.

The governance of GSU is made in accordance with the normative acts regulating the RA higher education system and the University's Charter based on the combination of solitary and

collegial managerial principles. The collegiate governing bodies of GSU are the GSU Board and the Scientific Council. The executive body is the rector. The governing bodies of mid-level management are the Faculty Councils, Deans, Heads of chairs and structural units. The Rectorate acts as an advisory body. The authorities of GSU governing bodies are stipulated by the GSU Charter which was last edited on 14.02.2013 and which functions till now. The GSU Board and the Scientific Council as well as the Rectorate act in accordance with their regulations, in particular, the regulation of the Board was approved in 2006, that of the Scientific Council - in 2018, and the regulation of the Rectorate - 2018.

The decisions made by the GSU Board and the Scientific Council are not published. The composition of the Board comprises not only internal stakeholders but also representatives of the RA Government and the RA ESCS Ministry. They are nominated among prominent figures in various fields of education, science, culture, and economy, as well as among employers who cooperate with GSU. The expert panel found out that the representatives of the mentioned body are not motivated to be actively involved in discussions on the agenda issues. At the same time, the site visit stated that they find the strategic goals need to be reviewed, conditioned by regional changes, but there were no discussions organized in this direction.

According to the GSU SP 2019-2023, the establishment and development of the management system aim to distribute the functions of all structural units for which the University has raised the problem to develop mechanisms and procedures through which GSU will monitor, revise and improve the regulations of administrative units and the management system. The University has developed regulations of the GSU Board and the Scientific Council, a policy on financial planning, control and monitoring, as well as regulations on activities of structural units, on ethics and on internal labor rules through which the University ensures the institutional-normative base for the operation of the management system.

Following the recommendation mentioned in the previous expert panel report, the University has revised its management structure with the aim to ensure the compliance of strategic goals and the management system. The GSU's organizational structure has undergone changes which have led to a row of other structural and organizational changes, in particular, the faculties have been optimized from 5 to 3, afterwards - 2 faculties, and the EQA & SCS Division has been re-organized. However, it should be mentioned that these changes have not been based on analyses.

The University has established the Division of External Relations and Cooperation the activity of which is directed to the fulfillment of strategic goals in the field of external relations and internationalization. With the aim to efficiently coordinate and implement scientific-research activities set by the strategy, the Scientific Center has been established which is managed by the rector who is also in charge of managing the Chair of Mathematics. Besides, a Division of Organization of Economic Activities has also been established with the aim to efficiently organize the activities in this direction.

As it turned out from the site visit, the structural changes were approved by the GSU leadership and the Board but the University does not have analyses which would reflect the evaluation of effectiveness of made changes and their compliance with the strategic goals.

The University functions a PR and Media Division and, as the site visit showed, there is a need to recruit the mentioned Division with an employee.

GSU has a Vice-Rector on Academic Affairs who is in charge of cooperating and controlling respective processes. The Vice-Rector also fulfills the functions of the Scientific Secretary.

The University also has an Academic Department, Personnel Management Division, Archive, Accounting Department, Division of Organization of Economic Activities, library, etc., the activities of which are regulated according to respective regulations.

GSU misses strategic budgeting, complex policy and clear mechanisms of diversification of financial inflows. In the SER the University specified the scarcity of financial resources as a weak point, and the SP does not contain financial planning and distribution of actions in accordance with responsible units.

The evaluation of efficiency of the activity carried out by separate units of the management system is made through their reports, however, the reports do not comprise the analytical component and are mostly descriptive and informative. The University has developed job descriptions for some positions but this is not ensured throughout the whole University.

On 27 December 2018 the GSU regulation on Ethics was approved. On 31.01.2020 the Scientific Council approved internal disciplinary rules. As the site visit showed, staff members of the University are generally satisfied with the working conditions in accordance with the rules of ethics which are defined by the University.

2.2. The Institution's system of governance gives an opportunity to students and the teaching staff to take part in decision making procedures.

According to the GSU Charter, regulations of the Board and the Scientific Council and exemplary charters of the faculty and the chair, GSU teachers and students are given the opportunity to participate in making decisions related to them.

The internal stakeholders of GSU are provided with the opportunity to participate in different levels of GSU governance (Board, Scientific Council, Rectorate, Faculty Councils) which has also given them the chance to participate in decision making processes mainly by means of discussions and voting.

The 25% of the GSU Board involve representatives of the teaching staff, and 25% - representatives of students. As the site visit showed, the representatives of the Board are not motivated to actively participate in discussions on agenda issues.

The composition of the Scientific Council involves students, managerial and teaching staff representatives. Part-time students are also involved in the Faculty Councils.

From the site visit it turned out that the Student Council as a structural unit is very passive. The level of students' awareness on the processes of selection of students in different councils is very low.

Teachers are involved in the processes of making decisions relating them which is also ensured by their participation in chair sessions. The site visit showed that mainly managerial staff

is involved in decision making, and teaching staff and students do not display any motivation in this respect.

The participation in the development and monitoring of the GSU SP and in the implementation of self-evaluation as well as the involvement in the QA Internal Audit Committee are also considered to be mechanisms of ensuring the participation of University's internal stakeholders, namely teachers and students, in decision making, however, the level of their activeness is not high.

2.3. The Institution formulates and carries out short-term, mid-term and long term planning consistent with its mission and goals as well as has appropriate mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of those plans.

Based on the necessity to eliminate the shortcomings specified in the previous accreditation expert panel report, the University has made a long-term planning by developing the SP 2019-2023 by which it has defined its mission and development goals. This is the first attempt of the University to develop a strategic plan. The GSU SP was approved by the Board, however, as the site visit showed, their involvement in the planning of the strategy was poor. The University also set a time-schedule for the implementation of key actions of the SP, which, however, doesn't contain clear planning components which would ensure measurability, feasibility and efficient fulfillment of monitoring. With the aim to evaluate the implementation of the SP, a Monitoring Committee was compiled after which the University made a report in 2020. The report is mostly descriptive. The rector makes annual reports and presents them to the Board. The format of the rector's report has been improved by which indicators of some data in accordance with processes have been integrated. However, the report is mostly descriptive and at the same time it does not clearly reflect the interrelatedness with the strategic goals.

Ahead to the institutional accreditation process, GSU Scientific Center, External Relations and Cooperation Division, faculties and chairs developed and approved mid-term development plans for 2020-2023 which, in accordance with the structure and each action specified for the attainment of goals, contain planning of resources, deadlines and responsible units. Besides, there is a reflection upon potential obstacles and anticipated KPIs. The KPIs are not clear and measurable, moreover, actions specified as KPIs can be often observed. In the mid-term plans the link with the SP is not expressed.

All the structural units of the University compile annual work plans. In case of some structural units there have been made some attempts to also link them with the mid-term planning for the 2020-2021 period. According to defined regulations, structural units submit annual reports in accordance with the hierarchy - firstly to chairs, afterwards - faculty councils, Scientific Council, and to the Board. The structural units make reports in the improved approved formats. However, in this case as well, they have a descriptive nature instead of being analytical. It should be noted that the recent reports of faculties have contained SWOT analyses but there was no reflection on planning of actions directed to the improvement of identified weaknesses.

One of the problems raised in the previous accreditation is the absence of indicators for evaluation of goals. Currently they are not clearly defined either.

2.4. The Institution carried out examination of facts affecting its activities and draws on reliable findings during the decision-making process.

The University considers the study of factors influencing its activity as a continuous process. In the SP 2019-2023 GSU has planned to study the labor market requirements and the best practice of APs. However, as the observation of the University's documents has shown, GSU hasn't yet made any multidirectional analysis in the direction of adaptation of best practice.

In the processes of undertaking some structural changes, the University was led by the problems identified in the previous accreditation and provided recommendations. The optimization of faculties was based on the quantitative data of students and expenses.

While revising curricula, the University took into consideration the respective APs implemented by other HEIs with which GSU cooperates, as well as with existing opportunities of the University. However, the mentioned process is not fully based on complex analyses.

The site visit showed that with the aim to develop a strategic plan, the University gave importance to the previous accreditation process. In this regard, the observation of financial and material resources as well as opportunities was highlighted an important activity though all the mentioned was not implemented throughout the whole University and in a coordinated way, and there is no clearly specified methodology.

As the site visit has shown, the leadership of the University identifies the factors influencing its activity through tête-à-tête conversations, discussions on internship results with students and opinions of attestation committees as well (as an example, the addition of internship hours and practical hours in some courses was specified).

According to the observation of GSU documents and the results of the site visit, the University lacks analyses or information about the compatibility and compliance with the labor market, state priorities stipulated in the government programs, state or agency concepts. The University also conducts some surveys, however, their impact on the decision making process is not visible.

2.5. The management of the policies and the processes is based on the quality management principle (plan-do-check-act /PDCA/).

The studies and the site visit have shown that the PDCA cycle of quality management hasn't clearly been put into practice yet. The policies, regulations and procedures related to management processes were mainly developed in 2019-2020 because of which the PDCA cycle is not closed yet. During this period GSU has made structural-organizational changes as well. In the site visit the COVID-19 pandemic was mentioned as a circumstance which hindered the full application of the PDCA cycle.

The GSU's long-term SP was developed for the 5-year term, the planned period is not complete yet, the current monitoring has been made, however, the University hasn't implemented any process of improvement based on the mentioned.

Some procedures and regulations have undergone changes but in general they are not based on the results of previous changes, and in some cases the changes have been conditioned by discussions (in particular, the changes made in the assessment system are considered to be the

result of chair discussions, some changes have been made based on the initiative of employer-teachers).

A number of documents have been developed and invested in the University prior to the accreditation process, and some part of them have been conditioned by the problems identified in the expert panel report of the previous accreditation results as well as by provided recommendations. However, the results conditioned by the mentioned are not visible yet, and the University didn't have time to fully apply some of them. GSU has compiled a respective committee for the development of documents.

It turned out from the self-evaluation and the site visit that currently a number of processes are in the phase of planning and some - in the stage of implementation. For instance, the policy on promotion, evaluation of APs, policies of attestation of teaching and support staff is are in the phase of investment, and it is planned to recruit some human resources.

2.6. The Institution has evaluation mechanisms in place ensuring data collection, analyses and application of the data on the effectiveness of the academic programs and other processes.

It turned out from the GSU self-evaluation and the site visit that the collection and analysis of data on efficiency of GSU APs and other activities are made by means of surveys, discussions and meetings as well as through opinions of state attestation committee members, employers' viewpoints on students' internship and through the GSU official website. A number of questionnaires have newly been developed and invested. Surveys which are conducted to evaluate the quality of teaching are organized on a regular basis, however, the results of evaluation of questionnaires are missing.

Based on the recommendations provided as a result of the precious accreditation, the formats of reports have been revised with the aim to improve the analytical component, in which the SWOT analysis is set as a requirement. Besides, some data included in the reports are compared according to years, and the information presented in reports has been expanded.

The development and application of procedures and mechanisms of monitoring, evaluation and improvement of the quality of APs are among strategic priorities, but the regulation on monitoring of APs and the implementation of the process are missing.

The process of evaluation of human resources of GSU and respective mechanisms have been revised though they have not been applied yet. In particular, the University has invested regulations ensuring the processes of attestation of teaching and support staff, according to which the evaluation should firstly be made.

There are no clear mechanisms for evaluating the data collection, analysis and application in GSU.

2.7. There are objective mechanisms in place evaluating the quality of quantitative and qualitative information on the academic programs and qualification awarded.

The University's website, official newspaper, Facebook page, booklets are among means of disseminating information about GSU. Through the mentioned means the society gets informed about the activities implemented in the University.

The rector's reports, internal legal acts, APs, documents, announcements on activities are posted on the website and on the Facebook page of the University. GSU has a feedback mechanism on its website and the Facebook page which, upon necessity, can be applied by stakeholders to receive feedback. In the student surveys there is also a reflection on satisfaction with the GSU website. The Facebook page toolset gives the opportunity to stakeholders to evaluate the publications. Nonetheless, the site visit showed that the University hasn't developed any clear policy for evaluating the publications and it doesn't make complex analyses either.

CONSIDERATIONS

The activity of each governing body of GSU is regulated by respective documents; the frameworks of authorities and liabilities are clearly divided. The decision making process is made in accordance with the GSU Charter and documents regulating the activity of the structural units. The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that conditioned by recommendations provided by the previous accreditation as well as by newly defined strategic goals, the current structure of the University has been more adapted to the strategic goals due to structural changes made at the University. All the structural units have regulations by which their functional framework is defined. GSU subdivisions are mainly equipped with material and human resources except for some cases in the direction of which GSU plans to take measures.

At the same time, the expert panel mentions that the University should be guided by complex and comprehensive analyses while making institutional changes.

The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that GSU has developed and put into practice the regulation on ethics and internal disciplinary rules, giving importance to the formation of a working environment which will be in compliance with the mentioned rules and, in this regard, the application of the rules will be important in the future.

The expert panel also finds it a positive point that the GSU management system (Board, Scientific Council, Faculty Councils, etc) allow students and teachers to participate in making decisions relating them, as defined by the formulated legal base. Besides, the University has to some extent involved part-time students and at the same time has expressed the willingness and has formulated mechanisms to involve employers in the mentioned process. At the same time, the expert panel finds it important to take steps towards increasing stakeholders' motivation with the aim to activate their participation in decision making.

The expert panel finds it positive that the University has developed a long-term development strategy by defining priorities and goals, moreover, this is the first attempt in this direction but the unclear articulations in the SP and the absence of clear planning may hinder the fulfillment of the strategy and afterwards - the evaluation of its efficiency. The compilation of mid-term plans for 2020-2023 is a better attempt of planning which, according to the structure, is more improved and to some extent more precise though there are still problems, in particular, the resource planning and the KPIs evaluating the efficiency are not clear, the link between financial planning and budget planning is not reflected. GSU subdivisions also have annual work plans, and the activities taken in the direction of improvement of plan formats are also given importance to by the expert panel. However, according to the expert panel, the unclear interrelatedness of the

mentioned plannings is problematic and respective steps should be taken in this direction by making clear and feasible planning which will ensure their implementation and evaluation.

It is positive that the University has also applied a mechanism of SP monitoring the results of which have been reported. The University functions mechanisms of evaluation of its activities and those of structural units, and this is reflected by reports. It is also positive that GSU finds them important and has taken steps to improve their formats. At the same time, the analytical component is still poor, and its link with mid-term and long-term plans is not clearly expressed which may impede the evaluation of implementation of the strategy.

Another positive point is that GSU realizes the importance of collecting information from different sources and the opinions of stakeholders, hence, it indirectly and in some ways takes them into consideration. There are some mechanisms by means of which they gained information has an impact. However, the University hasn't clarified all the factors influencing its activity and hasn't made comprehensive analyses in this direction either which may hinder the data-based decision making.

A number of documents are still in the stage of investment, and the changes of many documents and the revision of processes are not based on analyses of efficiency of previously applied documents. The expert panel has observed that GSU highlights the importance of the PDCA principle but the administration of policies and procedures is not based on the clear application of the PDCA yet which is also conditioned by the fact that many processes have been newly planned, and it is not possible to evaluate their efficiency. The expert panel gives importance to the full application of the PDCA principle as far as it will foster the simultaneous development of processes and the coordinated activity.

The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that the improvement of reporting formats has to some extent promoted the improvement of information collection and the process of analysis. The information on the efficiency of APs is obtained through some mechanisms such as surveys, internship registers, attestation committee members' opinions, class observations, however, there are no mechanisms through which their efficiency would be evaluated.

GSU takes different measures to ensure the availability of information but it does not have clear mechanisms for evaluating those means yet. In spite of the fact that there are some mechanisms on the University's website and the Facebook page, their results are not being analyzed, hence, further parallel activities of improvement conditioned by them are not guaranteed.

SUMMARY

Taking into consideration the fact that GSU has defined the functions, authorities and liabilities of the University's governing bodies and structural units, there are units in accordance with the SP priorities, the structural units are equipped with highly necessary resources, the University's management system has been enhanced after the previous accreditation process, the ethical rules in accordance with the management system have been defined, teachers and students have opportunities to participate in making decisions related to them, the University has taken some steps towards improvement of mechanisms of long-term, mid-term and short-term planning and

evaluation, and it realizes the importance of analysis-based decision making, the expert panel finds that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 2.

CONCLUSION

The compliance with the institutional competences of GSU with the requirements of the Criterion 2 is evaluated **satisfactory**.

III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

CRITERION: The programs are in concord with the Institution's mission, form part of institutional planning and promote mobility and internationalization.

Findings

3.1 The academic programs are in line with Institution's mission, they correspond to the state academic standards and are thoroughly described according to the intended learning outcomes of the qualification awarded.

GSU implements APs at 6th (13 APs in full-time study, 12 APs in part-time study) and 7th (7 APs in full-time study, 5 APs in part-time study) levels of the NQF in full-time and part-time studies. One of the main directions of strategic development of GSU is the development of new APs and revision of current ones which will help the University to prepare specialists who will best meet the labor market requirements. Led by the latter, GSU has invested a number of specializations in recent years, in particular, "English Language and Literature", "Tourism Management", "Special Pedagogy", "Fine Arts", "Social Pedagogy". However, the number of students studying in the mentioned specializations is not high, and in case of some APs the number has even decreased.

The number of alumni graduated in different years who are affiliated in the labor market in other than their specialization is very high, and the reasons are not studied.

At GSU the implementation of APs in small groups is observed as an issue of maintaining the specializations which are of importance for the state which is also connected with the problem relating the preservation of border villages. In such groups the remuneration conditions for teachers are different but there are no guarantees for ensuring the continuity of these APs.

In 2019 the current APs and course guides were revised, mainly being led by the studies of respective APs which was made within the cooperation with the Armenian State Pedagogical University. However, the syllabi/curricula the courses which were approved in 2016 are currently being implemented.

The structure of APs (for full-time, part-time studies) involves a detailed description according to LOs and awarded qualifications. There is information about further education and opportunities of being employed in the professional sphere of the labor market for alumni but the information sometimes corresponds to the disciplines involved in the AP and is not in line with the opportunities deriving from the AP LOs. The link between the outcomes of APs and those of

respective level of the NQF is clarified. As the site visit showed, the changes of APs do not quickly respond to the labor market requirements.

In 2019 the University amended the “Guide for the Development of Professional Academic Programs of Goris State University”, however, the guide hasn’t yet been put into practice. Before that, the University practiced the procedure on development, approval, monitoring and evaluation of APs and curricula of specialization, approved in 2012.

The site visit showed that in the processes of development and revision of APs the involvement of GSU teaching staff and external stakeholders is poor, and it is only manifested in some cases.

In the syllabus/curriculum the structure, total number of hours and their distribution according to the forms of classes and the individual work are provided. In the thematic plan the distribution of hours is made according to big sections and their content is presented. The syllabus doesn’t contain any clear planning of teaching of separate topics, descriptions of teaching, learning and assessment methods and respective assignments according to topics.

There are pairs of minors (non-professional) selective courses in APs, and each of them is an irreplaceable component ensuring the compulsory learning outcome.

There are APs by which the course paper is envisaged within only one or two majors (professional courses) which is not conditioned by any purpose.

It is not clearly reflected how the topics defined for final papers and MA theses are conditioned by the research of the labor market, but there are some cases in which the research outcomes are particularly applied by students in their work places.

6 courses are envisaged for BA students studying a 2nd foreign language but particularly the course outcomes of 1st and 2nd courses of the English language fully coincide. The LOs of the BA AP envisages proficiency in 2 foreign languages at practical level, and in case of the MA AP – competency of communication in a foreign language in the professional field, scientific and educational processes.

3.2 The Institution has a policy that promotes alignment between teaching and learning approaches and the intended learning outcomes of academic programs, which ensures student-centered learning.

In the specifications of APs (which were revised after the second accreditation process) the expected LOs – professional knowledge and understanding, professional practical competences and general transferable competences, as well as the mapping of formulation of competences are clearly provided. In the specifications of APs general teaching and learning approaches are provided. Besides, learning and teaching methods for each outcome are also presented. There are also repetitive teaching methods for the formulation of competences at different levels, in particular, lectures, practical activities, etc. The learning methods of knowledge, competences and skills are mainly repeated, and in APs (including MA APs) great attention is paid to the preparation of course and final papers. While course papers are not envisaged for MA APs, and the final paper is manifested by MA thesis.

As it turned out from the site visit, course and final papers prepared within the scope of BA APs are mainly essays, except for some good examples. In case of MA theses the fulfillment of research and acquisition of respective outcomes expected from students are given importance to, but this is not always ensured, and sometimes it is limited by the study of theoretical materials.

The syllabi and course descriptions do not contain any information about respective teaching and learning methods. The site visit showed that the teaching staff is mainly guided by their own experience gained within the scope of the given courses, and the relations between the outcomes of the course and those of the AP are not clear.

The site visit also showed that in terms of organizing part-time/correspondence study and with the aim to ensure efficiency, the University has revised the approach according to which the course materials are provided to students in the examination period prior to the organization of courses of the given semester.

The teaching staff has the freedom to select teaching and learning methods, takes the initiative to modernize applied methods and also to give feedback to students. At the same time, the classes are organized for small groups of students which has mainly led to the student-centered education.

In spite of the outcomes set for the foreign language proficiency and competences, during the site visit it turned out that generally those outcomes are not reached. Only in some cases students participate in facultative courses for developing their language proficiency after which they can practically apply their competences.

GSU practices the regulation on organization of pedagogical internship for BA APs. There is also a document on the "Regulation on the Organization and Conduction of Production and Pharmacy Clerkship for Bachelor's Students Studying the Specialization of Pharmaceutical Chemistry." The University cooperates with different organizations and employers for the organization of internship/clerkship. Although the hours allocated to the internship has been added, in the site visit it turned out that GSU stakeholders find the internship insufficient to formulate necessary competences. In regard to the organization of internship, some problems were emerged under conditions of organizing part-time studies. The internship activities organized within the MA APs do not always serve the purpose, and the site visit showed that there are some cases in which they are passive.

Under the condition of pandemic, in the organization of distance education, the teachers tried to get adapted to those conditions, and they mainly succeeded in applying modern technologies, in some cases they applied Zoom, Classroom, Viber and other means. At the same time, there are some cases in which the classes were organized in a hybrid way by also applying the technical facilities of the University. There were also some cases in which the insufficient competence and incomplete application of technological facilities led to inefficiency.

There are LOs relating the competences and skills set in APs which were revised in 2019, however, respective teaching and learning methods or approaches ensuring the attainment of those LOs are lacking.

The employers state that students usually have a high level of theoretical knowledge but the same cannot be said for their practical skills.

Although there are some mechanisms through which the University directly or indirectly evaluates the efficiency of teaching and learning methods, namely surveys conducted among students to evaluate teachers, class observations, opinions on interns, the involvement of students is not at sufficient level. Besides, the applied mechanisms have not led to improvement, and the changes and reforms are mostly made by teachers' personal initiative, motivation and through direct feedback with students.

3.3 The Institution has a policy on students' assessment according to the learning outcomes and promotes academic integrity.

The University functions a clear policy on assessment of student knowledge. Since 2013 the "Regulation on Student Knowledge Assessment and Appeal" is practiced at GSU. In 2016 the University invested the "Procedure on Check and Assessment of Student Knowledge by Computer Testing", afterwards, in 2020, it developed the "Regulation on Assessment of Knowledge of GSU Students".

In the specifications of APs the approaches applied for the assessment are reflected and described in details. Besides, for each LO the methods of assessing students' knowledge, competences and skills are specified. In the syllabi/curricula the questionnaires for checking students' knowledge, the topics for students' individual works are also provided but the lists of assignments are lacking. As a result of observation of documents (including assignments) as well as in the site visit it turned out that assessment methods are mostly aimed at checking students' knowledge.

Teachers make current check and assessment, provide comments on the formation of grades and thus foster the formative assessment. However, there are also some cases in which the assessment is made without any comments as a result of which the grades are not grounded and students don't have the opportunity to correct their mistakes.

The assessment of internship is regulated by respective regulations which were amended and approved in 2019. Meanwhile, the site visit has shown that in the assessment of internship the level of formation of students' competences and skills is often not taken into consideration.

The University has set clear standards for the evaluation of final papers and MA theses. In case of MA theses the scientific, methodical or practical novelty as well as clearly articulated conclusion and proposals are particularly given importance to, and in case of final papers the proposal of theoretical and practical solutions to the raised problem is highlighted. However, the approaches to assessment of final papers and MA theses have not always been practiced that way, and the final attestation was mainly expressed by the check of theoretical knowledge. The process of final attestation is organized in accordance with the current RA regulation, the whole process is registered and, upon necessity, the graduates can appeal their grades.

The University has an appeal procedure but the site visit showed that students were mainly unaware of it and also never needed it as far as in case of any problem emerged, they directly applied to teachers and deans.

Since 2012 GSU has been functioning the "Concept on Academic Honesty", and since 2018 – "Regulation on GSU Ethics". Based on the rector's order, a Committee on Academic

Honesty has been established, there are also some cases of violation of the rules of academic honesty which were identified and discussed by the Committee, and the violators were dismissed.

The problems related to the assessment system are identified in the discussions organized in chair sessions due to which some of them are revised, and at the same time teachers change their approaches after the direct communication with students.

3.4 The programs of the Institution are contextually coherent with other relevant programs and promote mobility of students and staff.

In 2019 the document on “Policy and Procedure of Implementation of GSU Benchmarking” was approved, before that suchlike mechanisms were missing. But the mentioned document hasn’t yet been put into practice, and there are no cases of comparative analyses of APs. Although it is mentioned in the GSU SER that the University has made comparative analyses of leading practices and APs in different years, such analyses are missing, and there is no sufficient experience of making comparative analysis either.

At the same time, it should be mentioned that due to the cooperation with Armenian State Pedagogical University, GSU has invested new APs and revised the current ones in the direction of pedagogical professions by giving more importance to practical hours and internship. Besides, within the framework of the HERITAG project, GSU has developed and invested (2017-2018 academic year) the MA AP in Tourism Management.

In the last 5 years there have not been examples of exchange and mobility of students and teachers based on respective agreements, and there have been no such projects either. Currently the University takes steps in this direction by expanding the scope of collaboration.

At the same time, in the last years (especially under conditions of organizing distance education), the University has invited many leading guest specialists from different universities and partner organizations with the aim to provide lectures within APs. However, during the site visit it turned out that guest lecturers were not fully involved in the University’s activities, and their activity is mainly limited by teaching of their course only.

The site visit has shown that there are some cases in which teachers take the initiative to study respective practice within the scope of their courses.

3.5 The Institution adopts policies in place ensuring academic program monitoring, evaluation of effectiveness and enhancement.

The syllabi of APs are revised in respective professional chairs, are discussed and approved in the faculty councils. The University mainly functions the syllabi which were approved in 2016 in spite of the fact that in 2019 the APs and LOs as well as course guides and course outcomes were revised.

Among the mechanisms of monitoring of APs the surveys conducted among students, teachers, alumni and employers, the reports and opinions of Final Attestation Committees as well as employers’ opinions on interns can be specified. However, the addition of practical hours and internship is mentioned as an importance change made in APs which, according to the University’s SER, is mainly conditioned by the studies of programs implemented by Armenian

State Pedagogical University. In this direction a recommendation was also provided as a result of the previous accreditation process.

Class observations are also considered to be important means of monitoring but the efficiency of their application is not visible. There are no comprehensive analyses made in this direction, neither improvements based on them.

The last section of the procedure on development, approval, monitoring and evaluation of APs and specializations of GSU approved in 2012 – the “Regulation on Monitoring, Evaluation and Revision of Curricula”, contains some general descriptive approaches.

In spite of some current mechanisms, the process of monitoring, efficiency evaluation and improvement of APs is not coordinated.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that GSU has invested APs which are demanded in the region which gives the alumni opportunities to be employed in the labor market. However, the big number of alumni working in other than their professional field as well as the low number of students studying the newly invested specializations state that the APs are not that much clearly conditioned by the labor market requirements and they are not based on in-depth analyses.

The expert panel gives importance to the high social responsibility of GSU leadership and staff in maintaining its specializations of high priority for the state, even with small groups of students, and at the same time the panel mentions that in this respect the state approach should be applied as well, and the University should also practice an institutional policy in order to ensure the continuity of those programs. At the same time, the extremely small groups of students (1-2 students) leads to the decrease of motivation among both students and teachers.

In the newly elaborated format of APs there is a detailed description according to LOs and awarded qualifications. The link of LOs with the outcomes of respective levels of the NQF is clarified. However, the expert panel gives importance to the clear interrelation between the LOs of APs and those of courses, hence, in the processes of development and revision the involvement of internal and external stakeholders is necessary, otherwise it may endanger the assurance of anticipated outcomes set by APs.

The unclear planning of implementation of courses may put at risk the assurance of its outcomes and at the same time it can make it more difficult for respective units to monitor and control the process.

The existence of selective courses in APs is important from the perspective of ensuring internal and external mobility, however, the University should pay attention to the fact that the selectiveness should be ensured in such a way that it does not endanger, even partially, the attainment of LOs.

The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that in APs the proficiency of a foreign language is given importance to for which sufficient number of credits are allocated, however, its efficiency and clear assurance of allocated outcomes are not visible.

There is information on teaching and learning approaches provided in APs, and the ways of formulating competences in accordance with LOs are also described which can serve as a guide for the teacher in the way of ensuring the LOs. At the same time, there is an impression that in some cases the formed approaches do not derive from application, and stakeholders are not well-informed about them; this also states about the lack of their involvement. Meanwhile, the expert panel gives importance to the fact that GSU teachers can freely choose teaching and learning methods in order to ensure efficiency. The insufficient practical competences and skills (including research and applied ones) of alumni is considered to be problematic, hence, the panel finds that the University needs to revise its policy in this direction, by also disseminating the best practice throughout the University, ensuring compliance of assignments, being more consistent towards internship, final papers and MA theses as well as taking into account the labor market requirements.

Teachers mainly give importance to students' opinions and take them into account in the selection of teaching and learning methods, and that impact is conditioned by small groups of students and direct communication between students and teachers.

The expert panel also gives importance to the fact that the University strives to ensure efficiency and revises the approaches to organization of part-time education. At the same time, the panel highlights the importance of evaluation and substantiation of changes made as a result of the mentioned processes.

Another positive fact relates to the University's response to the organization of distance learning under pandemic conditions, the approaches to the development of teaching and learning methods and the existing good practice due to which GSU has ensured quite efficient educational process. At the same time, the expert panel highlights the importance of disseminating that good practice and the problem relating the formation of skills and competences which, under these conditions, have become more visible. It is important that teachers take the initiative to develop the methods and approaches but the support provided by the University to promote teachers' development in this regard is also important.

The expert panel gives importance to the investment of functional mechanisms which will allow the University to evaluate the efficiency of teaching and learning methods and will lead the reforms at the University, thus ensuring the synchronous institutional development.

GSU functions a clear policy and defined procedures in the processes of student knowledge assessment and appeal. But the assessment process does not fully ensure the check of competences and skills which is manifested by both considerable lack of respective assignments and approaches applied for practical assessment of final papers and MA theses. The clearly set mechanisms to evaluate the efficiency of the assessment system are lacking, and there are no analyses made in this direction either.

The University has invested sufficient means and mechanisms to ensure academic honesty, the leadership is also willing to ensure it and to further have a more institutionalized and enhanced system particularly in order to be strictly consistent towards final papers and MA theses. This is a point that is positively evaluated by the expert panel.

It is worrisome that the experience of making comparative analyses of leading practice in the fields of mobility of students and teachers as well as those of APs is missing at the University. But at the same time it is important that the University has taken measures in this direction to develop a policy of benchmarking and the practices of establishing respective cooperation.

It is also important that GSU has a good experience in some cases in terms of investing an AP within the scope of the international project as well as the study of leading practice which is based on personal initiative of some teachers.

The expert panel finds that the involvement of invited leading specialists indirectly foster the integration of the leading practice into the educational process but it is also important to ensure more involvement of invited specialists in different activities of the University, including the contact with the main teaching staff as it will help them to be more familiar with the University's peculiarities and will foster practice exchange.

There is no any clearly set policy on monitoring, efficiency evaluation and improvement of APs at the University. There are some mechanisms which, however, are not coordinated, and their application has not led to comprehensive analyses and respective improvement.

SUMMARY

Taking into consideration the fact that APs implemented by GSU are mainly in compliance with the set mission, there is a detailed description according to awarded qualifications and anticipated LOs in the APs which have been revised after the previous accreditation, teaching and learning methods have been improved, assessment methods have been diversified, respective bases for ensuring academic honesty have been established, mobility of teachers and students, the importance of study and integration of leading practice is highlighted, and some mechanisms of monitoring and improvement of APs have been invested, the expert panel finds that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 3.

CONCLUSION

The compliance with the institutional competences of GSU with the requirements of the Criterion 3 is evaluated **satisfactory**.

IV. STUDENTS

CRITERION: The Institution provides support services to students ensuring productive learning environment

Findings

4.1. The Institution has set mechanisms for promoting students' recruitment, selection and admission procedures.

According to the SER, GSU functions clear mechanisms of student recruitment, selection and admission. With the aim to increase the indicators of involvement and admission of

applicants, the University takes many activities on an annual basis. With the aim of professional orientation, GSU organizes visit of the University's staff members to regional schools, prepares informative materials, promotional videos and disseminates it among schools during the year as well as regularly organizes informative visits for schoolchildren to GSU.

The admission of GSU applicants for the BA full-time study is implemented in accordance with the "Regulation on Admission (Bachelor's Degree) to State and Non-State Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Armenia" endorsed by the RA Government decree N 579-N as of 26.04.2012. According to the mentioned regulation, the admission is made as a result of unified examinations which are organized and conducted at national level by the Assessment and Testing Center.

The admission of GSU applicants for the BA full-time education is implemented in accordance with the "Regulation on Admission to Part-time Study of State Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Armenia" endorsed by the RA Government decree N 753-N as of 27.07.2012. The announcements on admission to part-time education are posted on the GSU website and through Mass Media within set deadlines. The organization and conduction of examinations are controlled by the RA ESCS Ministry.

The admission to Master's Degree at GSU is implemented according to the "Regulation on Admission and Study at Master's Degree at Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Armenia" approved by the order 1193-N as of 06.12.2007 of the RA Minister of Education and Science as well as to the regulation approved by the GSU Scientific Council.

As it turned out from the site visit, the number of applicants for some specializations of GSU (such as Fine Arts, Tourism) is rather low, even 1 student. But the University has decided to continue the implementation of APs in these specializations by distributing the means received by units responsible for other specializations. As the site visit showed, the above mentioned aims to maintain the specializations which are significant for the region as well as to retain the teaching staff, also taking into consideration the high level of unemployment and emigration.

4.2. The Institution has policies and procedures for assessing student educational needs.

According to the GSU SER, a number of units and subdivisions of the University are involved in the process of identification of academic needs of students. With this aim, GSU conducts surveys among students and, as it is mentioned in the self-evaluation, chairs also make needs assessment. In order to ensure more efficiency of the process directed to the identification of GSU students' needs, the editorial staff of the "LRATU" newspaper has put question boxes in the faculties so that students have the opportunity to raise their concerns and problems by application-proposals. In the site visit it was again stated that surveys are conducted with the aim to identify students' academic needs which are organized on annual bases, and survey results are sent to respective structural units.

According to the SER, both full-time and part-time students participate in surveys but the number of respondents is rather low and, as the site visit showed, part-time students are mostly unaware of surveys, and the level of their participation is low.

The identification of students' academic needs is one of the main functions of the Student Council. However, as the site visit showed, the involvement of the Student Council in the processes of students' needs assessment is missing, and students apply to deans and administrative units in order to have discussions on their academic needs.

4.3. The Institution provides opportunities for extra-curricular activities and advising services aimed at supporting student effective learning

At the beginning of the academic year GSU students receive full package of courses from teachers. After the investment of the credit system the organization of consultancy for students has become a mandatory condition. According to the SER, academic consultants are attached to each student group who are constantly in touch with students.

There are opportunities of organization of additional courses in spite of the fact that there are no clearly set time-schedules for that at chairs. The meetings organized during the site visit have shown that students, including those involved in the part-time study, can apply to teaching and support staff members to address their interests and problems and to receive support.

At GSU the bridging courses and facultative courses for students having low academic performance are missing. The level of involvement of part-time students in facultative courses and consultancy services is low, and the mechanisms aimed at identification of reasons and increase of their involvement are not invested yet.

4.4 There are precise regulation and schedule set for students to turn to the administrative staff for additional support and guidance.

As the GSU self-evaluation shows, there isn't any complete document on provision of support and guidance to students by the administrative staff yet. The process is regulated according to GSU's internal working disciplinary rules.

As the site visit showed, student can address their concerns to the faculty deans, academic consultants and, upon necessity, to the vice-rector and the rector. There are time-schedules set for admission of students by the rector, vice-rector and heads of subdivision as well as internal working disciplinary rules of GSU are available.

GSU students are also provided with information about the forms of mid-term check and respective time-schedules within the given term by the Dean's office.

GSU has set procedures for the solution of a number of problems, in particular, "Regulation on Assessment of GSU Students' Knowledge", "Regulation on Student Displacement and Transfer", "Concept on Academic Honesty", which facilitate the solution of the given problems. The University operates its official website (www.gorsu.am), Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/GorisSU>), e-mail (info@gorsu.am) which are also means for students to apply to the administrative staff. As it turned out from the site visit, the University plans to diversify existing mechanisms in the near future.

4.5. The Institution has student career support services.

The observation of GSU documents has stated that in 2011 the University established a GSU Student Career Support Center. Based on the decision of the GSU Scientific Council (2017), the Center was re-organized into GSU Education Quality Assurance and International Cooperation Division based on which two separate divisions were established – Division of External Relations and Cooperation, Division of Education Quality Assurance and Student Career Support (EQA & SCS). The regulation of the EQA & SCS Division was approved in the Scientific Council session on 19 January 2018.

In 2019 the above mentioned division developed a "Student Guide To Career", and a number of informative meetings were organized. However, the site visit showed that students' awareness on the mentioned processes was still poor.

As the SER stated, the feedback with the alumni is not complete yet for which the Career Center collects their data by means of their personal sheets. However, during the site visit it turned out that the level of awareness about the sheets was rather low. The EQA & SCS Division provides consultancy to students to prepare them for employment, to write CV and to train them for interviews.

The Center has made a study on employment of 303 alumni who graduated in 2019-2020. As the analysis results show, in 2012 89 alumni were employed in their professional sphere, 105 – in the non-professional field. The number of unemployed graduates is 113. The qualitative research activities aimed at studies of efficiency of the university-employer link and the labor market are limited.

In the site visit it turned out that GSU plans to create new services on the official website which will help students to find jobs, and for entities – to recruit high quality specialists. Employers have also been provided with questionnaires to provide their opinions about GSU alumni, their peculiarities and aspects subject to further improvement.

As the site visit has shown, GSU alumni and students find jobs on their personal initiative, and in terms of providing support to this issue the role of the University wasn't mainly observable, except for particular cases.

4.6. The Institution promotes student involvement in research activities.

GSU students' involvement in scientific-research activities is mainly ensured by implementing research in cooperation with professional chairs and supervisors of final papers. The self-evaluation of the University states that in the mentioned activities the level of involvement of MA students is higher as far as the preparation of MA theses is a compulsory component for the MA APs. The observation of final papers shows that the research component in MA theses is not always existent, and provided data and observed professional literature are often out-of-date.

Since 2017 the Student Scientific Union (SSU) also promotes the involvement of students in scientific-research activities at GSU. As the observation of documents and the site visit have shown, the research component in final papers of BA students is very poorly reflected and it is often presented as an information extracted from different sources. The meetings organized in the site visit have stated that the support provided to students to engage in scientific-research

activities is not sufficient. In the current year the SSU has initiated the organization of the student conference to which a big number of students and representatives from different universities have applied, but in terms of organizational activities there was not clarity yet.

Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that 4 BA and 3 MA students were involved in scientific-research activities organized in 2015, and the next year, in 2016 7 BA and 4 MA students were involved. Since 2017 none of the students have been involved in suchlike activities. According to the self-evaluation, the increase of the number of students involved in scientific-research activities is conditioned by the scarcity of state-funded topics and by the incomplete application of mechanisms of scientific policy at GSU as well as by the insufficient professional potential of some chairs.

The involvement of teachers in scientific-research activities at GSU is poorly reflected which also becomes an obstacle for students to be involved in similar activities.

4.7. The Institution has a special body, which is responsible for the protection of students' rights.

The rights of GSU students are defined by the RA legislation (“Law on Education”, “Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education”), GSU Charter, GSU internal disciplinary rules and other legal acts. The unit responsible for the protection of GSU students’ rights is the Scientific Council which, based on its own charter, is a self-governing, selective representative student body which unites learners and protects their rights. The Student Council’s authorities and regulation of its activity in accordance with the RA legislation and sublegal acts are defined by the GSU and Student Council’s charters. The main goal of the Student Council is to increase the role and activeness of students in the organization of educational process, in QA and in social life. They are involved in the compositions of the GSU Student Council and separate committees (such as educational-scientific, media and information, cultural, sports, etc.) but, as the meetings organized in the site visit showed, there isn’t any formulated united perception of the Student Council’s functions, role and adopted goals among students yet. The role of the mentioned unit is not visible especially regarding the issues on students’ rights. According to the site visit, students apply to the monitors of student groups, deans and administrative staff members for clarification and protection of their rights. The representatives of the teaching staff also inform students about their rights.

As the SER has shown, GSU plans to establish a committee in charge of protection of students’ rights which will deal with students’ applications and appeals, will proceed them and will promote the efficient protection of students’ rights. However, during the site visit the committee wasn’t established yet.

4.8. The Institution has set mechanisms for the evaluating and ensuring the quality of educational, consultancy and other services provided to students.

According to the GSU SP, the University gives importance to the evaluation of educational and consultancy services provided to students as well as to the QA aimed at continuous improvement. Surveys are among mechanisms which the University applies to fulfill

reach this goal. The student survey was conducted among BA and MA students after the completion of the first examination period in 2018 with the aim to evaluate the quality and efficiency of teaching. GSU students from 34 student groups (27 – BA students, 7 – MA students) participated in the survey. The problems raised through the survey relate to the need to increase the hours allocated to majors (specialization-related courses) and to internship, to replenish professional literature, to clarify the assessment system, to enhance building facilities and the heat system, to expand the scope of opportunities for exchanging practice with other RA HEIs. The involvement of part-time students in QA processes has again been pointed out as one of the problems raised both in the previous and the current site visits.

The University mentions that the availability of respective bodies for addressing concerns as well as the reports of the rector, presidents of final attestation committees, deans and heads of other subdivisions are considered to be mechanisms of needs assessment.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that GSU functions mechanisms of student recruitment and admission which are in compliance with the RA legislation and with the clear mechanisms deriving from the provisions stipulated by the GSU SP 2019-2023. This leads to the assurance of transparency and objectiveness of the mentioned process. However, in cases of some specializations (Pharmaceutical Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics) the number of applicants is gradually decreasing. The consideration of significance of these specializations for the RA and their implementation in small student groups is important based on regional needs but the improvement of mechanisms of student recruitment and assurance of awareness will give allow to engage more students.

The expert panel also positively evaluates the fact that GSU functions some mechanisms to identify students' needs. However, the assurance of more representativeness in surveys and more active involvement of part-time students in surveys will allow to have a comprehensive picture of students' needs, and their regular implementation will foster the increase of the level of students' satisfaction with the educational and other services provided by GSU. The diversification of the toolset of needs assessment (focus group discussions, assurance of feedback with alumni) will serve as an additional trigger for increasing the attractiveness of GSU's educational environment and for making it student-centered.

After the investment of the credit system the organization of consultancies has become a mandatory condition. Academic consultants are attached to each student group who are constantly in touch with students. It is also important to mention that students can freely address their concerns, questions and problems to the teaching staff and consultants which, as such, is a positive fact.

Although there isn't any clear time-schedule for applying to the administrative staff, students address their problems and questions to deans, heads of chairs and administrative staff members. The expert panel finds that the process needs to be regulated, clarified and enriched with such mechanisms that will be available for part-time students and which will foster the

reinforcement of the link between students and administrative staff members, the needs assessment of students and efficient planning of the educational process.

The regulation of the EQA & SCS Division was approved in the GSU Scientific Council on 19 January 2018. However, the feedback with alumni is not complete because of which the update of information on the University's alumni is not regularly ensured. In the last years the Center hasn't made any research on GSU alumni's employment, efficiency of the university-employer link, alumni's satisfaction and the labor market which is also conditioned by the scarcity of human resources. The implementation of such research activities, cooperation with specialized centers and alumni's needs assessment will foster the clarification of outcomes of APs and will help the University to prepare more demanded specialists.

The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that GSU students have respective skills to look for and find relative jobs in the labor market. Another positive point is that GSU has developed a guide supporting students' career and it takes steps in this direction. Meanwhile, the increase of the University's role, tight link between the University and employers, establishment of cooperation as well as implementation and development of coordinated processes supporting students' career are given importance to.

According to the expert panel, QA mechanisms and those applied by GSU to evaluate educational, consultancy and other services provided to students also need to be regulated. As it has been turned out during the site visit, the lack of mechanisms fostering students' involvement in scientific-research activities is among identified problems. The existence of the mentioned mechanisms and the activation of the SSU will foster the increase of students' motivation to participate in research and will serve as a basis for them to get prepared for the next level of education. Regarding the need to increase students' awareness on their own rights, the expert panel gives importance to the clarification of the Student Council's role and the fulfillment of main goals which derive from the charter of the mentioned unit (to increase students' role and activeness in organization of the educational process, in QA and in social life).

SUMMARY

Taking into consideration the fact that GSU functions clear mechanisms of student recruitment, selection and admission, there are a number of mechanisms applied for the dissemination of information about admission, the opportunities for students to be provided with consultancy and to apply to the administration are available, there are services which support students' career, and the University provides support to students to improve the educational environment, the expert panel finds that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 4.

CONCLUSION

The compliance with the institutional competences of GSU with the requirements of the Criterion 4 is evaluated **satisfactory**.

V. TEACHING AND SUPPORT STAFF

CRITERION: The Institution has a highly qualified teaching and support staffs to achieve the set goals for academic programs and institution's mission.

Findings

5.1. The Institution has policies and procedures promoting recruitment of a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff for the provision of academic programs.

GSU functions regulation on formation and positioning of teaching staff which was approved in 2019. The regulation defines the possible positions for teachers, standards set for the positioning as well as procedures on placement/positioning on competitive and non-competitive bases. The necessity of recruiting chairs with teaching staff is proposed by chairs at the end of the academic year.

So far the recruitment of teaching staff has been made on a non-competitive basis - by the rector's appointment. In the last years the University has pursued the policy in the direction of recruitment of teaching staff with leading specialists from different RA HEIs. GSU creates respective working conditions for them so that it is possible to involve them in the teaching process at GSU. But there isn't any clear approach or a policy on which standards the teachers should meet.

At the same time, the involvement of specialists, employers and alumni with practical experience in the teaching process is important for GSU by which the latter promotes their continuous education.

In 2018 GSU invested a program on training and qualification enhancement of teachers, according to which the teaching staff is evaluated by educational and research-methodical blocks. As a result of investment of the regulation, the University has anticipated to have competitive teaching staff who will also be able to participate in exchange projects and to conduct courses in foreign languages. In the site visit it turned out that before the investment of the regulation GSU didn't make any preliminary research and currently, while reflecting on it, it is observable that before the end of the 5-year deadline the percentage of those failing to pass the attestation process will be high.

GSU functions a procedure on hiring and dismissal of support staff which was approved in 2019. According to the procedure, the hiring of support staff is made without competition, based on probation period. In January 2020 the regulation on training and attestation of support staff was approved, respectively, the University expects that due to this process it will ensure support staff who have corresponding competences.

In December 2019 the job descriptions for some positions of support and administrative staff (Faculty Clerk-Operator, Specialists responsible for Chair Laboratory, for Library Computer Room and for Computer Classroom of the Faculty, Head, Quality Specialist and Specialist of Education Quality Assurance and Student Career Support Division, Specialist of Student Career Support) were approved.

GSU functions regulation on selection of the Head of Chair which was approved in 2009.

Depending on different APs, GSU staff members responsible for APs are appointed at chairs. The site visit showed that the staff member responsible for the AP is expected to regulate the frame of issues directly relating the given APs (changes in APs, issues related to teaching, learning and assessment methods, etc.). However, there are no clear policy, mechanisms or defined procedure regulating the process of positioning of the mentioned staff members.

5.2. The requirements for qualifications of teaching staff per academic program are comprehensively stated.

The requirements set for the teaching staff are reflected in the regulation on formation and positioning of GSU teaching staff. According to the mentioned document, the main functional framework of Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant and Teacher is defined. There are no clearly set norms of load formation and requirements for professional qualities of teachers. While making distribution of hours, heads of chairs are mainly guided by the above mentioned regulation and they take into consideration the main educational sphere, professional and research fields and teaching experience.

In the last years, the involvement of employees and employers having practical experience for taking practical hours is given importance to which is aimed at integration of their practice into the teaching process. While involving leading specialists from HEIs, the ad-hoc professional competences and teaching experience serve as a guidance. Meanwhile, the observation of documents showed that there are teachers who teach a considerable number of major (specialization-related) courses (7 and more).

As the site visit showed, teachers involved from other universities are not aware of and are not engaged in the processes of QA, development and improvement of APs and other activities.

5.3. The Institution has well established policies and procedures for the periodic evaluation of the teaching staff.

In 2019 the regulation on conduction of student surveys on GSU teaching quality and efficiency was approved. The document regulates the processes related to the surveys conducted for evaluating the quality of teaching and efficiency of the teaching staff, as well as to the application of survey results. According to the GSU self-evaluation, the University gives importance to the discussion of survey results and based on them, it makes respective changes and proposals, in particular, the University considers the problem relating the necessity to conduct surveys among part-time students as an important result of those discussions which was also mentioned as a recommendation in the previous accreditation process.

It is supposed that the results of the aforementioned surveys should be used in the organization of competitions, however, as the site visit showed, competitions haven't been organized yet.

The heads of chairs organize class observations according to the time-scheduled agreed upon in advance.

As it is mentioned in the self-evaluation, the University views the above mentioned two mechanisms as functional approaches to the evaluation of teaching staff.

GSU has invested a program on training and qualification enhancement of teachers but it hasn't yet made evaluation and evaluation-based improvement.

At the same time, the site visit stated that students are mostly satisfied with the teaching staff which, according to them, is a strong point of the University.

5.4. The Institution promotes professional development for the teaching staff in accordance to the needs outlined during regular evaluations (both internal and external).

In its SP the University has highlighted the enhancement of professional qualities of its teaching staff. In this regard, GSU has invested a promotion mechanism in accordance with the requirements specified in the document on teacher training and qualification enhancement which was approved in 2018.

Since 2018 GSU has organized courses for improving the English language proficiency. Some teachers who had the basic level of English also participated in the courses. In specific cases the courses brought benefit to teachers and helped them to also study the leading practice.

In 2018-2019 academic year GSU organized professional training courses for the staff members of GSU Chair of Biology and Chemistry. The topics of the training courses covered "Bioantioxidases" and "Biophysical Chemistry". Nine participants were granted with respective credits.

Under the conditions of organizing distance education during the pandemic, GSU organized trainings aimed at the development of IT skills.

In 2018 the regulation on promotion of scientific-research, educational-methodical and organizational activities of GSU staff was approved. The regulation aims to foster some aspects of scientific-research, educational-methodical and organizational activities of the GSU employees.

There are no clear mechanisms of making needs assessment of staff and fulfillment of activities directed the improvement based on needs assessment, and the mechanisms for their post-event evaluation are missing either.

According to GSU SER, the poor study of international practice and insufficiency of GSU teacher trainings is among its weak points.

5.5. The Institution ensures that there is a permanent staff for the stable provision of the academic programs.

Over 75% of the teaching staff are main teachers, the rest are employed on double-jobbing basis.

The University doesn't make analysis of age distribution of teachers according to the chairs.

The policy of increase of salaries is considered to be an important policy which ensures teaching staff retention. According to the mentioned policy, the salary was increased by 11% in 2018. The University had planned to increase salaries in 2020 as well but because of the military situation and the state of emergency, it did not manage to fulfill the plan.

GSU also gives importance to the mechanism of providing bonuses. In the last 3 years, at the end of each year, GSU staff was rewarded with bonuses (in the last 2 years - at the rate of one-month salary). Some teachers received bonuses under other circumstances as well but, as it turned out in the site visit, there are no defined standards for rewarding other bonuses about which teachers were aware.

The more distinguished MA students studying in different years have been paid special attention to from the perspective of ensuring generation change of the teaching staff. Currently there are teachers who have studied at GSU, and some of them also continued their education in the PhD (Researcher's) AP by defending their PhD dissertation.

Since 2018 GSU has put into practice the regulation on promotion of GSU teachers' scientific-research, educational-methodical and organizational activities with the aim to develop their scientific-research and scientific-methodical activities. However, as the site visit stated, very few teachers were planned to be proposed by chairs, and according to the mentioned regulation, the process of promotion is not clearly coordinated yet.

The site visit showed that in order to ensure the implementation of APs in the last years, the involvement of leading specialists from different HEIs is also an important mechanism from the perspective of ensuring respective teaching staff.

5.6 There are set policies and procedures for the staff promotion.

The mechanisms promoting teachers' professional development are defined by the regulation on formation and positioning of GSU teaching staff. The mentioned regulation sets the classifications for the Teacher, Assistant, Associate Professor, Professor as well as respective requirements. However, the placement of the mentioned positions has been implemented only by the appointment of the rector, without any competition.

There isn't any clear mentoring policy at GSU but it turned out from the site visit that there are some cases when experienced teachers help and support young freshman teachers, based on their own experience.

As the site visit showed, the involvement of leading specialists is also viewed as a means of motivation for local specialists which will lead to the formation of competition.

Besides, GSU leadership involves staff members with high sense of responsibility in different international projects or proposes their candidacy in administrative positions which is viewed as another mechanism of promotion. Nonetheless, there are no clear mechanisms and standards which would institutionalize this process.

5.7 The Institution has necessary administrative and support staffs to achieve the strategic goals.

The structural units of GSU have regulations which set their main functional framework. As it has already been mentioned above, there are job descriptions only for some positions of the administrative and support staff. As a result of the structural change, some new subdivisions (Scientific Center, Department of Organization of Economic Activities) have been established

with the aim to implement the SP. However, the long-term and mid-term strategic plans do not contain any responsible units.

The University lacks clear mechanisms for evaluating the activity of the administrative and support staff, and evaluated-based mechanisms of promotion are missing either.

It turned out from the site visit that administrative units mainly do not need human resources but in some specific cases the scarcity is visible, e.g. Division of External Relations and Cooperation and the PR and Media Division need to be recruited with respective specialists as far as the lack of human resources hinders the implementation of some processes. There are chairs which need to be recruited with laboratory assistant(s).

The University finds it is an urgent need to develop its support staff's competences with the aim of which it developed a regulation on training and attestation of support staff in 2020 by which the processes are planned to be implemented.

The functional framework of staff members responsible for APs is not clarified and regulated, and the mechanisms of accountability are lacking either.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel finds it positive that the University has regulated the mechanisms of selection and recruitment of teaching staff. GSU functions a policy on positioning of teaching staff and respective documentary base regulating the process. But the expert panel also highlights the importance of the process of positioning of teaching staff on a competitive basis which will ensure more transparency of the process and involvement of potential specialists as well as will serve as a guarantee for ensuring more sustainability of the main teaching staff.

The expert panel positively evaluates the fact the University has made the organization of distance learning under pandemic conditions as an opportunity and has involved leading specialists from different HEIs (of different regions) so that the involvement does not depend on personal networking but is rather based on the demand for the human resources necessary for the implementation of APs which will further be applied as a mechanism. At the same time, in this regard, the University can expand the scope of geography of cooperation by going beyond Armenia.

The involvement of teachers and employers having practical experience in the educational process is a positive point for the expert panel as far as it can foster the formation of students' practical competences and their compliance with the labor market. At the same time, the expert panel highlights that the University should be able to use employers' competences and material recourses for the improvement of its main teaching staff.

Another positive point can be mentioned which refers to the fact the University gives importance to the competitive teaching staff for which it has developed a program on teacher training and qualification enhancement. However, the expert panel mentions that while investing such mechanisms it will be useful to consider if they are based on preliminary evaluations and research so that the investment does not bring to unplanned situations and risks.

The process of placement of positions set for the support staff is regulated by respective procedure, and there are job descriptions developed for some positions. Besides, the University

highlights importance to the development of competences of support staff and thus has invested a mechanism of attestation. The opportunities of trainings aimed at development of support staff's competences have been limited by English courses.

GSU has established an institute of units responsible for APs but the non-regulated approach to the process of placement of their positions as well as the absence of functions and accountability do not allow to understand the expectations from the invested mechanism and to evaluate the efficiency.

There are no clear requirements set for teachers' professional qualities in accordance with APs though the University functions a certain policy due to which it manages to have a composition of teaching staff with respective professional qualities. Nevertheless, the expert panel finds that experience-based clarification of requirements set for the teaching staff in accordance with APs can ensure transparency of the process and guarantee availability of respective teaching staff irrespective of heads and their approaches.

The University has some mechanisms of evaluation of the teaching staff, namely, surveys and class observations, the impact of which, in terms of improvement, is not visible yet. The University hasn't made evaluation by the program of teacher training and qualification enhancement either. The incomplete systematization of this process can hinder the synchronous development of GSU teaching staff.

The expert panel finds it positive that the University gives importance to the enhancement of teachers' professional and methodical qualities and has respectively developed a policy. Besides, it organizes some activities in this direction. But at the same time the panel highlights the fact that the organization of the mentioned activities should be coordinated and purposeful, should derive from strategic goals and be based on the needs, as well as should lead to gradual development of the educational process. Hence, it is also vital that the University should have mechanisms through which it will evaluate the efficiency of organized activities.

In addition, from the perspective of practice exchange among teachers, it may be beneficial to fully involve invited teachers and employer-teachers in the activities of the University.

The comparison of diverse mechanisms applied by the University mainly ensures the sustainability of respective teaching staff. Meanwhile, the expert panel gives importance to the fact that the processes of promotion and provision of bonuses should be transparent, be based on criteria which are familiar to stakeholders in advance and which will also derive from the priorities of the SP. The expert panel also finds that there is a need for analyses of age distribution of teaching staff at chairs as well as for mechanisms ensuring the generation change.

There are different classifications set for the teaching staff of GSU for which different rates of salaries are allocated; this is an important mechanism of ensuring teachers' advancement. The expert panel also finds it positive that the leadership ensures the development of the staff under their subordination in different administrative positions as well and by means of involving them in international projects, however, the panel again emphasizes the importance of institutionalization of these processes so that they are not endangered conditioned by individuals.

Besides, in terms of further decision making, it would be helpful to the University to make analyses of efficiency of currently applied mechanisms.

Another important point is the fact that the elderly generation has the willingness to support and to transfer experience but the process again needs to be generally coordinated.

GSU mainly has necessary administrative and support staff but it is also important to have respective mechanisms of evaluation in order to make needs assessment (including that of human resources) and to condition the recruitment and optimization based on those evaluations.

SUMMARY

Taking into consideration the fact that the University functions mechanisms of formation of teaching and support staff, there is a respective policy on requirements set for the teaching staff according to APs, there are some mechanisms of evaluation of teachers' activity, opportunities created for practice exchange, as well as specific mechanisms through which the University ensures professional development and improvement of its teaching staff, the University is mainly recruited with respective administrative and support staff and involves specialists having respective experience, the expert panel finds that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 5.

CONCLUSION

The compliance with the institutional competences of GSU with the requirements of the Criterion 5 is evaluated **satisfactory**.

VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

CRITERION: The Institution ensures the implementation of research activity and the link of the research with teaching and learning.

Findings

6.1 The Institution has a clear strategy promoting its research interests and ambitions.

According to the section on "Research & Development" of the GSU SP 2019-2023, the following objectives have been planned to implement: a) implementation of research and development through clear policy and procedures, b) assurance with material-technical and financial resources for the implementation of scientific-research activities, c) promotion of internationalization of research activities, d) assurance of efficient interrelatedness between research and educational process. Afterwards, in accordance with the time-schedule set for the implementation of key actions stipulated by the SP 2019-2023, 5 actions have been envisaged which, however, are neither clear nor measurable (in particular, assurance of efficient interrelatedness between research and educational process, assurance with material-technical and financial resources for the implementation of scientific-research activities).

The University has developed a document on "Research Development Priorities for 2019-2023" in the session of the Scientific Council on 26.11.2019. In the document the research

activities in the Armenian Studies and Biology are differentiated as priorities by specifying that they are based on the analyses of current situation of the research sphere at GSU, as well as on the University's scientific-research potential and international experience, however, such analyses are missing. The same document reflects upon LOs which, however, are articulated as objectives, are not measurable and they do not give any clear picture about GSU's research ambitions and planned advancement in the field of research.

At the same time, it should be noted that the University implements a research grant project in the research field of Armenian Studies since 2010. The topic of the project is “The Material and Spiritual (Non-Material) Heritage of Syunik”.

The GSU Scientific Center's mid-term action plan of the strategic development for 2020-2023 was approved in the session of the GSU Scientific Council on 25.12.2019. It defines the vision of the Center - "In 2023 the vision is to create a competitive university in the fields of fundamental and applied scientific research, elaborations and start-ups which fosters excellence in fundamental and applied scientific research spheres, promotes the increase of competitiveness of the economy in the region as well as the development of social and cultural advancement." However, as it turned out during the site visit, there are no steps and outcomes yet which would make this vision achievable.

6.2 The Institution has a long-term strategy and med term and short-term programs that address its research interests and ambitions.

The University makes long-term strategic planning in the field of research which, according to the GSU SER, has been conditioned by the absence of a unit which would fulfill the function of coordination. Only the GSU SP 2019-2023 and the time-schedule of implementation of key actions of the SP reflect the research ambitions of the University but the mentioned documents haven't been converted into clear programs, the articulations are generic, the units responsible for the implementation of actions and indicators of outcomes as well as the allocated budget are missing.

In 2019, after the establishment of the Scientific Center the University developed and approved the "Mid-term Action Plan of the Strategic Development of GSU Scientific Center for 2020-2023" which contains deadlines specified for the implementation of actions, resources which are not specified, and KPIs which are not measurable. Although the document was approved on 25 December 2019 and it is the mid-term strategic plan of the Scientific Center, the plan also contains some actions (including the establishment of the Scientific Center) which have been planned to implement for the period of January-December 2019. As the site visit showed, only the actions which preceded the approval of the mid-term plan, have been planned and they are expressed by the establishment of a certain documentary base, and there are no visible outcomes which would state the implementation of goals and objectives that are defined in the field of scientific research by the SP.

In accordance with the mandatory requirement set by the RA Scientific Committee of the RA ESCS Ministry for the implementation of the grant scientific project on “The Material and Spiritual (Non-Material) Heritage of Syunik” funded by the budget of the “Maintenance and

Development of Infrastructure of Scientific and Scientific-Technical Activities”, the University compiles mid-term and short-term plans and in accordance with the long-term plan, submits report to the Scientific Council and the RA Scientific Committee.

There are actions directed to the scientific-research processes in the mid-term plans of strategic development actions of GSU faculties and chairs for 2020-2023 as well. Among anticipated indicators set for the evaluation of efficiency in compliance with the actions of faculty plans, some indicators are measurable (in particular, increase in involvement of teaching staff in research projects by 10% as compared with the previous year, increase of students' involvement in research projects by 5% as compared with the previous year, increase of number of participants involved in the conferences organized by the SSU, etc.). However, there are no tangible outcomes yet, and the reports made in this direction are missing either. In the annual work plans of chairs and faculties there are processes in the direction of the research activity, particularly, the organization of scientific seminars, organization of the SSU session, publication of collections of scientific articles.

6.3 The Institution ensures the implementation of research and its development through sound policies and procedures.

With the aim to coordinate the scientific-research activity and to centralize research opportunities, according to the GSU plan on elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the previous accreditation expert panel report, it was planned to have a position for a Coordinator or a staff member responsible for scientific issues and, accordingly, the University established a Scientific Center by the GSU Scientific Council decision N2 on 11 October 2019. On 26 December 2019 the regulation of the Scientific Center was established according to which the aim of the Center's activity is to organize, coordinate and support scientific-research activities carried out by GSU structural units and scientific groups. In accordance with the mentioned document, the Scientific Center should particularly establish cooperation links in the field of research and make financial planning. However, during the site visit it turned out that the mentioned processes were not carried out. The Scientific Center submitted a report for the 2019-2020 academic year which, according to the format, is also based on the practice of partner HEIs. The results are mostly reflected by the establishment of the documentary base and by the launch of the process to establish a database. In the report the Center presented some indicators (in particular, number of scientific works, number of scientific works according to the rating scale, teachers who don't have scientific works) but there isn't any comparative analysis and the changeability of indicators according to years is not visible.

On 19-20 October 2017 GSU organized a republic conference on “Syunik as the Hearth of Education and Culture” devoted to the 50th anniversary of the University. The collection of the conference materials was published in 2019.

The standards and conditions for promoting scientific-research, educational-methodical and some organizational activities of GSU are defined by the "Regulation on Promotion of "Scientific-Research, Educational-Methodical and Organizational Activities carried out by GSU staff" which was approved on 27 December 2018. However, the site visit showed that the process

is still in the phase of investment, is neither coordinated nor general, and the impact in terms of changes of indicators or improvement of processes is not visible yet.

On 19 January 2018 the document relating the program (structure and content) of training and qualification enhancement of GSU teaching staff was approved. In the research-methodical block of the mentioned document, particularly in the compulsory credit load of teachers there are components of publications and conference reports. But the document hasn't been practiced and, as the site visit showed, while investing it, no preliminary research was made to evaluate available resources, opportunities and risks that might emerge by practicing the document.

The indicators of scientific-research works published in both national and international journals and scientific collections are very low, they haven't increased, moreover, they even decreased. The indicator of teaching staff involved in the production of scientific-research outcomes is over 40%.

The expenses directed to the sphere of science are about 0.5% of the budget. There are no examples of commercialization of research works and respectively obtained income in spite of the fact that such an outcome was envisaged according to the priorities specified in the SP 2019-2023.

GSU doesn't implement joint scientific-research projects and grants with RA HEIs and scientific-research organizations but within the frame of cooperation with some universities and institutions, a peer-review process of scientific-research works and participation in conferences are organized.

The organization of scientific seminars at chairs is not coordinated, there are no set time-schedules, plans and reports.

The teaching staff members of the University fill in the annual work plan of the teacher at the beginning of each academic year. It comprises a section of scientific-research activities in which the teacher's planning in this direction is presented.

6.4 The Institution emphasizes internationalization of its research.

According to the SER, the University doesn't have a policy on internationalization of its research activity yet.

In the SP 2019-2023 of GSU the objective of "promotion of internationalization of research activities" is defined. According to the "Regulation of Promotion of Scientific-Research, Educational-Methodical and Organizational Activities Carried out by GSU Staff", a respective point is provided for the publication of articles in international scientific journals, however, as it is mentioned in the SER, the impact of the mentioned regulation is not visible yet.

GSU takes some steps to organize international conferences and to ensure publications in CIS and foreign periodicals. In particular, in 2018 the University was the co-organizer of the 9th international conference on "The Problems of Interaction of Deformable Media."

The number of articles published in CIS and foreign periodicals by GSU teachers in 2015-2019 is 16 among which 11 are published in journals having international impact factors (SCOPUS, РИИЦ).

There are no joint scientific publications in cooperation with researchers of international HEIs. GSU doesn't implement joint scientific-research projects and grants with international HEIs and scientific-research organizations.

The University considers the insufficient proficiency of its teachers' international scientific language - English, as an obstacle of internationalization of the research activity, hence, GSU has initiated English language trainings for them. But as the site visit showed, it didn't lead to the increase of the number of articles published in international journals or to the expansion of the scope of teachers' involvement in the mentioned process.

6.5 The Institution has well established mechanisms for linking research with teaching.

The assurance of efficient interrelatedness of the research activity with the educational process is specified as a strategic objective of GSU, at the same time, the following actions have been planned for the fulfillment of the mentioned objective:

1. to modernize MA theses and final papers more and to make them more scientific-practical by making sure that their topics derive from the regional needs,
2. to invest mechanisms of interlinking research and educational processes by ensuring the application of research outcomes in the educational process.

The actions are generally articulated, are not clearly measurable, and GSU hasn't clearly planned any concrete steps directed to the implementation of the aforementioned actions.

GSU BA and MA APs contain a research block which involves all the internship activities, however, as the site visit showed, there aren't any cases which would state that during internship students made research and gained outcomes by also using the employers' resources.

Since 12.04.2019 the University has invested the "Regulation on Preparation and Defence of Master Thesis" and the "Regulation on Preparation and Defence of Bachelor's Final Paper" which define requirements set for the mentioned works. However, the observation of documents and the site visit have shown that final papers are mostly studies of theoretical materials and presentations, and the research component is very poorly reflected in them. In case of MA theses there were some attempts to make the papers research based but in this case the link between the topics of research papers and regional needs is not visible, and the research, analytical and applicable aspects are poorly expressed. Besides, the application of outcomes in the educational process is not studied and given importance to, and the level of innovation is low.

In addition to all the mentioned, it should also be noted that in some cases there is a good practice, in particular, in 2017-2019 9 BA final papers and 11 MA theses were defended within the scope of the grant scientific project on "The Material and Spiritual (Non-Material) Heritage of Syunik" which was budget funded by the "Maintenance and Development of Infrastructure of Scientific and Scientific-Technical Activities".

By using separate component of assessment, the University evaluates students' individual works which, according to GSU, contain a research component. However, there are no mechanisms for evaluating individual works, and the preparation of individual works is not compulsory.

GSU teachers publish educational-methodical manuals and works which are not researched by the University to extract statistical data on them, to foster their application in the educational process and to contribute to the use of outcomes. Meanwhile, the expert panel found out that there are such precedents and some teachers stated that their research outcomes are applied in the educational process.

Student conferences give the opportunity to motivate students to make research activities. GSU organizes student conferences but they are not clearly coordinated and aren't regular, besides, there are no mechanisms for promoting students to make research. In some cases GSU students also participate in student conferences organized by other HEIs.

As the surveys on satisfaction with the interrelatedness between research and educational processes have shown, the level of dissatisfaction of both teachers and students is very high.

The University finds it is necessary to have research laboratories for the implementation of research which was also stated in the site visit.

CONSIDERATIONS

The site visit finds it positive that GSU gives importance to the development of scientific-research activity and it has formulated priorities and high ambitions in this direction.

The definition of priorities didn't lead to the change of processes in this field. The scientific-research activities in the sphere of Armenian Studies are still implemented since 2010, and GSU implements the scientific project on “The Material and Spiritual (Non-Material) Heritage of Syunik” by the budget funding of the “Maintenance and Development of Infrastructure of Scientific and Scientific-Technical Activities” which continues until now. The University hasn't taken clear and complex steps towards making research in the direction of Biology, and some outcomes are conditioned by the research which are made by some teachers' initiative.

The planning of processes of the scientific activity is expressed by strategic mid-term and short-term plans. However, there are no reports of the mentioned plans yet and, as it turned out from the site visit, the results are mostly manifested by the establishment of the documentary base. GSU hasn't made coordinated steps for the fulfillment of goals defined in the documents yet, and the impact of developed documents on outcomes and achievements is not visible. Besides, the link between the processes set by those plans and the budget planning is not visible.

The expert panel finds that the attainability of the ambitious vision defined by the mid-term development plan of the Scientific Center is not ensured yet, the implemented processes are mostly limited by the establishment of the documentary base. At the same time, the way which the University has set to realize the mentioned vision is not clear. In this respect the impact of the resource, created by the Scientific Center, on the processes as well as the clear position and role of the Center in terms of fostering the development of scientific-research activities are not visible yet.

The expert panel also mentions that the link or the interrelatedness between the goals of research processes stipulated in the long-term strategy (SP) of the University and the vision defined by the Scientific Center's mid-term development plan is not clear. At the same time, the

fact that the visible outcomes stating the fulfillment of scientific-research goals and objectives defined in the GSU SP are not existent yet, endangers their implementation within the set deadlines. Moreover, the way of their planning is not sufficiently clear either and it doesn't allow to make evaluation and monitoring.

The organization of scientific seminars and conferences creates opportunities for practice exchange and cooperation for the teaching staff but the conferences organized by GSU have provided opportunities only for a few number of teachers, conditioned by the field of their ad-hoc (narrow scope of) specialization. Scientific seminars haven't fostered the establishment of a new collaboration, new research activities or development of scientific environment. At the same time, these activities haven't led to the increase of the number of teachers carrying out scientific-research activity.

The expert panel gives importance to the fact that the Scientific Center has taken the initiative to establish general database and to make analyses but this process would be important before defining priorities and developing policy so that it would be possible to serve the analyzed results as a base.

The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that the University has some normative base which regulates the promotion of research outcomes. However, it is worrisome that the mentioned hasn't been applied in a coordinated way yet and haven't had any impact on the improvement of indicators relating scientific articles and other works; in addition, these indicators haven't increased and they have even decreased.

GSU hasn't yet expanded the scope of cooperation in the sphere of scientific research in order to serve it for the fulfillment of its goals, and there are no jointly implemented scientific-research projects or joint research works. But the co-organization of traditional international conference in cooperation with the Institute of Mechanisms of the RA National Academy of Sciences is important.

It is a positive point that the University realizes the importance of internationalization of research (by means of organization of international conferences, investment of mechanisms promoting publication of scientific articles in international journals), however, GSU doesn't have any clear policy in this direction, and there are no tangible steps and outcomes either.

The University has the ambitions to ensure the interrelatedness between research and educational process. In this respect the existence of blocks set for research in BA and MA APs is important. However, the expert panel finds that the research, applicable and analytical component of final papers and MA theses is poor which is worrisome, hence, the panel mentions that GSU should take measures in this direction in order to ensure the fulfillment of goals stipulated by the SP and regulations. At the same time, the expert panel finds it positive that the University has a good practice in this direction, including the implementation of activities taken within the scope of the grant project, and it will be useful to disseminate this practice. The expert panel also finds that the implementation of research within the frame of internship can be important for the development of the research direction which, however, is still missing.

The activity of the SSU is important from the perspective of motivating students to be involved in scientific-research processes, however, the University doesn't take clear and regular

activities in this direction, and mechanisms of promotion are missing. At the same time, it is a positive point that in some cases GSU students take the initiative to participate in student conferences organized by other HEIs, besides, in the current academic year they have planned to organize a student conference.

The expert panel finds that the teaching staff also needs to be motivated to involve students in scientific-research activities carried out by them which may ensure the continuation of the processes.

The expert panel positively evaluates the existence of individual works containing the separate component of research in the assessment system the targeted and coordinated application of which will foster the reinforcement of the research-learning link. At the same time, the scarcity of teachers' monographs and educational manuals, imperfection of mechanisms of students' research activities, lack of students' involvement in the University's research project, problematic aspects of preparation and evaluation of course, final papers and MA theses do not ensure the functionality of the research component of learning which, in its turn, endangers the efficient interrelation between educational and research processes. Besides, the process of integration of research outcomes in APs is not coordinated, and its efficiency is not evaluated.

SUMMARY

Taking into consideration the fact the University doesn't have any clear operational policy on research development, doesn't make clear strategic management in this sphere, the indicators of research outcomes are low, the policy on internationalization of the research sphere is absent, there are no tangible outcomes conditioned by cooperation, and the level of efficiency of mechanisms interlinking learning and research is low, the expert panel finds that GSU does not meet the requirements of the Criterion 6.

CONCLUSION

The compliance with the institutional competences of GSU with the requirements of the Criterion 6 is evaluated **unsatisfactory**.

VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

CRITERION: The Institution has necessary resources to create learning environment and to effectively support the implementation of its stated mission and goals.

Findings

7.1 The Institution has an appropriate learning environment for the implementation of current academic programs.

In the SP 2019-2023 GSU has highlighted the importance of ensuring and improving its educational environment aimed at implementation of APs, i.e. the existence of infrastructures, resources (7th goal) as well as teaching and support staff (5th goal) having necessary qualities. For

the implementation of APs the University operates 3 campuses, library and canteen, dormitory, and one of the campuses is not functional yet. According to the SER, recently, based on the decision of the RA Government (2019), 988 square meters of real estate, 0.2264 hectares of service land was allocated from the "Goris Regional Pedagogical-Psychological Support Center" non-profit organization to GSU.

The University's Archive, Medical Point, Accounting Department, Scientific Center, sports hall, offices of the rector and vice-rector, PR Division, Educational Department, Economic Section, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, classrooms and computer rooms for the organization and implementation of current and online classes are located in the first building.

The Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering, all laboratories, Chairs of Mathematics, Physics, Biology and Chemistry, Foreign Languages, Economics and Management, Division of External Relations and Cooperation, EQA & SCS Division, teachers' offices, conference halls, classrooms and computer rooms for the organization and implementation of current and online classes are located in the first building.

There are also separated educational classrooms for Fine Arts classes. Both buildings have been considerably reconstructed, the yards have been renovated, and the dormitory rooms have been partially renewed as well.

The library building of the University is separate which has 5 bookshelves with 43340 pieces of professional literature and fiction books, 3365 of which are donations. Among available literature, 16,653 are in Armenian, 23,568 - in Russian, and 805 - in other foreign languages. Compared to the previous accreditation data (68956 units of total fund), the number of literature has decreased which is conditioned by the inventory work made in the library since November 2018-2019 as a result of which the outdated literature was removed.

GSU has taken steps to improve the activities of the GSU library which are continuous. Although according to the SER, the necessary professional literature has been acquired in the last two years, the site visit has shown that there are still problems related to the replenishment with professional literature. There are no analyses on the frequency of attendance of library users.

GSU also has a reading room, electronic library (8 computers, printer, electronic board) and it makes attempts to digitize the current textbooks in order to make them available to students, but the number is still small (428 units). The library is not subscribed to any international journal. Within the framework of cooperation GSU students use the resources of the National Library of Armenia and the library of Goris city. The University plans to join the Library Association and library networks. The KOHA library system is in the phase of investment.

Within the framework of Erasmus + LNSS project, the reading room has been equipped with computers, multifunctional printer, scanning device - electronic board, and the internet connection is also available. In spite of the results of surveys conducted among students, the percentage of indicators relating the satisfaction with provision of resources ensuring the educational process is not high (according to the SER - about 80%), however, during the expert visit it turned out that their availability to students is not sufficient.

In addition to computer rooms and laboratories, the University also functions laboratories of Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Natural Sciences, Engineering, and Electricity for the

implementation of its APs. With the aim to re-equip them, GSU has made some activities, however, during the site visit it turned out that the University still needs to take some measures especially in the directions of Chemistry, Physics and Biology. In case of some subjects which are studied within certain specializations, the University doesn't have laboratories (e.g. in case of Criminology) the gap of which is not filled in by other mechanisms.

Under pandemic and martial law, the University managed to ensure corresponding environment for the organization of learning. In particular, as needed, it provided classrooms, respective technical means and also managed to ensure appropriate sanitary and hygienic conditions in the period of pandemic, etc.

7.2 The Institution provides appropriate financial resources with necessary equipment and facilities as needed to achieve its mission and goals.

The University functions a policy of financial management. GSU is funded by the state budget at the expense of extra-budgetary funds. According to the management of financial resources, the subtypes of revenues from the state budget are the compensations made for the expenses of state-funded students and the current and capital grants. Current state-funded grants include tuition fees, scholarships, and funding for research topics. The subtypes of extra-budgetary revenues are mainly student tuition fees (which is over 87.1% of the University's total revenue) and means obtained from other sources, including grants from international organizations; the number of grants has been very small especially in the last two years.

With the aim to manage and control financial flows, annual budget revenue and expenditure estimates have been formed. The University doesn't have any other stable financial flows. It has done some work to diversify its financial resources by providing trainings for those wishing to become directors of secondary schools, but they form a very small number. GSU has taken some steps in the direction of diversification of financial resources particularly by organizing trainings for potential principals planning to get the right for school management, however, respective indicator is very low. According to the financial management (2020), the main types of expenditures are the salaries of teachers, administrative, academic and technical staff (67.73%); the amount of payments directed to state budget is very small (1.90%); the following expenditures/costs also form small amount - scholarships (1.20%), deed of gift/gratuitous assistance (0.37%), organization of internships (0.22%), acquisition of educational equipment and property (0.44%), library costs (0.03%), QA processes (0.56%), teachers' professional development (0.01%), business trips (0.14), representative costs (0.09%), science expenses - acquisition of laboratory equipment and materials, publications, scientific business trips, participation in conferences (0.19%), economic expenses - utility, office and economic, transport, fuel, general and capital repairs (7.23%), costs for other services and products (0.45%), resource maintenance (0.51%), development costs (3.38), reward expenses (3.43%), means directed to the stabilization fund (12.62%). The budget for expenditures is distributed taking into account the mandatory expenditures and the means directed to the stabilization fund.

The budget for expenditures is distributed taking into account the mandatory expenses and the means directed to the stabilization fund. In spite of the budget allocation in different

directions, during the expert visit the expert panel registered that the budget allocation is not clearly linked to the strategic directions as far as the SP does not contain allocation of respective financial means for the fulfillment of actions.

In 2018 GSU increased the salaries by an average of 11%, and at the end of the year it gave the staff an additional salary with the one-month rate. An additional salary was given in 2019 as well.

Last time, in 2018, within the framework of the LNSS and HERITAG grant projects, the resource base of the University was mainly enriched, and the infrastructure was enhanced. In 2019 a gradual solution was given to the maintenance and enhancement of infrastructure at the expense of the University, by gradual renovation of campuses.

The financial flows of the University were audited as a result of which the Audit Committee submitted recommendations, but there are no analyses on the efficiency of performances.

It should be mentioned that the University considers the scarcity of financial resources as a weakness.

7.3 The Institution has a policy on financial distribution and capacity to sustain and ensure the integrity and continuity of the programs offered at the Institution.

The University has a developed policy on financial planning, management and monitoring which was approved by the Scientific Council decision in the session N 5 on 11 October 2019. It contains the complexity of functions, rules and principles of financial management, organization and application, which is directed to the recruitment of financial means, regulation of distribution processes and assurance of financial stability.

The draft of the University's annual budget estimate is compiled taking into consideration the applications submitted by all structural units in advance. The draft of the GSU annual budget estimate is discussed in the GSU Board session and in case of endorsement it is presented to the GSU Board for approval, and the salary rate of the teacher is decided according to his/her load, scientific degree, title or position. The lists of teaching and support staff are approved in the Scientific Council and the current financial issues are approved in the Rectorate session.

The University has a contract with the RA ESCS Ministry in the following directions - student allowance, scholarship and funding of scientific themes. The means are spent in accordance with the orders given by the GSU rector. Funding from international organizations is received in accordance with specific grant projects, is ordered and used purposefully. In spite of presented mechanisms, in the expert visit it turned out that the involvement of stakeholders in the process of distribution of funds is low.

The University distributes its financial resources for APs proportionally; the revenues from various APs are included in one general budget the expenditures of which are planned for all APs in accordance with priorities. In GSU there are APs the organization of which is not self-funded (there are even groups consisting up to 5 students), and the APs are implemented due to income received from other APs. However, the site visit showed that there are no clear policy and grounds ensuring their continuity, and the University is mostly led by social responsibility, i.e. by highlighting the high importance to provide specialists for the region, and by the need to regulate

the problem of employment of the teaching staff. At the same time, in case of small groups the remuneration of teaching staff is made in case of fewer hours, based on mutual agreement.

At the end of each academic year the volume of the next academic year is calculated, distribution of teachers' load is made based on which the preliminary calculation of salary fund of the teaching staff is made which forms the major part of the budget expenses. The University makes allocations to the organization and conduction of internships.

7.4 The Institution's resource base supports the implementation of Institution's academic programs and strategic plan, which promotes sustainability and continuous improvement of quality.

As the observation of documents and the video presenting the University's resources and that of class observations have shown, GSU has classrooms, laboratories, auditoria with projectors, computer rooms, some laboratories need to be enhanced. Separate offices are provided to the chairs, faculties and administrative subdivisions which have computer equipment and other facilities.

The library is replenished with professional literature but as the site visit showed, it needs more replenishment though the University continuously takes activities in this direction. It also turned out that there are no clear mechanisms for evaluating the need for literature and for planning the purchases in accordance with priorities.

In order to organize distance education under pandemic conditions, GSU provided opportunities so that upon necessity, teachers could conduct online courses in the University's classrooms.

The SP doesn't contain planning of necessary resources for the implementation of actions but many actions don't require additional resources. The report on current monitoring of the SP doesn't contain objectives of resources.

The University hasn't carried out general studies and analyses on compliance of APs and resources base. According to the SER, GSU has organized surveys among teachers and students to evaluate their satisfaction with resources and the respondents are mainly satisfied with them. However, no actions have been taken towards solution of identified problems, and the improvement plans are missing. Moreover, the site visit showed that there is still a problem of availability of some professional literature, some laboratories and resources. Due to grant projects GSU has significantly enriched its material-technical base, besides, it has made considerable renovation in its different buildings at its own expense. In the budget and plan the University has specified the problems relating regular recruitment of material-technical base, enhancement of building facilities and laboratories.

7.5 The Institution has a sound policy and procedure to manage information and documentation.

At GSU the documentation circulation is regulated by the GSU correspondence regulation which was approved in the Scientific Council session on 26 December 2019. According to the regulation, the correspondence is managed by the Personnel Management Division mainly by

electronic version, while, according to the SER - also by paper version. At GSU the internet is available, there is an internal computer networking, and GSU functions the MULBERRY system while making documentation circulation with the RA ESCS Ministry. During the site visit it was registered that the internal documentation circulation process is made by email.

According to the SER, the financial management of the University is made according to respective systems. In 2019 GSU installed and functioned AS-Enterprise Accountant system which is linked to the CLIENT TREASURY system which was also approved in the site visit.

GSU has an official website (gorsu.am), Facebook page, official newspaper by means of which it disseminates information.

The documents relating the activity of GSU's structural units are archived by the archivist.

The evaluation of effectiveness of information and documentation processes hasn't been made yet.

7.6 The Institution creates safe and secure environment through health and safety mechanisms taking into account the students with special needs.

According to the SER, the activities of GSU directed to the maintenance of health and safety are coordinated and implemented by the Division of Organization of Economic Activities.

The University has a Medical Point which provides first aid and has all the necessary items. Every year GSU staff members undergo medical examinations within the framework of cooperation with Clinic after A. Amiryan in Goris.

GSU collaborates with the "Goris Branch" NGO Syunik Regional Expertise Center to avoid the COVID-19 epidemic.

From the perspective of maintaining health at the University, physical education is also given importance to and, accordingly, large-scale sports events are regularly organized by teachers.

According to the SER, GSU doesn't carry out activities for rest and health rehabilitation of students and staffs due to the lack of necessary financial resources.

GSU also has a dormitory 8 rooms of which have been partially renovated, and which are used by both needy students and staff members of the University.

GSU has an Engineer in charge of safety by whom GSU staff members and students are notified of safety rules at the beginning of each academic year, and relevant entries are made in the instruction book.

The Civil Defense Headquarters of the University carries out educational trainings on protection of students and staff in emergency situations.

The ramp of the 1st campus has been renovated for students with disabilities /having mobility disorder/, and another ramp was built in the 2nd building.

According to the data provided in the ANQA electronic questionnaire, there were students with special needs until the 2019-2020 academic year, and since then the University hasn't had and still doesn't have students with special needs. That is why the adapted auditorium of the 1st campus is not being functioned yet despite the availability of equipment. It was

established within the framework of TEMPUS ASPIRE project ("Access to Society for People with Individual Requirements." A similar auditorium is planned to be furnished in the 2nd campus.

The buildings are equipped with fire protection equipment, and there are evacuation schemes on each floor. The University has a firefighting plan, however, due to lack of funds, no automatic fire alarm systems have been installed.

Over the last five years 1163500 AMD has been spent on health care (medical examinations of stakeholders and medication).

In the conditions of the epidemic, the University has created necessary conditions to ensure the health of staff members and students.

The expert visit showed that in the post-war situation the University finds that there is the need to develop and integrate additional approaches to security, including additional trainings of students and staff.

7.7 The Institution has special mechanisms in place for the evaluation of the effectiveness, applicability and availability of resources given to the teaching staff and learners.

The surveys on satisfaction of GSU students and teachers with the educational environment are among mechanisms of evaluation of applicability, availability and efficiency of resources and services provided to students and teaching staff. However, surveys are not conducted regularly and they haven't had any impact in terms of making improvement. The improvement plans and reports of evaluation of results directed to the solution of problems identified from the surveys are absent. Students can raise different problems, including those relating resources, during meetings with academic consultants. The University hasn't made any evaluation on the needs in the conditions of distance learning.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel finds it positive that the University values the provision of necessary resources for the fulfillment of its mission and strategic goals, including the implementation of APs. GSU has managed to create an appropriate educational environment by providing basic working conditions which are necessary for the implementation of organizational and administrative activities of the educational process.

The financial means of the University are limited for the replenishment, improvement, modernization and expansion of classrooms, laboratory conditions, library fund and other infrastructures, and the replenishment of resource base has mainly been ensured within the scope of international grant projects but in recent years GSU has been passive in this regard. However, the University makes distribution in such a way that it manages to make allocations for reforms.

The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that the University constantly takes steps to improve the building facilities by providing appropriate allocations in the draft budget, as well as carries out some activities in the direction of re-equipment of laboratories, library fund and replenishment. However, they still need to be improved in accordance with students' needs and those of APs for their efficient implementation.

The main financial inflows of the University are provided by tuition fees but the expert panel gives importance to their diversification which is also highlighted by the University.

The lack of professional literature is a concern in terms of implementation of APs. Provision of literature, in case of membership in online library networks as well, can help GSU to expand the opportunities of having access to many up-to-date sources and foreign literature.

The sports hall also needs to be replenished with sports equipment which plays an important role in the physical training of students.

The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that the University has a financial management policy, expenditures for different purposes in the annual budget but they are not specified according to strategic goals and APs, and the absence of financial flows may impede the implementation of strategic goals and sustainability. The lack of clear allocation of resources (including financial means) in the University's strategic planning can endanger their implementation, especially taking into account the fact that in the budget the indicator of financial allocations in some strategic directions is very low.

In spite of limited financial resources, the University is capable to effectively manage its financial resources due to financial savings and distribution of financial means according to priorities. The expert panel finds it positive that there is a fund of stabilization in the policy of financial distribution, according to which the University has managed to invite guest lecturers for online teaching, aimed at efficient implementation of APs. The lack of involvement of all stakeholders in the process of financial distribution may be an obstacle for ensuring the transparency of financial management.

According to the expert panel, although GSU's resource base is not rich, it is sufficient for the implementation of APs. However, the lack of studies and analyzes on the compliance of APs and resources can make the provision of APs unrealistic. It is a positive fact that the University regularly and step-by-step enhances building conditions, renovates the territory and re-equips the laboratories which states that GSU is consistent in improving the quality. At the same time, the University is concerned about the absence of guarantees that would ensure the continuation of some APs.

In parallel with some achievements registered in the field of information and documentation circulation management, GSU needs to evaluate the effectiveness of existing systems and mechanisms which was also stated by stakeholders in terms of the official website.

It is a positive point that the University pays special attention to safety and health issues, providing respective means and organizing events for the mentioned purpose. Besides, the expert panel positively evaluates the fact that the University considers this issue as a priority and respectively plans to make improvement activities in accordance with the situation urged as a result of changes in the region.

The imperfection of mechanisms for evaluating the applicability, accessibility and effectiveness of resources provided to students and teachers can impede their continuous improvement in compliance with the needs.

SUMMARY

Taking into consideration the fact the University has managed to create an appropriate educational environment, has a clear policy of financial management, makes efficient distribution and management of financial resources within the limited budget, it has made investments towards improvement of its educational environment after the previous accreditation, has enhanced its resources base for the implementation of APs, has continuously taken steps in the direction of ensuring safe environment, ensures documentation circulation process, applies some mechanisms of information mechanisms and has invested some mechanisms for evaluating the efficiency of applied resources, the expert panel finds that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 7.

CONCLUSION

The compliance with the institutional competences of GSU with the requirements of the Criterion 7 is evaluated **satisfactory**.

VIII. SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY

CRITERION: The Institution is accountable to the government and society for the education it offers and the resources it uses as well as for the research it conducts.

Findings

8.1. The Institution has a clear policy on accountability.

GSU has a clear mechanism of accountability. It is accountable to the society and to the RA Government which acts as a founder. At GSU the process of accountability is regulated by the RA Laws on "Higher, Postgraduate Professional Education", "Education", "State Non-Commercial Organizations", a number of RA Government decisions as well as by the Charter of the University. The accountability is also ensured based on the regulation on PR and Media Division. The annual activities of the University are summarized in rector's annual reports which are published on the University's website and in the booklet presenting the activities of the given academic year. GSU rector's reports are evaluated and approved by the Board but during the site visit it became clear that the Board doesn't conduct comprehensive discussions.

The rector's reports comprise quantitative and qualitative data on the activity and different fields of the University, however, they don't have analytic character. The reports don't reflect problems for providing further solutions. The comparative analyses according to years are lacking either. Besides, the analytical component of annual reports of the faculties and other subdivisions is weak. The results of monitorings on the implementation of SP conducted by respective committee have been posted on the website but they don't contain analyses either. As it turned out from the expert panel, stakeholders weren't well-aware of the mentioned.

In addition to the reports submitted to the GSU Board, the GSU submits reports to the RA ESCS Ministry, the Science Committee, the State Revenue Committee, the Statistical Department and other state agencies in accordance with the law.

In regard to accountability mechanisms, the University has developed a policy and procedure (approved in the Scientific Council session on 13 January 2020) to ensure accountability to its internal and external stakeholders. The policy and procedure include planned actions for ensuring accountability to the stakeholders and mechanisms of efficiency, however, their effectiveness has not been evaluated.

8.2. The Institution ensures transparency of its procedures and processes and makes them publicly available.

The development of public relations and media is one of the strategic directions of the University. GSU provides information about its activities to the society by different mechanisms, which are stipulated in the RA “Law on Higher, Postgraduate Professional Education”, “Strategic Development Plan 2019-2023 of Goris State University”, regulation of PR and Media Division of the University and in many other normative documents. Although the University has mentioned a number of traditional electronic means as mechanisms for provision of information, their efficiency has not been evaluated.

The website of the University is considered to be one of the mechanisms of transferring information. At the same time, during the observations of documents and the official website of the University it became clear that although GSU has taken significant steps to improve the website since December 2018, the website still needs to be improved. The staff members in charge of the website have a clear idea of the problems of the website but they think the problems are mainly conditioned by the absence of a specialist and, respectively, plan some improvement activities and involvement of a specialist having relevant qualification.

The website is trilingual but the materials are posted in two languages - Armenian and English. Besides, the selection of materials in English is not purposeful and coordinated. Due to that, the analyses of website visits are missing.

Although it is obvious from the inquiries that students and teaching staff are satisfied with the structure of the website, news, transparency and accessibility of the activity of PR and Media Division as well as with the quality and availability of publications on the official Facebook page and the convenience of receiving information, the observation of the website showed that it still needs to be enriched with materials, a number of sections are empty, and some contain very little information.

In particular, the website contains internal legal acts and information on the activities of the University, which are available to internal and external stakeholders but they do not give a complete picture of the processes carried out at the University. The GSU’s Facebook page reflects the activities of the University but there is more information about general education. The number of followers of the Facebook page does not exceed 4000 which is a small number, while it is considered as an important means of transmitting information, and the number of GSU students is about 1200. The regular analyses on dynamics of the number of followers are missing.

With the aim to ensure the availability of information on the University's activities to the society, GSU also cooperates with different organizations by organizing events. In particular, GSU regularly organizes discussions on different activities of the University in collaboration with the "Partnership & Training" NGO and "Jinishyan" Memorial Foundation which operates at GSU. In the discussion the strengths and weaknesses of activities/processes of GSU are identified, the efficiency of the process of information dissemination ensured by the University is analyzed. However, the effectiveness of cooperation are missing either, and the involvement of external stakeholders, particularly employers, is still not sufficient.

8.3. The Institution has sustainable feedback mechanisms for establishing contacts with society.

The University ensures feedback supporting the establishment of public relations in accordance with the objectives set in the regulation of the PR and Media Division and the GSU SP. Based on the recommendations provided in the expert report during the previous accreditation, the University has made attempts to improve the feedback mechanisms and tools by integrating a policy and procedure on accountability to its internal and external stakeholders, by which the planned actions and mechanisms directed to the assurance of accountability to GSU stakeholders will be clarified.

The following mechanisms of establishing public relations are specified in the SER – GSU official website (www.gorsu.am), Facebook page, LRATU official newspaper of GSU, Mass Media, media platforms (Zangezour Today, Syunik 24), periodicals and regional newspapers ("Mashtots" social, educational-cultural and Armenian Studies journal, «ARMENIAN VIP BUSINESS» journal, "Republic of Armenia" newspaper, "Process" independent analytical newspaper, "Syunyats Yerkir" newspaper), Public TV Company of Armenia, Goris Press Club, booklets, information leaflets and films (broadcasted by TV ADSTUDIO) illustrating the activities carried out at GSU, the official website of the "Union of Young Scientists and Specialists of Artsakh" NGO (<http://aegmm.org/>), the official page of the "Mirhav" literary club attached to the Museum of Aksel Bakunts (<http://mirhav.blogspot.com/p/blog-page.html>) as well as Slaq.am and Lurer.com media platforms. Meetings with schools and EXPOs are also held to raise public visibility of the University's positive image. Besides, the e-mail is also used. In spite of the diversity, a number of mechanisms are not regularly applied and coordinated in accordance with the goals and objectives. There are no analyses on what vital issues are addressed by the society members to the University.

Although the University has invested a mechanism of surveys conducted among internal and external stakeholders, no steps have been taken to address the problems identified through the surveys, and the activities towards improvement are not based on survey results.

8.4. The Institution has mechanisms that ensure knowledge /value/ transfer to the society.

According to the Charter of the University, the dissemination of knowledge among the society, raising GSU's educational, scientific and cultural level is one of the main tasks of the University, however, this problem is not reflected in the goals of the SP. The University considers

the organization of training courses for those wishing to obtain the right to manage schools based on the guarantee of the RA ESCS Ministry (order No. 422-A/2 of the RA Minister of Education and Science as of 29.04.2019) as a mechanism of knowledge transfer to the society. The program modules of training courses are compiled by the GSU team in compliance with the inquiry provided by the RA ESCS Ministry. Although it is mentioned that upon completion of teaching training module anonymous surveys were conducted among participants to evaluate the quality, the analyses on evaluation of their results are missing.

Among mechanisms of transfer of knowledge and values to the society, the University has also specified the conferences, discussions, literary readings and educational-informative competitions which are regularly organized within the scientific project on the “Syunik Centre for Armenian Studies” acting at GSU since 2010 as well as “The Material and Spiritual (Non-Material) Heritage of Syunik” - since 2017, respectively, within the framework of the project on the “Maintenance and Development of Infrastructure of Scientific and Scientific-Technical Activities” announced by the RA State Committee of the RA Ministry of Education and Science and funded by the RA state budget. Not only the teachers and students of GSU but also representatives of scientific spheres of Armenia and Artsakh, teachers and pupils of regional schools as well as intellectual community members take part in the mentioned activities. The University hasn't yet evaluated the efficiency of the aforesaid mechanisms, and they are not coordinated according to goals either.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel finds it positive that the University gives importance to the transparency of its activity and accountability to internal and external stakeholders, the publication of the rector's annual reports on the website, but the partial reflection of analytical component in reports and the absence of reflection on problems existent in the previous years may be an obstacle for the stakeholders to form a complete picture of the processes taken by the University. Besides, the link between the SP directions and objectives is not clearly visible in the rector's reports. The information on the implementation of the SP is limited by monitoring results. The comprehensive discussions of the University Board can significantly influence the progress of some activities of GSU.

The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that in order to ensure the availability and transparency of its activity to its stakeholders, the University applies different mechanisms. However, the absence of efficiency of their application and the problems relating the official website of the University can have a negative impact on efficient implementation of information dissemination, recruitment of applicants and other processes.

The possibility of feedback through the website is a positive point but the absence of messages, frequently asked questions, reports and analyses of comments does not allow to raise the regional social interests, needs and expectations from the University and to plan respective processes.

It is appreciable that the University cooperates with different organizations to ensure the availability of its activity to the society, however, the analyses on efficiency of different

mechanisms of collaboration are missing, while they could serve as a guide for the establishment of new cooperation links and would respectively foster the implementation of GSU's strategic goals and advancement of students. Another positive point is that GSU organizes training courses guaranteed by the RA ESCS Ministry, but the mentioned is not enough for transferring the values to the society. The University has resources and is capable of expanding the scope of its activity to implement separate courses and projects on its initiative, thus contributing to both the regional development and the increase of financial inflows of the University.

SUMMARY

Taking into consideration the fact that the University has a clearly defined policy of accountability, mechanisms of ensuring accountability to internal and external stakeholders, respective procedure, it has taken steps towards improving the mechanisms ensuring the transparency and accountability of its activity and feedback after the previous accreditation, as well as there are some mechanisms through which it transfers knowledge to the society, the expert panel finds that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 8.

CONCLUSION

The compliance with the institutional competences of GSU with the requirements of the Criterion 8 is evaluated **satisfactory**.

IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

CRITERION: The Institution promotes experience exchange and enhancement through its sound external relations practices, thus promoting internationalization of the Institution.

Findings

9.1 The Institution promotes its external relations through sound policies and procedures aimed at creating an environment conducive to experience exchange and enhancement and internationalization.

In the SP 2019-2023 the University has specified the external relations and internationalization as one of the directions and has set objectives aimed at fulfillment of different goals, including the creation of an environment fostering experience exchange, development and internationalization, however, they are not clear and precise.

The processes directed to the development of external relations and internationalization are regulated by the GSU Charter, development strategic plan and the regulation of the Division of External Relations and Cooperation. The mentioned Division has developed a mid-term plan of actions of the SP 2019-2023 in which the KPIs are also defined in accordance with the goals and actions of the University. However, the KPIs are not clear and measurable (e.g. number of students and teachers having certain level of a foreign language proficiency who participated in foreign language courses, results of tests passed by participants of facultative courses, impact of

external stakeholders on development and revision of APs, etc.). Before the development of the mid-term plan, the University was guided by annual plans which didn't contain the outcomes of actions and evaluation indicators. As the observation of documents, particularly the annual reports of the Division of External Relations and Cooperation has shown, only some of the planned actions has been implemented.

Although the University has mentioned in the SER that it constantly makes studies in the direction of internationalizing the leading practice of institutions, during the observation of documents and the site visit it was registered that there is one example of study of the leading practice of internationalization policy which relates to the spheres of mobility, capacity building projects and inter-university collaboration. In this context the practices of some RA HEIs and Dresden University of Technology have been mainly studied, and the analyses on integration and evaluation of study results are missing.

The division coordinating the activities of internationalization has a mid-term action plan but the steps fostering the mobility and the KPIs are not clearly reflected in it.

Although the University invested the regulation on promotion of scientific-research, educational-methodical and organizational activities in 2019 which was approved in the Scientific Council session on 27 December 2018, and according to which the publication in international conference collections and foreign scientific journals, particularly the publication of articles and theses in journals involved in the Web of Science and Scopus, as well as the organization of international conferences are supported, the regulation hasn't been put into practice, and there are no results registered either.

The University doesn't have clear mechanisms which foster the establishment of external relations and mobility.

In the SP of GSU the internationalization and external relations are specified as a separate direction subject to development, and in the SER it is mentioned as a priority, however, there are no allocations in the budget envisaged for this direction.

In order to foster the participation of GSU internal stakeholders in mobility programs, the University has taken stapes towards increasing the level of foreign language proficiency among its staff as well. The business trips are given importance to by the University but in recent times there hasn't been any.

In the last years there haven't been any cases of mobility of GSU students and teachers, the programs are missing which, according to the University, is mainly conditioned by the low level of English language proficiency. The last example of student mobility at GSU was in 2015, within the scope of the ERASMUS+ project the students studied in Masaryk University of Czech Republic.

According to the SER, due to the cooperation with the "Goris French-speaking Cultural Center" NGO, two students of GSU left for Vienna during the 2019-2020 academic year within the framework of the civil service program. However, it became clear from the site visit that this is mainly conditioned by students' initiative.

GSU has a QA manual the content of which doesn't clearly reflect the point that the level of internationalization and the character should be in compliance with the University's context (geographical, geopolitical, socio-cultural, cultural).

As the site visit showed, under pandemic conditions the University didn't use "on-site internationalization" policy approaches by using the opportunities of the online platform and making financial resource saving required for travel expenses.

9.2 The Institution's external relations infrastructure ensures regulated process.

The University functions a structural unit which is in charge of external relations and internationalization, which was re-organized in August 2017. The activities of the subdivision are regulated by a regulation. The latter defines the unit's functions, directions of activity, authorities and management. The division has annual work plans which to some extent envisage the processes, however, they do not specify the exact period and results according to actions, the reports are more descriptive, informational rather than analytical, and they are partially in compliance with the plans.. Besides, they do not include the unaccomplished and incomplete actions and respective reasons for providing solutions to them in the future. There are no clear QA policy and procedures of the infrastructure.

The Division of External Relations and Cooperation was active particularly in 2017-2018 by summing the grant projects and signing a number of partnership agreements with organizations. The activities taken within the scope of the mentioned projects haven't been evaluated by the University.

Based on the recommendation provided in the previous accreditation consultation, the University has taken some steps to translate some materials of the official website into foreign languages, but only in English (this process is always mentioned in the Division's work plan). However, during the visit it turned out that the selection of the mentioned materials is not targeted and coordinated, besides, the volume of work is not planned, and even after the implementation no clear information about it is available. There are no materials in Russian on the website in spite of the fact that the website is trilingual.

Although the University highlights the importance of business trips for ensuring the efficiency of foreign relations and cooperation activities, for which the budget also envisages expenses, the analyses of their effectiveness are missing, and evaluation of performances is not carried out either.

The staff of the mentioned Division consists of the Head who has a 0.5 workload, and a Specialist - with 1 workload, however, during the site visit it became clear that the Division needs to be replenished for full implementation of its functions, especially in terms of translation of the website materials. It should also be mentioned that the Division does not evaluate the staff performance.

9.3 The Institution effectively collaborates with local and international counterparts.

GSU has signed contracts and memoranda of cooperation with a number of local and international organizations, but during the expert visit it turned out that few of them are applied

in practice or ensure results, and the processes carried out within the framework of collaboration are not regular. The involvement of guest lecturers with the aim of teaching ad-hoc (specialized) subjects can be mentioned as an example of what the University needs, but as the site visit showed, their involvement is not a result of the institutional cooperation. The establishment of framework of cooperation with international universities is not based on the studies of GSU's potential from the perspective of language proficiency, e.g. there is no cooperation with Russian universities or with French HEIs in relation to the level of French language proficiency of teaching staff and students.

Taking into consideration the results of the previous accreditation, the University has made attempts to considerably expand the scope of its collaboration within the framework of its SP. It was particularly active and registered tangible outcome in 2018 by successfully continuing and completing the two international projects - ERASMUS+ LNSS ((Library Network Support Services: Modernizing Libraries in Armenia, Moldova and Belarus through Library Staff Development and Reforming Libraries) and HERITAG (Higher Education Interdisciplinary Reform in Tourism Management and Applied Geoinformation Curricula). Within the scope of the mentioned projects GSU as cooperated with a number of local and international HEIs and organizations and took various activities. In 2019 the University took an active initiative particularly in signing contracts of cooperation, agreements, memoranda of understanding, however, the evaluation of cooperation results is missing. GSU has also actively cooperated with different RA organizations, but in case of collaboration with international organizations no activities have been taken especially in the last years.

According to the SER, since 2017-2018 GSU has cooperated with Artsakh State University (ASU) particularly mentioning that a comparative analysis was made, however, respective evaluations are missing. On 23 January 2020 a memorandum of cooperation was signed between GSU and ASU in the directions of academic mobility, joint development of APs and courses, organization of professional trainings, students' scientific-research, scientific-pedagogical, educational industrial internship, joint conferences and other activities. In the site visit it turned out that there are no results registered in this direction yet.

According to the SER, GSU also cooperates with RA HEIs (Armenian State Pedagogical University, Public Administration Academy, National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia) due to which new APs in Pedagogy for the specializations of "Pedagogy of Elementary Education and Methodology", "Armenian Language and Literature", "History", "Biology", "Chemistry", "Physics" have been developed; besides, the academic plan of the "Tourism Management" AP and new courses (GIS basics, data collection and mapping, project management), new project-proposals of capacity building have been developed. However, there aren't analyses in this direction, neither any studies have been done to state how they were directed to the current structure and content of APs.

During the site visit it turned out that the University has also been involved in new international projects which, according to the University, is due to the fact that it was a trustworthy partner in the previous project. The project will give GSU the opportunities for internationalization of APs, capacity building and resource replenishment. The University gives

importance to the involvement in international mobility programs, however, GSU's efforts made in this direction haven't brought any result yet.

The University has envisaged to develop and invest international scientific cooperation development projects since 2020 but as the site visit showed, there are no established preconditions to ensure the mentioned goal.

As it turned out from the site visit, only a narrow scope of GSU stakeholders is aware of current projects.

9.4 The Institution ensures internal stakeholders' appropriate level of a foreign language to enhance efficiency of internationalization.

In its SP the University has highlighted the importance of foreign language proficiency of its internal stakeholders in the development of the direction of internationalization. Based on that, it has made evaluation of foreign language proficiency (English, French, German) among its teachers and learners according to which the level of French among both teachers and learners was high. Nonetheless, the University neither makes use of French proficiency nor ensures a respective frame of collaboration or projects. However, depending on the evaluation results, some courses of only English were organized and implemented for teaching and administrative staff members which were short-term. The participants received credits but the University hasn't made any evaluation of practical effectiveness to identify whether the goal set by the organized courses was reached. As the observation of documents and the site visit have shown, conditioned by a row of circumstances, in the given academic year the University didn't organize courses but it plans to ensure the continuity of courses. At the same time, it turned out that the participants of courses were targeted and organized for different proficiency levels, and this mainly didn't foster the involvement in international projects or mobility.

The University hasn't organized separate courses of English but the hours allocated to English in the AP have been added, aimed at assurance of respective outcomes. However, in the site visit it was stated that GSU hasn't managed to reach the set goal. Besides, the observation of documents and the site visit allowed to clarify the fact that the addition of hours allocated to English didn't contribute to the mobility of learners and students, publication of teachers' articles in international journals which, according to the University, is conditioned by the low level of proficiency of foreign languages.

CONSIDERATIONS

In spite of the fact that with the aim to establish an environment that will foster practice exchange and development, GSU has defined objectives in the SP, the absence of clear time-schedule of actions and KPIs may impede the efficient attainment of the goals.

The expert panel finds it positive that the Division of External Relations and Cooperation has developed a mid-term action plan 2020-2023, however, it can be functional and efficient if it is based on its own needs and capabilities, meanwhile GSU hasn't made suchlike analysis. At the same time, the absence of clear indicators will not allow to further evaluate the efficiency of actions or to make monitoring and reforms, respectively.

In general, the GSU strategy of internationalization is not based on respective analyses of the conditions under which the University carries out its activity, and the GSU's geographical, geopolitical and economic situation in the Syunik region is not taken into consideration either. From this perspective the expert panel also emphasizes the importance of use of opportunities that online environment gives with the aim to expand the frame of international collaboration, study of leading practice and development of the University.

In addition, the study of international and local leading practice and its adaptation gives a wide scope of opportunities to ensure development but the University hasn't taken complex actions in this direction but was rather limited with the studies of some practices which were not functional. The expert panel positively evaluates the development of benchmarking policy and mentions that its efficient application can contribute to the integration of the leading practice.

The fact that the SP doesn't contain any clear distribution of budget and resources, makes the University's expectations from external relations and international projects vague, and the absence of financial allocations to the internationalization specified as a priority in the budget may endanger the development of this direction.

The expert panel finds it problematic that GSU doesn't have a clear policy fostering the establishment of external relations directed to practice exchange, development and internationalization. Besides, the panel finds that the investment of efficient mechanisms fostering the aforementioned can be favorable for the establishment of external relations, directed to the solution of different objectives according to the SP.

The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that GSU has an infrastructure the operation of which is regulated, and staff members are experienced in this field. The panel also gives importance to the practiced accountability but at the same time mentions that reports should allow to evaluate the efficiency of processes in accordance with registered results, amount of carried out activities, as well as to evaluate the gaps and make respective improvement.

It is also important that the actions should be more targeted and purposeful, particularly, the translation of materials and organization of courses in foreign languages.

The expert panel highlights the importance of the establishment of cooperation with RA and Artsakh HEIs and organizations but the efficiency of cooperation is not visible yet. It has been only visible that due to cooperation the University had the opportunity to integrate APs but the role of cooperation is not directly manifested.

The expert panel evaluates it positive that GSU has managed to be involved in international projects which is also conditioned by responsible staff members who have respective skills, especially taking into consideration the fact that the successful completion of those projects has led to the proposals of new projects. Another positive point is that within the scope of the mentioned projects GSU managed to replenish its resource base, invest an AP, ensure capacity building among some of its employees. However, it is worrisome that the mentioned activities didn't ensure academic mobility for students and teachers, and they didn't have opportunities of capacity building. In addition, there aren't any projects in this field yet.

The expert panel finds that the establishment of cooperation with different foreign HEIs and organizations is a crucial possibility for GSU, taking into consideration their needs, capacities

and the SP goals. The Diaspora is also an opportunity of internationalization for the University which, however, was not observed and studied by the University.

The expert panel has observed that GSU emphasizes the importance of knowledge of the English language among students and teachers, hence, it has conducted a survey in the direction of their foreign language proficiency. However, the results of the mentioned survey weren't viewed as an evaluation of resources which would lead to the study and use of opportunities. In particular, there aren't cooperation links with Russian and French HEIs. The frameworks of cooperation with foreign HEIs are conditioned by the involvement in international projects.

It is undoubtedly important that the University takes steps towards development of foreign language proficiency among its students, teaching, administrative and support staff members but the steps taken haven't led to desirable results and haven't served the anticipated purpose.

SUMMARY

Taking into consideration the fact that in the field of external relations and internationalization the factual achievements of the University do not comply with the defined ambitions, the strategy directed to the internationalization does not derive from its capacities, the frame of external relations does not cover the attainability of strategic ambitions, the activities directed to the upgrade of language proficiency have not led to expected outcomes, and there are no results and opportunities for academic mobility, the expert panel concludes that GSU does not meet the requirements of the Criterion 9.

CONCLUSION

The compliance with the institutional competences of GSU with the requirements of the Criterion 9 is evaluated **unsatisfactory**.

X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

CRITERION: The Institution has an internal quality assurance system, which promotes establishment of a quality culture and continuous improvement of all the processes of the Institution.

Findings

10.1 The Institution has quality assurance policies and procedures.

The QA system (manual) of GSU has been put into practice since 2014. The University is currently guided by manuals of "Quality Assurance Guidelines, Criteria and Standards in the Professional Education System of Armenia" and "Self-Evaluation Guide" published by ANQA. The University finds it is necessary to review the manual.

The regulation of EQA & SCS Division of GSU was approved on 19 June 2018 which, however, does not allow to understand the role of the Division in the context of QA system of the University. By the order of GSU rector on 30.12.2019 an Internal Quality Control Audit Committee was established under the EQA & SCS Division, but there are no clearly defined functions. In SP 2019-2023 of GSU there is a QA section in which the goals and objectives are specified and for the solution of which the University has planned 6 actions according to the time-schedule of key actions of the SP 2019-2023. However, they are general and not measurable, there are no responsible units specified for them (to support the improvement of educational services provided, to identify the needs of the University's stakeholders, to support their improvement, etc.). At the same time, some actions aimed at QA of the University are not understandable in the mentioned document, there is such an impression that the mentioned actions are the functions of the subdivision and not actions planned by the University SP (in particular, to support the accreditation of University's APs, to foster the reforms of the University's management system).

On 21 January 2020 the working regulation of Internal Quality Control Audit Committee was approved which does not contain procedural details of the implementation of processes outlined in the document.

10.2 The Institution allocates sufficient material, human and financial resources to manage internal quality assurance processes.

In GSU there is an EQA & SCS Division the staff of which includes one head and three co-workers. 1 office with corresponding furniture and technical facilities is allocated to the Division. Job descriptions were developed and approved (December 2019) for all positions of the mentioned Division. Job descriptions involve the functions of the staff. During the site visit it turned out that the staff members are not strictly guided by the defined functions, and they give importance to mutual support.

The Division acquires necessary material resources through current requisitions. However, there are no calculations of what material resources were spent each academic year.

The Internal Quality Control Audit and Internal Quality Assurance Audit Committees operate on a voluntary basis.

GSU considers the main financial resources allocated for the implementation of QA processes to be the monthly salaries and extra payments/premiums provided to staff members of the EQA & SCS Division.

One staff member of the EQA & SCS Division was trained within the training on "Improvement of Quality Assurance System" organized by ANQA, and another staff member participated in the two-stage training course on "Self-Evaluation of Institutional Capacities", and the third one - in the course on "Ethics Assessment Methodology and Internal Quality Assurance" organized by the Open Society Foundations-Armenia (OSF).

The University doesn't make evaluation of performance and needs assessment of the staff members of EQA & SCS Division, responsible staff members of faculties and members of committees though as a result of the previous institutional accreditation a recommendation was

provided in this direction. However, the University considers that there is no need for additional resources.

The EQA & SCS Division has done a lot of work in the direction of development of documents related to different processes of GSU.

The University has also started conducting surveys through online platforms by using their capacities.

10.3 The internal and external stakeholders are involved in quality assurance processes.

In 2019 the regulation of conduction of student survey on teaching quality and efficiency at GSU was approved. According to the regulation, pilot surveys have been conducted but improvements under the influence of those surveys are not visible yet.

In accordance with the mentioned regulation (approved on 26 December 2019) the University conducted a survey in order to evaluate the satisfaction of students and teaching staff with educational and working environment, however, the site visit showed that students and teachers are not actively involved in the mentioned surveys.

Teachers and students were involved in the compositions of the Scientific and Faculty Councils, besides, external stakeholders have also been involved in those Councils according to the recommendation of the expert panel provided in the previous accreditation process in order to activate the involvement of stakeholders in QA processes. The students involved in the mentioned Councils are selected by the Student Council, however, during site visit it turned out that the Student Council doesn't actively carry out activities and students, even members of the Student Council, are generally unaware of their activities. Students are not actively involved in QA processes either, moreover, they have no motivation to be involved in them.

In addition to the Faculty Councils, external stakeholders are also involved in Final Attestation Committees. At the same time GSU has started conducting surveys among employers (23 school principals and 19 other employers), and the results have been analyzed. The employers provide their opinions in internship registers. The impact of results of the mentioned on the processes is not visible yet.

A questionnaire was developed by the EQA & SCS Division with the aim to conduct surveys among alumni. In the questionnaire GSU alumni also fill in their personal data in order to contact them for job offers upon necessity. During the site visit it turned out that alumni aren't involved in the improvement processes of the University.

In the Institutional Accreditation Committee of the University the internal stakeholders were involved, however, as the site visit has shown, the involvement of teachers and students was poor in the mentioned processes, the administrative staff was mainly involved in them. In the mentioned committee no external stakeholders were involved.

10.4 The internal quality assurance system is periodically reviewed.

The EQA & SCS Division functioning in GSU is a result of re-organization. In December 2019 the Committee on Internal Quality Control Audit attached to the mentioned Division was

established. But the observation of documents and the site visit have shown that the role of these units are not clearly reflected in the QA system of the University.

The University doesn't have a policy and mechanisms of monitoring and revision of internal QA system, and the benchmarking mechanisms are missing either. Although it was planned to make benchmarking in 2020, it hasn't been carried out yet.

The institutional accreditation has a huge impact on the processes of GSU, hence, ahead of the accreditation, GSU had developed and invested a row of documents, had conducted surveys and analyses which, however, didn't lead to improvement.

As the presented facts, documentary bases and the site visit have shown, the processes of the University are mainly in the phase of planning and in some cases - at the stage of implementation.

10.5 The internal quality assurance system provides valid and sufficient grounds for the external quality assurance processes.

The terminology of documentary bases of the internal QA system is complied with the terms specified in the ANQA manuals as far as GSU is mainly guided by them. This is the second attempt to make self-evaluation according to the criteria and standards of institutional accreditation. As it turned out during the site visit, there were some members in the self-evaluation working group who had already participated in the first self-evaluation and at this stage they tried to make some improvement based on their previous experience. However, in this regard there wasn't any general approach and improvement of the process based on the evaluation of the process and previous experience.

In the SER there are some sections which are incompliant or partially compliant with the standards (particularly 1b, 2c, 2d, 2e, 2f, 2g, etc.). Even in some cases the strictly separated character of activities of responsible members per criteria as well as the weak manifestation of the integrated activity of general team and stakeholders is observable. Besides, the analytical approach is poorly reflected. The strong and weak points, opportunities and threats presented in the SER do not give a complete and comprehensive picture of the University.

As the site visit has shown, some processes have been taken in the very process of self-evaluation but the observation of documents showed that they had mostly already been reflected by the recommendations provided in the previous accreditation. At the same time, stakeholders mention that the self-evaluation didn't lead to new identifications and the problems specified in the SER were obvious before that.

The reports of the University and of its different units do not contain either sufficient data for making necessary analyses or comprehensive analyses.

10.6. The internal quality assurance system ensures the transparency of the processes at the Institution providing valid and up to date information on their quality to the internal and external stakeholders.

The analyses of 3 surveys which are attached as appendices of the SER of the institutional accreditation are posted on the GSU website - 1. surveys on satisfaction with educational

environment conducted among students; 2. surveys on satisfaction with working environment conducted among teachers; 3. surveys conducted among employers. As it turned out from the site visit, stakeholders were mainly unaware of the analyses. They were aware of surveys conducted among students and teachers, and the chairs were informed about the analyses expressed by total average.

The GSU website contains the rector's report on the activity of the University which is mainly informative, and the analytical component is poorly reflected in it. Other publications are also informative, besides, the existent information is not available on the page in English.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel positively evaluates the University's efforts directed to the enhancement of the QA system. There is some documentary base directed to the QA processes of the University but they are not sufficient for regulating respective processes, and available documents haven't yet fully served the purpose. The role of GSU's different units in the internal QA system is not regulated which doesn't allow to ensure the certainty and fluent process of the general internal QA system.

The expert panel finds it important that different committees are established at GSU whose activity is aimed at solution of different QA related problems. Thus, the University also makes attempts to ensure the involvement of stakeholders, however, the unclearness of their goals and functions impedes the efficient evaluation of the activity.

The unclear planning of QA processes both by the SP and other documents does not allow to evaluate their efficiency, hence, the assurance of sufficient amount of resources and their effective application also become complicated.

The expert panel highlights the importance of the fact that job descriptions have been developed for the staff of the EQA & SCS Division but at the same time the panel finds that it is necessary to make sure they derive from and are compliant with both other documents and factually carried out processes. As the studies have shown, the activity of the EQA & SCS Division is not sufficiently clear and coordinated yet which has hindered the process of disseminating the quality culture. At the same time, it is important to first of all make needs assessment of the Division's staff members, afterwards - that of other units as well, aimed at their improvement and implementation of QA processes.

The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that the University expands the directions of surveys by envisaging to involve wider scope of stakeholders, as well as the fact that it revises the mechanisms of surveys. At the same time, surveys are not regularly conducted, and the involvement of a wide scope of internal and external stakeholders and their motivation to be engaged in surveys are not visible, and the impact of surveys in improvement directed processes isn't visible either. The expert panel emphasizes the importance of involving alumni in different QA processes too as far as they can best inform about the problems they face while practicing their knowledge, skills and competences.

The expert panel finds that the non-realization of the Student Council which is an important unit negatively reflects on the QA processes in terms of ensuring active involvement of students in them, as far as they select student representatives in different units.

The internal QA system and the role of different units in it are not clear. Besides, the needs of internal QA system are not studied which endangers the efficient functioning of the internal QA system. At the same time, the expert panel expected that the implementation of at least one PDCA cycle of processes would be ensured after the previous accreditation.

The internal QA system is mostly focused on processes, formal decisions and resources rather than on the problems which relate to how and to what extent these processes, formal decisions and resources actually support the provision of educational, research and other services of the University.

The expert panel finds it important that the terminology of documentary bases of the internal QA system complies with the general terminology but the imperfection of data collection mechanisms and the lack of the analytical component in current reports make the self-evaluation and external evaluation difficult. The self-evaluation didn't provide sufficient grounds for forming an objective picture of the University's processes.

From the perspective of the expert panel, it is a positive fact that the University has highlighted the publication of analyses of some surveys but it is crucial that the mentioned should be general and regular. Besides, it is important to ensure the availability of sufficient information on the quality of procedures and processes to GSU's stakeholders, otherwise the efficiency of applied mechanisms can be endangered.

SUMMARY

Taking into consideration the fact that GSU's QA policy and procedures do not ensure the fulfillment of respective goals deriving from the University's SP, the involvement of internal and external stakeholders in internal QA processes is poorly reflected, the internal QA system is not clear and needs assessment is not made, internal QA processes are mainly in the phases of planning and implementation, the efficiency of conducted surveys and analyses is not visible, the information extracted from the internal QA system doesn't serve as a basis for decision making, and the availability of information on the quality of processes and procedures is not guaranteed, the expert panel finds that GSU does not meet the requirements of the Criterion 10.

CONCLUSION

The compliance with the institutional competences of GSU with the requirements of the Criterion 10 is evaluated **unsatisfactory**.

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERION	CONCLUSION
<i>I. Mission and Purposes</i>	meets
<i>II. Governance and Administration</i>	meets
<i>III. Academic Programmes</i>	meets
<i>IV. Students</i>	meets
<i>V. Teaching and Support Staff</i>	meets
<i>VI. Research and Development</i>	does not meet
<i>VII. Infrastructure and Resources</i>	meets
<i>VIII. Societal Responsibility</i>	meets
<i>IX. External Relations and Internationalization</i>	does not meet
<i>X. Internal Quality Assurance System</i>	does not meet

Armenuhi Sargsyan
Chair of the expert panel

23 July 2021

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

Armenuhi Sargsyan graduated from State Pedagogical Institute after M. Nalbandyan of Gyumri in 2006 with the specialization of Mathematics. In 2011 she was awarded the scientific degree of Candidate of Physical and Mathematical Sciences. In 2007-2011 she was a lecturer of the Chair of Mathematical Analysis and Differential Equations at State Pedagogical Institute after M. Nalbandyan of Gyumri, in 2011-2014 - Assistant of the same Chair, and in 2014-2017 - Associate Professor of the Chair of Higher Mathematics and Mathematics Teaching Methodology.

Since 2018 A. Sargsyan is the Head of the Scientific Policy, Quality Assurance and Management Center of Shirak State University. She has worked as a senior researcher or supervisor in a number of scientific projects. In 2017 and 2019 A. Sargsyan delivered a lecture at Kiel University in England within the framework of the Erasmus + mobility program. Since 2018 she is the Deputy Chairman of the Editorial Board of the Scientific Bulletin of Shirak State University, before that (since its establishment) she acted as the Executive Secretary. Armine Sargsyan is a co-author and author of 1 educational-methodical manual and more than 60 scientific articles.

Kees Kouwenaar - since 1982 is a Doctor in History. Since 2016 K. Kouwenaar is the Secretary-General of the Aurora Universities Network. He has a 38-year experience in the fields of international higher education, legal and judicial cooperation, and 33 years of experience - in the spheres of management, policy development, strategic and change management. K. Kouwenaar is a member of many international agencies and associations, and he has authored and co-authored a number of scientific articles and research activities.

Narine Kirakosyan - in 1989 graduated from the Faculty of Management of Yerevan Institute of National Economy. In 2001 she graduated from the Postgraduate (PhD) study at Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia and holds the degree of Candidate of Economics and is Associate Professor. Since 2007 she is a trainer of training courses on Civil Servants and Community Servants, since 2010 - a lecturer at European University, and since 2013 - the Head of the Department of Economics and Management at the same university. N. Kirakosyan has authored 6 professional books and 48 scientific articles.

Narine Sirakanyan - in 2006 graduated from the Faculty of Physics & Mathematics of Armenian State Pedagogical University (ASPU) after Kh. Abovyan in specialization of Mathematics. In 2006-2011 she was a researcher of the Chair of History and Theory of Pedagogy at ASPU. Since 2016 N. Kirakosyan is a Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences. In 2014-2019 she was employed in the National Institute of Education of the RA Ministry of Education and Science, acting as a trainer of TOT (training of teachers). In 2019-2020 she acted as the Head of the Quality Assurance

Department at Northern University as well as was a teacher of the same University. Since 2020 N. Kirakosyan is employed in the Education Inspection Body of the Republic of Armenia as an expert of the Department of Risk Assessment, Inspection Planning, Analysis and Evaluation. She has authored many scientific articles.

Grigor Bejanyan - is a 2nd-year student of the Faculty of Law at Northern University. In 2020 he graduated from the school of Local Democracy. G. Bejanyan has participated in the training course of preparation of student-experts within the ANQA "Student Voice" project.

APPENDIX 2. TIME-SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT

SITE VISIT OF EXPERT PANEL CONDUCTING EVALUATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF GORIS STATE UNIVERSITY

26.04.2021-29.04.2021

	26.04.2021	<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>	
1	Meeting with the Rector of Goris State University	12:00	13:00	60 minutes	Meeting ID: 819 3562 3050 Passcode: 912385
2	Meeting with the Vice-Rector	13:15	14:15	60 minutes	Meeting ID: 828 9344 9920 Passcode: 497740
3	Meeting with the Deans	14:30	15:20	50 minutes	Meeting ID: 844 6694 0008 Passcode: 392431
4	Break, discussions of the expert panel	15:30	16:30	60 minutes	Meeting ID: 826 3204 6117 Passcode: 992010
5	Meeting with the self-evaluation working group	16:30	17:10	40 minutes	Meeting ID: 871 0572 4151 Passcode: 557902
6	Meeting with employers	17:20	18:20	60 minutes	Meeting ID: 881 2581 6532 Passcode: 893411
7	Meeting with alumni	18:30	19:30	60 minutes	Meeting ID: 865 1785 7506 Passcode: 947141

	27.04.2021	<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>	
1	Meeting with the members of Goris State University Board	09:30	10:10	40 minutes	Meeting ID: 870 4689 0610 Passcode: 135310
2	Meeting with the Heads of Chairs and representatives responsible for academic programs	10:30	11:30	60 minutes	Meeting ID: 839 2988 2819 Passcode: 825850
3	Meeting with teaching staff members (10-12 representatives)	12:00	13:00	60 minutes	Meeting ID: 850 0123 2121 Passcode: 754595
4	Break, discussions of the expert panel	13:10	14:10	60 minutes	Meeting ID: 814 0474 1207 Passcode: 273963
5	Meeting with the representatives of Student Council and Student Scientific Union (8-10 representatives)	14:20	15:00	40 minutes	Meeting ID: 846 0589 2046 Passcode: 748107
6	Meeting with students	15:20	16:20	60 minutes	Meeting ID: 810 3646 7771 Passcode: 82496
7	Observation of documents, close meeting of the panel	16:30	18:30	120 minutes	Meeting ID: 814 0474 1207 Passcode: 273963

28.04.2021				<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>	
1	Parallel meeting with the representative(s) responsible for “Armenian Language and Literature” academic program	Meeting with the representative(s) responsible for the “Mathematics” academic program	Meeting with the representative(s) responsible for “Economics” academic program	09:30	10:30	60 minutes	Meeting ID: 818 7674 4502 Passcode: 891697
2	Parallel meeting with the teaching staff of “Armenian Language and Literature” academic program	Meeting with the teaching staff of “Mathematics” academic program	Meeting with the teaching staff of “Economics” academic program	11:00	12:00	60 minutes	Meeting ID: 836 6480 7696 Passcode: 852511
3	Break, discussions of the expert panel			12:30	13:30	60 minutes	Meeting ID: 859 5028 6421 Passcode: 765153
4	Parallel meeting with the students of “Armenian Language and Literature” academic program	Meeting with the students of “Mathematics” academic program	Meeting with the students of “Economics” academic program	13:40	14:40	60 minutes	Meeting ID: 820 5857 3251 Passcode: 944660
5	Open meeting			15:00	16:00	60 minutes	Meeting ID: 829 4578 8180 Passcode: 313724
6	Observation of documents, close meeting of the panel			16:30	18:30	120 minutes	Meeting ID: 859 5028 6421 Passcode: 765153

29.04.2021		<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>	
1	Meeting with the Heads of the structural units (Department of Education, HRM Department, Department of	09:30	11:00	90 minutes	Meeting ID: 810 8979 7940 Passcode: 035366

	Organization of Economic Activities (Maintenance), Division of External Relations and Cooperation, Division of PR and Media, Department of Accounting)				
2	Meeting with QA and SCS Center staff members	11:30	12:30	60 minutes	Meeting ID: 834 2313 9739 Passcode: 390401
3	Meeting with the representatives selected by the expert panel	12:40	14:00	100 minutes	Meeting ID: 871 5497 1781 Passcode: 981597
4	Break, discussions of the expert panel	14:10	15:10	60 minutes	Meeting ID: 839 5595 5922 Passcode: 038750
5	Close meeting of the panel	15:20	18:30	160 minutes	Meeting ID: 839 5595 5922 Passcode: 038750
6	Meeting with the Management of Goris State University	19:00	19:30	30 minutes	Meeting ID: 841 9176 1869 Passcode: 980380

APPENDIX 3. LIST OF REVIEWED DOCUMENTS

N	NAME OF DOCUMENT	CRITERION
1.	Time-schedule of implementation of actions of the Strategic Plan (SP)	1
2.	Analyses of needs assessment of internal stakeholders	1
3.	Analyses of needs assessment of alumni	1
4.	Analyses of needs assessment of employers	1
5.	Minutes, analyses and reports of sessions of the Internal QA Audit Committee	1
6.	Reports of the SP Monitoring Committee	1
7.	Reports and work plans of chairs and other structural units	1
8.	Analysis on necessity to invest "Tourism Management" specialization	1
9.	GSU list of staff	2
10.	Annual plans of faculties, chairs and structural units	2
11.	Reports /of chairs and faculties/	2
12.	Minutes of the University Board sessions /for the last 3 years/	2
13.	Composition of academic consultants, topics of consultancy and time-schedule of meetings, register	2
14.	Norms of academic load	2
15.	Regulations o committees attached to the Scientific Council	2
16.	Analyses and reports on the necessity to change GSU's organizational structure	2
17.	Documents grounding the processes of fulfilled internal audit or risk management in compliance with the regulation of GSU Ethics	2
18.	Minutes of discussions organized at GSU based on students' initiative or proposal	2
19.	Strategic plans of faculties and chairs	2
20.	Reports of chairs and faculties	2
21.	Annual reports of structural units	2

22.	Regulations on monitoring of APs	2
23.	Grounds and analyses on revision of curricula	3
24.	Analyses of evaluation of efficiency of teaching and learning	3
25.	Results of surveys on efficiency and quality of teaching conducted among students, results of surveys on satisfaction of teachers and students with educational and working environment	3
26.	Analyses of students' knowledge, competences & skills and their academic progress, conducted after the examination period by chairs, faculties and the Scientific Council with the aim to measure the mentioned competences; results of surveys conducted among students	3
27.	Minutes of proposals based on which the GSU regulation of student knowledge assessment was developed	3
28.	Internship programs	3
29.	Reports of presidents of the Attestation Committee	3
30.	Regulations on educational, industrial and pre-graduation internships	3
31.	Grounds of revision of the policy of student assessment, respective mechanisms of ensuring efficiency	3
32.	Substantiations on changes made in APs, respective minutes, etc.	3
33.	Procedure on revision, evaluation and improvement of the AP	3
34.	Class-schedules /for this academic year/	3
35.	Registers of class observations /per chair/	3
36.	Portfolios of teachers, plans of the teacher /if available, five per chair/	3
37.	Filled in portfolios/diaries of internships /4 for each of selected 3 APs/	3
38.	Indicators of the number of students (2019)	4
39.	Regulation of discount of tuition fees	4
40.	Booklets, promotional videos	4
41.	Analyses of efficiency of the activity of academic consultants	4

42.	Analyses and reports on academic needs assessment of students	4
43.	Minutes of the Student Council sessions, reports	4
44.	Forms of questionnaires presented to students, methodology, analyses of results	4
45.	Time-schedules of student admission, analyses, reports of structural units	4
46.	Statistical data on alumni's employment (2019-2020 academic year)	4
47.	Reports and analyses of Career Center	4
48.	Sample of the questionnaire of the study of employers' opinions, analyses, reports	4
49.	Sample of the student questionnaire on Career Center, methodology, general analysis	4
50.	Composition of academic consultants, topics of consultancy, time-schedule of meetings, register	4
51.	Procedure on hiring and dismissal of GSU support staff	5
52.	Analyses, reports and minutes on scientific-research, educational-methodical and organizational activities	5
53.	Reports and analyses on training and qualification enhancement of GSU teaching staff	5
54.	Grounds stating the compliance of professional competences of teaching staff with qualifications awarded by APs	5
55.	Analyses/reports on needs assessment and monitoring of teaching staff	5
56.	Data on teaching and support staff (at the period of 2020-2021)	5
57.	Data on bonuses	5
58.	Indicators of teachers recruited into teaching staff according to years /3 years/	5
59.	Regulation on formation and positioning of GSU teaching staff	5
60.	Time-schedule of trainings of teachers	5
61.	Training packages	5
63.	Strategy and policy on research and development of science	6

64.	Reports, analyses, evaluation analyses of the Scientific Center	6
65.	Reports on implementation of the scientific project on "Material and Spiritual (Non-Material) Heritage of Syunik"	6
66.	Research works made within the framework of the scientific project on "Material and Spiritual (Non- Material) Heritage of Syunik" /5 units/	6
67.	Samples of some research works carried out at GSU	6
68.	Mechanisms and reports of evaluation of research development	6
69.	Mid-term plan of strategic development actions for 2020-2023 of the Scientific Center	6
70.	Minutes of conferences, reports	6
71.	Theses implemented due to basic funding program	6
72.	Budget performance (for the last 2 years)	6
73.	Topics of final papers and MA theses by years	6
74.	List of grant projects to which GSU applied	6
75.	Scientific articles published in CIS and foreign journals in 2020-2021	6
76.	Local and international journals published in 2019, 2020	6
77.	Samples of course papers, final papers and MA theses	6
78.	Report of the library (for the last 2 years)	7
79.	List of equipment/property obtained within the Erasmus + LNSS project	7
80.	GSU annual reports (for the last 3 years)	7
81.	Management of financial resources (% of total budget)	7
82.	Revenue and expenditure estimates of 2020	7
83.	Report 2020, estimates	7
84.	Reports on improvement activities fulfilled as a result evaluation through surveys on satisfaction with resources	7

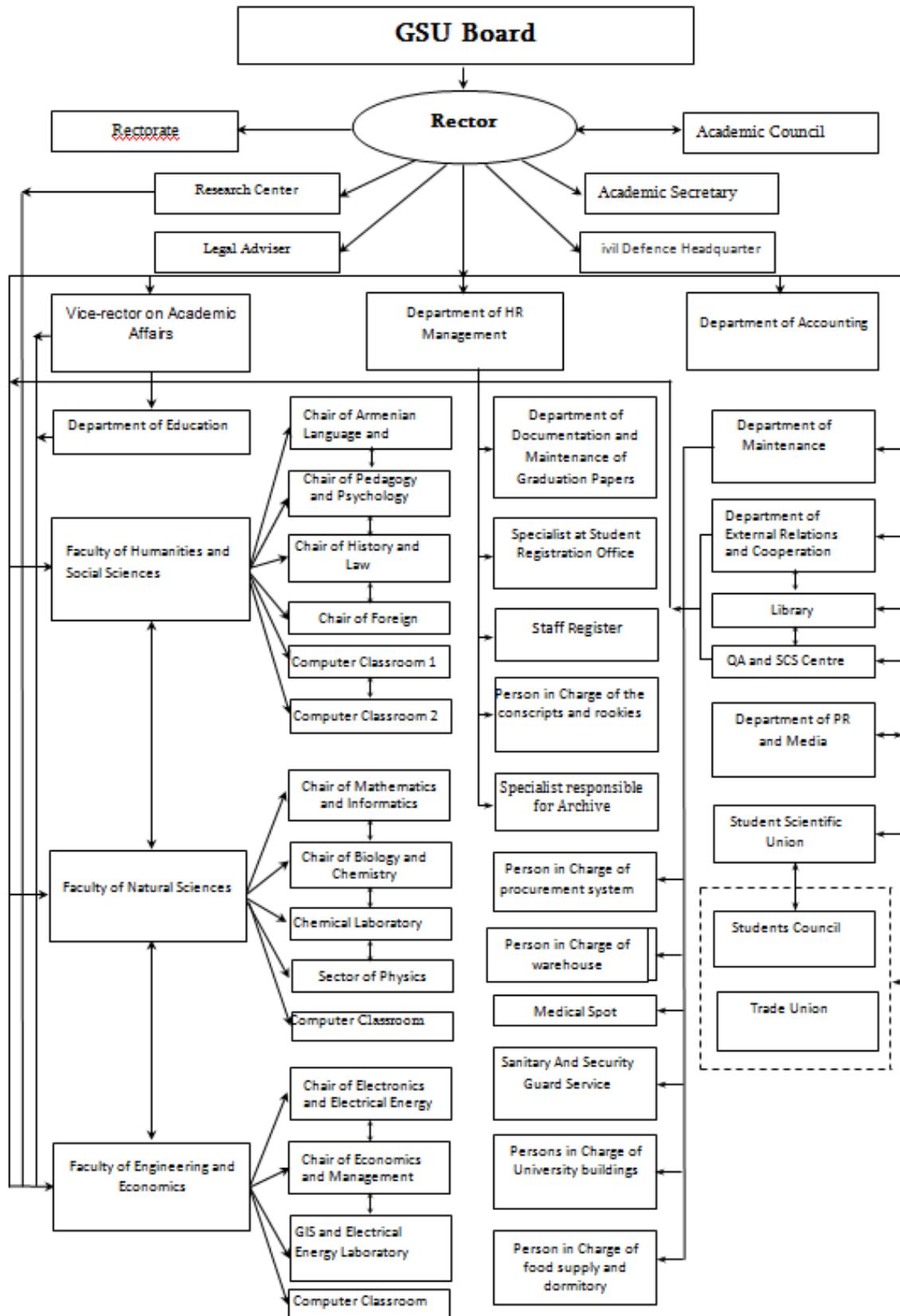
85.	Analyses and grounds of reports of faculties relating the grounds based on which the problems of faculties were identified and presented	8
86.	Policy and procedure on assurance of accountability to GSU internal and external stakeholders	8
87.	Analyses of surveys on satisfaction with educational environment conducted among students and those on satisfaction with working environment conducted among teaching staff	8
88.	Procedure on needs assessment of internal and external stakeholders, analyses	8
89.	Procedure and policy on assurance of accountability to internal and external stakeholders	8
90.	Documents stating the clear mechanisms of efficient evaluation of external monitoring conducted by "Partnership & Training" NGO	8
91.	Regulation of the Division of External Relations	9
92.	Documentary bases on study of international practice of leading institutions	9
93.	Analyses of efficiency of the organization of informative meetings with DAAD and "Goris French-speaking Cultural Center" NGO, Erasmus+	9
94.	Reports on business trips	9
95.	Draft/project of strategic plan on replenishment of GSU library fund	10
96.	Grounds on revision of the "Tourism Management" AP	10
97.	Policy and procedure of GSU benchmarking	10
98.	Analyses of grounds conditioning the increase of number of EQA & SCS Center's staff	10
99.	Composition of the Faculty Committee	10
100.	Reports on elimination of shortcomings submitted to ANQA	10

APPENDIX 4. OBSERVED RESOURCES⁵

1. Classrooms
2. Deans' Offices
3. Chairs
4. Structural Units
5. Labs
6. Cabinets
7. Outdoor sports ground
8. First Aid
9. Library
10. Reading Hall
11. Archive
12. Canteen
13. Dormitory

⁵ Conditioned by the COVID-19 pandemic, the University's resources were observed online by means of videos presented by the University in advance.

APPENDIX 5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE INSTITUTION



APPENDIX 6. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANQA - National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance
ASU - Artsakh State University
AP - academic program
EHEA - European Higher Education Area
ESCS – Education, Science, Culture and Sports
EQA & SCS - Education Quality Assurance and Student Career Support
GSU - Goris State University
HEI – higher education institution
KPIs - key performance indicators
LOs - learning outcomes
ESCS – Education, Science, Culture and Sports
NQF - National Qualifications Framework
PDCA - plan, do, check, act
QA - quality assurance
RA - Republic of Armenia
SC - Student Council
SER - self-evaluation report
SSU – Student Scientific Union
SP - strategic plan