

Decision of the Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education

Yerevan Haybusak University Institutional accreditation decision

29.06.2023

The Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education decided to accredit the Yerevan Haybusak University for three years with secondary condition.

Pursuant to section 43.5 and 43¹ of the Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation established on the basis of the authorisation contained in subsection 3 of § 38 of the Higher Education Act and in subsection 5 of § 24 of the Statutes of the Education and Youth Board, the Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education (hereinafter the Council) states the following:

1. The Yerevan Haybusak University (hereinafter YHU) and the Estonian Quality Agency for Education (HAKA) agreed on the period for institutional accreditation on 29.08.2022.
2. On the basis of section 8 of the Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation, the following study programmes were also assessed as part of institutional accreditation:

Dentistry	DMD
Management	BA
Law	MA
Psychology	BA
3. By the decision of 24.11.2022, the Director of HAKA approved the composition of the Assessment Committee for Institutional Accreditation (hereinafter the Committee) as follows:

Anca Greere (chair)	Chair of the Panel, Professor, Babes-Bolyai University Cluj; Romania
Jonathan Loose (secretary)	Director of Learning & Teaching, Heythrop College, University of London; UK
Marge Vaikjärv	Student member of the Panel, PhD student of the University of Tartu; Estonia
Tanja Dmitrovič	Professor, former Vice-Rector, University of Ljubljana; Slovenia
Kristi Joamets	Senior Lecturer, Tallinn University of Technology; Estonia
Katri Kerem	Professor, Estonian Business School; Estonia
Kairi Kreegipuu	Professor, Head of the Institute of Psychology, University of Tartu; Estonia



Ewen McColl

Director of Clinical Dentistry, Peninsula Dental School,
University of Plymouth; UK

4. YHU submitted the self-evaluation report to HAKA on 22.01.2023, and the assessment coordinator of HAKA sent the self-evaluation report to the Committee on 16.02.2023.
5. The assessment visit to YHU took place from 17th to 20th April 2023.
6. The Committee sent the draft assessment report to HAKA on 4.06.2023, HAKA forwarded the draft assessment report to the higher education institution for comment on 5.06.2023, and YHU submitted its comments on 19.06.2023.
7. The Committee submitted the final assessment report to HAKA on 19.06.2023. The assessment report is an integral part of the decision. The report is available on the HAKA website.
8. The Secretary of the Council forwarded the final assessment report and the self-evaluation report to the members of the Council on 22.06.2023.
9. The Assessment Committee's assessments were as follows:

Standard	Assessment
Strategic management	Partially conforms to requirements
Resources	Partially conforms to requirements
Quality culture	Partially conforms to requirements
Academic ethics	Partially conforms to requirements
Internationalisation	Partially conforms to requirements
Teaching staff	Partially conforms to requirements
Study programme	Partially conforms to requirements
Learning and teaching	Partially conforms to requirements
Student assessment	Partially conforms to requirements
Learning support systems	Partially conforms to requirements
Research, development and/or other creative activity	Does not conform to requirements
Service to society	Partially conforms to requirements

10. At its meeting of 29 June 2023, with the participation of 12 members, the Council discussed the received documents and decided to highlight from the assessment report the following strengths¹, areas of concern and recommendations² and opportunities for further improvement³ regarding YHU.

10.1 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Strengths

¹ Achievements that exceed the level of the standard (not compliance with the standard) are presented as strengths.

² Areas of concern and recommendations point to shortcomings in meeting the requirements of the institutional accreditation standard and affect the formation of the final decision of the Council.

³ Opportunities for further improvement are proposals for improvement that do not contain a reference to noncompliance with the standard and the inclusion or exclusion of which is at the discretion of the institution of higher education. Proposals for further developments will not affect the final decision of the Council.

1. The University's commitment to promoting quality through participation in HAKA accreditations.
2. The University's diligence in relation to responding to many of the recommendations of the previous HAKA accreditation. The Panel recognises steady progress and encourages YHU to continue with these efforts.

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. YHU engagement with stakeholders does not ensure that the University receives sufficient input, at strategic level, for the directions it is taking. YHU should strengthen its communication with internal and external stakeholders in relation to institutional priorities, so that actions across the various institutional structures can be clearly guided by such priorities.
2. The strategic plan proposes targets which are unjustifiable and can deplete the resources of YHU. There was no concrete awareness of risk in relation to these targets, nor was there a clear measure of success, beyond a numerical/statistical evaluation. Strategic planning should propose attainable targets which are accompanied by a comprehensive risk analysis and offer qualitative measures of success. YHU should focus on consolidating existing arrangements for partnerships and curricula before expanding exponentially. The Panel sees this as an area of concern especially in regards to the portfolio of programmes.
3. YHU does not apply a clear differentiation between leadership and academic decision-making, and that many decisions are still noted to be addressed in informal ways. The governance system should be strengthened for a clear delineation between institutional direction and academic decision-making, and all decision-making should be properly formalized and systematically monitored. Committees should be provided with Terms of Reference and explicit reporting lines.
4. The University has a benchmarking policy, however the procedure for benchmarking is extremely limited and does not form part of a collaborative partnership with comparable institutions. The University should apply the benchmarking policy in all its detail and aim to establish effective partnerships at an institutional level for the sharing of qualitative and quantitative data which can drive improvements across all institutional activities, and not be restricted to specific areas of individual programmes. In a partnership, the sharing of information becomes vital to both partners as they discuss possibilities to support each other procedurally.
5. Data collection and data management at YHU are not sufficiently fit for purpose and, hence, cannot support strategic drivers or operational activities on the ground. YHU should ensure that the data being collected is relevant, reliable and when analysed has the potential to support both strategic and operational decision-making.

10.2. RESOURCES

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. It is difficult to establish how performance is linked to remuneration. YHU should further improve the transparency and understanding of the principles of employees'

remuneration. This issue should be considered when benchmarking against other institutions nationally and internationally.

2. It is unclear how improving English language skills was recognised in performance appraisals. YHU should further systematise staff development processes to ensure that activities support the development of new knowledge, skills and behaviours, with particular emphasis on English Language development.
3. The library is under resourced with regards to allow full utilisation of e learning. YHU should focus investment in the library to extend the digital resources to enable staff to exploit e-learning opportunities for the benefit of students' learning.
4. Certain programmes have an over reliance on hourly paid staff. YHU should review utilisation of hourly-rate staff to mitigate the sustainability risk for programmes where there is overreliance on staff paid on hourly-contracts.
5. There is limited evidence of systematic marketing with regards to the overseas market. Resource allocation should be increased to improve marketing which appears to be ad hoc rather than systematic particularly international marketing.
6. Classrooms were ill equipped with regards to blended learning. Classrooms need upgrading so as to facilitate modern teaching techniques, including having cameras for hybrid delivery (not just the laptop), if hybrid teaching is to continue in this format.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. Steps are being taken to promote green initiatives. The University may wish to continue to consider environmental factors as a high priority for resource allocation.
2. SP Dentistry: Students reported an enthusiasm to have more clinics on main campus. YHU to complete build of multidisciplinary clinic (currently ongoing) and consider availability of Digital Intra Oral Scanners (DIOS) in this facility for demonstration and future proofing of clinical education.

10.3. QUALITY CULTURE

Strengths

1. The development of quality tools specifically geared towards the ESGs and HAKA quality standards.

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. Currently there are multiple surveys used, however these do not render most effective results and do not play a full and direct role in guiding decisions at the University. The University should revise the usability of surveys to ensure these are rendering relevant outcomes to inform decision-making and support improvements across all areas of provision, including specifically targeted improvements for individual courses.
2. For some categories of stakeholders informal interactions constitute the only form for feedback-gathering. Some of this feedback may fail to reach formal channels so as to be given the attention and oversight needed. The University should formalise feedback

arrangements with all categories of stakeholders to ensure feedback can be systematically captured and analysed.

3. The study programme working groups (SPWG) are less functional and with little direct real impact on quality assurance developments. The study programmes (SP) information packages being produced lacked in consistency across programmes and frequently failed to offer clear details in alignment with EHEA requirements. The University should revise the working arrangements of the SPWG and create more oversight from CDEQA to ensure good quality SP documentation is consistently produced. (See also Standard 7)
4. Many of the actions taken were in response to issues raised, i.e. when problems were brought to the attention of senior management, rather than in anticipation of possible developments as part of futureproofing considerations. The University should take a more proactive approach to quality assurance to ensure that a quality culture is recognised and becomes integrated across all stakeholder groups.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. There are many policies which are being revised as and when necessary, without a formal cycle for such revision and with the high risk of stakeholders losing sight of changes made, as random and frequent dissemination can be less effective. The University may wish to develop a policy for policy management to facilitate a cycle for revision.

10.4. ACADEMIC ETHICS

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. The system for disseminating the knowledge of ethics among YHU staff and students is not clear and not sufficient. The system for disseminating knowledge of ethics among YHU members should be more comprehensive. There should be more training for personnel about principles and knowledge of academic integrity should be integrated into every study programme.
2. Current regulations regarding all types of complaints do not ensure confidentiality. YHU should develop clear and thorough procedural rules for solving complaints of various types, including discrimination, whistle-blowing etc. There should be an explicit process for appealing the judgments of the Ethics Commission on any matter. Complaints procedures should, as a matter of priority, guarantee confidentiality at all stages of the process, i.e. the availability of the *content* of complaints and the identities of complainants and complainees should be confidential, with the policy specifying to whom this information is available for the purpose of resolving the complaint.
3. The rules regulating the approvals by the Ethics Commission are not clear. Research involving human participants should be approved ethically with clear rules as to how approval may be approached. Systems should be developed to monitor the implementation of this. For the beginning, this should include the submission of all research projects for ethical approval until there is a clear understanding of the rules to be enforced. Decisions to give or withhold ethical approval should be made through a comprehensive, documented and transparent process.
4. The Panel is concerned about the copyright matters regarding teaching materials. Matters of copyright regarding the duplication, digitisation, and storage of teaching materials

should be explored. Clear and transparent rules should be developed in these areas that are in line with international practice and relevant legislation.

5. YHU policy regarding plagiarism in digital environment does not accord to the current needs considering the development of technology. Plagiarism prevention and plagiarism detection in the digital environment need improvement in approaches and means by which plagiarism is confirmed should make use of human-decision-making practices.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. YHU may wish to explore how other high education institutions have organised and regulated the procedure of ethical cases and research control, and see if a separation of functions across two parallel committees may prove beneficial.
2. YHU may wish to develop policy details for AI-based tools which have the potential to intensify attempts at academic integrity violations and for social media communication via University specific channels.

10.5. INTERNATIONALISATION

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. The internationalisation strategy and its operationalisation have only been adopted recently, and it is too early to judge their success. YHU should establish a timetable with milestones and checkpoints to monitor the achievement of objectives in a regular, structured, and coherent manner. It should also establish feedback loops that allow for continuous improvement in the level and quality of internationalisation.
2. English language skills are largely lacking. The YHU should continue its efforts to improve the English language skills of its students and staff by offering language courses.
3. There are not many opportunities to participate in mobility and at the same time there is a reluctance on the part of students and faculty to participate. The YHU should actively support student and teacher mobility by creating more exchange opportunities and promoting the benefits of mobility to all stakeholders. The University may wish to include exchange opportunities in the study programmes to facilitate mobility.
4. In its strategic plan, the YHU set a goal of expanding its partner network and sign several new cooperation agreements with foreign institutions. This raises concerns for the Panel. The YHU should shift its focus from expanding the international partner network to increasing the quality of the network and deepening relationships with international partner institutions that are most appropriate in terms of student and faculty mobility, study programmes, and research projects.
5. In some programmes, such as Medicine and Dentistry, where clinical practice is an essential part of the curriculum, students must be able to communicate with patients in their native language. Despite the introduction of obligatory Armenian courses, it is not anticipated that the minimum required level of Armenian can be achieved by most international students. The YHU should sign contracts with clinics in other countries to allow international students to complete internships in their home countries as a formalised part of their study programme.

6. International students face many barriers when they begin with their studies in Armenia. The induction process for international students should be adapted to their needs and challenges related to living and studying in a foreign country.
7. SP Management: There is almost no student mobility. YHU should take measures to increase student mobility.
8. SP Psychology: There were almost no international contacts, It is important to take the university's internationalisation strategy seriously (i.e., work out an action plan for Psychology SP), as it can help to raise the level and demands of education through international contacts. The employee evaluation system did not support internationalisation activities. Regular assessment of academic staff should be developed to include also internationalisation in all its forms.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. The recruitment process for foreign students could be greatly improved by establishing a functioning website with information about programmes, fees, admission requirements, and study conditions (such as housing, insurance, etc.). The application form should be available on the YHU website so that foreign students can apply directly to YHU programmes without going through intermediaries (such as agents).
2. SP Dentistry: Due to COVID staff reported limited attendance at international dental conferences. The panel recommends encouragement of academics to attend international conferences face to face in order to raise profile of YHU in line with internationalisation agenda, and present research abstracts as appropriate.

10.6. TEACHING STAFF

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. Workload is specified only in terms of teaching hours. YHU should adopt a holistic system that takes into account teaching, research, and administrative workloads and specify all work commitments in employment contracts. (see also Standard 2.)
2. There is some concern about the sustainability of employing part-time, non-permanent and hourly-paid staff, which could jeopardise the quality of academic programmes. The YHU should limit the scope of hourly paid faculty and employ key faculty on long-term (permanent), full-time contracts. (see also Standard 2)
3. The University uses a ranking system (based on self-evaluations) to assess annual performance. Although most key components of academic work are monitored, this system has several shortcomings. The YHU should rethink the measurement points so that they capture current performance and outcomes, link the system to workload allocation, and establish feedback loops to close the gaps in meeting the goals set in the annual plan as well as address their root causes.
4. Academic support related to access to scholarly literature does not meet the standards of higher education. The YHU should significantly improve library resources by providing access to online scholarly databases.

5. SP Management: Despite the high number of international partners the teaching staff is not participating in international mobility. YHU should increase teacher mobility by incentivising being mobile.
6. SP Law: There is no mobility for teaching staff. YHU should encourage mobility among its teachers, developing exchanges. In the absence of international activities, YHU should intensify internationalisation-at-home initiatives.
English language skills of teachers are low. English language skills of teachers need improvement, especially if English-medium teaching is envisaged. This would require a strategic decision by the SP and should be underpinned by a specific action plan.
Teachers do not participate in development trainings. Teachers should participate more actively in training activities.
7. SP Psychology: A large portion of activities necessary for the professional development of academic staff are not covered by the employment contracts. It should be ensured that academic staff contracts include all aspects of academic work, including self-development, mobility and international cooperation. This means that number of full-time staff should be increased. Only then can the University expect to receive these from its staff.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. While part-time faculty bring specific expertise, YHU could improve the transfer of state-of-the-art expertise by engaging more visiting lecturers and guest speakers (both domestic and international) on a regular basis.

10.7. STUDY PROGRAMME

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. Study programme review policies and processes are not developed and applied in a way that is sufficiently systematic and consistent across the institution. Therefore, YHU is recommended to ensure that governance of study programme review, and the study programme working group system is part of a larger committee structure that has responsibility for and authority over the academic functions of the university. (see also Standard 1).
2. Policies and processes for study programme review are not being updated, improved, and documented as part of a continual process of enhancement. Therefore regulations governing study programme review should themselves be reviewed on a regular, fixed schedule. The institution should aim to bring continual improvement in the effectiveness of programme reviews across the institution. These reviews of the review process should lead to developments in the regulations that indicate an increasingly coherent, detailed, and shared institutional understanding of how an effective review should be conducted. The regulations should include increasingly precise and detailed requirements for review schedule, composition of working groups, required study programme documentation and data, and decision processes. These regulations should be applied consistently across the institution to ensure consistency in judgments and review outcomes.

3. The gap between programme reviews can be too short to allow changes recommended in earlier reviews to be implemented and embedded. Therefore, as part of the revision to working arrangements for SPWGs (see also Standard 3), regulations governing study programme review should be updated to show that all programmes are subject to review on a fixed schedule ensuring that reviews are carried out after a period that is neither shorter nor longer than five years, providing periodic review that allows sufficient time for recommended changes to be implemented successfully.
4. It is *possible* for a SPWG to begin its work without sufficient stakeholder representation. Therefore YHU is recommended to update the Terms of Membership of the SPWG to ensure that it is impossible for groups to be approved to undertake their work without sufficient representation from both internal and external stakeholder groups.
5. Students involved in SPWGs may not understand their roles and the contribution they can make. Therefore YHU is recommended to include within the policy for programme approval and review requirements for training for students involved in SPWGs so that they are aware of (among other things): (i) the purpose of the exercise; (ii) the aspects of the programme and institution on which they should comment; (iii) how to consult with and represent all students taking the programme in order to bring forward a corporate view.
6. YHU does not benefit sufficiently from high quality employer feedback. Therefore YHU is recommended to improve the use of employer feedback in study programme development. This includes stating clearly in the regulations the purpose of involving employers in programme review. Principally, this purpose is to identify the qualities that employable graduates should possess so that the programme can be designed to develop these qualities in students. It also includes ensuring that employers who are involved in study programme review are those who are: (i) involved in making hiring decisions, and (ii) aware of the essential and desirable qualities of employees in the profession. (Some internship supervisors will not meet these criteria.)
7. YHU does not understand the main purpose of alumni feedback in developing its programmes. Therefore YHU is recommended to ensure that alumni who provide feedback for study programme development are those who have moved on from the institution (i.e. not students continuing studies at the institution). These alumni will be people who can comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the programme in light of their subsequent experience in the world of employment or further study elsewhere.
8. YHU does not make use of explicitly defined professional standards in all its applied programmes. Therefore, the institution should develop an approach that enables it to define professional standards for each of its applied programmes; that is, the standards required of professionals employed to work in that area. These can be adopted directly from national professional bodies where these exist to govern a profession, or defined on the basis of a combination of international standards and the articulation of local good practice.
9. The institution does not take responsibility for ensuring that its staff are up to date with trends in their disciplines. Therefore YHU should ensure that its staff have an ongoing awareness of the breadth and latest trends in their fields. This requires development in policies for provision of learning resources and policies for the management of academic

staff. These must ensure that staff have access to the relevant information and the time to engage in scholarship and professional practice. Documented programme development processes should indicate how these trends are taken into account in programme development.

10. The process of study programme review should include an evaluation of the extent to which learning outcomes ensure that students progress in their understanding and intellectual and practical skills as they move from one level (year) to the next. Therefore, learning outcomes should be worded consistently to reflect the level of study and learning, teaching and assessment methods should align with level to help students progress effectively.
11. YHU is not adequately protected against the risk of inadequate internship providers. Therefore, it is recommended that YHU establish contracts with all providers. Internship providers should normally be inspected by YHU prior to students undertaking an internship and there should be ongoing monitoring during the internship by the University to ensure that it is proceeding successfully and the provider is meeting its contractual obligations.
12. SP Management: The system of programme level, module level and course level ILOs is not clear. YHU should revise the programme learning objectives and create a coherent system of module and course objectives that are clearly linked to the programme ILOs. While the program includes conventional management courses, it falls short in offering courses in rapidly evolving areas that are essential for contemporary business practices. The programme needs updating with courses addressing international business, ethics and CSR, digital marketing, and other key components of contemporary management education.

The system of elective courses in the programme and their credit value was unclear in the documents. The system and list of electives needs clarification. Electives should be clearly marked in the study programme.
13. SP Law: The SP is composed of courses from many areas of law with no logical division and sequence and with no clear specialization demonstrating misalignment with current European and international practice. The SP should be revised and the prospect of offering a specialisation should be considered. The revision should also strive to present a curriculum in logical sequence with an interdisciplinary connection between the courses.

The learning outcomes are not coherent and concrete and did not accord to the requirements provided by the European Higher Education Area (level 7 qualifications). Learning outcomes should be revised to ensure full compatibility with Level 7 requirements so as to constitute a relevant guide for teaching, learning and assessment practices, and these in turn should be revised to be in alignment with the learning outcomes proposed.

The Panel could not find proof that entrepreneurship skills are taught more than just in business law course. Studies of entrepreneurship should be added to the SP and their presence should be clear and explicit.

The course “Legal ethics and writing” does not cover the topics regarding YHU Ethics Code rules. Topics regarding the YHU Ethics Code should be added to the SP.

14. SP Psychology: The Psychology SP does not conform to international professional standards. The psychology SP development should be managed according to international standards for psychology curricula. First, the Psychology SP at the YHU should become familiar with the international standards of the profession, and second, use them as a basis for developing its curriculum. A systematic programme should be developed for this purpose, and the ample of opportunities offered by open cooperation with the other universities and international professional organizations (such as APA or EFPA) should be utilised.

YHU does not take the direction of professional development in the society seriously enough. The Psychology SP at the YHU should take a more active role in the development of the field of psychology in Armenia. If there are no local psychology standards in the country, they should be developed. It is also a responsibility of the university and education system to establish professional standards and objectives. Through this it is possible to guide expectations among society, employers, and students. Simply taking feedback into account may reinforce expectations that cannot be met or direct the development of the field into the wrong direction.

The SP did not contain any contemporary research. The Psychology SP should update the methodology section of the curriculum and create ways to involve students in various research and practical projects. This supports the development of independent critical thinking among students, and helps to transfer the research experience into future problems.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. The University may wish to document the ongoing application of the regulations to provide evidence of their effective implementation.
2. The University may wish to gather feedback routinely, not only from employers offering internships or from those presently employing alumni, but also from others.
3. SP Management: YHU has been benchmarking the programme to other management programmes. The Panel suggests creating criteria for selecting schools and programmes for benchmarking, e.g. look at aspiring schools with international accreditations such as EQUIS and EFMD. (see also Standard 1)

10.8. LEARNING AND TEACHING

Strengths

1. SP of Dentistry: A well-structured curriculum delivered by experienced academics and clinicians with a student centred approach to planning and management of studies. The Panel observed on numerous occasions [S,T,M] a fully engaged student body, who were consistently complementary about staff's level of support for them academically and pastorally. Student involvement and engagement in a wide range of academic and management committees was observed by the panel as a particular strength of the Dental Faculty.
2. SP Management: Students and employers were satisfied with the organisation of internships. The students feel appreciated and supported by the staff.

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. The current admissions policy does not result in the rejection of unsuitable candidates and risks forming a student body that is not sufficiently coherent or motivated. Therefore, it is recommended that the admissions policy and process should establish clear standards and requirements for admission for each programme, along with effective processes for determining which candidates meet these standards and which do not. The institution should expect a proportion of applicants to be rejected each year, and should track the proportion of applicants accepted and rejected on each programme.
2. The institution should have a means to bring prospective students up to the level required for admission. Therefore it is recommended that the institution consider carefully whether to introduce a Foundation Year in one or more programmes to provide an opportunity for prospective degree students to gain the necessary academic and/or language skills to meet the admission criteria for successful degree study.
3. The institution does not maintain a high enough level of English among students and staff to enable effective learning and teaching. Therefore YHU is recommended to adopt the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages in order to assess the level of English among students and staff. The minimum level for incoming international students should be at least B1/B2 for BA, with the institution putting development in place to bring them to at least B2. At MA level incoming international students should be at least B2/C1, with the institution putting development in place to bring them to at least C1. The institution should work rapidly towards a typical level of B1 among all admin staff required to communicate with students, with a mid-term goal for this to be raised to B2. The standard for teaching staff should be at least B2/C1, with a mid-term goal to raise this to C1/C2.
4. The student voice is not intentionally strengthened and represented systematically across the institution. It is therefore recommended that the institution ensure that the terms of membership for all committees specify a student representative and that students are provided with training and support to enable them to represent the wider student voice and contribute to decision-making.
5. Due to the poor management of language requirements the institution's admissions policy enables students to enter who cannot make use of all the learning resources required to complete their programmes successfully. Therefore YHU is recommended to create a written, implemented policy to ensure that all learning resources are accessible to all students admitted to a programme. For example, all core texts included in reading lists should be readable by all students who have met the language requirements and been admitted. If necessary, texts should be available in multiple languages to ensure this. There should also be sufficient learning resources to provide for all students on the programme. For example, there should be sufficient copies of books that students are required to read to ensure that they have the opportunity to do so.
6. The institution does not manage the use of hybrid and online learning to ensure the best outcomes for students. Therefore, it is recommended that YHU should work with students and staff to develop and approve a written, student-centred policy for online and hybrid learning. This should establish the purpose of online and hybrid learning and should

control the extent and manner in which such learning can be used within different programmes to ensure that students are able to achieve the learning outcomes. It should also include minimum standards for teaching rooms that can be used in a hybrid way to ensure that the online learning experience is of a high standard. The policy should give consideration to students who have limited or poor-quality internet access.

7. The institution does not have a student-centred approach to the use of the Moodle VLE since there is no consistent approach for its use across courses and programmes. It is therefore recommended that the institution should work with students and staff to develop and approve a set of minimal standards for the use of the Moodle VLE in courses so that students will have clear expectations of what information they will be able to find there, and these expectations will be met as the policy is implemented effectively.
8. SP Dentistry: International students reported that agents in India had not fulfilled their side of the contracted agreement leaving YHU students at a financial disadvantage. The Panel recommend that YHU should fully review use of agents in recruiting students from India and risk to students at YHU of utilising such agents.
9. SP Management: The availability of library resources is limited, and there is a lack of access to international academic journal databases. Access to international academic journal databases and contemporary textbooks should be guaranteed for faculty and students.

A large share of the classrooms the Panel observed were equipped just with a conventional chalk blackboard and did not have projectors and screens. The classrooms need updating the equipment and technology to create a modern and student-centred learning and teaching environment.

During the presentation of Moodle pages for courses, the Panel did not come across any relevant content or materials that showcased the effective utilization of Moodle support. The usage of Moodle for digital support to the courses needs to be standardized. All courses should have functional Moodle pages with relevant content to support students' independent learning and support hybrid teaching and learning.

10. SP Law: In some courses the materials were outdated, and some were in Russian, Moodle courses were just repository. The Panel could not find clear answer to the question whether and how many learning materials in English are used. Learning materials should be reviewed in relation to the languages required and they should be developed accordingly. Bibliography lists should be updated with more modern titles. Moodle courses should be developed to provide an integrated component for learning and teaching interactions, rather than a repository of minimal course information.

Learning environment where students with different levels of English are taught together is not efficient. English courses need improvement to be responsive to the aims of the university provided by the strategy documents.

The Legal Clinic serves less of a developmental purpose, via shadowing and mentoring, to existing students and remains a Legal consultancy service offered to YHU students. Student participation in the Legal Clinic should be increased.

Admission rules did not consider the motivation of the applicant and no specific threshold for admission. Also, there was no admission rules for those who apply from another SP than law. It is unclear whether there are admission exams or not. Admission rules should

consider the motivation of the applicant and a specific threshold for admission. They should include additional rules for those applying from another SP than law. It should be clear whether there are admission exams or not.

The admission process also does not have any requirements for English or Russian, yet some items of compulsory reading in bibliographies are in these languages. The admission rules should require a specified level of competence in all languages that are required in order to read the materials included in compulsory bibliographies on the programme. There should be an effective system for assessing language use for academic purposes.

Student mobility is absent. YHU should identify opportunities for mobility, develop the principles for international mobility for its students in the SP and support students to study abroad.

The number of students in the SP is very small. The institution should reflect on the minimum number of students that are required to ensure that the programme is sustainable, and should increase student numbers accordingly.

11. SP Psychology: Study materials are mostly outdated. The curriculum should increase access to modern professional knowledge in psychology. It is essential to use more up-to-date materials, including those in English. The fastest and most accessible way to start is to use open science resources (databases, software), but some areas of work will also require additional resources (textbooks, laboratory equipment, analytical software).

The view of student-centeredness was too narrow. The Psychology SP should understand student-centeredness more broadly, not relying primarily on student feedback and satisfaction. The goal should be an independent and critically thinking psychologist who has faced enough professional challenges during their studies. This also means that assessment procedures should be regularly reviewed accordingly.

The teaching excessively relies on contact hours. The Psychology SP should find more modern ways to support independent learning. In addition, there should be systematic support for students to gain international experience.

The suitability for the profession was not assessed upon enrolment. Entrance criteria should also take into account an applicant's suitability for working in the field of psychology.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. The University may wish ensure that all policy and regulatory documents include a section detailing when amendments are made and approved.
2. The University may wish to develop and approve a policy establishing the minimum requirements for a standard teaching space furnished to support different types of learning (lectures, seminars, group work, etc), and various learning technologies (projectors / smart boards, effective cameras and microphone systems for hybrid learning, etc).
3. SP Dentistry: Students and Alumni reported that they would welcome opportunities to carry out Post Graduate Training at YHU, given the expertise available in the Faculty. YHU may wish to review Post Graduate offer to support the wider profession in Armenia, and develop Alumni relations.

Students and Staff reported very limited opportunity to carry out treatment on patients under supervision. YHU should pursue legislative change to allow students to carry out direct patient care in a range of Dental disciplines.

Alumni providing practice based experience requested closer collaboration with YHU Faculty. The panel recommends termly meetings with external placement providers (Practice owners) and improved feedback mechanisms as to student and provider satisfaction with such placements.

Staff Reported aspirations to include Objective Structured Clinical Examinations [OSCE] as part of the assessment strategy at YHU. The panel considered the YHU Dental curriculum well suited to such an assessment modality, and this should be implemented as a priority to strengthen Clinical assessment.

10.9. STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. The current template for course syllabi does not direct the teachers to describe course-specific assessment methods and criteria and lacks alignment between the elements. All learning outcomes, teaching methodology, subject content, and course-specific assessment methods and criteria need to be detailed in the syllabi. A selective quality control of the syllabi is recommended to facilitate the implementation of described alignment. (see also Standard 3)
2. Currently the assessment of knowledge, skills and competencies is separated and assessment focuses on the reproduction of factual knowledge. The Panel recommends providing teachers with topic-specific training on assessment methodologies that will allow the combined assessment of knowledge, skills, and competencies.
3. The grade formation formulas are not ensuring alignment between expected learning outcomes and assessment criteria. The baseline for passing a course is 40 points based on the grade formation formula, but it remains unclear how the achievement of all expected learning outcomes is evaluated. The Panel recommends reviewing the final grade formation formula to ensure that it measures the level of achievement of expected learning outcomes and development of assessment matrixes/rubrics.
4. YHU currently has no system for recognition of prior learning and work experience. The Review Panel recommends developing guidelines for acceptance, communicating these clearly within the institution, ensuring implementation, and monitoring the process.
5. As paper-based assessment bulletins are accessible to everyone and lack consistency it is recommended that assessment reporting be digitised to ensure the confidentiality and security of student assessments.
6. SP Management: Students exhibited a limited understanding of the appeal procedures, and the available documents regarding appeals primarily focused on a narrow range of appeal grounds. YHU should create a more comprehensive grade appeal policy outlining different grounds of appeal, including but not limited to mistakes in grading, errors in grading or assessment procedures, biased evaluation. Students should be aware of how they can confidentially initiate an appeal.
7. SP Law: The Panel learned that an assessment system was not clear and mainly exam was used in assessment, the role of other assignments regarding assessment was unclear. The

programme management should develop clear assessment strategies to ensure consistency across the programme. Any assessment requirements should be clearly stipulated. As part of this it is likely that the management will want to distinguish formative and summative assessment methods.

10.10. LEARNING SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Strengths

1. Commitment of the university staff in providing comprehensive support to students is appreciated and creates a trusting environment.

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. There is no systematic approach to address student mental health, and referral to counselling involves multiple managerial contacts. The Panel recommends hiring a separate psychologist to provide psychological support to students. This will ensure confidentiality and implement a “one door” approach with no referral needed from teachers or management, while keeping the existing referral option still available.
2. Monitoring of students’ individual development and academic progress is unsystematic. It is recommended to develop standardised and sustainable process for monitoring students’ advancement and criteria for intervention for high- and underperforming students.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. International students are vulnerable to exploitations by “agents” who promise to organize accommodation and other services for comfortable settling into YHU and Yerevan. The international students experience will be improved by accommodation being organized by YHU.

10.11. RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND/OR OTHER CREATIVE ACTIVITY

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. The Panel observed the absence of clear and systematic definition of research goals and areas of focus at the institutional level within the University. YHU should clearly and systematically define research goals and areas of focus at the institutional level.
2. Research funding lacks systematic approach. In order to initiate and foster a thriving research culture, YHU should provide targeted funding to support research projects that are closely aligned with the institution’s positioning, vision, values, strategic goals, and other relevant factors.
3. YHU claims to have an ambition of becoming a leading research institution in Armenia. The Panel finds this goal not achievable in the nearest future. Strategic research ambitions should be more modest in approach, setting realistic and achievable objectives. This will enable the university to focus its resources and efforts effectively and to make progress.

4. Currently there was lack of articulation between strategic ambitions and research goals. YHU should ensure alignment between strategic ambitions and research goals.
5. YHU should consider using the SMART approach in setting its research objectives.
6. The RRC strategic plan lacks information regarding support services. While control mechanisms like the monitoring template are described for research monitoring, they do not contribute to the overall enhancement of research, and there is a notable absence of comprehensive support services YHU should create a system of support services for research.
7. The University has high numeric goals for partnerships. YHU should prioritise quality over quantity when selecting partners for research collaboration. Establish a rigorous filtering process that takes into account factors such as expertise, resources, reputation, and alignment with the university's profile.
8. Currently the research at YHU is mostly of local importance and disseminated on conferences in Armenia or neighbouring countries. The University should make efforts to establish a link between their researchers and international research environments.
9. Research assessment includes categories that are not considered as research output in the European higher education system. The research monitoring and evaluation system should exclude textbooks, methodological manuals, and articles published in popular press from its list of research outputs. While these have value as general scholarship, they do not constitute research. A transparent system should be established to determine what qualifies as a research article, ideally using an internationally recognized impact system as a basis.
10. Currently the RRC is focused on offering training and methodological support to students and faculty, but it does not advance the research agenda. If RRC will be the main body leading the research of YHU then its activities should be aligned accordingly.
11. The current practice at YHU only specifies workload in terms of teaching hours, without allocating a specific proportion of working hours to research. YHU should specify the time allocated for research in its employment contracts and should link this to (realistic) targets for individuals (e.g. in a three-year period). If these targets are met, then incentives/rewards could follow.
12. SP Psychology: The Panel found that there was no research that meets international standards. The number of personnel active in psychological science needs to be increased to provide the necessary criticism and methodological strength in the Psychology SP.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. YHU may consider placing greater emphasis on building and fostering a research culture and climate, which involves demonstrating to its employees that research constitutes a crucial aspect of the university's growth and has a positive impact the personal academic development of the faculty. YHU could do this by inviting foreign researchers to provide workshops to YHU staff on how to design and implement research projects, how to publish in international outlets, etc.

10.12. SERVICE TO SOCIETY

Strengths

1. Engagement of staff with governmental bodies to contribute expertise, advice and guidance to national authorities where national development directions are decided.

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. Service to society was considered important but was not understood similarly at the YHU. YHU should work out guidelines and objectives for service to society. This should be done together with development of action plan and means for assessing the impact of these activities.
2. Development of important services suffers due to lack of regulations. YHU should work on establishing a legal framework that enables the provision of legal and psychological services to the wider society as well as their own members, particularly in matters of a sensitive nature.
3. Lifelong learning was not understood similarly at the University. YHU should consider carefully its understanding of lifelong learning and how it will support this systematically.
4. Activities done under Service to Society were not recognised when assessing the staff. Service to Society activities should be taken into account in assessment of the professional performance of the teaching staff.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. YHU should ensure that information about professional services in law and psychology is effectively communicated to the relevant target groups (e.g., vulnerable groups). This may require using other channels beyond the institution's web-page and social media.
11. If one to two standards are assessed as 'does not conform', the Council shall analyse the strengths and areas for improvement of the HEI and decide that there are shortcomings in the management, administration, teaching and research activities or in the environments of learning and research at the HEI, provide guidance for their elimination, and accredit the HEI for three years; or shall decide that the management, administration, teaching and research activities as well as the environments of learning and research at the HEI do not meet the requirements, and decide not to accredit the HEI.
12. The Council analysed the strengths and areas of concern of YHU and took into account that:
 - 1) The University's commitment to promoting quality through participation in HAKA accreditations.
 - 2) The University's diligence in relation to responding to many of the recommendations of the previous HAKA accreditation.
 - 3) The development of quality tools specifically geared towards the ESGs and HAKA quality standards.
 - 4) Commitment of the university staff in providing comprehensive support to students is appreciated and creates a trusting environment.
 - 5) Engagement of staff with governmental bodies to contribute expertise, advice and guidance to national authorities where national development directions are decided.
13. According to the point 43.7 of the document 'Guide to Institutional Accreditation', if the Council weighs between two accreditation decisions and finds that if the HEI were to

satisfy certain conditions, a more positive decision would be possible, the Council may make that decision with a secondary condition, as defined in § 53 of the Administrative Procedure Act.

14. The Council found that the management, administration, teaching and research activities as well as the environments of learning and research at the YHU conform partially to the requirements on the condition that the YHU eliminates the **following shortcomings** as a matter of urgency:

Shortcomings in research, development and/or other creative activity: Absence of clear and systematic definition of research goals and areas of focus at the institutional level within the University. YHU should clearly and systematically define research goals and areas of focus at the institutional level. YHU claims to have an ambition of becoming a leading research institution in Armenia. The Panel finds this goal not achievable in the nearest future. Strategic research ambitions should be more modest in approach, setting realistic and achievable objectives. This will enable the university to focus its resources and efforts effectively and to make progress.

Shortcomings in study programmes (SP). BA programme in Psychology: The SP does not conform to international professional standards. The psychology SP development should be managed according to international standards for psychology curricula. Study materials are mostly outdated. The curriculum should increase access to modern professional knowledge in psychology. It is essential to use more up-to-date materials, including those in English. **MA programme in Law:** The SP is composed of courses from many areas of law with no logical division and sequence and with no clear specialization demonstrating misalignment with current European and international practice. The SP should be revised and the prospect of offering a specialisation should be considered. The number of students in the SP is very small. The institution should reflect on the minimum number of students that are required to ensure that the programme is sustainable and should increase student numbers accordingly.

Shortcomings in teaching staff: There is some concern about the sustainability of employing part-time, non-permanent and hourly-paid staff, which could jeopardise the quality of academic programmes. The YHU should limit the scope of hourly paid faculty and employ key faculty on long-term (permanent), full-time contracts. Workload is specified only in terms of teaching hours. YHU should adopt a holistic system that takes into account teaching, research, and administrative workloads and specify all work commitments in employment contracts.

Shortcomings in internationalisation: English language skills are largely lacking. The YHU should continue its efforts to improve the English language skills of its students and staff by offering language courses. International students face many barriers when they begin with their studies in Armenia. The induction process for international students should be adapted to their needs and challenges related to living and studying in a foreign country.

15. According to clause 53 (1) 2) of the Administrative Procedure Act, the secondary condition of an administrative act is an additional duty related to the principal regulation of the administrative act and, also, according to clause 53 (1) 3), a supplementary condition for the creation of a right arising from the principal regulation of the administrative act. Clauses 53 (2) 2) and 3) of the Administrative Procedure Act stipulate that a secondary condition may be imposed on an administrative act, if the administrative act cannot be issued without the secondary condition or if the issue of the administrative act must be resolved based on the administrative right of discretion. The Council found that without a secondary condition the decision shall be 'to not accredit' and based on points 43.5 and 43¹ of the 'Guide to Institutional Accreditation'

DECIDED TO:

Accredit the Yerevan Haybusak University for three years with the following secondary condition:

The YHU will submit a report in English on the elimination of the shortcomings stated in point 14 by 29.06.2025 at the latest. Members of the panel will be involved in the assessment of the fulfilment of the secondary condition. The prerequisite for evaluating the fulfilment of the secondary condition is the contract between HAKA and YHU.

The decision was adopted with 12 votes in favour and 0 against.

16. Accreditation is valid until 29.06.2026. If the Yerevan Haybusak University does not comply with the secondary condition by the due date, the Council will repeal this accreditation decision or establish a new secondary condition.
17. The council proposes to YHU to submit, together with the report on the fulfilment of the secondary condition, no later than 29.06.2025, in English, an overview of the higher education institution's activities, including the consideration of other areas of concern and recommendations outlined in the council's decision.
18. A person who considers that his or her rights or freedoms have been infringed by the decision, can lodge a challenge with HAKA's Assessment Council within 30 days of the date on which the objector became aware or should have become aware of the contested act. The Council shall forward the challenge to HAKA's Appeals Committee who shall provide an unbiased opinion in writing regarding the validity of the challenge to the Council, within five days after receipt of the challenge. The Council shall resolve the appeal within 10 days of its receipt, taking into account the reasoned opinion of the Appeals Committee. If further examination of the challenge is necessary, the Assessment Council may extend the deadline for examining the challenge by up to 30 days. Judicial contestation of a decision is possible within 30 days from the date of service of the judgment by filing an appeal with the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Administrative Court Procedure Act.

Hillar Bauman

Secretary of the Council