

IS APPROVED
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of “M. Nalbandyan State University of Shirak” Foundation

CONCEPT
ON QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MANAGEMENT
“M. NALBANDYAN STATE UNIVERSITY OF SHIRAK” FOUNDATION

1. INTRODUCTION

1. The five-year strategic plan of “M. Nalbandyan State University of Shirak” Foundation (hereinafter- the University) has defined the main directions which the University will follow in the long run to accomplish its mission and key strategic goals, by providing high quality services.
In the context of achieving these strategic goals, the need to create an effective productive quality assurance system is important.
2. This conception defines the scope of quality management, assurance, monitoring in the University- the general requirements and principles, as well as its organizational structure.
3. The University develops and approves policies and a set of procedures- Quality Assurance System to fulfill its mission and internal quality assurance.
4. The Quality Assurance System consists of several interconnected parts.
5. According to European standards and guidelines, the university internal quality assurance system should contain the following seven main structures:
 - 1) quality assurance policy and relevant procedures and standards;
 - 2) formal procedures for approving programs and qualifications, on-going monitoring and periodic reviews;
 - 3) consistently applied and published criteria, categories and procedures for students’ assessment;
 - 4) transparent mechanisms and criteria for assessing the capacities of the teaching staff;
 - 5) educational and other support resources appropriate to the academic program requirements;
 - 6) collection, analysis and use of proper information for the effective management of the educational process;
 - 7) regular publication of constantly updated, impartial and objective information on programs and awarded qualifications.
6. The mission of the University internal quality assurance system is to foster confidence in the core areas of the University activities (education, science and public services) and ensure that the qualification quality and operating standards of the University are maintained, continuously improved and effectively managed.
7. The overall policy of the University internal quality assurance system is implemented in

the context of the vision, mission and goals of the University. It is based on the principle of obtaining and maintaining high quality standards.

8. The purpose of the University internal quality assurance system policy is to assist the University in fulfilling its mission and strategic goals in accordance with national and international standards.

II. BASIC NOTIONS USED IN THE CONCEPT

1. **assessment** - a process of systematically collecting, quantifying, and using information to comply the educational effectiveness and contextual equivalence of the entire university (institutional assessment) or its program (program assessment with the goals;
2. **self-assessment**- a process of systematic collection of factual data, surveys of students and graduates, discussions with lecturers and students, the results of which are summarized in the self-assessment report;
3. **peer review/ external review**- an assessment process conducted by external experts on the quality and effectiveness of the University or academic program and personnel- resource provision;
4. **program development permit**- a process as a result of which the academic unit receives the official consent of the University to develop a new academic program according to the application;
5. **program approval**- a process by which the University assesses the quality of the new academic program development and the ability of the program team to implement it in accordance with established standards;
6. **program monitoring**- a process which observes the effectiveness of the program in terms of achieving the set goals and expected educational outcomes and reveals the problems related to the quality of education to disseminate best practices for implementing the necessary improvement measures;
7. **periodic review of the program**- a process by which the University assesses the achievement of the program standards and goals and the quality of factual provision with full cycle results of its implementation and makes a decision on the appropriateness of continuing the program or making changes to the program;
8. **standards** – defined requirements and conditions, on the basis of which the necessary quality of the University or academic program is assessed and achieved for accreditation or licensing;
9. **criteria**- level benchmarks that characterize the degree of implementation of certain issues and / or standards;
10. **qualification descriptors**- formulations that define the qualification outcomes at the appropriate levels of higher education and describe the main differences between them;
11. **educational standards**- requirements for the level and extent of knowledge, abilities and skills which are required from the student under this program for awarding the requested

- qualification;
12. **academic program profile**- a description of distinctive qualification indicators awarded as a result of the project implementation, based on its specific goals, which shows how the qualification relates to the accepted scope of qualifications and the working environment;
 13. **quality**- many-sided category which is related to the institutional mission and goals, as well as the accepted standards within a particular university, program, or course. Depending on the purpose of use, there are different quality definitions: “quality as excellence”, “quality as conformity to the goal”, “quality as improvement”, etc.;
 14. **quality assurance**- continuous process of evaluating, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining and improving the quality of the higher education system, university or academic program;
 15. **quality audit**- a quality assessment process through which the competent external body verifies the existence of internal quality assurance procedures of the University or academic program;
 16. **internal quality assurance system**- management system through which the University implements its quality assurance policies and objectives with the help of established procedures and mechanisms;
 17. **quality improvement**- a process of continuous quality enhancement through quality management;
 18. **quality review**- a factual process of external quality assessment (study) of the University or academic program;
 19. **quality management**- a combination of events regularly carried out at the University or academic program level to improve quality;
 20. **quality control**- an internal or external quality control process of the University or academic program;
 21. **quality policy**- a formal statement of the University general intentions and principles in the sphere of quality assurance;
 22. **quality culture**- a system of overall acceptable and integrated quality principles, which is typical of the organizational culture or management system of the University.
 23. **European quality assurance standards and guidelines**- a pan-European official document developed by the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA) and adopted at the Bergen Summit in 2005, which includes relevant standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance at universities, as well as quality assurance agencies;
 24. **student learning outcomes/learning outcomes**- formulations about what the learner should know, understand and be able to accomplish at the end of the learning process (academic program, module, course). Student learning outcomes are usually expressed by knowledge, intellectual and practical abilities and skills.
 25. **accreditation**- a process by which the state (or public) authorized body assesses the quality of the University or the academic program for formally recognizing their compliance with the minimum specified criteria or standards. It consists of three successive stages: self-assessment and preparation of the relevant report, inspection visit and assessment of

experts, preparation of assessment report.

III. UNDERSTANDING OF QUALITY

1. The quality assurance of education means that during the studies the University enables the learners to acquire such competences in form of knowledge, skills, and abilities that meet the needs of both the internal and external market, the political, social and personal needs of the individual and society, economic and cultural aspirations.
2. External quality assurance is the compliance of education quality with the challenges of the modern world, with the requirements of the European education area, as well as with the policy of Armenia in field of education and with the higher professional state education standards of the Republic of Armenia.
Internal quality assurance depends on the perfection and flexibility of the University management system, the mission of the University, the clarification of goals and objectives, the quality of professional academic programs, the scientific and educational resources of the teaching staff, the material and technical conditions, the student level, the financial situation.
3. Quality is an abstract idea that is impossible to analyze without bias. Quality can, in essence, be assessed subjectively, despite the fact that some unbiased criteria can be set for measures and results. It is more difficult to define and analyze the quality of education as it involves the growth, development and change of people who are the source of quality assurance, quality result and means of quality measure.
4. The logic of the reforms in the field of professional education indicates that the role of education institutions in education quality assurance is of great importance: professional education institution is responsible for the quality of education provided. Responsibility for the quality of education implies managing the process of organizing and conducting that education, as well as continuing improvement processes. In this sense, the management of the educational process becomes a guarantee of the effectiveness of internal quality assurance system. If we consider the education institution as an organization, then it is possible to carry out the management of the latter through the management mechanisms of the organization that are used in the organizations, of course, taking into account the peculiarities of the education institution as an organization providing educational service.
5. The notion of "Quality", which is at the heart of the University quality assurance system, is the combination of the principles of "conformity to the goal" and "equivalence of the goal". That is to say, the University, its structures and processes are of high quality if they meet the goal for which they are intended. On the other hand, the goals themselves must be justified, adequate and relevant.
6. Quality as a principle of 'conformity to the goal' emphasizes the need to meet or comply with acceptable standards. The focus here is on the effectiveness of processes at the

University or at the program level that are directed to achieve the set or given goals. The mission, goals, and objectives of the University are key drivers of the 'conformity to the goal' model of quality assurance as they define the framework for planning, monitoring and measuring results. They also promote communication with stakeholders, such as the state, public administration bodies, civil society, economy, employers and learners.

7. Consequently, both 'conformity to the goal' (that is, the guarantee of achieving the stated goal) and "equivalence of the goal" (i.e. the appropriateness, relevance of the chosen goal, consideration of stakeholders' expectations and requirements) are quality standards in the University quality assurance system.

The latter can be ensured when in close contact with international education standards and the labor market.

IV. BASIC PRINCIPLES OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

1. The principles of University quality assurance processes are:

- 1) evaluation objectivity
- 2) continuity
- 3) transparency
- 4) publicity

2. The basic principles of University quality assurance policy are:

1) **Systemic approach:** Identification, modernization, and management of an interconnected process system contribute to the effectiveness of institution activities. Every organization, including the University, is a system that has its own elements and the principles of interdependence between those elements.

All areas of the University activities, including academic, scientific-research and administrative, are subject to evaluation and accountability.

2) **Centralized regulation.** There are common regulatory and procedural frameworks and evaluation criteria for quality assurance processes that guide all educational units. The main coordinating role here is assigned to the Scientific Board, which carries out relevant work planning, the approval of regulatory / standard documents and procedures, oversight of intended quality assurance processes and discussion of results.

3) **Decentralized implementation of processes.** The process approach enables a more flexible management and quality improvement policy. Flexibility provides the ability to respond to external environment demands and make appropriate changes.

The Chairs and Chairs Committees are responsible for the quality assurance processes of educational standards and programs in specific subject areas. The compliance of decentralized quality assurance processes to the unified criteria of the University is ensured through the unified regulatory and procedural framework, Scientific Policy, Center for Quality Assurance and Management, Faculty Boards, Quality Assurance Committees, College Quality Assurance Committee and the Scientific Board.

4) Self-assessment. The activities of the University are assessed according to its goals, to what extent the set goals have been achieved. The accepted quality assurance model assumes the existence of a planning and assessing system. Goals must be planned and actions must be measurable. The set goals should be clear, measurable, achievable, realistic, timed, and formed by the "SMART" principle, namely, Specific (S), Measurable (M), Attainable (A), Relevant (R), Timely (T).

5) Improvement. The University Quality Assurance System is intended to facilitate continuous quality improvement processes at the University. This principle is implemented by the PDCA model: Plan, Do, Check, Act. Self-assessment is considered as an important tool for enhancing the quality of education at the University. The surveys of learners, graduates and employers are considered as an important tool for continuous quality improvement.

6) Benchmarks-based and testimonies-based approach: The University appreciates its achievements towards relevant national and international benchmarks. University quality assurance methods are based on evidence/testimonies, where the outcomes and the feedback information from stakeholders (including learners, teaching staff, employers, and the public) are the basis for analysis and conclusions, as well as improvement measures are planned on these bases.

The university must be able to respond quickly to changes that will lead to continuous improvement.

7) Expanded and conscious participation of staff. The University encourages expanded and conscious participation of teaching and administrative staff in quality assurance and improvement processes, promotes individual initiatives in the teaching (methodological department, chair) and quality assurance processes of administrative units.

Expanded and conscious staff engagement enables them to use their capabilities to achieve the University goals. In this sense, the correct formulation of the responsibilities and rights of the administrative and teaching staff will contribute to the fulfillment of the mission and goals of the institution, moreover, through complete and professional participation. This implies a proper staff policy that should be documented and have an environment of appropriate management and evaluation goals, directions, where the staff is fully engaged to achieve the institution goals.

8) Involvement of students, academic staff and external assessors. Full participation of learners, graduates, academic staff and employers is one of the key guarantees of the effectiveness of the system in quality assurance processes, as well as the requirement of European standards. The following are the main forms of their involvement in different spheres:

- assessment surveys on training, internships, and academic staff competencies by the students;
- surveys on satisfaction of graduates from the University education;
- student satisfaction surveys on the academic, scientific and organizational processes and resources of the University;
- lecturer self-assessment and development needs assessment surveys;

- academic staff satisfaction surveys from the academic, scientific and organizational processes and resources of the University;
- opinions from the graduates about the level of employers' satisfaction;
- opinions of pupils and teachers on internship teaching;
- university and academic self-assessment program processes;
- student needs assessment surveys;
- involvement of external beneficiaries in the Graduate Certification Committees;
- student involvement in the Board of Trustees and Scientific Boards;
- involvement of students, lecturers and graduates in different committees (strategic plan development, internal legal acts development, Specialty academic program development, etc.);
- involvement of students in research and information dissemination processes;
- involvement of lecturers and students in the process of document development.

As a result, the University should develop appropriate mechanisms aimed at revealing the requirements for applicants, learners, alumni, academic staff and employers regarding the content and organization of education.

9) Interconnection between internal and external quality assurance processes.

Internal quality assurance is the basis of external evaluation and is built up taking into account the latter's criteria and procedures. Accordingly, the institutional and programmatic self-assessments of the University are the key interconnected links of internal and external quality assurance processes.

V. THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

1. The main goals of the University quality assurance system are:

- 1) to ensure the maintenance of high standards in all key areas of the University activities;
- 2) to create a regulatory and organizational basis for external quality assessment and accreditation of the University and its academic programs, establish a link between internal and external quality assessment processes;
- 3) to promote continuous improvement of the education quality and the development of a quality culture at the University;
- 4) to show the stakeholders and external evaluators that the adopted quality assurance enhancement policies, system and processes function effectively;
- 5) to ensure University accountability for education quality in front of students, employers, the Founder (The Republic of Armenia on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Armenia), Authorized Body, ("Staff of the President of the Republic of Armenia" State Administrative Institution) and other financing organizations.
- 6) to support the strengthening of links with national, regional and international quality assurance agencies and universities.

2. The objectives of the University quality assurance system are:

- 1) to assist in the maintenance of educational standards, quality assurance and continuous improvement of academic programs through coordinated processes;
- 2) to create conditions for the implementation of quality self-assessment, external assessment and accreditation of academic programs;
- 3) to envisage accountability procedures for quality assurance and initiate appropriate processes;
- 4) to ensure the transparency of quality assurance processes and procedures, the active participation of students and graduates, key employers and external experts in them;
- 5) to create the necessary prerequisites and incentives for continually improving the quality of provided education;
- 6) to ensure that the quality of University academic programs meets the expectations of stakeholders.

VI. THE QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

1. The University is committed to developing the quality culture, which emphasizes the importance of quality and quality assurance in its work. The policies and procedures should be officially approved and publicly available. The quality assurance policy sets out the University principal approaches to quality assurance issues and ways of their implementation.
2. Through a quality assurance policy, the University establishes a quality assurance system, that clearly defines the principles, guidelines, quality assurance system structure and procedures for implementing institutional quality assurance processes.
3. The University quality assurance policy aims at introducing an official, transparent and reliable quality assurance system based on the activity results and the internal and external assessment of applied processes, enhancing the effectiveness of educational, research and management processes of the University. It includes all the main spheres of institution activities, which aims at complying them with University strategic goals and ensuring maximum contribution of forces to achieve those goals.
4. The objectives of the University quality assurance policy are:
 - 1) to provide guidelines for the development and implementation of internal quality assurance processes and procedures;
 - 2) to provide guidelines for the definition of internal quality standards and criteria in line with accepted European requirements;
 - 3) to promote the establishment and further development of continuous quality improvement culture at the University;
 - 4) to assist in revealing the strong and worthy of special attention areas of the University to ensure continuous improvement in the short and long term;
 - 5) to harmonize the different areas and processes of quality assurance in the University;

- 6) to strengthen the role of the Center for Scientific Policy, Quality Assurance and Management in quality management and enhancement issues;
 - 7) to promote the implementation of the University mission in accordance with its strategic goals and objectives;
 - 8) to continuously improve the quality assurance system through periodic reviews, improve and modernize quality assurance functions, procedures, criteria and related official documents;
 - 9) to ensure compliance of the quality assurance policy and strategy with the mission, strategic goals and objectives of the University.
5. The quality assurance policy is built on the following principles:
- 1) The University is responsible / accountable to the public for education quality assurance which is expressed in periodic assessments of programs and qualifications;
 - 2) The policy is transparent, formally adopted by the University Authorized Body (Board of Trustees, Scientific Board) and ensures the envisaged quality standards and continuous improvement of academic programs;
 - 3) The policy is built for the purpose of continuous quality enhancement, provides mechanisms for the sustainable development of quality culture at the University;
 - 4) The starting point of the policy is the mission and strategic goals of the University and the quality assessment process should reflect the extent to which they are implemented;
 - 5) The policy is applicable to all current and planned programs and education degrees;
 - 6) All academic programs are subject to internal and external examination, at a predetermined periodicity according to established criteria;
 - 7) The internal and external stakeholders of the University, the public are aware of policies, related processes and schedules of assessments;
 - 8) The quality assessment process is based on self-assessment and independent external examination;
 - 9) All key internal and external stakeholders of the University are involved in the quality assessment process;
 - 10) The University has a documentation package guiding the quality assessment process, which is posted on the University official website;
 - 11) The University has established and applies certain procedures for periodic review and examination of its quality assurance policy and related processes;
 - 12) The University evaluates the state and prospects of its programs with the use of benchmarks internationally accepted in the country;
 - 13) Effective decisions and conclusions on quality management can be made only on the basis of analysis of factual data and information. The university should have an adequate information system and technologies for the formation and management of information flows related to quality assurance.

VII. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

1. The main university departments/units and structures involved in the internal quality assurance system and the distribution of responsibilities between them are as follows:
 - 1) **The University Board of Trustees** approves the annual and strategic plans of the University, listens to and evaluates the annual report of the University activities (presented by the Rector), discusses the results of the quality assurance system within the framework of the annual report and proposes improvement issues, performs functions provided by the University Statute and other legal acts.
 - 2) **The University Scientific Board:**
 - approves the internal quality assurance and management policies;
 - discusses the results of quality assurance processes and proposes improvement measures within the University annual report;
 - discusses and approves the results of inter-university quality assurance processes and faculty council conclusions;
 - acts as a quality monitoring, control and assurance body to assess the compliance of quality assurance procedures and criteria to the accepted standards;
 - performs functions provided by the University Statute and other legal acts.
 - 3) **The Rector of the University:**
 - manages the works of University quality assurance and management policy and appropriate strategy development, guides their implementation, ensures the harmonious activity of the quality assurance system, regulates system interoperability and interconnection with other higher education management systems (bodies) (particularly with four centers);
 - manages the University self-assessment/self-analysis process and the planning, control of subsequent actions;
 - performs the operative management and control of the quality assurance system;
 - provides operational links and interactions between the involved key institutions;
 - performs functions provided by the University Statute and other legal acts.
 - 4) **The University Teaching Process Management Centre:**
 - provides procedures for the development and effective implementation of academic programs (secondary professional, bachelor, master and postgraduate professional academic programs), control and monitoring mechanisms;
 - oversees the quality of the development and implementation of academic programs (secondary professional, bachelor, master and postgraduate professional academic programs) and verifies their compliance with established standards and labour market requirements;
 - coordinates and oversees the implementation of quality assurance and management functions and procedures for academic programs in educational units;

- performs functions provided by its Statute and other legal acts.

The Director-Vice-Rector is responsible for the quality of the Center at the University Educational and Methodical Process Management Center

5) The Center for Scientific Policy, Quality Assurance and Management:

- contributes to the enhancement of scientific research efficiency at the University, the implementation of editorial and publishing processes;
- organizes international and national conferences, seminars, workshops and promotes the participation of University stakeholders;
- organizes and coordinates the postgraduate and additional educational process;
- contributes to the training of scientific personnel and the purposeful recruitment of the University academic staff;
- contributes to ensuring effective interdependence of educational and scientific processes;
- develops and periodically reviews the University quality assurance and management policy and concept;
- provides organizational-methodical and standard documentation for education quality assurance and management;
- supports the maintenance of unified quality standards in all key areas of the University activities, the harmonization and implementation of quality assurance and management processes;
- promotes the dissemination and improvement of quality culture at the University;
- supports the activities of University structural units, carries on interconnected activities in terms of education quality assurance;
- assists in ensuring the University accountability between internal and external stakeholders for education quality management;
- creates legal and organizational framework and provides administrative support for external quality assessment and accreditation of the University and its academic programs, provides various links between internal and external quality assessment processes;
- establishes links with national, regional and international quality assurance agencies and quality assurance centers of professional education institutions and ensures mutually beneficial cooperation;
- performs functions provided by its Statute and other legal acts.

The Director of the Centre is responsible for the quality of activities of the Center for Scientific Policy, Quality Assurance and Management.

6) University External Cooperation and Public Relations Center:

- establishes and develops external cooperation links, provides information and support on national and international scientific and academic programs, grants to the University structural units;

- ensures and promotes the University participation in higher education capacity building programs;
- organizes and coordinates the activities of the University administrative, teaching staff, students' involvement in international academic exchange and credit mobility programs;
- provides and fosters the internationalization processes of the University according to the priority directions of the national strategy of internationalization;
- promotes and develops University relations with the public, coordinates the works with media;
- prepares and disseminates materials to raise public awareness about the University and its educational institutions;
- performs the functions provided by its Statute and other legal acts.

The Director of the Center is responsible for the quality of activities of the University Centre for External Cooperation and Public Relations.

7) The Library-Center for Academic Consultations, Innovations and IT:

- provides comprehensive and operative library and information-bibliographical services to centre users, based on the wide availability of library collections, according to information requirements;
- expands the library-information services based on the technical equipment of the Center, automation of library-information processes, improves their quality;
- promotes the dissemination of information culture, teaches the users to modern methods of information search;
- assists in the formation of library collections in accordance with the University academic programs, scientific-research activities, financial resources and the users' information requirements;
- organizes and conducts an information-bibliographical system and electronic databases;
- provides the educational processes and research activities of the University through native and foreign information resources;
- cooperates with other structural units of the University, as well as with external stakeholders of the University;
- provides and manages the work of the University information systems, develops and introduces new systems;
- supplies University computer techniques and equipments;
- supports the use of information technologies in the educational process;
- ensures the information security of the University infrastructure and auditorium computers as required;
- develops the institute of academic counseling at the University;
- performs functions provided by its Statute and other legal acts.

The Director of the Center is responsible for the quality of library-educational

consultations, innovations and IT centre activities

8) Faculties.

The Dean of the Faculty:

- coordinates the implementation of professional academic programs (bachelor, master and postgraduate professional academic programs);
- implements the University quality assurance policy and strategy within the Faculty;
- is responsible for the organization and implementation of all quality assurance and control functions at the Faculty level;
- organizes the Faculty self-analysis within the self-assessment process;
- performs functions provided by the University Statute and other legal acts.

The Faculty Board:

- offers Faculty internal quality assurance and management policies in accordance with the University basic guidelines;
- discusses the results of the Faculty quality assurance processes, approves them and proposes improvement measures;
- prepares and submits regulatory, procedural and standard documents on quality assurance (with the Quality Assurance and Management Centre) to the Scientific Board for approval;
- guarantees quality assurance and evaluation procedures, standards and curricula of academic programs, quality assurance regulatory documents to the University Scientific Board for approval;
- acts as a supervisory body to evaluate the implementation of the Faculty quality assurance processes according to appropriate procedures and standards, as well as proposes improvement measures (in particular with the Quality Assurance and Management Centre);
- performs functions provided by the University Statute and other legal acts.

The Dean of the Faculty is responsible for the quality of the Faculty activities. The Faculty quality coordinator is involved in the Faculty Board.

9) Chairs.

The Head of Chair:

- is responsible for the organization and implementation of all quality assurance and control functions at the department level;
- organizes the processes of developing, implementing, monitoring, periodically reviewing and improving the academic programs of the department in accordance with quality assurance procedures;
- implements the University quality assurance policy and strategy within the Chair;
- provides necessary resources (teaching staff, technical equipment, literature, etc.) and educational assisting services for the implementation of academic programs, in accordance with program standards;
- ensures and supervises the quality of scientific research activities in the Chair;

- organizes the self-analysis of the Chair within the self-assessment process;
- performs functions provided by the University Statute and other legal acts.

Chair Quality Committee:

- is approved by the Chair sitting proposal and the decision of the Rectorate;
- ensures the planning of the Chair work and its accountability;
- provides the processing of a number of Chair documents;
- oversees the processes for implementing the planning, development, modification and quality assurance of academic programs at the Chair;
- oversees the proper resource and methodical provision of academic programs;
- is responsible for overseeing the quality of teaching and internal control at the Chair, as well as for consistent implementation of decisions at the University level;
- performs functions provided by the University Statute and other legal acts.

The Head of the Chair is responsible for the quality of the Chair activities. The staff of the Chair Quality Committee: Head of Chair, Heads of Methodical Units, Chair Quality Coordinator, Responsibles of the Chair of Student Council and Student Scientific Society.

10) The students:

- are involved in learning quality assessment processes by participating in student surveys and inquiries regarding the graduates' level of satisfaction;
- are included in the University Board of Trustees, the Scientific Board and the Faculty Board, as well as in the committee that develops the University strategic development plan;
- participate in University quality assurance processes as representatives of student self-governing bodies (Student Council / SC, Student Scientific Society / SSS, etc.);
- participate in the development of the University strategic plan, as well as in the self-assessment processes and in the preparation of the relevant report as members of the self-analysis working group, in accordance with the established procedure;
- The responsible members of SC and SSS for the Chairs and Faculties are respectively included in the Chair Quality Committees and in the Faculty Committees that develop the University strategic development plan.

The Head of SSS is responsible for the quality of the SSS activities, the Head of SC is responsible for the quality of SC activities.

11) College.

The Head of the College:

- coordinates the implementation of secondary professional academic programs, considering the continuity of education as a priority;
- provides the processing of the college development strategic plan, the timetable for its implementation, as well as the formation of the annual (short-term) work plan and the accountability for its implementation;
- is responsible for the organization and implementation of all quality assurance and

control functions at the college level;

- organizes the processes of developing, implementing, monitoring, periodically reviewing and improving the academic programs of the department in accordance with quality assurance procedures;
- implements the policy and strategy of the quality assurance institution within the department;
- provides necessary resources (teaching staff, technical equipment, literature, etc.) and educational assisting services for the implementation of secondary professional academic programs in accordance with program standards;
- ensures and oversees the quality of academic research activities with the relevant department of the University and the Center for Scientific Policy and Foreign Cooperation;
- organizes the self-analysis of the college within the self-assessment process;
- performs functions provided by internal legal acts.

College Quality Committee:

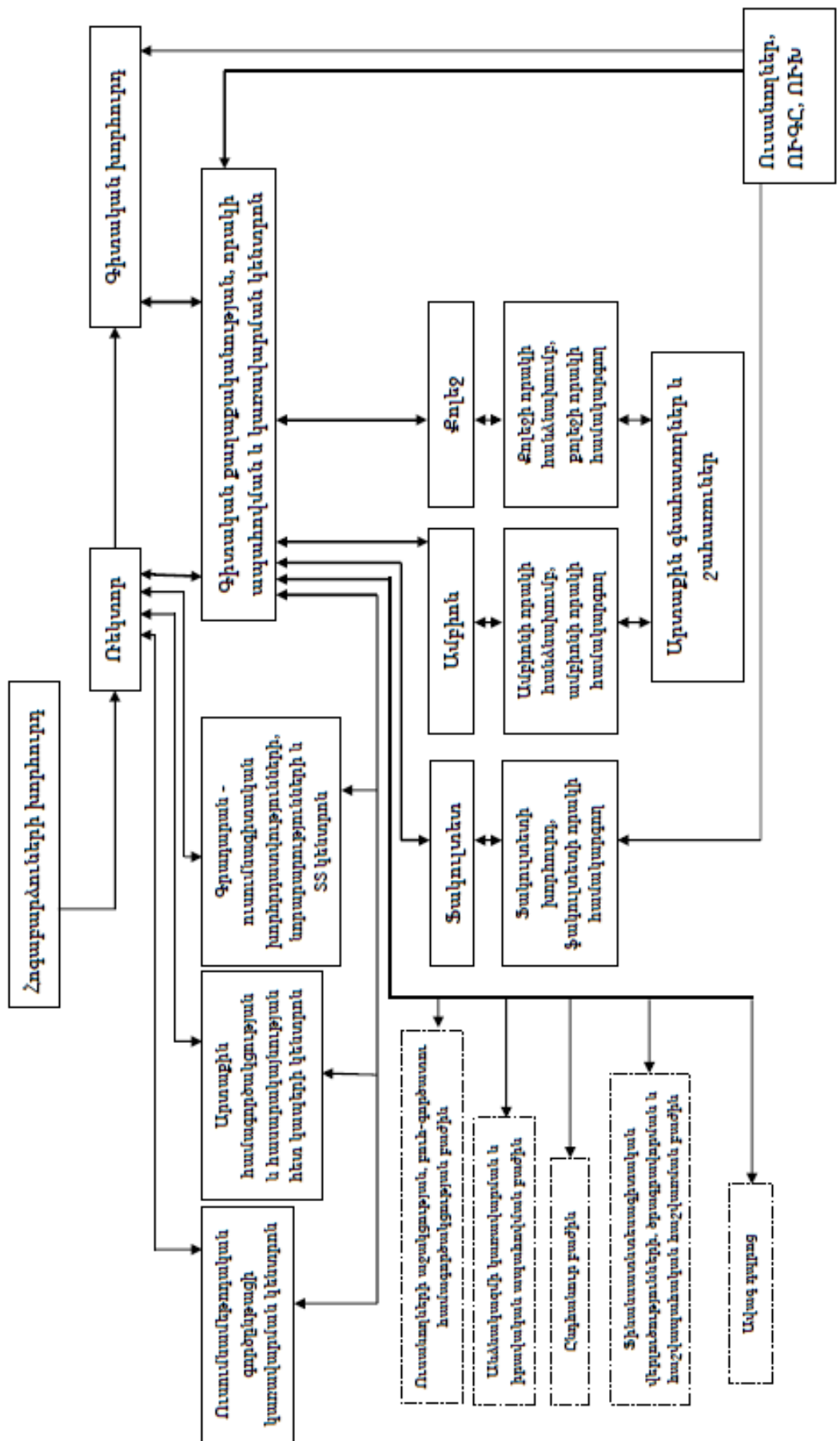
- is approved by the proposal of College pedagogical board meeting and by the decision of the Rectorate;
- oversees the process of planning, development, modification, and quality assurance of College academic programs;
- oversees the proper resource and methodical provision of academic programs;
- is responsible for overseeing quality assurance and internal oversight of the College, as well as for consistent implementation of university-level decisions.
- proposes College internal quality assurance and management policies;
- realizes the discussion and approval of the results of internal quality assurance processes;
- prepares and submits the regulatory, procedural and standard documents on College quality assurance (with the Quality Assurance and Management Center) to the Scientific Board for approval;
- provides the College quality assurance and assessment procedures, standards and curricula of academic programs, quality assurance regulation documents for the approval by the University Scientific Board;
- acts as a supervisory body to assess the implementation of College quality assurance processes according to the appropriate procedures and criteria, and proposes improvement measures;
- performs functions provided by internal legal acts.

The head of the College is responsible for the quality of the College activities.

College Quality Committee staff: College Head, College Vice-director, Quality Coordinators, representatives of College teaching staff, head of Student Council and other students.

12) External evaluators, beneficiaries (experts, graduates, employers):

- make external examination of University activities, quality assurance system, academic programs;
- are included in the Graduate Certification Committees (final graduate examination and Master's thesis defense);
- can participate in ongoing and / or semester assessment processes of learners on the initiative of the University;
- participate in surveys on the level of satisfaction of graduates from the University education;
- participate in surveys on the level of employer satisfaction from the academic programs and the professional qualifications of graduates.
- Diagram 1 shows the organizational scheme of the University internal quality assurance system. It shows the hierarchical relationship between the units and structures of the institution involved in the system.
- The description of the responsibilities of all units and structures depicted in Diagram 1 is submitted in point 28 of this Concept.



Գծապատկեր 1. Համալսարանի որակի ներքին ապահովման համակարգի կազմակերպական սխեմա

The structure

The Board of Trustees of “M. Nalbandyan State University of Shirak”

Scientific Board

Rector

Rectorate

Scientific Secretary

Rector's Assistant

Rector's Advisor

Public Board

Student Board

Student Scientific Company

Trade Union Committee

High School

College

Language Centre

Social-Psychological Counseling Centre

Sport Club

Sport Base

Center for Educational and Methodical Process Management

Vice-Rector-Head

External/ Foreign Cooperation and Public Relations Centre

Faculties

Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences

Faculty of Pedagogy

Faculty of Social Sciences and Law

Faculty of Human Sciences and Arts

Military Chair

Center for Scientific Policies, Quality Assurance and Management

Library- Centre for Academic Consultations, Innovations and IT

Vice-Rector- Staff Head

General Department

Department of Financial and Economical Analysis, Programming and Accounting

Department of Personnel Management and Legal Assurance

Department of Student Support, University-Employer Cooperation

Department of Economic Activities and Procurement Coordination

Archive

Medical Faculty (Point)

Department of Guesthouse Activities and Organization of Public Food (Catering).

VIII. QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

1. Quality assurance procedures aim to plan and transform the processes required by the quality assurance policies into clear actions and guide the processes of their implementation.
2. The main processes and procedures of University quality assurance are presented below, according to the standards relevant to separate directions:

1) MISSION AND GOALS:

The University Statute is approved by the decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia. The University Board of Trustees has the authority to make decisions on the amendments and additions to the University Statute, to amend the Statute, to approve the Statute with a new edition.

The University Strategic Plan is developed jointly with all units, with the appropriate committee.

The review and documentation of University mission, set goals and objectives are carried out at three levels: chairs, faculties, college and University administrative staff.

The staff of the relevant committees is so that the opinions of the academic and educational assisting staff, students and the administrative staff ("Concept of Development, Implementation and Accountability of the SUSh Development Strategic Plan") are taken into account. External stakeholders' requirements are mostly revealed both during University student internships and when studying the labor market (conducting surveys among external stakeholders), as well as by the cooperation of chairs and participation in committees through the mediation of "Student support, university-employer partnership" department.

The mechanisms for evaluating and improving the implementation of the strategic plan (in particular, the mission and goals) are set out in the concept on "SUSh strategic development plan processing, implementation and accountability" (stakeholder involvement, study and analysis of

reactions from the stakeholders, annual reports of evaluation of the results).

2) MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

The activities of the University Board of Trustees, Scientific Boards and the Rector are regulated by the University Statute.

The finance management and allocation is carried out according to the procedure of preparation, approval and analysis of actual data (performance) of the University income and expenditure estimates.

The University has centres, departments, faculties and chairs according to the relevant statutes.

The Board of Trustees is formed according to the University Statute.

The election of the Rector is carried out in accordance with the University Rector Election procedure.

The staff of the Scientific Board is formed in accordance with the University Statute and the University Scientific Board procedure.

The procedures for the formation of Faculty Boards and election of the Deans are described in the “Exemplary Statute of SUSh Faculty” document, and the procedure for the election of the head of the Chairs is described in the “Exemplary Statute of SUSh Chair” document.

The schematic image of the organizational structure by subordination and communication links is approved by the University Board of Trustees, which is also available on the University official website.

The hiring, transfer, dismissal, advancement, encouragement and application of penalties for University employees are carried out in accordance with appropriate procedures approved by the Scientific Board.

Different representatives from academic staff and students are included in the Board of Trustees, Scientific Board and faculty Board, chair methodical unions, and the chair quality committees, thereby ensuring the participation of learners and teachers in decision making processes.

Besides, before discussing any new document or decision at the Scientific Board, when it is presented to the members of the Scientific Board, the deans and heads of chairs of the Scientific Board, being members of the Scientific Board, are obliged to inform the relevant academic staff representatives and organize a discussion in wider frameworks.

A number of documents that deal directly with students are discussed with different student staff.

Work plans are formed in different departments of the University, which are mainly derived from the University strategic development plan. The plans are evaluated based on the submitted reports.

The evaluation and review of professional academic programs are carried out according to the appropriate procedure.

The dissemination of public information is mainly provided by the Center for External Cooperation and Public Relations. The activities of each department are covered in the appropriate section of the University official website, as well as on social networks.

3) PROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

The development or revision of the specification, description of PAP and thematic calendar plan (TCP) formats is organized by the Teaching Methodological Process Management Center. The PAP specification is developed by the Chair methodical unions, and the subject descriptions and TCPs are developed by the appropriate lecturers (reviewed at the beginning of each new academic year). The latter are discussed at the boards of appropriate faculties and guaranteed to the approval by the Scientific Board.

The comparative analysis of advanced experience (the benchmarking) for the professional academic program is carried out as needed, in the respective chairs.

The learning outcomes and their appropriate teaching and learning approaches and methods are provided by the lecturers and are reflected in the description of PAP and in the TCP.

Regular updating of teaching and learning approaches and methods is carried out in each new academic year, conditioned by the outcomes and appropriate analysis of the PAP monitoring and review.

The modernization of teaching materials and resources is carried out according to the chairs and the Library-Academic Consultations, Innovations and IT Center initiative, based on the thorough needs and budget opportunities of the University.

There is a student assessment procedure that is revised depending on the research results or needs.

Assessment methods and criteria defined in compliance with learning outcomes are set out in the subject descriptions of the PAP.

There are conceptual approaches to academic honesty.

The policy of student assessment is reviewed based on feedback from students and lecturers and taking into account the advanced practice in assessment approaches.

The professional academic programs are divided into theoretical, practical, laboratory, seminar components (TCP of PAP and description).

The issues related to continuing education and career development opportunities of students and graduates are regulated by the “Student Support and University-Employer Cooperation” Centre.

When reviewing professional academic programs, the consideration is also given to ensuring consonance within the institution or other local and international institutions of academic programs in this or that profession. The mobility opportunities for students and teaching staff are studied and expanded by the Center for External Cooperation and Public Relations.

Surveys, discussions, discourses and debates are conducted to study the needs of external and internal stakeholders.

The monitoring, assessment and review of the PAP is carried out according to the appropriate procedure.

4) STUDENTS.

The activities of the University high school are essential for the students' professional orientation. In addition, free vocational trainings are provided for students who will later be the University applicants.

Bachelor (full-time, extramural), master's and PhD / applicant admissions are organized and implemented in accordance with the appropriate procedures. The division of study places in each PAP is carried out by discussions at relevant chair meetings and faculty boards, where the indicators of the previous years and the requirements and development tendencies of the labour market are taken into account.

The host committee conducts an effective admission study.

The students are included in the Board of Trustees, the Scientific Board, Faculty Boards and other committees, representing the students' appropriate needs. Besides, regular student surveys are conducted, the results of which are analyzed and the appropriate measures are taken.

The SUSh Academic Advisory Management Procedure is acting at the University, providing the description, goals, and timetable for the advisory courses.

The additional support and guidance processes for students are regulated according to the procedure of "Identifying, Assisting and Guiding the Needs of SUSh Students".

The student supportive career development is implemented by the Student Support, University-Employer Cooperation Department.

To ensure the participation of students in the priority research activities for the University, there is a procedure of "Awarding an inter-university grant for scientific activities of SUSh Foundation".

The rights and responsibilities of learners are mainly reflected in the document of "SUSh Internal Disciplinary Rules: Regulations ", as well as in the credit system education procedure and in other legal acts.

The activities of the Student Council are regulated by the Statute.

Students' rights, complaints and appeals are handled by the Student Board and the department of Student Support, University-Employer Cooperation Department.

There are a number of mechanisms for assessment and quality assurance of educational, counseling and other support services to students at the University (inquiries, discourses, monitoring, etc.).

5) ACADEMIC AND TEACHING SUPPORT STAFF

The policies and procedures for the hire and dismissal of academic and teaching support staff are approved by the Scientific Board.

To encourage the lecturers, the system of "Regular Assessment and Rating of SUSh academic staff" has been introduced.

The requirements for professional qualifications of the academic staff of the professional academic program are reflected in the PAP specifications, which may be revised as needed, according to the requirements of the time.

In order to assess the teachers' professional qualities and evaluate their work, surveys are

carried out, documentary bases are studied.

The sustainability of the main academic staff is ensured and completed as necessary with teachers who combine their work with another one.

The professional progress of the academic staff is encouraged.

The list of the administrative staff is approved by the Board of Trustees according to the institution structural units.

6) RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The coordination of the process of the University Research Center is implemented by the Scientific Policy, Quality Assurance and Management Centre. The strategy in the research sphere is reflected in the University development strategic plan, but a separate strategy or concept can also be developed and implemented.

The main directions of research are given by the chairs.

The University has the procedure of “Awarding inter-university grant for scientific activities of SUSh”, accordingly mid-term and short-term research programs are planned and implemented, as well as requirements for publications are also presented. The research that is focused on and invested in the education process is of great importance here.

The University publishes the Scientific Journal of SUSh, which has clear requirements and means of struggle against plagiarism.

According to the appropriate procedures, the expansion of research activities, as well as involvement of students in the process are encouraged, highlighting the publications in international peer-reviewed journals.

7) INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

The University provides the necessary education environment, there are well-arranged subsidiary buildings, laboratories, studios, workshops that are improved according to strategic goals and priorities.

There is a library, a reading room at the University which are equipped with computers.

The University has an official website. The information about the University activities is disseminated on the official website as well as on the official pages of Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn.

The distribution of the budget is conducted for each year, according to the established procedure. Research on resource satisfaction is being conducted. The resources are redistributed and replenished based on the surveys and inquiries.

8) SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The University provides the transparency and accessibility of the processes to the public.

Each year it publishes a report on its activities, that includes information on implemented projects, financial resources, educational, scientific and other processes. It is published on the official website.

University centres, faculties, chairs and other departments are accountable to the Scientific Boards and / or Faculty Boards. The latter also provides an opportunity to carry out evaluation of work plan implementation.

The University has a Centre for External Cooperation and Public Relations, which ensures public relations with the use of sustainable feedback mechanisms.

9) EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

External Relations and Internationalization Strategy is mainly expressed in the University Development Strategy, but a separate internationalization strategy can be developed and implemented.

The Centre for External Cooperation and Public Relations deals with the coordination of the external relations and internationalization processes and acts in accordance with its Statute.

The University effectively cooperates with local and international institutions.

The University provides students and staff with the necessary level of foreign language knowledge.

10) INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Quality assurance processes include both administrative, academic, teaching and support staff, as well as students (Diagram 1). The University has the Center for Scientific Policy, Quality Assurance and Management Centre (Diagram 2), the functions of staff and public employees are defined by position descriptions.

There are urgent technical and material resources needed to implement quality assurance processes. Internet access is provided in the University, there are auditoriums, a reading room equipped with computers, that are served for conducting surveys.

The allocation of financial resources for the implementation of quality assurance processes is carried out as needed, based on priorities.

The involvement of students, academic staff, alumni and external evaluators in the quality assurance process is generally reflected in the forms outlined on pages 8-9.

Student needs revelation and assistance are carried out in accordance with the "SUS Student Needs Revelation, Assistance and Guidance" procedure. Besides, surveys and discussions are conducted. The needs of the teaching staff are clarified through chair sittings as well as through discussions and inquiries.

The revealed needs of lecturers are deeply studied and measures are taken according to the priorities.

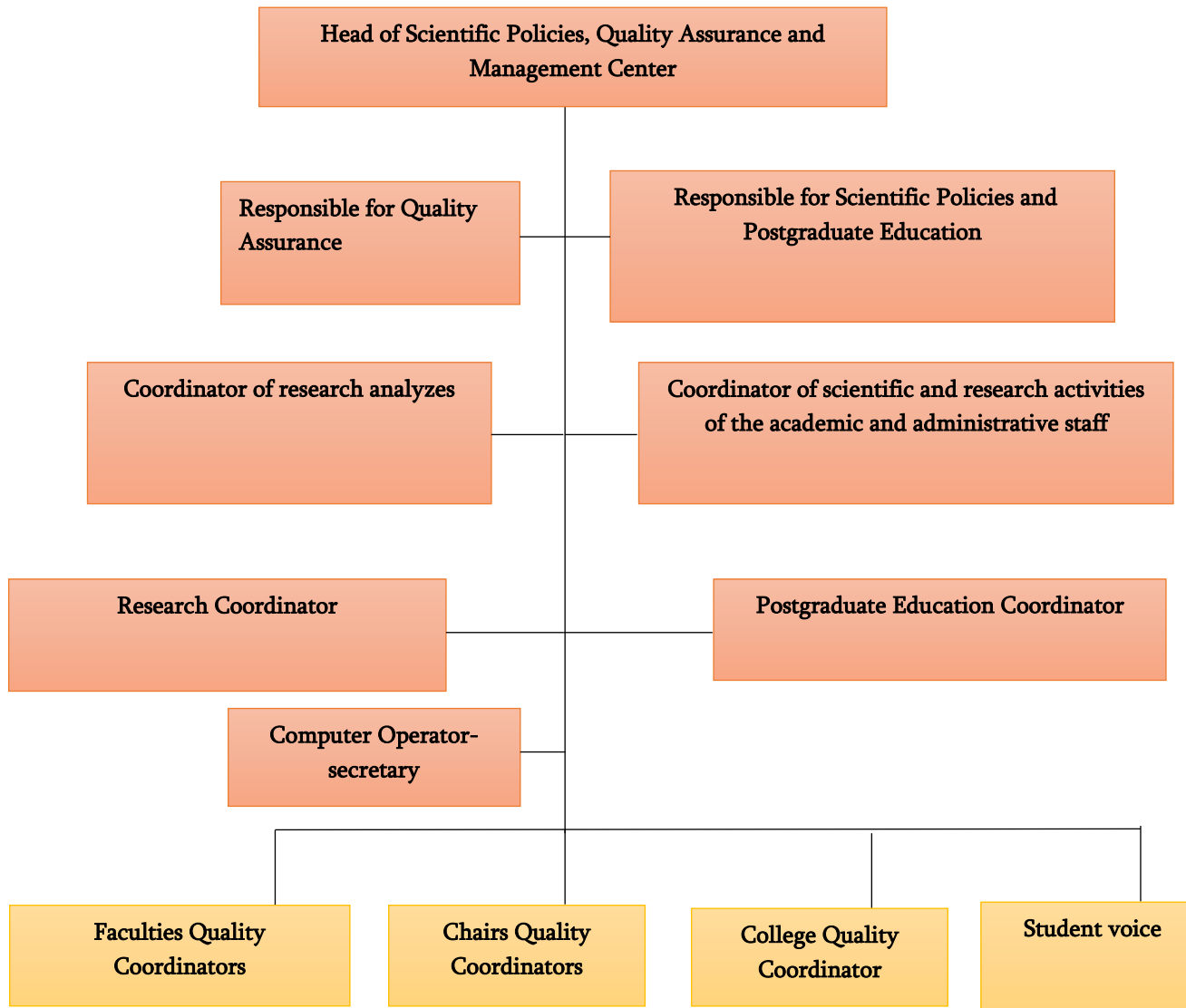


Diagram 2. Hierarchical structure of the Center for Scientific Policy, Quality Assurance and Management / the orange colour indicates the staff positions provided by the staff list, and the yellow one indicates those decreed on a public basis and by the Rector's order

University documentation assurance and information system include:

1) manual of internal Quality assurance that contains:

- the general description and organizational structure of internal quality assurance system;
- the goals and objectives of the quality assurance policy;
- the quality assurance principles, functions, procedures and responsibilities among different levels and units of management, the connection and interaction with other University management bodies;
- a brief description of the main quality assurance processes and a package of established quality assessment procedures;
- regulations and methodological materials on the implementation of separate quality assurance processes;
- the formulations of University educational standards;
- other materials needed to implement the quality assurance system.

2) The quality assurance information system includes:

- All official documents related to the University quality assurance system: the quality assurance concept, the quality assurance manual, documents dealing with the academic programs, teaching staff, student assessment and with the quality and assessment of the learning resources;
- all the reports on the results of the implementation of quality assurance processes;
- the self-assessment analytical reports and related documents prepared for institutional and program accreditation;
- the forms and records of various inquiries and other events;
- other materials and documents related to the system of information provision.

The ongoing quality improvement is a key component of the University quality assurance policy, the role of which is to ensure continuous and sustained quality improvement in teaching, learning and assessment processes in line with the changing needs and demands of learners and the labor market.

The means by which the University strives to ensure continuous and sustained quality improvement are substantially dependent on its profile, mission, quality culture, strategic goals, selected quality policy.

The University is guided by the following principles in the context of continuous quality improvement and enhancement:

- 1) the quality assurance processes are regulated, monitored and regularly reviewed;
- 2) the quality assurance processes are based on quality monitoring reports, feedback from students, graduates and employers and alumni employment statistics.

The University continuous quality improvement mechanism is based on a cycle process which consists of the following four main stages:

- 1) **planning:** defines the key issues and measurable expected outcomes;
- 2) **implementation:** carries out all necessary actions and measures aimed at achieving the

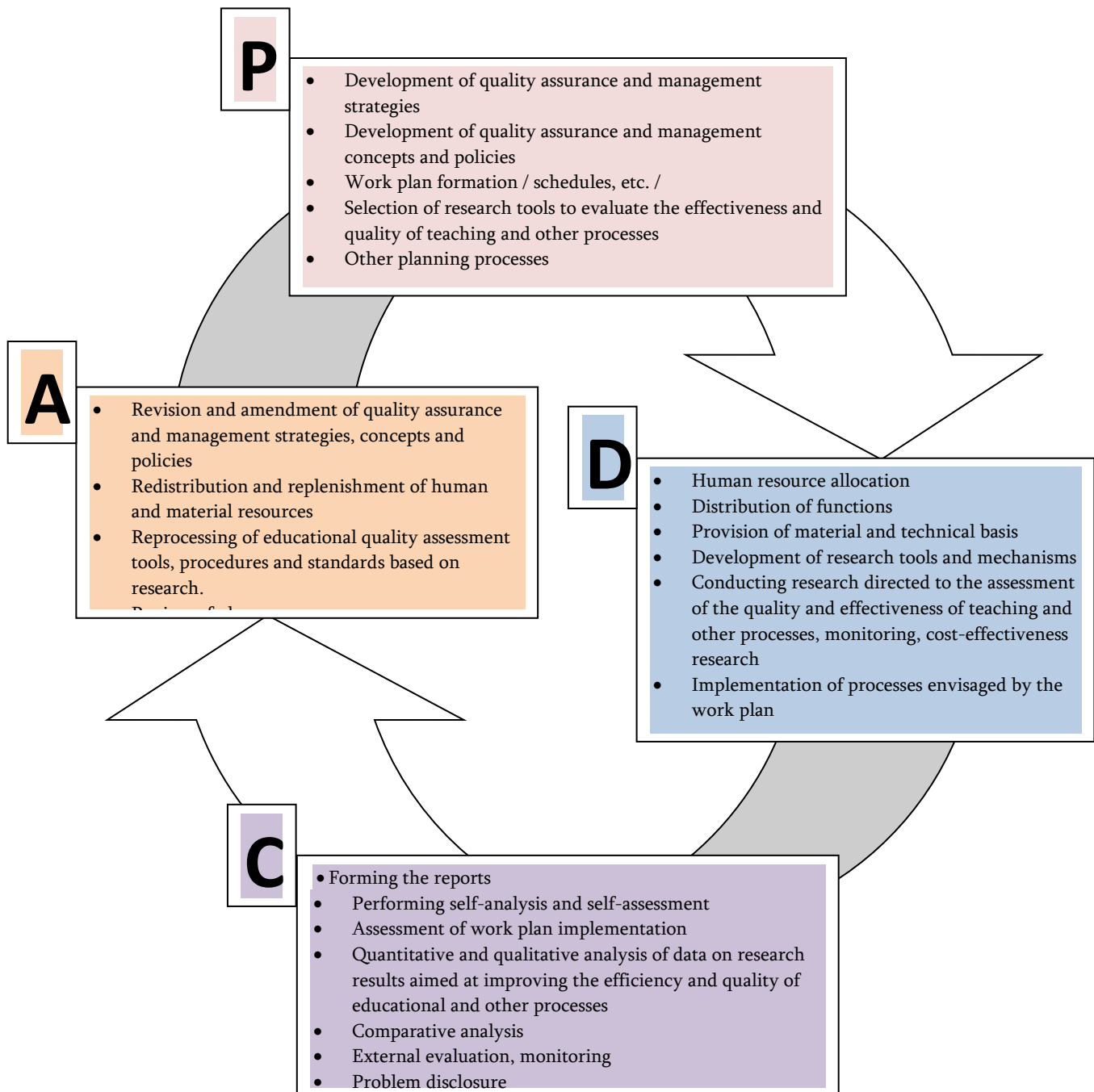
expected outcomes:

3) **evaluation:** checks, evaluates and measures the factual results as compared to the expected ones, that difference is assessed.

4) **improvement:** develops and plans additional measures to correct shortcomings and gaps and achieve the intended outcomes at the next stage of implementation.

The internal quality assurance system is reviewed according to the following scheme:

The efficiency of the Center activities is provided by the PDCA cycles.



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Some processes can be presented as grouped*

