

**“M. NALBANDIAN STATE UNIVERSITY OF SHIRAK” FOUNDATION
CONCEPT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

1. INTRODUCTION

1. The Strategic Development Plan of “M. Nalbandian State University of Shirak” Foundation (hereinafter referred to as University) has identified the main goals that the university will implement in the long term perspective in accordance with its mission and vision.
2. The given Concept of Quality Assurance and Management of the University (hereinafter referred to as the Concept) defines the main concepts used in it: the Quality concept, the basic principles of the internal quality assurance system (hereinafter referred to as IQAS), the goals and objectives of IQAS, the organisational structure of the internal quality assurance system and management of the University, the parties involved in IQAS.
3. In order to realise its mission and internal quality assurance, the University elaborates and approves a set of policies and procedures - IQAS.
4. The quality assurance system consists of an internal and external framework. In accordance with the European standards and guidelines, the University's internal quality assurance system should include the following seven main structural elements:
 - 1) quality assurance policy, relevant standards and procedures,
 - 2) formal procedures for the approval of programmes and qualifications, ongoing monitoring and periodic review,
 - 3) consistently applied and published standards, categories and procedures for student assessment,
 - 4) transparent mechanisms and standards for the Faculty's ability assessment,
 - 5) educational and other supporting resources in accordance with the requirements of educational programmes,

- 6) storage, analysis and use of appropriate information for effective management of the educational process,
 - 7) regular publication of constantly updated, unbiased and objective information about programmes and awarded qualifications.
5. The mission of the University's IQAS is to promote confidence building in key areas of the university activities (education, science and public services) and to ensure that the quality and current standards of qualifications awarded by the university are maintained, continuously improved and effectively managed.
 6. The general policy of the IQAS of the University is implemented in the context of the vision, mission and main goals of the University. It is based on the principle of gaining and adhering to quality standards.
 7. The purpose of the University's IQAS policy is to support the University in the implementation of its mission and strategic goals in accordance with the national and international standards.

2. THE MAIN IDEAS USED IN THE CONCEPT

1. **Assessment** is the process of systematic collection, quantification and use of information in order to bring the educational effectiveness and adequacy of the content of the entire University (institutional assessment) or its programme (programme assessment) in line with the goals.
2. **Self-assessment:** the process of systematic collection of evidence, surveys of students and graduates, discussions with teachers and students, the results of which are summarized in the self-assessment report.
3. **Expert assessment / external expertise** - the process of assessment of the quality and effectiveness of a university or educational programme, personnel and resource provision conducted by external experts.
4. **Licencing of the programme elaboration** is a process as a result of which the educational unit receives the official consent of the University to elaborate a new educational programme in accordance with the submitted application.
5. **Programme confirmation** - the process by which the University assesses the quality of the newly-elaborated educational programme and the ability of the programme team to implement it in accordance with the established standards.
6. **Programme Monitoring** is a process that observes the effectiveness of a programme in terms of achieving the set goals and expected end results of education and identifies problems with the quality

- of education in order to disseminate best practices in the implementation of necessary improvement measures.
7. **Periodic review of the programme** is the process by which the university assesses the achievement of the standards and objectives of the programme, as well as the quality of actual implementation based on the results of the full cycle of its implementation and decides whether to continue the programme or make changes to the programme.
 8. **Standard** - the established requirements and conditions on the basis of which the necessary quality of the university or educational programme for obtaining accreditation or licence is assessed and achieved.
 9. **Criteria** - reference level benchmarks characterising the degree of completion of certain tasks and/or criteria.
 10. **Qualification descriptors** are formulations that define the end results of qualifications at the relevant levels of higher education and characterise the key differences between them.
 11. **Educational standards** are requirements for the level and scope of knowledge, skills and abilities that are required from a student within the framework of the given programme to assign the requested qualification.
 12. **The profile of the educational programme** is a description of the distinctive features of the qualifications awarded as a result of the implementation of the programme, based on its specific goals, showing how the given qualification correlates with the accepted range of qualifications and the work environment.
 13. **Quality** - a multifaceted category related to the institutional mission and goals, as well as to the accepted standards within the framework of a given university, programme or course. Depending on the purpose of the application, there are different definitions of quality, such as "quality as excellence", "quality as corresponding to the goal", "quality as improvement", etc.
 14. **Quality assurance** is a continual process of evaluating, controlling, guaranteeing, maintaining and improving the quality of the higher education system, university or educational programme.
 15. **Quality audit** is a quality assessment process through which a competent external body verifies the availability, adequacy to objectives and actual implementation of internal quality assurance procedures of a university or educational programme.
 16. **Internal quality assurance system** is a management system through which the university implements its quality assurance policy and objectives using established procedures and mechanisms.
 17. **Quality improvement** is the process of continual quality improvement through quality management.

18. **Quality inspection** is the actual process of external inspection (study) of the quality of a university or educational programme.
19. **Quality management** - a combination of measures regularly carried out at the university or educational programme level in order to improve quality.
20. **Quality control** is an internal or external quality control process of a university or educational programme.
21. **Quality policy** - a formulation officially expressing the university's general intentions and principles in the sphere of quality assurance.
22. **Quality culture** is a system of generally accepted and integrated quality principles characteristic of the organisational culture or management system of the university.
23. **The European standards and guidelines for quality assurance**, elaborated by the European Quality Assurance Association (ENQA) and adopted in 2005 is a pan-European official document confirmed at the Bergen Summit, which includes relevant standards and recommendations for internal and external quality assurance at universities, as well as for quality assurance agencies.
24. **The end results of student education** / the final results of student learning (student learning outcomes/learning outcomes) - formulations of what the student should know, understand and be able to perform at the end of the learning process (educational programme, programme module, course). The students' end results are usually expressed in knowledge, intellectual and practical abilities and skill.
25. **Accreditation** is a process by which an authorised state (or public) body assesses the quality of a university or educational programme in order to officially recognise their compliance with established minimum standards or criteria. It consists of three consecutive stages: self-assessment and preparation of an appropriate report, experts' verification and assessment, and preparation of an assessment report.

3. THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY

1. Ensuring the quality of education means that the university provides the student with the opportunity to acquire during the learning process such competencies in the form of knowledge, skills, abilities that meet the requirements of both the internal and external market, political, social, economic and cultural aspirations of the individual and society.
2. The purpose of external quality assurance is to confirm that the PEI is seeking answers to the following questions:

- Does the PEI have procedures that form quality culture that are applied at all levels of the institution and in the implementation of all educational programmes?
- Does the PEI regularly monitor its progress towards achieving quality goals, in particular in ensuring and further improving the quality of educational services?
- Are these quality assurance procedures used to improve the quality of educational and training services and to meet the students' needs?
- Does the PEI monitor the effectiveness of services provided to students?
- Are appropriate actions taken to correct the shortcomings found in the quality assurance process?
- Are parties concerned provided with reliable information about the quality of educational institutions and educational programmes in the specialties?

The Internal quality assurance processes should become part of the activities of an educational institution, and should create prerequisites for the improvement and development of its activities.

3. Quality is an abstract notion, which means that it is impossible to fairly define and analyse. Quality in its essence can be assessed subjectively, despite the fact that it is possible to distinguish some unbiased criteria to describe it. It is most difficult to define and analyse the quality of education, since it includes the growth, development and changes of people, who are precisely the source of quality assurance, the result of quality and a means for measuring quality. The logic of the reforms carried out in the sphere of vocational education indicates that the role of educational institutions in ensuring the quality of education is high. If we consider an educational institution as an organisation, then it is possible to manage the latter with the help of those management mechanisms that are used in organisations, of course, taking into account the peculiarities of the educational institution as an organisation providing educational services.
4. The concept of "quality", which underlies the university's quality assurance system, is to jointly ensure the principles of "goal conformity" and "goal adequacy". That is, the university, its structures and processes are of high quality if they correspond to the purpose they are aimed at.
5. Quality as a "fit for purpose" principle emphasizes the need to meet or conform to generally accepted standards. Here, the focus is on the effectiveness of processes at the university or programme level aimed at achieving established or set goals. The mission, goals and objectives of the university are the key benchmarks of the "fit for purpose" quality assurance model, as they define the basis for planning, monitoring and measuring results. Therefore, the quality criteria in the quality assurance system of the university are both "compliance with the goal" (that is, a guarantee of achieving the set goal) and "adequacy of the goal" (that is, compliance with the chosen goal, relevance, taking into account the

expectations and requirements of stakeholders). The latter can be ensured in the context of international educational standards and close relationship with the labour market.

4. THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF IQAS

1. The quality assurance processes at the university are carried out in accordance with the following principles:
 - 1) objectivity,
 - 2) continuity,
 - 3) transparency,
 - 4) publicity.
2. The fundamental principles of the University's quality assurance policy are:
 - 1) **A systemic approach.** The University is an integrated system with its inherent elements and the functional interconnection of these elements, the effectiveness of which is based on the identification, modernization and management of a system of interrelated processes. All spheres of the university's activities are subject to assessment and accountability.
 - 2) **Centralised regulation.** For quality assurance processes, there is a single regulatory and procedural framework and assessment criteria that guide all departments. In particular, the collegiate body planning, coordinating and regulating the educational, methodological, research and scientific and technical activities of the University is the Scientific Council, which ensures the approval of normative/regulatory documents and procedures, control of the envisaged quality assurance processes and discussion of the results.
 - 3) **Planning.** The goals should be planned, and the actions – measurable. The set goals should be clear-cut, measurable, achievable, realistic, timed and formulated in accordance with the "SMART" principle, that is, specific (S), measurable (M), achievable (A), relevant (R), time-bound (T).
 - 4) **Decentralized implementation of processes.** A decentralized approach to quality assurance processes allows for a more flexible management policy, as well as quality improvement. Flexibility provides the ability to quickly respond to the requirements of the external environment and make appropriate changes. The compliance of decentralized quality assurance processes with the unified standards of the university is ensured by a unified regulatory and procedural framework.

- 5) **Self-assessment.** The university's activities are subject to self-assessment in accordance with the accepted model of quality assurance through planning and assessment systems.
- 6) **Improvement.** The University's quality assurance system is aimed at facilitating the processes of continual quality improvement at the University. This principle is realised via the PDCA model: Plan, Do, Check, Act. The self-assessment is considered an important tool for improving and increasing the quality of education at the University.
- 7) **An approach based on comparative analysis (benchmarking) and evidence.** The university's quality assurance methods are based on evidence/facts, where the final results and information obtained as a result of feedback from beneficiaries/stakeholders (including students, teachers, employers and the community) serve as the basis for analysis and conclusions, and based on them, improvement measures are planned.
- 8) **Motivated, conscious and expanded participation of the staff.** The University ensures motivated, conscious and expanded participation of teaching and administrative staff in the processes of ensuring and improving quality (by stimulating and encouraging individual initiatives in the quality assurance processes of educational (educational-methodological division, Chair) and administrative divisions).
- 9) **Involvement of students, the Faculty and external estimators.** The full participation of internal and external beneficiaries/stakeholders (students, graduates, Faculty, employers, etc.) in quality assurance processes is one of the main guarantees of the effectiveness of the quality assurance system, as well as a requirement of European standards. Accordingly, the university engages internal and external beneficiaries/stakeholders in quality assurance processes, including various needs assessment and identification processes, self-assessment surveys, educational quality certification/final certification, accreditation, etc./, in decision-making processes related to them, such as document processing, etc.
- 10) **The relationship between internal and external quality assurance processes.** Internal quality assurance is the basis of external assessment and is based on the criteria and procedures of the latter. Accordingly, the university's institutional and programme self-assessments are the main interrelated links of internal and external quality assurance processes.
- 11) **Accountability.** The University ensures transparency and accountability of processes, bearing responsibility for the proper implementation of its powers.

5. THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF IQAS

1. The main goals of the University IQAS are the following:

- 1) ensure compliance with high criteria in all major areas of the University's activities,
- 2) create a regulatory and organisational framework for external assessment and accreditation of the quality of the university and its educational programmes, establish a link between the processes of internal and external quality assessment,
- 3) contribute to the continual improvement of the education quality of and the development of a quality culture in the University,
- 4) show stakeholders and external appraisors that the policies, systems and processes adopted to improve quality are working effectively,
- 5) ensure that the university is accountable for the quality of education to students, employers, the founder (the Republic of Armenia represented by the Government of the Republic of Armenia), the authorised body (the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia) and other funding organisations,
- 6) promote the strengthening of links with national, regional and international quality assurance agencies and universities.

2. The tasks of the University IQAS are:

- 1) support for compliance with educational standards, quality assurance and continual improvement of educational programmes through coordinated processes,
- 2) create conditions for self-assessment of the quality of educational programmes, external assessment and accreditation,
- 3) plan reporting procedures for quality assurance and initiate the appropriate processes.,
- 4) ensure transparency of quality assurance processes and procedures, the active participation of students and graduates, key employers and external experts in them,
- 5) create the necessary prerequisites and incentive mechanisms for continual improvement of the quality of education provided,
- 6) ensure that the quality of the University's educational programmes meets the expectations of stakeholders, and the graduates of the university acquire the knowledge, skills and abilities (formation of competencies) they demand.

6. THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY'S INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The university management bodies involved in the IQAS, the main structural units, the distribution/area of responsibility of the latter.

1. **The Board of Trustees of the University** confirms the annual and strategic plans for the university activities, hears and assesses the annual report on the university activities (which is presented by the rector), discusses the results of the quality assurance system within the framework of the annual report and sets tasks for improvement, performs the functions provided for by the University Charter and other legal acts:
2. **The Scientific Council of the University:**
 - confirms the internal quality assurance and management policy,
 - discusses quality assurance processes within the framework of the University's annual report and proposes measures to improve,
 - discusses and approves the results of intra-university quality assurance processes and the conclusions of the department council,
 - acts as a monitoring, controlling and quality assurance body to assess the compliance of quality assurance procedures and standards with the accepted criteria,
 - performs the functions provided for by the University Charter and other legal acts:
3. **The Rector of the University:**
 - directs the work on the elaboration of the policy and appropriate strategy for quality assurance and management of the University, guides their implementation, ensures the harmonious functioning of the quality assurance system, regulates the interconnection and interaction of the system with other university management systems (bodies) (in particular, with three centres),
 - manages the University's self-assessment/introspection process, as well as planning and monitoring follow-up actions,
 - provides operational management and control of the quality assurance system,
 - provides operational communications and interaction between the key structures involved,
 - performs the functions provided for by the university charter and other legal acts.
4. **The University Centre for educational - methodological process management:**
 - provides procedures for the elaboration and effective implementation of educational programmes (Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree), as well as the control and monitoring mechanisms,

- monitors the quality of the elaboration and implementation of educational programmes (Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree) and verifies their compliance with the established standards, the NFQ, the SFQ and labour market requirements,
- coordinates and controls the performance of functions and procedures for quality assurance and management of educational programmes in educational units,
- performs the procedures provided for by its Charter and other legal acts.

At the University's educational - methodological process management centre, the responsible for quality assurance is the Director-Vice-Rector of the centre.

5. **The University's Centre for Science Policy and Innovation:**

- contributes to the improvement of the efficiency of scientific-research at the University, the implementation of editorial and publishing processes,
- organises international and national scientific conferences, seminars, workshops and promotes the participation of university stakeholders,
- organises and coordinates the post-graduate educational process at the University,
- promotes the training of scientific personnel and the purposeful replenishment of the university Faculty,
- contributes to ensuring an effective relationship between educational and scientific processes,
- performs the functions provided by its Charter and other legal acts.

The responsible for ensuring the quality of the activities of the Centre for Science Policy and Innovation is Head of the Centre

6. **The University Centre for External Cooperation:**

- establishes and promotes links for external cooperation, provides information and support to the structural divisions of the university regarding national and international scientific and educational programmes, grants,
- ensures and stimulates the University's participation in programmes aimed at developing the potential of universities,
- organises and coordinates the work on the involvement of the administrative staff, Faculty and students of the University in international academic exchange and credit mobility programmes,
- ensures and stimulates the procedures of internationalisation of the University in accordance with the priorities of the national internationalisation strategy,
- promotes and develops the University's public relations, coordinates work with Mass Media,

- prepares and distributes materials contributing to raising public awareness about the University and its constituent educational institutions,
- performs the procedures provided by its Charter and other legal acts.

The responsible for ensuring the quality of the University's Centre for Foreign Cooperation is the Head of the Centre.

7. **The University's Quality Assurance Department:**

- elaborates and regularly reviews the University's quality assurance and management policy and concept,
- provides organizational, methodological and regulatory documentation on ensuring and managing the quality of education,
- supports the observance of uniform quality standards in all major spheres of the University's activities, harmonisation and implementation of quality assurance and management processes,
- promotes and improves the distribution of quality culture in the University,
- supports the activities of the university's structural units and carries out interrelated activities in terms of ensuring the quality of education,
- supports ensuring the accountability of the University to internal and external stakeholders in the management of educational quality,
- creates a legal and organisational framework and provides administrative support for external quality assessment and accreditation of the University and its educational programmes, provides various links between internal and external quality assessment processes,
- establishes links with national, regional and international quality assurance agencies and quality assurance centres of professional educational institutions and ensures mutually beneficial cooperation.

The Quality Assurance department's work is also supported/participated by Quality assurance lecturer-supporters and student supporters of the chairs, which are selected by the chair session.

Quality assurance lecturer-supporters of the chairs functions are:

- ensuring awareness and involvement of the staff of the Chairs in the Quality assurance processes at the university,
- participation in surveys and discussions organized by the Quality assurance department,
- implementation of other processes contributing to Quality assurance under the coordination and control of the head of the Quality assurance department,

Quality assurance student-supporters of the chairs functions are:

- ensuring awareness and involvement of the students in the faculties in the processes of Quality assurance in the university,
- participation in surveys and discussions organized by the Quality assurance department,
- implementation of other processes contributing to Quality assurance under the coordination and control of the head of Quality assurance department,
- student group of volunteers supporting quality, whose functions are:
- participation in surveys and discussions organized by the Quality assurance department,
- implementation of other processes contributing to Quality assurance under the coordination and supervision of the head of the Quality assurance department,

8. Departments.

The Dean of the Department:

- coordinates the implementation of professional educational programmes (Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree),
- Implements the University's quality assurance policy and strategy within the Department,
- is responsible for the organisation and performance of all quality assurance and controlling functions at the Department level,
- organises self-analysis of the Department as part of the self-assessment process,
- performs procedures provided by the University Charter and other legal acts.

The Department Council:

- proposes a policy of internal assurance and quality management of the Department in accordance with the basic guidelines of the University,
- discusses the results of the Department's quality assurance processes, approves them and proposes measures to improve,
- prepares and submits regulatory, procedural and standard documents on quality assurance for approval by the Scientific Council (together with the Quality Assurance Department),
- guarantees the confirmation by the University's Scientific Council of the quality assurance and assessment procedures, standards and curricula of educational programmes, regulatory documents on quality assurance,
- acts as a supervisory body to assess the implementation of the Department 's quality assurance processes in accordance with the relevant procedures and standards, and also proposes improvement measures (in some cases jointly with the Quality Assurance Department),
- performs the procedures provided by the University Charter and other legal acts.

9. Chairs.

The Head of the Chair:

- is responsible for the organisation and performance of all quality assurance and control functions at the unit level,
- organises the processes of elaboration, implementation, monitoring, periodic review and improvement of educational programmes of the Chair in accordance with quality assurance procedures,
- carries out the University's quality assurance policy and strategy within the frames of the Chair,
- provides the necessary resources (Faculty, technical equipment, literature, etc.) and educational assistance services for the implementation of educational programmes in accordance with the standards of the programmes,
- ensures and monitors the quality of scientific-research activities at the Chair,
- organises the self-analysis of the Chair as part of the self-assessment process,
- performs the procedures provided by the University Charter and other legal acts.

The Quality Assurance Committee of the Chair:

- is approved by the proposal of the seat of the Chair and the Rector's resolution,
- ensures the planning of the Chair's work and accountability for its implementation,
- provides processing of a number of documents of the Chair,
- monitors the implementation of the processes of planning, elaboration, modification of educational programmes and ensuring their quality at the Chair,
- controls the proper resource and methodological support of educational programmes,
- is responsible for ensuring the quality of education at the Chair and internal control, as well as for the consistent implementation of the resolutions taken at the University level,
- performs the procedures provided by the University Charter and other legal acts.

The responsible for ensuring the quality of the Chair's activities is the Head of the Chair. Composition of the chair's quality assurance committee: head of the chair, responsables of the chair's PEPs, lecturer-supporter of the chair's quality assurance, responsables of the chair's StC and SSS.

The Students:

- are involved in the education quality assessment processes via participating in student surveys and graduate satisfaction surveys,

- are included in the lists of the members of the Board of Trustees of the University, the Scientific Council and the Department Council, as well as the committee elaborating the University's development strategic plan,
- participate in the University's quality assurance processes as representatives of student governing bodies (StC, SSS, etc.),
- in accordance with the established procedure, participate in the elaboration of the University's Development Strategic Plan, as well as in the processes of self-assessment and preparation of the relevant report as members of the working group on self-analysis,
- the StC and SSS officials from the Chairs and Departments are members of the quality assurance committees of the Chairs and the committees elaborating the Departments' development strategic plans, respectively.

The responsible for ensuring the quality of SSS activities is the SSS President, the responsible for ensuring the quality of the StC activities is the StC President.

The external appraisers, beneficiaries/stakeholders (experts, graduates, employers):

- conduct an external expertise of the University's activities, the quality assurance system, and educational programmes,
- are members of the commissions for the graduates' final certification (graduation exam and Master's Thesis defense), Department Councils,
- are included in the work of the PEP methodological councils,
- on the University's initiative, may participate in ongoing and/or semester student assessment processes,
- participate in surveys on the level of the graduates' satisfaction with education received at the University,
- participate in surveys on the level of the employers' satisfaction with the educational programmes and the graduates' professional qualities.

Appendix 1 presents the parties involved in the University's internal quality assurance system. It shows the relationship between the units and structures included in the system.

7. QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

1. Quality assurance procedures aim to plan and transform the processes required by the quality assurance policy into clear actions to guide their implementation.

2. The given below are the main processes and procedures for ensuring the University's quality in accordance with the standards corresponding to individual spheres.

1) THE MISSION AND GOALS

The University Charter is confirmed by the resolution of the RA Government. The powers to make amendments and additions to the University Charter, amend the Charter, and take resolutions on approving the charter in a new version belong to the University's Board of Trustees.

The University's development strategic plan is elaborated jointly by all units in a relevant committee.

The review of the University's mission, set goals and objectives and relevant documentation is carried out on the bottom-up principle (Chairs, Departments, centres, other structural units, committees/commissions, management bodies) with the participation and active role of internal and external beneficiaries/stakeholders / in particular, see the "Concept of elaboration, implementation of the and accountability of SUSH development strategic plan").

2) THE MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

All management and administration procedures in the Foundation (SP, PAED implementation, Centres management, etc.) are performed within the quality assurance PDCA cycle.

In particular, guided by the principle of quality as "meeting the goal", as well as paying special attention to the beneficiaries' satisfaction, the University has applied the following approaches to the management and administration procedures:

- a) **Top-down planning.** SP → five-year/annual work plans of centres → annual work plan-schedules of Departments → annual work plan-schedules of Chairs,
- b) **Implementation: top-down : ↔ bottom-up.** structural divisions (centres, Departments, Chairs, etc.)
- c) **Assessment (decentralised).**

- **compliance check: from bottom to top**

<i>What is it? evaluated/confirmed</i>	<i>Accountability</i>	<i>Participatory performance monitoring</i>
	<i>Who or what body reviews/approves the annual report?</i>	<i>Who checks correspondence /or whichever is the same related reporter/</i>
Individual working plan of the lecturer	Head of the chair Dean of the faculty	EPMC vice-rector, director CSPI director
According to the chair's annual work plan-schedule, the corresponding annual report	DC	Dean of the faculty, quality lecturer-supporter of the chair, quality student-supporter of the chair

According to the faculty's annual work plan-schedule, the corresponding annual report	SC	EPMC vice-rector, director, Faculty StC president, Faculty SSS president
According to the center annual programme, the corresponding annual report	SC	Directors of all centers, except the director of the reporting center, the head of the QA department, StC president, SSS president
Rector's annual report on the activities of the SP	BT	-

- **satisfaction check:** checking the satisfaction of beneficiaries and stakeholders through surveys, thus raising the needs.

d) **Improvement.** A working committee formed by the order of the Rector for the development, control and improvement of the implementation results of the strategic plan, based on the decisions of the Scientific Council on the annual reports of the centers, related reports on the performance of the annual reports of the centers, the effectiveness of various processes based on the analysis of the results of the evaluation surveys done by the Quality assurance department and other structural divisions, the issues raised during the annual meetings with the university's beneficiaries and stakeholders, compiles and submits to the Rector an annual report on the performance of the strategic development plan and proposals for improving the annual work programs of the centers.

The management of the Foundation is based on its autonomy: a combination of the principles of individual and collegiate management, the exercise of the functions of the founder, the authorized body, SUSh Board of Trustees, SUSh Scientific Council and the Rector.

The SUSh governing bodies are:

- a) the Board of Trustees,
- b) the Rector,
- c) the Scientific Council,
- d) the Rectory (administration).

The framework of duties of the governing bodies are defined by the SUSh Charter and regulations and/or regulations of each body.

The management and distribution of finances is carried out in accordance with the procedure for compiling, approving and analysing the actual data (results) of the assessment of the University's income and expenses.

In the University, there are Centres, Sections, Departments and Chairs in accordance with the relevant Charters.

The Board of Trustees is formed in accordance with the University Charter.

The election of the Rector is carried out in accordance with the Regulations on the election of the University Rector.

The composition of the Scientific Council is formed in accordance with the University Charter and the Regulations on the Scientific Council of the University.

The procedures for forming the composition of Department Councils and election of deans are described in the document “SUSh model Charter of a Department”, and the procedure for electing Heads of Chairs is described in the document “SUSh model Charter of a Chair”.

A schematic representation of the organisational structure in accordance with subordination and communication links is adopted by the University’s Board of Trustees, which is also available on the official website of the University.

The hiring, transfer, dismissal, promotion, encouragement and imposition of penalties on the University staff are carried out in accordance with the relevant procedures adopted by the Scientific Council.

The Board of Trustees, Scientific Council and Department Councils, PEP methodological councils, quality assurance committees of Chairs include various representatives of the Faculty and student staff, thereby ensuring the participation of students and teachers in decision-making processes.

The evaluation and revision of Professional Education Programmes are carried out in accordance with the relevant procedure.

The distribution of public news is mainly provided by the Centre for Foreign Cooperation. The activities of each subdivision are highlighted in the relevant section of the University's official website, as well as on social networks.

3) PROFESSIONAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

The monitoring, assessment and revision of PEPs is carried out in accordance with the PEP management concept. In particular, the elaboration or revision of the PEP, subject description, and TCP formats are organised by the Educational and Methodological Process Management Centre. The PEP specification is elaborated by the PEP methodological councils, and the subject descriptions and TCP are elaborated by the relevant teachers (reviewed at the beginning of each academic year). The PEP curricula are discussed at the relevant Department Councils and guaranteed for adoption by the Scientific Council.

Professional Educational Programmes are divided into theoretical and practical components (TCP and PEP descriptor).

The final studying outcomes and their corresponding approaches and methods of teaching and learning are outlined by the teachers and reflected in the PEP specification, subject descriptions and TCPs.

The review of teaching and learning approaches and methods is conducted annually and in stages based on relevant PEP monitoring and review analyses.

The modernisation of the educational material and resources is carried out through analysing the current situation and identifying the needs of beneficiaries.

In accordance with the results of the training, the assessment methods and criteria are defined in the PEP subject descriptions and the TCPs.

There is a procedure for assessing students' knowledge and filing appeals, which establishes effective mechanisms to ensure the objectivity and impartiality of the assessment process.

A policy of academic integrity has been elaborated and, accordingly, the concept of combating plagiarism has been introduced.

The Comparative analysis of the best practices (benchmarking) for the professional educational programme is carried out, if necessary, at relevant Chairs.

The issues of continuing education and career development for students and graduates are regulated by the Department of Student Support, University-Employer Cooperation.

The mobility opportunities for students and Faculty are studied and expanded by the Center for Foreign Cooperation.

To study the needs of external and internal stakeholders, surveys, discussions, conversations and debates are conducted.

4) **THE STUDENTS**

For the students' professional orientation, the activity of the University's high school is of great significance. In addition, there are free professional classes for those who will study at the University in the future.

Admission to the Bachelor's Degree (full-time, extra-mural), Master's Degree and Post-graduate education is organized and carried out in accordance with the relevant categories.

Students are members of the Board of Trustees, the Scientific Council, Department Councils, PEP methodological councils and other committees, ensuring their active participation in decision-making processes. The main tool for identifying students' needs and verifying their satisfaction with the services provided are various anonymous surveys conducted in accordance with the procedure for conducting surveys and summarizing the results at SUSh, which implements the ideology of the PDCA cycle.

The university has a procedure for managing SUSh academic consultations, which provide a description, goals and schedule of consulting classes.

The processes of delivering additional support and guidance to students by the administrative staff are regulated in accordance with the SUSh procedure for identification, support and guidance of students' needs.

Student career promotion activities are carried out by the Department of Student Support, University-Employer Cooperation.

The students' rights and obligations are mainly reflected in the "SUSh rules of internal regulations", as well as in the "Procedure of studying with the credit system of GSPI" and other legal acts. The activities of the Student Council are regulated by its Charter.

The students' rights, complaints and appeals are handled by the Student Council, the Student Support Department, the Department of Student Support, University-Employer Cooperation and other structural units within the framework of their functions.

There are a number of mechanisms (surveys, interviews, monitoring, etc.) to assess and ensure the quality of educational, consulting and other support services provided to students at the University.

5) **THE FACULTY AND EDUCATION ASSISTING STAFF**

The policies and procedures for the recruitment and dismissal of the Faculty and Education Assisting Staff are adopted by the Scientific Council.

To encourage teachers, the "Procedure for regular assessment and ranking of the SUSh Faculty" has been introduced.

The requirements for the Faculty's professional qualities are reflected in the PEP **specifications**, which can be revised as necessary in accordance with the requirements of the time.

The stability of the main Faculty is ensured and, as necessary, is replenished by teachers working part-time and with hourly pay.

The professional progress of the Faculty is encouraged. The staffing table of the administrative staff for the structural divisions of the institution is approved by the Board of Trustees.

6) **THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

The research processes at the University are coordinated by the Centre for Science Policy and Innovation. The research strategy is reflected in the development strategic plan of the University.

Effective mechanisms have been introduced (policy, concept, grants, etc.) to identify, promote and ensure sustainable development of the main directions and priorities of research activities.

The university publishes the journal “SUSh Scientific bulletin” which is included in the list of publications acceptable to RA MESCS CHES.

According to relevant categories, the deployment of research activities is encouraged, as well as the involvement of students in this process; at the same time, special importance is attached to publications in international peer-reviewed professional journals, as well as the participation in international conferences.

7) THE SUBSTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

The university has created the proper educational environment: there are well-maintained buildings, laboratories, studios, workshops which are improved in accordance with the needs and strategic priorities.

The University has a library, a reading-hall equipped with computers.

The University has its official webpage. The information about the university's activities can be found on the Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other official webpages.

The budget is distributed according to preliminary estimates.

Survey is done on resource satisfaction. Basing on research and surveys, resources are redistributed and replenished.

8) THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The University ensures transparency of the procedures and their accessibility to the public.

Every year, in accordance with the law, the University publishes a report on its activities which includes information on implemented programmes, financial sources, educational, scientific and other processes. The information is published on its official webpage.

The University centres, Departments, Chairs and other structural units are accountable to the Scientific Council and/or the Department Councils. The current accountability system makes it possible to assess the implementation of work plans.

In the University, there is a Centre for Foreign Cooperation that maintains public relations using sustainable feedback mechanisms.

9) THE FOREIGN RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALISATION

The strategy of foreign relations and internationalisation is mainly reflected in the development strategic plan of the University.

The coordination of foreign relations and internationalisation processes is dealt with by the Centre for Foreign Cooperation which acts in accordance with its Charter.

The University effectively cooperates with local and international institutions.

The University provides the necessary level of foreign language proficiency for students and staff.

10) THE INTERNAL SYSTEM FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

Both internal and external beneficiaries and stakeholders are involved in the quality assurance processes (see Appendix 1).

There is a quality assurance department in the University, whose functions are defined in accordance with the job descriptions.

The necessary human, technical and material resources are available here to implement quality assurance processes.

The identification of students' needs and assistance to them is carried out in accordance with the "SUSh procedure for identification, support and guidance of students' needs". Besides, surveys are held and discussions arranged. The Faculty needs are clarified during the seats of the Chairs, as well as via surveys and discussions.

The identified needs of the Faculty are studied and measures are undertaken per priorities.

Achieving the objectives of the quality assurance policy and effectively solving problems include the following basic quality assurance procedures.

Management and Administration Quality Assurance.

- Improvement of the University's management system through consistent application of accountability and transparency mechanisms,
- Clarification of the functions of management bodies, processing of positions, passports for the sake of the effective management and continual improvement of quality,
- Ensuring the participation of stakeholders in the activities of the management bodies.

Quality Assurance of Educational Programmes.

- Compliance of educational programmes with European, national and domain qualification frameworks,
- Ensuring the participation of all stakeholders in the planning, expertise, approval, regular monitoring, assessment and review of educational programmes,
- Alignment of established missions, goals and selected methods of teaching, learning, and assessment of educational programmes with the expected end educational outcomes,
- Comparative analysis of educational programmes using benchmarking with the perspective of introducing best practices,
- Conducting regular surveys of the students', graduates' and employers' satisfaction with the content of the programmes and courses, teaching methodology, as well as the effectiveness and quality of their implementation in order to assess.

Quality Assurance of the Faculty.

- The regular assessment of the efficiency of the Faculty using a multidimensional approach, including teacher assessment by students, Chairs and colleagues, teacher self-assessment,
- Elaboration and implementation of an effective system of gradual professional development and professional retraining of the Faculty,
- Implementation of competitive selection systems, job placement, promotion and encouragement of the Faculty.

Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance.

- Introduction of new teaching and learning methods and technologies, exchange of best practices,
- Objective and transparent assessment of the course learning results (current and final exams),
- Objective and transparent assessment of the educational results of the programme (the graduates' final certification),
- Organization of regular surveys among students on the effectiveness of assessment forms and methods,
- Conducting regular surveys among the Faculty about the student assessment process in order to assess the effectiveness of the applied criteria, forms and methods.

Quality Assurance of Teaching Resources and Education Assisting Services.

- The assessment of the quality of educational resources and education assisting services through student satisfaction surveys, which assess the conditions of the University building, the work of the library and computer classrooms, Internet accessibility, classrooms and educational laboratories equipment, technical equipment, the work of the Career Center and the effectiveness of other consultation services, the quality of the work of the education assisting staff.
- Assessment of the quality of teaching resources and support services through teacher satisfaction surveys, which assess the university's infrastructure and management, the operation of libraries and computer classrooms, access to computers and the Internet, accessibility of classrooms and educational institutions.
- Laboratory equipment, etc.

Scientific-Research Quality Assurance.

- Extensive participation of the Faculty in scientific-research work,
- Encouraging students to participate in research work, enhancing the activities of the SSS,
- Taking into account the number of scientific publications and ratings in the competitive selection of the Faculty, filling positions, promotion, financial and moral encouragement.

Internationalisation Quality Assurance.

- Improvement of the efficiency and quality of the University's International Relations department, elaboration and implementation of the University's internationalisation strategy,
- Strengthening and improvement of the existing partnerships, establishment of new relations and cooperation,
- Participation of the Faculty, students in grant and exchange programmes.

QA for Public Responsibility and Public Relations

- Expanding the services provided to the society, improving their efficiency and quality,
- SUSH website / webpage monitoring,
- Monitoring the number, volume and content of the materials published about the University,
- Regular survey on public opinion about the University,
- Expanding the coverage of the University with life-long education and retraining courses, monitoring the work performed.

QA of the functioning of the quality management system

- Formation of an internal quality management system, University and Faculty quality management structures, organization of retraining of those responsible for quality assurance,
- Implementation of a phased quality management model, improvement of the quality control system, improvement of functions, procedures, quality control standards and related official documents and updates,
- Conducting research on the needs of the University stakeholders and providing feedback,
- Formation of a quality culture at the University and support for its continual development and enforcement,
- Creation of prerequisites for the implementation of internal and external quality assessment processes, preparing for the institutional and programme accreditation of the University.

The documentation support and information system of the University include:

- 1) an internal quality assurance manual containing:
 - the general description and organizational structure of the IQAS
 - a quality assurance policy formulated with goals and objectives,
 - the distribution of the quality assurance principles, functions, procedures and responsibility between different Management levels and departments, their relation and interaction with other management bodies of the University,
 - a brief description of the main quality assurance processes and a package of established quality assessment procedures,

- regulations and methodological materials for the implementation of separate quality assurance processes,
- formulation of the University's educational standards,
- other materials necessary for the implementation of the quality assurance system.

2) The quality assurance information system includes:

- all official documents related to the University's quality assurance system: quality assurance policy, quality assurance concept, quality assurance manual, documents related to educational programmes, the Faculty, the quality of student assessment and educational resources,
- all accounts and reports concerning the results of the implementation of quality assurance processes,
- analytical self-assessment reports prepared for institutional and programme accreditation, and the related documents,
- forms and protocols for various surveys and other activities,
- other materials and documents related to the provision of the information system.

Continual quality improvement is an essential component of the University's quality assurance policy aimed at ensuring continual and sustainable improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment processes in line with the changing needs and requirements of students and the labour market.

The means with which the University strives to ensure continual and sustainable quality improvement largely depend on its profile, mission, established quality culture, strategic goals and chosen quality policy.

The University is guided by the following principles in the context of continual increase and quality improvement.

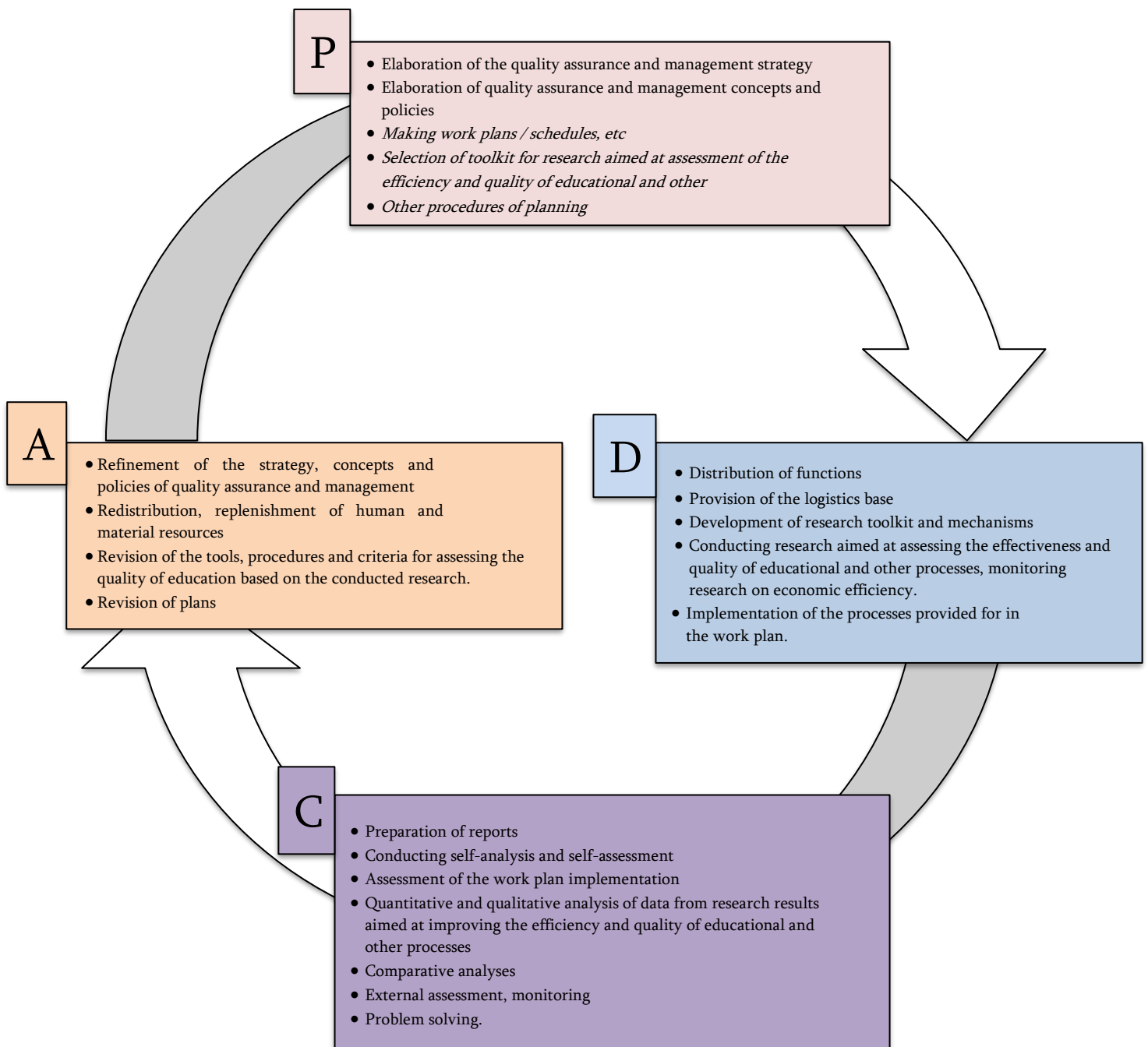
- 1) Quality assurance processes are regulated, monitored and regularly reviewed,
- 2) Quality assurance processes are based on quality monitoring reports, feedback from students, graduates and employers, as well as statistics on graduate employment.

The mechanism of continual quality improvement at the University is based on a cyclical process, which consists of the following four main stages:

- 1) Planning: The main tasks and measurable expected end results are defined.
- 2) Implementation: all the necessary actions and measures aimed at achieving the expected final results are carried out;
- 3) Assessment: The actual results are checked, assessed and measured in comparison with the expected ones, and this difference is estimated.

4) Improvement: Additional measures are being elaborated and planned in order to eliminate shortcomings and deficiencies and achieve the intended end results at the next stage of the implementation.

The IQAS is considered according to the following scheme (some processes may be presented in a grouped form or omitted)



The Structure of Internal Quality Assurance System

