

Approved by

Rector M. Z. Narimanyan

“29” March 2013

ACADEMIC PROGRAMME SELF-ASSESSMENT

Yerevan State Medical University after M. Heratsi

060100, General Medicine, Bachelor and Magister

(Code, Title and Degree of Academic Program)

Qualification - M.D. Physician

Koryun str. 2, 0025, Yerevan, Armenia

Yerevan 2013

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Overview of faculty involved in the program

Name – General Medicine

Discipline – Medicine

Program involvement – Core and elective (8%)

Qualifications – MD, Physician

Number of publications - 1. Textbook 12 (in the Armenian language), 0 (in the English language), 0 (in the Russian language); 2. Methodical manual 27 (in the Armenian language), 8 (in the English language), 8 (in the Russian language);

More details – www.ysmu.am/en/faculties/faculty-of-general-medicine

and PEP (see attached)

CRITERION 1

Academic programme design and approval

The programme is in control with the Armenia National Qualifications Framework (hereinafter referred to as “ANQF”), national qualifications descriptors, and state academic standards as well as in line with the institution’s mission.

Ambitions. Through improving mechanisms necessary for the implementation of the educational programme, the University is in pursuit of:

- *increasing effectiveness of the educational programme, which is consistent with the University mission;*
- *training high-quality specialists tailored to meet the labour market demands.*

Standard 1.1. The goals and objectives of the programme are in line with the institution’s mission and purpose.

General Medicine is an educational programme with a major commitment to educate and train a specialist in the field of General Medicine, who qualifies for Medical Doctor /hereinafter referred to as “MD”/ (attaining a Master’s Degree) being entitled to engage in professional activities going as follows:

1. Medical-preventive
2. Diagnostic
3. Rehabilitative
4. Scientific-research
5. Educational/educational-instructional
6. Managerial, administrative

(see the programme description /approved in 2006/ for General Medicine specialization leading to “MD” qualification)

Herewith, the aim of this programme is consistent with the University mission articulated as “...provide higher medical education, educate high-quality specialists trained

to meet the requirements of the healthcare sector (see p. 6 of Strategic Plan 2006-2010 of Yerevan State Medical University).

The programme ensures achievement of objectives encompassed by the University Strategic Plan, *inter alia* “contributing to the effectiveness of education programmes and improving the teaching quality” (see p.12, objective 2 of Strategic Plan 2006-2010 of Yerevan State Medical University). The education programme ensures the employment of a more effective system, which is based on the final academic outcomes and is specifically designed to cover the final certification of bachelor and master graduates and teaching methods for the purposes of achieving the aforementioned objective (see the programme description, curricula /approved in 2006/ for General Medicine specialization leading to “MD” qualification).

Furthermore, General Medicine educational programme has a specific mandate to help to face another major challenge in the University Strategic Plan – “to focus thematic contents of the general education in the bachelor educational programme, facilitate interdisciplinary student movement based on annual learning outcomes (see p. 13 of University Strategic Plan 2006-2010). These interdisciplinary movements have been made possible due to the entire compatibility of the University first-year bachelor’s curricula as regards “General Medicine”, “Stomatology”, “Pharmacy” programmes (see first-year curricula and syllabi of the University educational programmes).

Conformity with the European Credit Transfer System requirements (hereinafter referred to as “ECTS”) of course design and criterion for assessing learning outcomes greatly contributes to the “interdisciplinary movement of students within the European Higher Education Area”. This aspect is also in line with the University objectives (see p. 13 of University Strategic Plan 2006-2010; educational programme description for General Medicine specialization leading to “MD” qualification). To note, September-October of 2011 have registered transfer of seven students from different higher education institutions (hereinafter referred to as “HEIs”) to Yerevan State Medical University (hereinafter referred to as “YSMU”) for study purposes in General Medicine education programme (see protocols of the Office for Academic-Methodical Affairs).

Standard 1.2. The academic programme forms part of institutional planning and resource allocation.

The University staff, tangible assets and financial resources are composed and structured in a way to ensure the implementation of all the University programmes; moreover, the General Medicine educational programme is an integral part of the institutional planning, and this safeguards its inseparability from the overall institutional planning and allocation of resources (see statement 01.01.2012 on University main resources, “YSMU State Non-Commercial Organisation” estimate for 2012, University Budget financial statements for 2010-2012).

Financial resources of the University are mainly generated from the tuition fees. An average of 3000 students per annum or about 70 per cent of the university students have been matriculated into the General Medicine programme for the reporting period. Following from this, it can be safely concluded that the targeted programme significantly predetermines the university budgetary resources foreseen. Meanwhile, state funding is also available to students enrolled in the General Medicine educational programme – about 20 per cent of them study free of charge.

The University administrative body, professorial faculty and the instructional support staff – persons of adequate number and capacity – are engaged in relevant activities with regard to due implementation of the programme. The latter is delivered through tangible assets and financial resources allocated in conformity with the university budgetary resources foreseen (see statement 01.01.2012 on University main resources, “YSMU State Non-Commercial Organisation” estimate for 2012, University Budget different financial statements for 2010-2012). In furtherance, the majority of the University clinical facilities and academic departments are committed to mainly ensuring the due delivery of General Medicine programme.

Standard 1.3. Academic programme is thoroughly formulated, according to intended learning outcomes, which correspond to an academic qualifications.

The necessity of developing and implementing innovative educational programmes designed to gain acclaim among students, meet the specialization requirements and the demands of today's market/employers, improve the employability of graduates and foster service to society – this necessity is the underlying principle in the baseline approach, which stems from the provisions of the University strategic plan and the ongoing policy and is at the heart of the educational programme (see procedures for Strategic Plan and Policy).

The programme provides comprehensive descriptors for each educational degree, their objectives, as well as final learning outcomes on the basis of knowledge, skills and competences (see professional education programme).

The Tuning project principles provided common reference for devising distinctive tools and mechanisms on the overall and subject-specific competences to be acquired (see professional education programme procedures); meanwhile, the contents (referring to the topic included) and design (modules and credits) of the curricula are thoroughly articulated. In addition, learning outcomes and competences have been duly developed and listed for each subject (see p.____, professional education programme). It is noteworthy, that the intended learning outcomes are provided with reference to a single class unit or module, and the entire course of study, i.e. first and second degrees of the programme.

Currently, the transition to developing new approaches of teaching and learning (types of methods, technique, formats), as well as to updating and improving grading methods is accomplished pursuant to the ANQF requirements (see protocols of meetings of cyclic-methodical and central methodical committees, statements, decisions of Scientific Council).

Both the feedback and progress results with due regard to developments in society and academic field of medical education are an explicit input and key pillars in defining changes and expansion tendency of ongoing programmes (2011-2012).

Transition to the integrated model of higher medical education (4+2) under the Tuning methodology has been largely driven by the challenges arisen with the application of bachelor-master two-cycle education system and those in the labour market. Therefore, certain amendments and supplements are made to the professional education programmes (hereinafter referred to as "PEP").

Standard 1.4. The learning outcomes of the programme are in line with the ANQF, national qualifications descriptors, and state academic standards.

Since September 2012, the University has launched multifaceted and large-scale activities aimed at reviewing the PEP and subject curricula and conforming them with the ANQF requirements based on the Armenian Government Decision No 332-N of 31 March 2011 on Approving National Framework for Education Qualifications of the Republic of Armenia and the Armenian Government Decision No 1230-A of 25 August 2011 on Approving the Timescale of Fulfillment of Measures Ensuring the Implementation and Application of National Framework for Education Qualifications of the Republic of Armenia.

This is an ongoing effort, the best illustration of which is the deliberations and discussions constantly held at respective academic departments and within the cyclic methodical committees (see meeting protocols and draft versions of programmes). As for the conformity of PEP with the description on qualifications of professional education and to the state education standard of a specialization under ANQF, the education qualifications descriptions should be approved within the IV trimester of 2012, and the state education standards should be approved within the IV trimester of 2013 having regard to the Decision No 1230-A on Approving the Timescale of Fulfillment of Measures Ensuring the Implementation and Application of National Framework for Education Qualifications of the Republic of Armenia. Consequently, making a reference to the aforementioned concordance at this point of time can be characterised as untimely reference.

The Faculty of Medicine has been operating at Yerevan State Medical University since the establishment of the University, i.e. since 1920; afterwards, in 1999, it has been renamed as Faculty of General Medicine. Meanwhile, the graduates of this Faculty have attained “MD” qualification in the field of General Medicine pursuant to currently existing Armenian education standard. This standard is defined for training/educating a certified specialist within a nonstop six-year course.

Instruction was conducted through delivery of respective PEP. The latter was last reviewed in 2006 having regard to the Common Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area adopted during the 2003 Ministerial Summit on Education held in Berlin, and the RA Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education adopted in 2006. It should be noted, that formulation of learning outcomes, defined in the PEP, is based on the key triangle of descriptors illustrated as “Knowledge”, “Skills”, “Competences”.

Since the University had incorporated the two-cycle system by 2006, the state education standard 060100 qualifying for Bachelor of higher professional education was stipulated by the Decision No 81-N of 4 April 2008 issued by the RA Minister of Education and Science. This Decision defines the qualification “Bachelor of Medicine” in the field of General Medicine. Pursuant to this Decision, the first class, attaining this qualification, graduated from the University Faculty of General Medicine in 2011.

The educational programme for General Medicine specialization is consistent with the state education standard qualifying for Bachelor defined by the Armenian Ministry of Education and Science. However, the state education standard qualifying for Masters of higher medical education is not yet approved and currently undergoes final development. Let us also state, that the first class attaining a Master’s Degree will graduate from the Faculty of General Medicine in summer of 2013. This standard is, in essence, based on provisions and outcomes which have been at play for educating a certified specialist within a nonstop six-year course, since the graduate attains “MD” degree in the field of General Medicine upon completion of the two-cycle education system. Most importantly, distinguishing the functions of a bachelor and a master proved to be the milestone of the system.

Standard 1.5. The programmes are intellectually credible, designed coherently and articulate well within other relevant programmes.

Being within the same educational and healthcare framework, professional education institutions of former Soviet countries, including medical HEIs, delivered, *de facto*, the same programmes (see respective PEP).

Many HEIs have preserved these PEPs almost *per se* existing in the previous educational system within the post-Soviet era. These programmes have been mainly preserved or haven't undergone substantive changes, since these changes have been chiefly of adaptive nature. For instance, the PEP for General Medicine at Moscow First State Medical University after I.M. Sechenov and the PEP qualifying for "MD" at YSMU are comparable in respect of subjects and hours and credits thereof (see websites for Sechenov University PEP, website for YSMU PEP enclosed). Same situation is observed when making reference to many other medical HEIs (see website of other medical HEI PEP enclosed). Following from this, it should be noted, that the student mobility between these HEIs as a result of the absence of key programme differences was present in the post-Soviet era, existed in the reporting period and is observed nowadays. For example, only in 2011 from different countries of the CIS 5 students transmitted to YSMU.

In the reporting period, the University has managed to participate in, and currently achieves further integration into internationally acclaimed education programmes, such as Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, Linnaeus-Palme, etc. The University has also signed numerous international agreements enabling university faculty and student professional exchange; launching training courses, organising field summer practicum in medical HEIs and university clinics of numerous countries across the world. In 2011, the University was integrated into the ALRAKIS Action 2 Project under Erasmus Mundus Programme, thus enabling students to matriculate into a 36-month long academic courses offered at a number of European HEIs (see the partnership agreement). The impact of Erasmus Mundus in this context has been particularly important, in that it has given rise to a number of good practice initiatives to study abroad: two students of the Faculty of General Medicine are currently studying at the University Santiago de Compostela, Spain (see letters of invitation and signed contracts) under this Programme; meanwhile, three students among many applicants for the second call of the Programme have been recognized as winners (see respective letters), and in the offing, these students will leave for different HEIs of the European Union for study purposes.

Summer field practicums, as a required component, are an integral part of the PEP. For these practicums, specific programmes were designed and approved by the methodical

committee in February, 2011. These programmes cover the listings of manipulations for each faculty and academic year that the student should participate in or accomplish himself/herself. Moreover, having regard to the international agreements currently existing at the University, which offer summer field practicums (International Federation of Medical Students Association, International Federation of Dental Students Association, International Pharmaceutical Students Federation), abridged contents of these programmes was as well outlined in the course books of those students leaving for study purposes. Thus, the field practicum courses for the 2011-2012 academic year were entirely unified for students completing field practicum in Yerevan, Armenian marzes, Iran, India, the CIS and the EU countries and in other world regions.

Standard 1.6 The program learning outcomes meet the needs of the students and other stakeholders.

The programme for General Medicine specialization leading to “MD” qualification, which was approved in 2006 in a meeting convened by the University Scientific Council, provides comprehensive description on the functions of graduates and PEP outcomes. In addition, curricula incorporated into the PEP define learning outcomes chiefly conforming to the National Framework for Qualifications developed by the Armenian Ministry of Education and Science.

However, a number of surveys conducted among the stakeholders in frames of scientific research come to prove the point, that the PEP in its entirety and the curricula, in particular, need improvement. Specifically, two thirds of professors and residents have articulated their position for the PEP improvement. Approximately one third of professors, residents and doctors surveyed are inclined to think, that the current curriculum is not tailored to educate/train physicians corresponding to the needs of the labour market. In addition, 20 per cent of the professors believe, that PEP does not comprehensively cover the entirety of subjects needed to meet the labour market demands. According to the viewpoints of about 30 per cent of doctors and residents surveyed, the knowledge acquired throughout the course of study cannot be deemed to be sufficient to enable fulfilling professional activities.

Another survey results reflect the disadvantage of the practical skills acquired throughout the studies in respect of engaging in professional practice (see the section on the seventh criteria of institutional accreditation, self-analysis report)/.

Having regard to the survey results and the current situation, a number of reforms have been implemented within the PEP since 2008. These reforms can be safely characterised as horizontal integration of certain subject curricula (synchronization of teaching process of materials from different subjects), conducting examinations in a computerised format (first course students already passing their examinations centralized), providing opportunity for certain credit transfer up to the final year of studies (students can pass their reexaminations of academic debts even during last year of education), etc. These changes will facilitate the achievement of final learning outcomes defined by the PEP. Students and other stakeholders have mainly ranked the aforementioned changes as positive initiatives (see survey results).

Given what has been stated, we can articulate, that the PEP provides a clear definition of the learning outcomes, which are in conformity with the national qualification framework developed by the Armenian Ministry of Education and Science and the state education standard qualifying for Bachelor of professional education in the field of General Medicine (approved by the Decision No 81-N of 03 April 2010 issued by the RA Minister of Education and Science). However, the academic process itself needs improvement and does not yet enable full achievement of those intended learning outcomes. Besides, PEP outcomes and demands of the labour market are not comparatively assessed on a regular basis, and the involvement of external stakeholders in the development and assessment of educational programmes/curricula is not achieved on a regular basis. Within the current labour market no further monitoring is observed on the employability and professional practice of the graduates having completed the PEP.

Standard 1.7 There are set mechanisms and procedures in place to ensure development, approval, monitoring and periodic review of the academic programme.

Pursuant to the Objective 2 of the University Strategic Plan, mechanisms and criterion should be set up for self-analysis, self-assessment and further monitoring on

contents and learning outcomes of educational programmes (see p. 7, 8, Strategic Plan 2006-2010).

The procedure for development and monitoring of the educational programme was designed and approved in the University in 2006; whereas the procedure for assessment and improvement of the educational programme was devised and approved in 2011 by the University Centre for Education Quality Assessment and Assurance (see respective procedures).

Thus, the programme undergoes the following screening in accordance with the procedure for development and approval of an educational programme:

- (a) programme design and planning
- (b) development
- (c) implementation and application

Overall description of the new programme is presented within the programme design/planning, or the ongoing programme is supplied with amendments based on the tendencies and demands of the labour market.

Information on the function/aim of the qualification, objectives of the specialization, length of the programme, and the tuition fees of the specialization are clearly covered within the programme planning. The syllabus, modules, subject curricula, academic credits, learning outcomes, as well as educational resources and instructional support services are developed afterwards.

Programme development is followed by introducing components necessary for the programme implementation and application. This envisages the organisation of learning process, delivery of instructional support, provision of needed resources in the academic process, conducting the ongoing and final certification of student knowledge.

For the purposes of ensuring the quality of educational programme, the latter undergoes the following inter-university screening:

1. permission to develop the programme
2. acquisition of programme approval
3. programme ongoing monitoring
4. programme assessment and review

Programme relevance to and conformity with the institutional mission is considered within the aforementioned first stage. The second stage, i.e. acquisition of programme approval, ensures assessment of the development quality, and whether the HEI can conduct it in accordance with standards (programme licensing is currently being accomplished in order to acquire permission/authorization for organizing programme-based admission).

Monitoring is aimed at assessing the quality of the programme in the stage of implementing the standards; whereas the assessment and review identify, whether the programme is consistent with its objective along with the entire cyclical results.

Relevance of General Medicine programme curriculum, initial outcomes and qualification descriptors (based on national framework for professional education qualifications and requirements of the respective state education standard) has been approved in the meetings convened by the cyclic-methodical committees (see protocols). Curricula of programmes, contents and initial outcomes of which were designed in conformity with qualification descriptors of the given specialization, have been deliberated and approved in those meetings (curricula were approved after holding meticulous deliberations, where proposals and commentaries had been provided) (see protocols of cyclic-methodical committees).

Central methodical committee has forwarded its opinion based on reports provided by respective cyclic-methodical committees, and has further submitted it to the consideration and approval of the University Scientific Council. General Medicine programme has been approved during the meeting convened by the University Scientific Council.

Monitoring has been conducted on the General Medicine educational programme, allowing for the assessment of effectiveness of the academic process, relevance of instruction methods and technologies, as well as needs for resources. In particular, surveys conducted among students have revealed student satisfaction with the programme contents (separate courses thereof), methods of subject delivery, programme units which are of enhanced success and those lacking success or odd components from a student perspective, as well as the necessity for changes in the programme (see survey results).

Surveys conducted among graduates and employers have further detailed whether the programme is tailored to meet specific labor demands for the given specialization, as well as the relevance of the programme and its prospects from a specialist demand perspective (see survey results).

Analysis of the survey results has been presented to respective committees for further deliberation. As a result, several proposals have been made on changing separate elements of the educational programme.

Each term surveys have been conducted among students having completed subject courses of the programme. These surveys aimed at ascertaining student satisfaction with the course contents and methodology aspects (see survey results).

Examples of Good Practice

1. Educational programme for General Medicine specialization is in conformity with the state education standard for Bachelor qualification defined by the Armenian Ministry of Education and Science.
2. The contents of the field practicum component, which forms an integral part of the PEP, is in accordance with the resources of the HEI hosting the student of Yerevan State Medical University.
3. Operating procedures at the University for the development, approval, monitoring, assessment and improvement of the educational programme.
4. Respective committees at the University are engaged in monitoring the quality of the programme and application of changes.
5. Surveys on the programme and its separate components are conducted among internal and external stakeholders.

Examples of Not-so-Good Practice

1. Insufficient awareness on the Bologna Process and the ANQF requirements among the stakeholders.

2. The necessity for further transparency when revealing the subject listing for Bachelors and Masters, subject contents and learning outcomes.
3. Insufficient awareness on international descriptors (Dublin Descriptors). There is an open issue on harmonization of modules delivered at Western institutions and our universities, on learning outcomes, as well as on challenges of developing a common framework for relevant terminology.
4. Master's Programme for General Medicine specialization and the state education standard are not yet developed.
5. Number of student and faculty international exchanges is not significant.
6. Within the current labour market no further monitoring is observed on the employability and professional practice of the graduates having completed the PEP.
7. No coordination on the comparative assessment of final outcomes of PEP and labour market demands.
8. Final outcomes of PEP are in accordance with the state education standards; however, the system doesn't yet enable full achievement of these outcomes.

CRITERION 2

Teaching staff

A high quality staff provides for the achievement of the set goals for the academic program

Ambitions: The institution, in the frame of implementing academic program aims at involving qualified and competent teaching staff through setting comprehensive requirements on professional qualities, elections and development of the teacher.

Standard 2.1. The teaching staff qualifications for the program are comprehensively stated and there are policies and procedures promoting recruitment of a highly qualified teaching staff capable of ensuring program intended learning outcomes.

To shape and promote a high-quality staff the University has adopted the following policy:

- a. refresh and recruit younger faculty through increase of post-graduate vacancies, signing contracts with post-graduate students and reviewing the requirements referring the teaching staff qualifications,
- b. set comprehensive requirements for the teaching staff professional qualifications,
- c. set well-established mechanisms and procedures for evaluation of the teaching staff,
- d. set the teaching staff election procedures,
- e. improve the institutional plan for teachers' professional development with the whole teaching-staff enrollment(see strategic program page 9, 10, attached).

Up to 2007 the faculty election at the University was conducted on competitive basis. From 2007 to 2011 the election of teaching staff was carried out with the consent of the chief of the department based on a direct contract signed with the Rector. The above-mentioned form of recruitment was temporary and aimed at innovation of the teaching staff more actively with no contradiction with the faculty election regulations of the University and legislation of RA.

Since 2011 the teaching staff election has been conducted on competitive base in accordance with the “Teaching-staff election procedures” (see scientific council meeting N 3 of 25/05/2012 protocol and procedure).

In compliance with that procedure, each academic year Rector sets the list of vacancies of the current academic year. The Human Resources department informs the University scientific council secretariat about the need of announcing a vacancy according to the set rules at least 80 days before the expiry of the work contract of the corresponding instructor. The announcement on vacancies is posted on the University official website and in press with circulation of 2000 at least 2 months before the election date. After candidate passes the competition, the Rector signs a contract for up to 5 years (1-5 years) taking into account the assessment of the qualification committee and decision of scientific council.

During 2011-2012, 325 instructors from 30 departments, involved in education program of general medicine, participated in the competition for vacancies, out of which 295 passed the election procedure. Six percent (6%) of participants either were not approved by the qualification committee and the departments and/or were not elected by scientific councils (see protocols of qualification committee, department meetings and scientific council). In case of not being endorsed by departments and/or qualification committees the candidate has a right to participate in the tender announced by the University scientific councils.

Currently, the required thresholds for different ranks of teaching staff (professor, associate professor, assistant) both for general and different fields of activities (methodological, scientific, clinical, etc.) are in process. This will allow evaluating the current procedures and the policy of teaching staff elections through monitoring.

In compliance with the ongoing regulations, the University can hire only short-term service providing teachers without competition, based on the contract signed with the Rector. As of 20.10.2011, the number of similar teachers involved in education program is only 8.

Standard 2.2. There are well-established policies and procedures for periodic evaluation and promotion of the teaching staff.

In the reporting period up to 2010, the evaluation of the teaching staff was organized in each semester through surveys “the students’ opinion on teachers”. The questionnaire included 7 questions evaluating teacher’s professional and pedagogical qualities. The survey outcomes were considered while signing contracts with instructors. Negative outcomes (below 3.5 in a 5-score system) can serve a base for contract breach or/and a new contract commencement only if the instructor received negative rating 3 or more times within 5 years (10 semesters). Periodic evaluation of the teaching staff was carried out through mutual hearing of lectures. The results have been discussed at department meetings (see registers of mutual hearings). In 2008-2009 the University Department of Reforms and Integration developed “The questionnaire on teacher’s qualification evaluation”. All University departments gave careful consideration to the mentioned questionnaire, proposals were made most of which were accepted. The final version of the questionnaire was again considered with chairmen and people in charge of educational line. Only then the University central methodological board endorsed it (see protocol of central methodological board and the questionnaire). Since 2011, when elections of teaching staff on competitive base re-established, the policy of the teacher’s qualification assessment has been set as a basis for elections. Pursuant to that policy, through the developed system, the instructor’s activities in all spheres, such as methodological, scientific, post graduate and continuing education, clinical, administrative and social in a 5-years period, as well as the rating received by students were presented. The questionnaire includes about 80 questions (see questionnaire). Along with the necessary documentation the candidate fills in and submits the questionnaire. The corresponding faculty’s scientific secretary on the basis of the presented documentation checks the completed questionnaire, counts the score and presents to the “Permanent board of teacher’s qualification”(see the board list). Afterwards in a special convened meeting the board considers the received ranking based on the qualification questionnaire and the outcomes of lesson hearings carried out periodically once or twice a year by the chairmen and methodological board (see the protocols of lesson hearings and discussions). Further, after

a direct interview with the teacher the board makes a decision whether approve or not teacher's further work activity. Finally, the decision is presented to faculty scientific council discussion, where a closed selection is held. It is worth mentioning that notwithstanding 'Teacher Qualification Board' decision, the instructor is eligible to participate in the election procedure organized by faculty council.

Such evaluation procedure is organized for each teacher periodically in 1-5 years pursuant to the set duration on working activity outlined in the contract.

Standard 2.3. Teacher professional development is promoted in accordance to the needs outlined during regular evaluations (both internal and external).

The programmes as part of academic programme are approved and periodically reviewed by methodological cyclical committees. The programmes are regularly updated in terms of methodology to meet the progress of the science and include the contemporary scientific research findings. Once in two weeks chair methodical sessions are held in the departments during which each teacher may bring forward his/her opinion on the subject taught, new materials are also introduced in the mentioned workshops. Part of the considered scientific innovations after appropriate discussions are applied in the subject programmes (see the chairs methodical workshop records) In Yerevan State Medical University surveys "the teacher in the eyes of students" are conducted among the students twice a year. During these surveys the students evaluate the modernity of the subject taught, provision of the latest data, the teachers' professional qualities and teaching skills and etc. The outcomes of the surveys are considered during the teacher's re-election on the competitive basis. The university will not prolong contracts with the teachers who have negative outcomes more than three times.

Prior to the re-election and signing contracts with the teaching staff, the reports on professional trainings, scientific work and publications and etc. have an important part in the questionnaire, which definitely creates an appropriate environment promoting teaching staff progress (see attached teaching staff election procedure)

Regular meetings with the separate group of students are organized during which students' suggestions on the taught material and educational process are considered. The outcomes of the above mentioned surveys and workshops are discussed at methodical cyclic committees and chair sessions.

It is worth mentioning that professional educational program doesn't set precise requirements for teaching staff professional qualities. It is guided by the requirements set for the teachers of different ranks at the university level, which are based on the teacher's basic and post-graduate education, scientific rank (degree) and position and don't include the volume and direction of educational-methodical work, the compliance of professional quality with the given educational program and etc.

Thus we may conclude that the university environment in general promotes faculty development and its progress, but Academic program doesn't stipulate procedure regulating this field and complete policy.

Standard 2.4. There is necessary permanent staff to provide for the coverage of qualifications adequately.

32 departments of the university are subordinate to the faculty of General Medicine, however the other departments of the University also deliver lectures to academic program students. Today the total number of the permanent faculty is 1114 including 173 doctors of science among which 107 hold the title of professors, 517 candidates to doctor of science, 201 associate professors, 424 assistants: student/teacher ratio is 5530:1042=1:5 on 10.10.2012.

It should be noted that in pre—diploma educational level there is no clear separation of the departments and the faculty as per different professional academic programs. The absolute majority of the departments deliver lectures to the students of all academic programs.

In the strategic plan the university highlights the emergency of providing the academic programs with the proficient, competent staff, the formation of the human resource potential. To this end a number of activities were carried out during the reporting period: the teaching staff re-election procedures on competitive basis and questionnaire reflecting all areas of their activities were formed. Two years ago the policy on allocating seats for the

targeted post-graduate studies was reviewed and more seats were allocated to the professions (physiology diagnostics, diagnostic anatomy, physiatry), which were much needed at the university (see protocols of the university academic department). A teacher training model was developed and tested, which allowed us to improve teaching staff skills and qualities. In the course of the last five years 474 teachers of the university participated in professional trainings abroad.

As mentioned earlier in the project self-assessment report for this criterion the university sets requirements for teaching staff different rankings, which means that the basic education and academic activities are compliant with the program of the subjects being taught.

We have already mentioned about the inquiries called “Teachers through the eyes of the students” conducted by the practical training department, however, it should be noted that the results of the inquiries have not been analyzed at academic program level and, thus, it is now difficult to talk about the effectiveness of teaching staff academic activities.

Examples of good practices

1. Teacher student ratio is quite small.
2. The academic program sets requirements for the teaching staff different rankings, which assumes compliance of the basic education and academic activities with the program of the subjects being taught.
3. Availability of the competitive selection procedure for the teaching staff
4. Constant revision of curricula.

Examples of not-so-good practices

1. The academic program does not define clear requirements for the professional qualities of the teaching staff

2. The academic program does not define a comprehensive policy and procedure directed at professional development of teaching staff and the establishment of the faculty.

3. A comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the final results of the teaching staff activities as well as academic program implementation has not been carried out during the reporting period.

CRITERION 3

Teaching and learning practices

The programme promotes productive teaching and learning practices based on the evidence of student learning outcomes as well as provides for the faculty effectiveness in achieving its educational objectives.

Ambitions: Improve teaching quality and the effectiveness of educational programmes to align these aspects with the Bologna Process; taking account of the fact that all these are the major pledge for promoting university competitiveness and the professional activities of graduates (see p. 12-14, Strategic Plan of Yerevan State Medical University).

Standard 3.1. The programme clearly defines the teaching and learning approaches necessary to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

The following three approaches have been underscored within the scope of 2006-2011 Strategic Plan of Yerevan State Medical University (hereinafter referred to as “the YSMU”):

(a) on the basis of criteria adopted by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) define unified academic (teaching and learning) quality standards at all the academic departments of the University in accordance with ongoing academic programmes at the same time synchronising the requirements of the succeeding programmes;

(b) review and improve the process aimed at modernization of educational programmes with a view to advancing initial learning outcomes, as well as the quality and accuracy of academic assessment;

(c) undertake a comprehensive study - on employers' satisfaction in respect of professional competence of university graduates, effectiveness of educational programmes, as well as student satisfaction with the teaching - for the purpose of setting-up feedback mechanisms on programme modernisation and guarantees for improving graduates' employability (see p. 12-14, YSMU Strategic Plan).

Learning outcomes for the General Medicine specialization and each academic programme have been clarified to some extent in terms of "Knowledge-Skills-Competences" triangle. This comes to ascertain the following: what the student shall know; what he/she shall comprehend/internalise, and be able to demonstrate while making comparison of what has been acquired with the learning outcomes. The State, Final exams, as well as ongoing/mid-term exams reflect the educational level/volume in line with the Quality Assurance National Framework standards.

The following mapping of qualifications and learning outcomes is currently in the process of development:



The description on intended learning outcomes is provided within the professional education programme (hereinafter referred to as “the PEP”) and respective links between teaching, learning and student assessment methods (see the General Medicine education programme).

It is noteworthy, that teacher-centered method is still dominating in the reporting period within the policy on applied methods in teaching and learning relevant to the PEP intended learning outcomes.

Currently steps are made towards ensuring a student-centered teaching method consistent with the Tuning model (see meeting protocol N4 of Biomedical cyclic methodical commission, materials on “Student-centered Bologna Policy” Congress organised by University Student Parliament, G., Navasardyan, 2012).

For the purpose ensuring the abovementioned, education outcomes framework on General Medicine specialization in Bachelors and Masters Courses has been developed and put into action. In furtherance, stated outcomes have served an impetus for academic programmes and curricula (see relevant documents) of separate subjects have been mapped and edited; student self-study topics and thematic sections (lecture, seminar, laboratory tasks, practical classes, professional field practicum) taught on each subject have been separated. However, it should be noted, that the self-study component is not widely observed in the academic process, whereas student-centered learning projected on the initial outcomes (“Tuning” project) requires quite the opposite. The problem is that the volume of self-study themes in our educational programs is still limited, whereas in European programs it has relatively more volume. Our educational resources and tools do not allow us to increase the volume of self-study work.

Standard 3.2. The teaching and learning draw on the progressive approaches accepted at international level.

In the reporting period the following have been most effectively achieved when implementing best teaching practices and approaches within the PEP delivery: creating a

professional literature dataset (textbooks, manuals, guidelines) and employing modern technological solutions.

These solutions have had wide application in the form of PPT presentations (mainly within lectures), animations and videotapes.

Drawing upon translation of internationally applied teaching model into a national scope, it shall be noted, that the participants of distance and e-learning training courses (organised under Tempus programme) have partially applied given method in several academic departments of the YSMU (see the web-site www.community.livejournal.com/pathphys). Within the subject matter there are certain points which can serve as an illustration of good practices; for instance, professional associations, currently operating in Armenia, have achieved cooperation with similar international bodies and have implemented their best practice in the subject curricula. Moreover, several experienced and renowned professors of the University are involved in the academic-methodical commissions of international associations; they are engaged in jointly development of programmes on modernising and advancing the teaching of various courses (Pathophysiology, Biochemistry of Neural Degeneration, Cardiology, Invasive Surgery, etc.). Currently measures are taken towards teaching the fundamentals of protocol-driven and personalised medicine within the clinical subjects.

In the reporting period, university teaching could safely be characterised as teacher-centered covering the interests and professional experience of the teaching staff. As a result, there appears to be separation of programmes, systematically structured courses are not effectively ensured and the development of final intended outcomes is not duly achieved. One of the underlying reasons causing such drawbacks is the current transition to the application of Tuning methodology. While the Tuning project fully respects the primacy of extensively employing expertise capacity by the staff, this specific approach should not be dominating across the programme. This framework is designed with due regard to creating a student-centered academic environment, so that the fundamental knowledge and skills acquired by the student in the course of education could add value to developing academic programme content.

To note, no entire coordination has been observed in respect of procedures for licensing, approving and reviewing educational programmes/subject curricula, which are milestones for carrying out teaching in the University. Furthermore, the process of implementing leading practices and approaches of internationally applied teaching remains principally on individual/spontaneous initiatives. The main reason accounting for such situation is that mechanisms on quality in higher medical education, in particular – mechanisms tested in sense of comparability with international teaching practice – haven't been fully employed in the University. Moreover, the academic process has been chiefly organised employing conventional methods of the Russian academic model.

Standard 3.3. There are set mechanisms evaluating quality of teaching and learning approaches.

The major interface for implementing the policy on academic process quality improvement is the Office for Academic-Methodical Affairs. Specific mandates entrusted upon this Office are enshrined in its Regulation (see point 7, Regulation of the Office for Academic-Methodical Affairs). For this purpose, the Office fosters and carries out various activities towards the training and advancement of the teaching staff; the Office is also involved in development and submission of legal acts in relation to continuous enhancement of educational quality, as well as supervision and analysis of professorial activity.

Observing lessons is also provided for by the working programmes of the Dean's Offices. Observing held at the academic departments, which are under the supervision of Dean's Offices. When registering certain drawbacks in the classes, the departments are engaged in considering them at departmental meetings. In case of observations requiring a structural solution, a report is submitted to the vice-rector for academic affairs, respectively; and polemical issues are solved in cooperation with relevant administration and legal authorities. Academic departments have achieved cooperation in respect of mutually observing lessons, the outcomes of which are later discussed at departmental meetings.

A survey - on lectures, practical classes and courses delivered throughout the given term - is conducted among the YSMU students upon completion of each term

(questionnaires are enclosed). Analysed outputs of the data are submitted to the head of relevant academic department. The latter presents these outputs at the departmental meeting, and the faculty is involved in consideration and analysis thereof. While drawing certain conclusions, the faculty panel also approves, if necessary, approaches for making necessary improvements (see departmental meetings protocols). In addition, survey data are furthermore communicated to the relevant dean's office and vice-rector for academic affairs. In order to make necessary arrangements to improve periodically observed (in the course of several semesters) poor findings, discussions are accordingly held in respective Faculty Boards and decisions are adopted thereon (see a sample of similar decision).

In addition to what has been stated, the YSMU Quality Assurance Unit as well, though not on a regular basis, conducts occasional surveys among students and professorial faculty conditioned by the necessity of improving educational quality. These surveys comprise questions addressing assessment of teaching and learning processes coupled with other queries (see samples of questionnaires).

Examples of Good Practice

1. In order to ensure the effective delivery of the PEP, certain subdivisions operate committed to providing professional education in conformity with societal needs.
2. Transition to initial learning outcomes is made by applying the principle of Tuning methodology. This transition is progressively achieved from departure of conventional approaches to comprehensive/initial approach.
3. There is a tendency towards ensuring greater accuracy and transparency of qualifications, providing precise information and data to students, aligning education with individual needs, improving links between labour market and employability, gaining international acclaim of the university.

Examples of not-so-good Practice

1. The professional education programme is not always compatible with the NQF in respect of all the subjects.
2. In educational programmes the list outlining general and specific professional competencies is not thus far clearly finalised; policies on working in a group, mastering the ways to permanently improve knowledge and skills are not yet developed.
3. Lecturing materials and resources need to undergo updating and upgrading.
4. The policy approved on intended learning outcomes is not clarified and goal-oriented; stakeholders' needs are not always taken due account of.
5. Student and other stakeholders' involvement into the programme assessment is not guaranteed at a sufficient level.
6. Distance learning platform is not hitherto ensured, which, if succeeding, could lead the student to self-study practices on the one hand, and would reduce the heavy classroom workload of the instructor on the other hand, when remarkably higher number of students and lack of relevant resources would be observed in the University.

CRITERION 4.

Student assessment

The institution ensures impartial and consistent evaluation of students' level of achievement against the intended learning and educational objective and promotes academic integrity.

Ambitions: The University, within the professional education programme (hereinafter referred to as "the PEP") is committed to improving final and ongoing student certification system with a view to enhance the quality and accuracy of assessment of learning outcomes; ensure transparency of assessment standards and procedures and wide publicity of outcomes (see p. 8, YSMU Strategic Plan 2006-2011).

Standard 4.1: The program evaluates students' level of learning outcome achievement against the intended learning outcomes in accordance with the evaluation methods and criteria described in the prospectus.

Basic provisions of student assessment system, put in action within the educational programme on General Medicine specialization leading to "MD" qualification, are included in the state educational standard of the PEP mentioned above. In particular, under a separate heading, it reads, that "...marking a final grade (knowledge assessment) shall be a mandatory practice applied to all courses and field practicum provided for by the curriculum" (see state education standard of educational programme designed for "General Medicine" specialization (060100) approved by Ministerial Decision 81-N of 04 March 2010, Ministry of Education and Science).

Unbiased and transparent student knowledge assessment is based on the guidelines and procedures for conducting mid-term and final examinations (see YSMU Guideline on Organising and Conducting Final Certification of Masters and Bachelors Graduates,

University Scientific Council Decision, University Rector Order of 22.11.2011..., Order N53 M of 26.04.2011, N02-36/04 Procedure of 08.01.2013 for Computer Test Examination). Said guidelines are developed within the cyclical and central methodical commissions; afterwards; they are approved by the University Rector followed by an introduction to instructors and students. Guidelines provided to first-year university students clearly define the procedure for student assessment (see p. 16-17, Guideline for first-year students).

Knowledge assessment mechanisms and standards laid down in the given procedures are based on final learning outcomes; these are, in turn, ensured in every subject curricula provided for by the educational programme (see educational programme description for General Medicine specialization leading to “MD” qualification, respective curricula). Each curriculum clearly states aspects on “what student shall know” and “what student shall do” while studying and mastering specific theme or a discipline. In addition, curricula are created in accordance with the requirements of state education standard. Instructors are directly involved in drafting the curricula. Alterations made in the knowledge assessment system are respectively introduced within the meetings regularly held between students and administrative staff and faculty. The education programme on “General Medicine” greatly underscores the importance of field practicum as an essential stage to provide for learning outcomes. Student undergoing a field practicum is provided with certain guideline prior to commencing the practicum, in which intended learning outcomes throughout the practicum are stipulated. This component of the academic process is assessed through checking practicum-related learning outcomes (see Practicum Statement Sheet).

Learning outcomes of Practice Modules (Practical Skills) are assessed by quiz upon a completion of appropriate module and at the 1st stage of Final Attestation (see Criterion 3).

The modes of student knowledge assessment (examination and progress test) are included in the state education standard, in the professional education programme description on “General Medicine” specialisation, also in the academic programme and curricula.

Written progress tests (mid-term exams) are conducted for all test-based and exam-based disciplines. These tests are assessed in accordance with a clearly developed assessment guideline. Test-paper outputs account for calculating the annual (or term) grade. In cases of

courses culminating in an exam, satisfactory grade on a written examination is averaged out with the annual (or term) grade.

Student knowledge assessment is carried out pursuant to a 10-scale system in a way going as follows: “10-9” counts for “distinction”; “8-7” for “merit”; “6-5” for “fair” and “4-1” accounts for “fail”. Assessment of knowledge and competencies acquired during the test-based and practice-based courses is conducted in different ways; namely, by marking “pass” or “fail”.

Mistakes by students frequently encountered within examinations are properly analysed and considered with students; however, this process is not yet coordinated. And that is due to paper-based exam. Now there is an initiation and sustaining of computer-based exam process for 1st and 2nd year students that gives opportunities for statistical analysis of typical student mistakes and serves for better coordination.

Standard 4.2: The assessment of the achieved learning outcomes is based on clearly stated and transparent policies and procedures as well as standards.

Final graduate certification is the final stage of the education programme on General Medicine specialisation. Examination Commission grants the “MD Physician” qualification to the graduate upon successful completion of this stage.

Student final certification is carried out by the State Final Examination Commission in accordance with the guideline approved by the Government of the Republic of Armenia (see Ministerial Decision N1197 of 31.10.2011, Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia) and University guidelines and procedures (see YSMU Guideline on Organising and Conducting Final Certification of Masters and Bachelors Graduates). Final certification is a three-stage process; in particular certification of manual skills, computerised test-based examinations, oral examination. Certification questionnaires are compiled in accordance with subject curricula developed pursuant to state education standards; i.e., the intended learning outcomes are fully reflected in those questionnaires (see decision of Council of Faculty of General Medicine /Protocol 5, 16.05.2012/ for the Approval of Questionary for final attestation). All the three stages of the final certification are of decisive importance

when the graduate qualifies for a specific qualification. If the student fails in each amongst from the first two stages, he/she is not permitted to enroll in the final stage. The final grade is calculated as a result of averaging out the test and oral examination grades. Thus, the granting of qualifications within the educational programme on General Medicine specialization leading to “MD” qualification is ensured through an accurate mechanism, which comes to prove, that the graduate has acquired final learning outcomes.

There is a certain drawback in that the said mechanism is clearly at play mainly during the final certification and less in application during the mid-term examinations – a stage, when knowledge assessment is chiefly carried out through test-papers, and the checking of manual skills is not always decisive, even though being a crucially important component in assessment of learning outcomes.

According to the regulation of Final Attestation the Board Assesses students learning outcomes (knowledge and skills and competences) against Academic Program intended learning outcomes, State Academic Standard on General Medicine Speciality (<<MD>>, code 060100) and National Framework of Qualifications of Republic of Armenia.

Traditionally (since 1920) in YSMU as well as in most of international medical HEI there is no Master Thesis as a graduation requirement (except experimental implementation for Pharmacy Program in 2004-2006) which does not contradict WFME requirements.

Standard 4.3: There are set mechanisms for review and improvement of student assessment.

Assessment system, employed within the Bachelor’s and Master’s PEPs on General Medicine specialisation, is not substantially different from those of other PEPs implemented in the University. This is largely determined by historically shaped University administrative ethos (with the exception of newly launched “Public Health” Master’s programme, the final certification of which envisages defence of a Master’s thesis (see Criterion 3 of self-analysis report, institutional accreditation)).

Since 2012 the University Centre for Quality Control and Assurance has been regularly conducting surveys among internal stakeholders, which have allowed for more

effective improvement of the assessment system (questionnaires of surveys conducted among students and instructors are submitted).

Though the given state education standard is not a flexible mechanism, the University, taking due account of the internal stakeholders' opinions, achieves certain flexibility (surveys among internal stakeholders: departmental meetings protocols, Board meetings of General Medicine Faculty, meetings of cyclic-methodical commissions, meeting convened by the central methodical commission, Rector's Council meeting, Scientific Council's meeting). These bodies maintain a constant focus on the improvement of assessment system. It is worth mentioning, that the University Statute stipulates certain governance types, and a hybrid governance created resulted in significant improvement of knowledge and competencies assessment system; in particular, by Scientific Council Decision, paper-based test examination in the first-year of studies was substituted with the computerised exam starting from 2012-2013 academic year. This was done to ensure greater transparency and unbiased approach.

It is specifically noteworthy, that the University has ensured wide introduction of test-based exams in the said and other PEPs since 2006 prior to the approval of respective state education standard (2010). This was conditioned by the adoption of the new Law on Higher and Postgraduate Education in the Republic of Armenia (law, citation). Pursuant to this Law, competition for refund of the student's tuition fees through the State Budget financing is organised not only taking account of entrance examination results, but also test and academic year examination results on a competitive basis (academic rotation). In these conditions, the competition is even harder between students, and thus, the necessity for creating and employing comprehensible, clear, fair and transparent system was revealed. The analysis of data on rotation within the last five years proved, that the system is quite fair in sense that the number of students with minimum level of academic achievement is not high. Taking into account of the fact, that currently, there is no state education standard in the Republic of Armenia for educational programme in "General Medicine" specialization (060100) qualifying for "Master of Medicine", and having regard to the surveys conducted among internal stakeholders, the University Scientific Council made a decision on conducting oral examinations in professional disciplines upon completion of first-year of

studies in Master's Course (preserving test-based component). This decision was largely predetermined by worry of internal (students, instructors, administrative staff) and external (chairpersons of final certification commissions) stakeholders: that *“unusual” oral* examination in front of commission student takes could be considered as not sufficiently valid. In the nearest future, comparative analysis of 2013/2014 final examination data will enable taking more vigorous actions towards improvement of knowledge assessment system.

Summarising what has been stated thus far, it is evident, that accurate mechanisms are at play to improve specific PEP assessment system within the scope of powers of the University and the Faculty implementing the PEP. However, description of improvement mechanisms reflected in respective institutional legal acts remains largely unsecured.

Standard 4.4: The institution treats students fairly and equitably through policies and procedures, which address student conduct and grievances.

Within the PEP, equal and unbiased approach is followed towards students through the procedures under the Armenian legislation and clearly defined University policies (reference to the law, internal disciplinary regulation, circulars of rector/vice-rector, procedures). To note, given instruments provide comprehensive description on the appellate process as well. Students' complaints are considered with due regard, and fairness and transparency are ensured throughout the appellate process. The following example can prove a useful reference point: in 2006-2012 no claims or complaints were filed by students or their representatives and submitted to respective external bodies on fairness or transparency issues. Student representatives actively participate in the appellate process. The appellate issue on oral examinations in first-year Master's professional disciplines (exams to be held in the forthcoming summer session of 2012-2013 academic year) has been thoroughly discussed among internal stakeholders. Respective procedure is currently developed to be submitted to the University rector for approval. It is prepared having regard to the procedure of PEP final certification in Master's Course and the practices of other PEP in Master's (professional

education programme for international students granting qualification of a certified specialist in “General Medicine”, “Stomatology”, “Pharmacy”; Master’s professional education programmes).

Standard 4.5: The institution has clearly articulated policies promoting academic integrity and tracking for plagiarism.

The University pursues a clearly defined policy, which promotes ensuring academic integrity across the said PEP and other university programmes. This quality is chiefly achieved under stringent supervision over and transparency of examination processes, as well as through explicitly defined student assessment mechanisms.

Examinations are mainly conducted in written test-based form. Computerised test-based system of holding examinations is employed starting from the first academic year (see YSMU Rector Order N53 M26 of 26.04.2011...). This has resulted in minimizing human involvement/attribution bias in the process of examination to a great extent.

Supervision and monitoring of the examination process are conducted by administration and instructors at examination sites/rooms, as well as in a distant mode – through a system of cameras. If necessary, an appellate process is held on exam outcomes, in which the presence and participation of students and the representative of the Student Parliament – as a defender of students’ rights and interests – is ensured.

Oral examinations are conducted in the presence of the Examination Commission. Students, upon desire, may as well take part as observers. The whole exam process is recorded in order to avoid possible errors during appellate process.

Commission on Final Certification Examination consists of University officers and Armenian leading specialists practicing beyond the University. Moreover, the Chairperson of the Commission is not a University officer as well.

Fight against plagiarism in the course of self-analysis is not enlisted in the University policy priorities, since, except for tests, a thesis or other form of written examination is not envisaged to assess student knowledge within the education programme on “General Medicine”.

Examples of good practice

1. The University has a clearly set system aimed at assessing the formation of intended learning outcomes, and this system is available to students and instructors.
2. In the reporting period the University and the Faculty implementing the PEP - prioritizing the factors of transparency, unbiased approach and fairness called forth in light of implementing the rotation system (State Scholarship for 100% Discount for tuition fee and State Stipend) approved by the Armenian legislation in 2006 - have significantly advanced knowledge assessment test-based system.
3. Student knowledge assessment – achieved through final certification examination aimed at granting respective qualifications – is conducted pursuant to a clearly defined mechanism, which ensures quality and accuracy when assessing learning outcomes, as well as transparency of assessment standards and processes.

Examples of not-so-good practice

1. The process of analysing and considering – with students - mistakes made by students frequently encountered within examinations is not yet coordinated.
2. During ongoing (mid-term) examinations student knowledge is mainly assessed on the basis of test-papers only, and the assessment of manual skills is conducted exceptionally at the end of field practicum and during the final graduate certification.
3. Even though improvement is carried out within the scope of powers of the University and the Faculty implementing the PEP, the issue of a description of improvement mechanisms remains unresolved.

CRITERION 5.

Research and development

The programme promotes its research objectives and projects while ensuring link between teaching and learning and research.

Ambitions: Within the scope of the educational programme for "General Medicine" specialisation leading to "Medical Doctor" qualification, the University seeks to create conditions for carrying out research activities by professors and students, and to enhance the effectiveness of the use of scientific capacity, as well as to promote the effective learning of students and to ensure the sustainable recruitment of the academic staff of the University, through increasing the student engagement in research activities (see the Strategy Programme of the University).

Standard 5.1. The programme has a long-term strategy and medium and short-term programs which address its research interests in a due manner.

The functions that promote the professors and postgraduate students to undertake and accomplish research and creativity initiatives are carried out within the scope of the educational programme for "General Medicine" specialisation leading to "Medical Doctor" qualification. In the research area, the Strategy of the University very often includes the long-term strategy, the mid-term and short-term programmes covered by the PEP, since the coordination of the research activities of all the PEPs of the Institution is mainly carried out at the institutional level, through the joint activities of the three major units administering the scientific and organisational activities of the Institution: Research Coordination Board,

Department of Scientific-Medical Organisation and the Scientific Research Center (see the Institutional Programme, Criterion 1.6).

The staff of the academic departments and the academic staff delivering the PEP are widely involved in four of the five main directions of the scientific activities of the University for 2006/2011. Moreover, the major part of scientific research programmes of these predominant directions is implemented in the academic departments delivering the PEP. Mid-term programmes for research work topics, with the duration of three years, which determine the Long-Term Strategy of the PEP, are established for the academic departments and university clinics delivering the PEP and carrying out research activities. The academic departments delivering the PEP present in their work plans the research work topics planned for the following year and the persons responsible for carrying them out, while the performance of the planned activities is presented in the reports submitted over the next year. The above-mentioned work plans and reports are submitted both to the institutions of the University, which carry out scientific and organisational activities, and to the Dean's Office which carries out analysis once a year on the work plans and reports of the academic departments, and also on research activities. The Dean's Office submits a report on the findings of the analysis to the Faculty Council once a year.

Standard 5.2. The programme promotes development and innovation through sound policies.

Within the scope of the PEP, the Policy aimed at the research development is implemented both by university-wide scientific and organisational institutions, and the academic departments, Dean's Office and Faculty Council delivering the PEP.

One of the most essential duties of academic departments is the implementation of scientific and research activities, the publication of the results of the performed activities and the introduction thereof into practical medicine (see Regulations of the YSMU Academic Department, approved by the Order of the YSMU Rector No 24M-2 of 2009). Under the same Regulations, the academic departments are obliged to participate in scientific

programmes of the University. The academic departments carry out discussion not only on academic-methodical, but also scientific and research activities, which are also planned.

The Faculty Council and the Dean's Office which coordinate the academic-methodical activities carried out within the framework of the PEP, are obliged, under the Regulations of the Faculty, to address also the issues relating to the scientific and research activities (see Regulations of the YSMU Faculty, approved by the Order of the YSMU Rector No 24M-2 of 2009). Pursuant to the work plan approved by the Faculty Council, the Dean presents once a year the analysis of the work plans and reports of the academic departments introducing therein issues relating to the scientific and research activities of the academic departments. However, the role of the Faculty Council and the Dean's Office within the policy aimed at the development of scientific research carried out within the framework of the PEP is rather limited.

Standard 5.3. The programme emphasizes internationalization of the research.

The University staff and students deliver reports abroad; publish scientific papers in foreign high-ranking scientific journals, regarding the results of the scientific and research activities carried out within the PEP. The University provides, to the extent possible, (financial) assistance for foreign business trips (scientific conferences) of the staff, carries out exchange programmes, organises international symposia, invites foreign leading specialists in the field of medicine, professors, scientists that appear with reports before the academic staff and the students of the University (see the reports of the Rector and the Vice-Rector for Scientific Affairs).

All the issues of the scientific, scientific and information journals (“New Armenian Medical Journal”, “Medicine, Science and Education”) are sent to the libraries of several foreign countries. In the Editorial Board “The New Armenian Medical Journal” there are Scientists from Foreign Universities (i.e. Greece, USA, Russia, Italy, Georgia etc.) The Articles of the Journal Are Cited in the Scopus and VINITI Data Base. There is a raise of

Citation Index in 2009-2011 and international cooperation (publications with foreign colleagues) (see report of Editor of “The News Armenian Medical Journal”, and the web site of Journal www.ysmu.am/media/new-armenian-medical-journal).

Standard 5.4. There are well established mechanisms for linking research and teaching.

Clear-cut mechanisms linking the research and academic process are applied both within the framework of all the PEPs of the YSMU and the educational programme for "General Medicine" specialisation leading to “Medical Doctor” qualification. This link is ensured for all the years of learning; however, it is of greater importance, in particular, during 4th to 6th years of study, while studying specialised disciplines, as well as in university clinics. This is when the future physician is formed, who may not possess only passive knowledge, but should master active research methods to be able to take independent and scientifically founded decisions in the course of his/her work activities, to be able to make use of professional, scientific literature and apply current research methods. One of the peculiarities of the learning process for future physicians also concerns the fact that during the trainings conducted in the clinics the student already, to this or that extent, carries out research activities by communicating with patients and completing the patient’s medical history.

The engagement of future physicians in research activities develop flexibility required for reasoning and solution of practical issues, ability to orientate themselves in emergency situations and to find not standard solutions. The students carry out both academic and research, as well as scientific and research activities. Academic and research activities are carried out by almost all the students, and they are the constituent part of the academic process. Very frequently the research is of theoretical nature and is usually summarised through abstract reports and is highly emphasised, since in this stage the student turns from a passive student to an active researcher. From the cognitive viewpoint, this research method is exploratory, however, from the functional perspective, it is educational, that is the acquisition of objective research findings is not always realistic.

A lower number of students, i.e. the best students, are engaged in scientific and research activities, as opposed to academic and research activities, and their activities are coordinated in scientific unions set up within the academic departments. The nature of scientific and research activities of such students is conditioned by the subject area of the academic departments. The scientific and research activities carried out in the academic departments through the engagement of students, may aim at teaching the students the essentials of the scientific and research work, and research activities are carried out under the guidance of a skilled scientific worker or professor. The scientific and research activities are summarised in scientific papers and reports. The students deliver scientific reports both in Armenia and abroad. The operation of such scientific unions within the academic departments provides opportunities to select the best students who can later on join the academic staff of the University. It is the competence and the responsibility of the academic departments to engage the students in scientific activities (see Regulations of the YSMU Academic Department, approved by the Order of the YSMU Rector No 24M-2 of 2009).

One disadvantage that may be mentioned in this regard is that the limited material resources allocated for scientific activities often cause difficulties for the operation of the student scientific unions.

The academic and research, as well as the scientific and research activities carried out through the involvement of the students are planned in advance, i.e. they are the constituent part of the work plan of the academic departments, which is submitted to the Dean's Office at the beginning of the academic year. A report on the accomplished activities is presented one year later. The presence of student scientific unions is the most essential indicator of the performance of the academic departments.

The staff of the research laboratories of the University is also engaged in teaching process. In particular, the students attending the master's course are introduced with such topics that closely relate to the research done within the framework of the scientific programme implemented thereby.

During theoretical and practical studies, the professors rather frequently provide information to their students on the findings of the scientific research carried out by

themselves and their colleagues, which helps the students to have an idea of the latest scientific achievements and development perspectives in the given area. In particular, the research on the application of new technologies introduced in the clinical departments for therapeutic and diagnostic purposes has been of great teaching value for the students.

Examples of good practice

1. In the research area, the Strategy Programme of the University includes the long-term strategy, the mid-term and short-term programmes covered by the PEP.
2. There is a clear-cut policy aimed at encouraging the research activities of young professors of the University.
3. The senior students are involved in research activities carried out in the clinics.

Examples of not-so-good practice

1. The role of the Faculty Council and the Dean's Office within the policy aimed at developing the scientific research carried out within the framework of the PEP is rather limited.
2. Limited material resources allocated for scientific activities often cause difficulties for the operation of the student scientific unions.
3. There is no mechanism within the knowledge assessment credit system that may encourage the students' participation in the activities of scientific unions.

CRITERION 6.

Learning environment

The quality educational provisions are ensured through creating an environment conducive to learning.

Ambitions: Improvement of the logistics of the University, directed towards (aimed at) updating of the content of the professional education programme "General Medicine" and modernisation of the methods of education, according to the quality assurance requirements in the education and research fields.

Standard 6.1. The programme has its property and resources, which effectively support the implementation of its stated mission and objectives and create an environment conducive to learning.

In the reporting period, the fundamental issue of improving the logistics of the University has been emphasized and stressed among the priorities of the YSMU Strategic Programme, generally, and with regard to the specialisation "General Medicine", in particular. Within the mentioned context, particular importance in the University has been attached to the reconstruction and re-equipment of four educational institutions — "Kentron", "Muratsan", "Davitashen" and "Arabkir" clinics. According to it:

(a) the current state of lecture halls has been assessed, the time-phased reconstruction, modernisation and expansion of lecture halls are being carried out successfully, in line with the educational programmes and the issues of developing the contingent;

(b) the clinics of the "Kentron" and "Muratsan" educational institutions, where the academic process for bachelor's and master's degrees are mainly organised, have been reconstructed and provided with modern medical equipments with the help of which the base of didactic materials for academic processes has concurrently been improved;

(c) the clinical diagnostic laboratory of the "Muratsan" educational institution — which is provided with modern diagnostic and medical equipments and necessary reagents — has been completely reconstructed;

(d) certain positive steps have been implemented towards academic process, computerisation of the correspondence and introduction of new technologies;

(e) the introduction of modern medical and diagnostic equipments in the clinics, provision of the clinical professional academic departments with educational training devices (phantoms, simulators) and artificial waxworks are underway;

(f) a perspective programme has been elaborated for the modernisation of the educational and scientific laboratories of the University, according to the educational institutions and clinics;

(g) the technical expertise, capital repair and reconstruction programme of the buildings of the educational institutions of the University is under time-phased implementation.

Standard 6.2. The programme ensures that all students understand the requirements and receive timely, useful and regular information and advice about relevant academic requirements.

Since the independence of Armenia, when the education of students in the higher education institutions of the Republic is carried out only in the mother-tongue, the preparation of professional literature in the Armenian language is of vital importance. Until 2005, mainly Russian language literature was used during the academic process. This was the reason why the goal of preparing professional literature in the Armenian language corresponding to the requirements of modern science, was set. And nowadays, the Higher Education Institution can nearly fully provide the local students with professional literature in the Armenian language. The problem is that these materials are mainly academic-methodical manuals and methodical instructions, whereas it is very important to have also textbooks in the mother-tongue.

As regards education in the English and Russian languages, this issue is both easy and difficult to solve. The first option is due to the fact that well-known textbooks in the English and Russian languages are used during the teaching process. For example, when teaching biochemistry, the students are recommended to use the following materials in the English language: «Harper's, Illustrated Biochemistry», «A. Lehninger, Principles of Biochemistry», «Lippincott, Illustrated Biochemistry», and in the Russian language — «Биохимия: Уч. под ред. Северина» ["Biochemistry", Textbook by Severina].

It is worth mentioning that when selecting professional literature, the academic departments take into account the countries of the students they work with. For example, since the education in the English language is organised mainly for the students from India, authoritative textbooks, published in India, are used for them as a professional literature. For example, the textbook «U. Satyanarayana, U.Chakrapani, Biochemistry», widely applicable in India, is used in the teaching process of biochemistry.

However, the academic departments are not limited to this textbook only. Since 2000, they have commenced publishing academic-methodical manuals and methodical instructions in the English and Russian languages (for example, «Lipids», handout, Biochemistry department of YSMU); and this database is added and updated every year.

Thus, during the reporting period, the following materials have been published:

1. Textbook 12 (in the Armenian language), 0 (in the English language), 0 (in the Russian language);

2. Methodical manual 27 (in the Armenian language), 8 (in the English language), 8 (in the Russian language);

As it has already been mentioned in Standard 2.3 b., accessible information, fostering the learning, is also provided through advanced technical means: electronic power point presentations, animations and slide shows are widely used (mainly during lectures).

In this context, partial introduction of the mentioned method in several academic departments of the YSMU by participants of the training courses within distance and

electronic learning implemented by Tempus Programme in the international level is worth mentioning. (see the web-pages: livejournal.com/pathphys).

As regards provision of accessible consultation promoting the learning within the scope of the programme, as it has already been mentioned, consultation hours are in place in the academic departments every day, during which the specialists provide free of charge professional consultation in all the languages.

Standard 6.3. There are necessary teaching and learning resources to meet ensure achievement of intended learning outcomes.

For the purpose of ensuring the PEP of the YSMU General Medicine Faculty, textbooks and academic-methodical manuals, elaborated in compliance with the PEP content and approved by the Central Methodical Committee and the Scientific Council of the University, are used as a compulsory professional literature in the academic departments teaching in the Faculty of General Medicine. The materials are available in the library in necessary quantity or are provided by the academic department.

Acquisition of practical skills of the PEP component in the teaching process of the fundamental (base) disciplines is ensured through laboratory experiment for the carrying out of which the academic departments teaching the mentioned disciplines, have laboratories with minimum completeness of equipment of necessary experimental base. In several academic departments, the students who are interested in this process, are involved in the student scientific unions of academic departments.

Aids and appliances, such as computers, experimental modelling (computer, on animals), information on preparations, laboratory value, slides, images, etc., used during practical studies are among the necessary components of the academic-methodical base. Within the framework of the above-mentioned, there are certainly some measures that are applied during the practical studies; however, their quality, and quantity are far from being sufficient and up-to-date. This mainly refers to the theoretical academic departments.

Acquisition of practical skills at the stage of teaching specialised clinical disciplines is ensured through their direct engagement in appropriate manipulations (bandaging, operations, patient examinations, data analysis, etc.). The enhancement of the effectiveness of the process is directly promoted by the fact that the enrichment of the logistics of the university clinics is one of the priority issues of the Higher Education Institution and one of the target directions of development of the HEI for the reporting period. It is worth mentioning that the creation of the Manual Skills Development Center (Manipulation Center) has aimed at the strengthening of the last component of the educational programme mentioned above.

In order to provide the PEP with the necessary logistics, at the end of each (academic) year the departments studying their needs present bid (application) to the relevant administrative structures.

The PEP binding component is also the internship practice, within the framework whereof the HEI has concluded agreements with the developed medical institutions covering all the Marzes of the Republic and provided the students with the opportunity to acquire the skills required under the above-stated practice in better equipped clinics.

For the recent years, the strategic measures aimed at strengthening the international cooperation of the HEI provide the opportunity to implement a specific phase of the educational programme envisaged for the students at various foreign HEIs having sophisticated logistic resources.

Examples of Good Practice

1. Establishment of clinical education institutions
2. Expansion of the computer database
3. Update of the library complex
4. Gradual re-equipment of academic and scientific and clinical laboratories

Examples of Not-So-Good Practice

1. The problem of updating the learning environment of theoretical departments is not addressed (or partially addressed)
2. Insufficiency of lecture halls
3. Low-level of provision with academic and technical means
4. Lack of resource centres
5. The procedure of off-loading of academic programmes, ensuring the compliance of their content with the labour market needs and the required professional capacities (insufficient level of monitoring, meta-analysis) is implemented with due regularity
6. Necessity for methodical improvement of the academic process
7. The level of organisation of the academic process, the quality of supporting services, moral and psychological atmosphere in an internal environment of the University need to be improved.

CRITERION 7

Quality Assurance

The programme has internal quality assurance system that promotes its maintenance and continuous improvement

Ambitions: The internal quality system applied in the University has a mandate to ensure — through the monitoring of internal and external stakeholders — the continuous development of the educational programme and the embedding of the quality culture in the faculties.

Standard 7.1. The quality assurance is designed and operated to attend societal needs and students' requests, as well as to check the functions of the system itself.

The Educational Quality Assessment and Assurance Committee has been functioning in the Faculty of General Medicine (educational programme for the profession of "General Medicine") since 2011, the main functions whereof arise from the policy and the strategy of the Quality Assessment and Assurance Center. According to the above-mentioned, the functions of the Quality Assessment and Assurance Faculty Committee are as follows:

- supervising and participating in the performance of activities regarding the planning, elaboration and amendment of the educational programme, as well as the quality assurance procedures thereof;
- supervising and participating in the assessment of the appropriate supply of educational programmes by methodical, technical and human resources;
- assuming responsibility for ensuring the learning quality assurance of the educational programme and for the control over the consistent implementation of the decisions aimed at internal control;

- guaranteeing the satisfaction of stakeholders and their participation in various phases of management;
- fostering the development of a quality assurance culture within the faculties;
- submitting annual reports to the Educational Quality Assessment and Assurance Center of the University.

A policy for performance of the functions of the Quality Assessment and Assurance Faculty Committee has been worked out, pursuant to which the Committee shall ensure:

- monitoring of the educational programme, periodical review and implementation thereof;
- self-assessment of the educational programme;
- transparency of faculty quality control procedures;
- participation of students, alumni and employers in the internal assessment procedure;
- elaboration of mechanisms directed to the continuous enhancement of learning quality;
- implementation of self-assessment procedure through feedback.

During 2013 faculty QA committee planning to conduct monitoring of educational programs through collaboration with methodological board. Questionnaire was developed with help using of which among internal and external stakeholders we are planning to emphasise the questions directed to improvement of programs. Faculty QA committee and methodological board will discuss these questions. After discussion of suggestions mechanisms will be developed for improvement of program.

Standard 7.2. There are well-established policies and procedures for programme internal quality assurance.

No institution for assessment of performance quality of the YSMU subdivisions had operated under the YSMU until 2006. In 2005, however, when the Republic of Armenia signed the Bologna Agreement and the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On higher education" was adopted, it became necessary to introduce European education quality

assessment system. Thus, the Department of Reforms and Integration was established in 2006 under the guidance of the Vice-Rector coordinating these activities (see the Order of the Rector).

The main objective of the Department was to study the experience of the European and American medical schools and to work out recommendations regarding the changes, which derive from the requirements of the Bologna System, to be made to the educational process.

The Department was also engaged in educational quality issues; this function was not, however, of a regulated nature. In cooperation with faculty cyclical methodology commissions, the Department has reviewed the syllabuses, made horizontal and vertical integration thereof, developed and introduced the testing system, elaborated the procedure for assessment of students' knowledge, etc. The policy and strategy of the Department of Reforms and Integration, however, have not provided sufficient grounds for implementing quality assessment and assurance procedures. The human and material resources would not suffice for organising quality assurance works, either.

Having participated in PICQA, DIUSAS projects of Tempus, and in the "Higher education reforms" sub-projects of the World Bank "Education Quality and Compliance" project, having studied the quality assessment systems applied by the European well-known higher education institutions, as well as having assessed the effective performance of the University Department of Reforms and Integration, the members of the Department staff provided justification to the administration of the University for the necessity to establish the Educational Quality Assessment and Assurance Center. In 2011, the Department of Quality Assessment and Assurance was established, and the quality assessment and assurance system was introduced (see the Order of the Rector "On establishing a new Center and Committee").

After establishment of centre strategy plan, policy of centre, processes and procedures of quality assurance of different aspects of university were developed. For example procedures of assessment of students' evaluation system, annual monitoring of educational programs, quizzes among students about quality and effectiveness of teaching and lecturing of YSMU stuff, development of self-assessment reports, qualification of

lecturers, etc. were developed (see above mentioned papers). QA faculty committees discussed developed questionnaires after what they were implemented. Results can be found in web page of university (see webpage). Methodological hand-out of education quality assessment and assurance is in stage of development.

At the end of 2011, Quality Assessment and Assurance Faculty Committees were established in all the faculties of the University, including in the Faculty of General Medicine (see the composition of the Quality Assessment and Assurance Faculty Committees).

The policy of the Quality Assessment and Assurance Faculty Committees, and the functions and the work plan deriving therefrom have been developed; one year (for 2011/2012 academic year) work plan (see the work plan) has been worked out, pursuant to which the Committee shall:

1. develop quality assessment and assurance standards and procedures for elaboration, supervision and review of educational programmes;
2. carry out discussion and monitoring of educational programme (syllabus);
3. develop quality assessment and assurance standards and procedures for assessment based on students' learning outcomes;
4. provide feedback to the alumni and employers.

Standard 7.3. The programme provides an educational feedback system that examines it on the basis of the results of evaluation regarding the level of student achievement against the intended learning and educational objectives.

Pursuant to the policy of the Quality Assessment and Assurance Faculty Committees, the Committee is obliged to gather information through the feedback provided between the internal and external stakeholders, for the purpose of assessment of the related educational programme and its separate components, as well as the improvement thereof.

In 2011-2012, 284 clinical residents (alumni) specialised in "General Medicine", were interviewed for the purpose of assessing the outcomes of the educational programme. The processing of interview data has led to conclusions and recommendations that have been submitted to the University administration (the interview results have been published in the scientific and information journal of the University "Medicine, Science and Education" (see Issue 14 of the Journal).

Preparation of new checklists concerning the assessment of various components of the educational programme is and has been carried out (see the prepared checklists).

Standard 7.4. The internal and external stakeholders are involved in the quality assurance processes.

Only internal stakeholders (professors and students) are included in the quality committee of all the faculties of the University, including the Faculty of General Medicine (see the composition of the Committee). The participation of external stakeholders is limited to their voluntary participation in the interviews held among them. Thus, in 2010, an interview regarding the knowledge of the graduates employed by medical institutions for the last 3 years was held among 247 physicians working in such institutions (see the checklist). The interview results have been summarised, submitted to the Head of the University and published in the scientific and information journal "Medicine, Science and Education" (see Issue 14 of the Journal). When participating in the meetings of academic department, faculty and cyclical committees, internal stakeholders promote the adoption of decisions on improving the quality of education through their recommendations.

It is planned by QA committee to conduct quizzes among doctors, head of departments, clinical ordinators to evaluate learning outcomes, annually starting from 2013.

Standard 7.5. There are set mechanisms in place ensuring dissemination of good practice to other relevant programmes.

Internal quality assurance culture has been newly embedded in the University.

As stated above, the University Quality Assessment and Assurance Center and the corresponding faculty committees have been functioning for only one year. Rules and procedures have been newly developed and introduced to these levels. At the levels of academic departments and subdivisions, no quality assessment and assurance institutions function, and faculty institutions lack relevant experience; consequently, we cannot speak about exchange or dissemination of experience.

Example of good practice

1. The strategy and functions of the internal quality assurance system (faculty committees) have been developed.
2. Within the scope of the educational programme, information regarding the outcomes of the educational programme has been gathered — via feedback — through the interviews held among internal and external stakeholders.

Examples of not-so-good practice

1. The engagement of external stakeholders in the internal quality assurance procedure for the educational programme is not sufficient.
2. It is still impossible to speak about the dissemination of exemplary experience in the educational programme.

List of attachments

1. Strategy plan of YSMU 2006-2010
2. Strategy plan of YSMU 2011-2015
3. Structure of YSMU
4. Syllabuses of YSMU programs
5. Staff selection procedure
6. Procedure for Final Exams of Bachelors and Masters
7. QA policy of YSMU
8. Statute of YSMU
9. Academic Council Regulation
10. Department Staff, Lecturers' Ranks, Academic Load and Remuneration Regulation
11. Institutional self-evaluation procedure of YSMU
12. Procedure of QA of learning resources and student support services
13. Statute of student parliament
14. Procedure of monitoring of educational programs
15. PEP