

Strengthening Integrity and Combatting Corruption in Higher Education
in Armenia Project

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TOOLKIT TO ENHANCE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN GOVERNANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN ARMENIA

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Introduction

The Toolkit aims to promote transparency and accountability among Armenian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and refers to university activities, processes, and policies in key areas of HEI's institutional governance, including financial activity; governing boards; strategic planning; human resources management; admissions, academic discipline, and student issues; and information management.

The Toolkit has been developed as a model for periodic institutional reporting in the area of higher education governance. It provides a template that universities may use to prepare a formal, standardised disclosure to the Government and the public. As universities prepare this document, the completion of sections of the template may be delegated to individual units within each university, pending final institutional review and certification. The document might also be prepared concurrently with other existing institutional activities such as annual reporting, accreditation, or auditing processes.

The Toolkit requests information in the areas of governance, using a template for universities to disclose information in a precise, organised, and publicly available format. The consolidation of this information in a single document can provide a new resource for stakeholders, promoting a clearer understanding of the efforts universities are making to ensure fair and rigorous financial management, implementation of institutional policies and procedures, and decision-making.

The intended users of this information are the stakeholders to which universities are ultimately accountable: the Government (if it is the founder of the HEI), the Ministry of Education and Science, ANQA (National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance); university staff, students, and their families; non-governmental organisations; the private sector; international partners; the media, and the Armenian society.

Toolkit to Enhance Transparency and Accountability in Governance of Higher Education Institutions of Armenia

<i>I. Financial</i>	
A. Budget Planning	<p>i. Does your institution prepare an annual Budget Plan? (Yes/No)</p> <p>ii. Does each budget non-salary line in the annual Budget Plan reflect expenditures of less than 3% of the total non-salary expenditures¹ of your institution? (Yes/No)</p> <p>Please report which budget lines, if any, reflect expenditures greater than 3% of total non-salary expenditures of the institution.</p> <p>iii. Does your institution prepare an Annual Activity Plan? (Yes/No)</p> <p>Is the Annual Activity Plan used as a basis for budget planning? (Yes/No)</p> <p>What percentage of budget lines is cited in the Annual Activity Plan?</p> <p>Does the Budget Plan provide a justification² for each budget lines? (Yes/No)</p> <p>Are allocations for the budget lines from prior years reported in the Budget Plan? (Yes/No)</p> <p>iv. When is a draft Budget Plan distributed publicly through a webpage or communication to entire university community prior to the adoption of the budget?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Less than 10 days prior to adoption Form 10 to 20 days prior to adoption From 20 to 30 days prior to adoption More than 30 days prior to adoption <p>Is there a formal process for receiving comments from the university community on draft? If yes, please describe briefly (one to two sentences).</p>
<p>¹ Non-salary expenditures refers to all expenditures of the following governing bodies or personnel: Rectorate (Administration/Executive Board), Faculty, Department, Institute, Center, etc. A justification for all other expenditures should be linked with Annual Activity Plan measures (relevant goods or activities). These calculations and accompanying explanations may be posted as an appendix to the budget prepared by institution.</p> <p>² The justification for each budget line should include the following information: Quantity; for utilities data from the previous year may be used taking into account significant new circumstances expected in the upcoming year.</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty/Structural Unit³ Council • Professional/Trade Union Organization • Other bodies (specify)
B. Budget Implementation and Expenditures	<p>i. Does your institution develop a Budget Implementation Report? (Yes/No)</p> <p>ii. Is it linked with the Report of Implementation of Annual Activity Plan? (Yes/No) If yes, please describe briefly how it is linked (2-3 sentences)</p> <p>iii. What percentage of the total non-salary expenditures is reported with a breakdown of the expenditures?</p> <p>iv. Do reports on implementation for each budget line include information on the implementation from prior years for the same budget lines? (Yes/No)</p> <p>v. Please indicate the amount of salary paid to each group of employees of your institution (report these figures as a percentage of overall salary expenditures) and provide salary ranges (maximum and minimum salary by employee type) for each group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching (Professorial) Staff • Research Staff • Educational Support Staff • Administrative • Technical • Other (please specify) <p>vi. Does your institution publish a methodology for setting salaries? (Yes/No) If yes, please provide this documentation. [Label the document “Annex I.B.v.”]</p> <p>Is this methodology based on labor market demands? Please specify which staff positions consider labor market demands.</p>
C. Revenues	<p>i. What percentage of the total revenue your institution comes from the following sources?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government • Undergraduate student tuition and fees • Graduate student tuition and fees • Scientific activities • Other (please specify)

³ Hereafter instead of Faculty/Structural Unit expression Faculty Governing body term will be used (some HEIs can have other structural units, e.g. institutes instead of faculties)

D. Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Is the draft budget available on the web page of your institution prior to its approval? (Yes/No) ii. Is all procurement documentation⁴ available for interested parties to view online? (Yes/No) Offline? (Yes/No) iii. Are all invoices⁵ for each non-salary budget line of your institution available for interested parties to view online? (Yes/No) Offline? (Yes/No). Has your institution published the procedures for accessing the invoices? (Yes/No). Please indicate the relevant website link where the procedures are published or provide a copy of the document in an Annex. [Label the document “Annex I.D.iii.”] iv. Is the staff list of your institution posted on the web page of your institution? (Yes/No). If yes please indicate the relevant website link where it is published. If no, please, provide a copy of the document in an Annex. [Label the document “Annex I.D.iv.”]

⁴ **Procurement documentation** should include information on bidding procedures and other relevant documentation in compliance with RA Procurement Law and related regulations.

⁵ This documentation refers to all required **invoices** filed in accordance with legislation, subject to the privacy rights of involved parties.

II. Governing Boards

A. Appointments to Governing Boards

Highest Governing Board (Board of Trustees/University Council)

- i. Are following members of the highest Governing Board of your institution (e.g., Board of Trustees) elected by secret ballot?
 - Representatives from the Professorial Staff (Yes/No)
 - Student Representatives (Yes/No)
- ii. For each of the following groups, please report the ratio of proposed candidates to available seats on the Board.
 - Professorial Staff
 - Student Representatives
- iii. Is there an open and competitive process for nomination and appointment of non-elected members of the highest Governing Board of your institution? (Yes/No) Please describe the process of selection for all members of the highest Governing Board of your institution who is not elected.⁶

Academic Council

- iv. Are members of the Academic Council of your institution elected by secret ballot⁷?
- v. Please report the ratio between proposed candidates and available seats for elected positions on the Academic Council.

Faculty Governing Body (Faculty Academic Council)

- vi. Are members of the Faculty collegial Governing Body of your institution (e.g., Faculty Academic Council) elected by secret ballot⁸?
- vii. Please report the ratio between proposed (nominated) candidates and available seats for elected positions on the Faculty Governing Body.

B. Governing Process

⁶ Non-elected members include individuals properly appointed as the board by the Prime Minister or delegated Minister. The description of the nomination process should indicate whether there is an open or competitive process. For more information, please, look 3rd paragraph of description of "Governing Boards" Section of guidelines.

⁷ Members appointed by position are excluded from this question

⁸ Members appointed by position are excluded from this question

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty Governing Body <p>ii. Of the agenda items adopted by each governing body, what percentage received at least 20% of the votes in opposition?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest Governing Board • Academic Council • Faculty Governing Body <p>iii. What opportunities are available to outside groups to provide input to each governing board? Please, describe the existing opportunities in 2-3 sentences for each body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest Governing Board • Academic Council • Faculty Governing Body
C. Outputs	i. Summarize the three major decisions adopted by each governing board in the current year, not including adoption of Strategic Plan, Annual Activity Plan, Budget and corresponding Implementation Reports (2-3 sentences per decision) ⁹ .
D. Documentation	<p>i. Are the election documents and nomination (appointment) procedures for the each of the following governing boards of your institution publicly available? (Yes/No). If yes, please, indicate the relevant website link.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest Governing Board • Academic Council • Faculty Governing Body <p>ii. Are the names, credentials, and descriptions of the responsibilities of the selected board members published? ? (Yes/No)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest Governing Board • Academic Council • Faculty Governing Body <p>If yes, please provide the website address if these are published on a webpage.</p> <p>iii. Is the basis (criteria) for selection¹⁰ for non-elected members of each of the following governing boards of your institution provided publicly? (Yes/No). Please provide the website address if these are published on a webpage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest Governing Board • Academic Council • Faculty Governing Body

⁹ For more details, please, look last paragraph of description of Governing Boards” Section of guidelines.

¹⁰ The basis for selection may include competency, position, philanthropic, and others

	<p>iv. Are the protocols/minutes of sessions and decisions reached by each of the following governing boards of your institution available? (Yes/No). Please provide the website address if these are published on a webpage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest Governing Board • Academic Council • Rectorate (Administrative/Executive Board) • Faculty Governing Body
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III. Strategic Planning	
A. Preparation of Strategic Plan	<p>i. Does your institution prepare a strategic plan? (Yes/No)</p> <p>ii. Please indicate which groups participate in the preparation of the strategic plan, and briefly describe (in one sentence) how each group participates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest Governing Board (Board of Trustees/University Council) • Academic Council • University Administration/Rectorate • Faculty • Staff • Students • Professional Organizations/Trade Unions • Alumni • Branches of the University [specify] • External Stakeholders [specify] • Other [specify] <p>iii. Does your institution have formal policies, procedures, and/or regulations for adopting the strategic plan? (Yes/No) If yes, are there publicly available? (Yes/No) Please indicate the relevant website link where these documents may be viewed or provide them in an Annex. [Label the documents “Annex III.A.iii”]</p>
B. Strategic Priorities	<p>i. Please list the top strategic priorities (maximum 9 priorities) of your institution reflected in your current strategic plan.</p> <p>ii. Please indicate whether each priority is new priority in the current strategic planning period.</p> <p>Please provide a target indicator (or target indicators) to be achieved for each priority by the end of the strategic planning period.</p> <p>For each priority that is carried over from the prior strategic planning period, provide the target indicator (or indicators) from the last strategic planning period and describe whether the indicator was achieved in that period.</p> <p>iii. Please explain how each priority aligns with a specific national priority¹¹ for Armenia [one to two sentences each]</p>
C. Implementation	<p>i. Please explain how each of the following units of your institution has adopted the priorities in the strategic plan¹² (e.g., in the activity plans of the respective units)</p> <p>Please indicate how much funding has been allocated to the priorities for each unit</p>

¹¹ Your institution may cite any relevant government document or other authoritative source to demonstrate that a particular priority is also a national priority

¹² Activities cited in the **Activity Plans** of the respective units may be offered as evidence of adoption of the priorities of your institution, provided the activities are relevant to the strategic priority

	<p>Please identify any relevant indicators adopted for each unit below to achieve these priorities and explain how this progress is monitored</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools /Faculties (undergraduate and graduate) • Departments (administrative units) • Monitoring/Quality Assurance Department • Student Organizations • Research Units (if separate from schools/faculties) • Other (specify, .e.g. clinics, branches, affiliated commercial units) <p>ii. Do the faculties/schools and/or Administrative Departments of your institution develop Strategic Activity Plans? (Yes/No)</p> <p>iii. Do the faculties/schools and/or Administrative Departments of your institution develop Annual Activity Plans? (Yes/No)</p>
D. Outcomes and Reporting	<p>i. Please indicate progress, if any, your institution has made toward meeting each strategic priority in each of the following periods. Please identify the relevant target indicator(s) and provide specific data on the progress or achievement of the indicator(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current year • Last three years¹³ • Last five years¹³ <p>ii. Does your institution prepare a report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan (Yes/No)</p> <p>iii. Does your institution prepare a report on the implementation of the Annual Plan (Yes/No)</p> <p>iv. Do the faculties/schools and/or Administrative Departments of your institution prepare a report on the implementation of their Strategic Plans (Yes/No)</p> <p>v. Do the faculties/schools and/or Administrative Departments of your institution prepare a report on the implementation of their Annual Plans (Yes/No)</p>
E. Documentation	<p>i. Are the current and past strategic plans of your institution available online? (Yes/No) If yes, please provide the website address (es).</p> <p>ii. Is the Report on Implementation on Strategic Plan of your institution available online? (Yes/No) If yes please provide the website address.</p> <p>iii. Are the current and past strategic plans of the faculties/schools and/or administrative departments of your institution available online? (Yes/No) Please specify which unit and provide the website address(es) if posted online.</p>

¹³ You may report “No data – newly adopted priority” for any newly adopted priority for which data are not yet available, e.g., a priority adopted during a strategic planning period in effect for less than three years

	<p>iv. Are the reports on the implementation of the Strategic Plans of the faculties/schools and/or administrative departments of your institution available online? (Yes/No) Please specify which units and provide the website address(es), if posted online.</p> <p>v. Is your annual Activity Plan of your institution available online? ? (Yes/No) Please provide the website address, if posted online.</p> <p>vi. Is report on the implementation of the Annual Plan of your institution available online? ? (Yes/No) Please provide the website address.</p> <p>vii. Are the Annual Activity Plans of the faculties/schools and/or administrative departments of your institution available online? (Yes/No) Please specify which units and provide the website address(es), if posted online.</p> <p>viii. Are the reports on the implementation of the Annual Activities Plans of the faculties/schools and/or administrative departments of your institution available online? (Yes/No) Please specify which units and provide the website address(es), if posted online.</p>
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IV. HR Management	
Academic Staff	
A. Hiring	<p>i. Does your institution have a webpage publishing announcements of job openings for the following positions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research positions (Yes/No) • Teaching (professorial) positions (Yes/No) <p>ii. What percentage of open (vacant) faculty (research and teaching) positions is posted publicly¹⁴?</p> <p>iii. Please indicate the percentage of published open positions for which there were two or more applicants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Research positions • For Teaching (professorial) positions <p>iv. What percentage of staff hired into temporary/interim positions were eventually appointed to permanent positions?</p> <p>v. Does your institution publish announcements (through public or internal channels) of newly hired staff?</p>
B. Job Review and Professional Development	<p>i. Does your institution provide a professional development and/or training process for teaching (professorial) staff? (Yes/No). If yes, please, describe the process in one paragraph.</p> <p>ii. Does your institution provide a professional development and training process for non-teaching academic staff (educational support staff)¹⁵? (Yes/No) If yes, please, describe the process in one paragraph.</p> <p>iii. Does your institution allow staff members to satisfy the requirements for professional development and/or training through programs that are offered outside of your institution? (Yes/No). If yes, please, describe the process in one paragraph.</p> <p>iv. Does this include professional development and training programs outside Armenia? (Yes/No)</p> <p>v. What percentage of current teaching staff has not passed the professional development and/or training process for last 5 years or longer?</p> <p>vi. Of the teaching staff that did not pass the professional development and/or training process for last five years and longer, how many are still employed (as lecturers or in other positions) in the university?</p>
Non-Academic Staff	
C. Hiring	<p>1. Does your institution develop formal job descriptions or Terms of Reference (ToR) that are adopted by the rector or relevant</p>

¹⁴ Temporary/interim positions to fill immediate vacancies without a formal posting may be excluded from this calculation if the position is subsequently opened to a competitive hiring process after five months of the temporary/interim hiring; if the position is not posted formally after five months, it should be included in the calculation.

¹⁵ These may include training in publishing articles, course on teaching methods, etc.

	<p>authority for administrative, support, and technical positions? Please provide a sample job description for each job type in Annex IV.C.i.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For administrative staff • For educational support staff • For technical staff • Other (please, specify) <p>ii. Of all new non-academic staff hires, what percentage of open positions was posted publicly? Provide figures for the last three years and indicate the annual time frames if figures are reported for whole last 3 years period.</p> <p>iii. Does your institution publish announcements (through public or internal channels) of new hired non-academic staff? (Yes/No) [Indicate which types of positions are published and not published]</p> <p>iv. Please provide a list of current staff positions in your institution by job title and category (administrative, support, etc.). For each staff position, please indicate whether there exist a formally documented job description (e.g., Terms of Reference) describing the job responsibilities and qualifications required for the position.</p> <p>v. Please indicate the percentage of published open positions for which there were two or more applicants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For administrative positions • For educational support positions • For technical positions • Other (please specify) <p>vi. Has your institution developed formal procedures for hiring of non-academic staff [Yes/No]. If yes please indicate the relevant website link or provide a copy of the document in an Annex. [Label the document “Annex IV.C.vi.”]</p> <p>vii. Does your institution have term limits for managerial positions (e.g., dean, head of chair)? [Yes/No] If yes, please, specify for each position, and provide examples when this rule was imposed.</p> <p>viii. For what positions do you have age limitations? [Indicate the position(s) and age limit]</p> <p>ix. For what positions do you have term limitations? [Indicate the position(s), number of terms, and number of years per term]</p> <p>x. What are the qualification requirements for managerial positions (e.g., PhD, relevant professorial or professional appointment)?</p>
D. Job Review and Professional Development	<p>i. Does your institution have a professional development and/or retraining process? If, yes, please briefly describe the process for each job category (two to three sentences)</p>

	<p>ii. Does your institution have a professional attestation process for non-academic staff? If, yes, please briefly describe the process for each job category.</p> <p>iii. Of the staff that did not to pass the obligatory professional development and/or retraining process or attestation¹⁶, how many were terminated from employment at your institution?</p>
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¹⁶ This may include an interview and preparation of a report or similar to the civil service attestation process.

V. Admissions, Student Assessment, Academic Discipline, and Student Feedback

A. Admissions	<p>i. Are the application procedures and criteria for admission to the following programs in your institution published? Please provide a relevant website or a copy of these documents. [Label the documents “Annex V.A.i”]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Bachelor’s Programs? (Yes/No) • For Masters’ Programs? (Yes/No) • For PhD Programs? (Yes/No)
B. Student Assessment, Retention, and Completion	<p>i. Does your institution publish examination procedures? Does your institution publish grading criteria? Please provide a sample for each in a relevant website or a copy of the document. [Label the document “Annex V.B.i”]</p> <p>ii. Does your institution provide students with a list of examination questions? Please provide a sample in a website or in copy of the document. [Label the document “Annex V.B.ii.”]</p> <p>iii. Does your institution utilize anonymous grading? (Yes/No)</p> <p>iv. How many students were expelled for failure to pass academic standards in the past year? Past three years? Past five years?</p> <p>v. (For public institutions) What percentage of student candidates for graduation failed the state graduation examination?</p>
C. Academic Violations and Disciplinary Proceedings	<p>i. Does your institution publish handbooks and policies on plagiarism and other academic violations? (Yes/No)</p> <p>ii. Does your institution publish handbooks and policies on grievance and redress procedures? (Yes/No)</p> <p>iii. What mechanisms does your institution utilize to identify academic violations (e.g. online antiplagiarism programs)? Has your institution adopted a code of ethics? Please provide documentation through a website or copy. [Label the documents “Annex V.C.iii”]</p>

	<p>iv. How many disciplinary cases were brought in the following periods?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior year • Prior three years • Prior five years <p>How many of those cases resulted in disciplinary sanctions against the student? How many of those cases resulted in disciplinary sanctions against faculty or staff? How many cases were appealed? How many cases were overturned through appeal?</p> <p>v. How many appeals were made to revise the results of examinations (or retake examination) that are administered during the last academic year (regular examinations)? How many times were the grades increased?</p> <p>vi. (For public/state institutions) How many appeals were made to revise the results of the state examinations (final examinations)? How many times were the grades increased?</p> <p>vii. How many students were expelled due to a violation of the Code of Ethics during the last academic year?</p> <p>viii. How many cases of plagiarism and other violations of the Code of Ethics were reported by students the last academic year?</p> <p>ix. Does your institution publish information on disciplinary proceedings and outcomes¹⁷?</p> <p>x. Does your institution provide information to students on procedures for appeal and other administrative issues? (Yes/No)</p>
D. Student Feedback	<p>i. What opportunities to students have to provide formal feedback on their academic experience? Can this feedback be given anonymously? Please provide samples of surveys and questionnaires. [Label the documents “Annex V.D.i”]</p> <p>ii. Please report the results of surveys on student satisfaction in the following periods.¹⁸ If your institution does not collect information on student satisfaction, indicate “Does not collect information.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior year • Prior three years • Prior five years <p>iii. Does your institution publish a report on student feedback? Please provide documentation through a website or copy of the document. [Label the document “Annex V.E.ii”]</p>

¹⁷ Such information can be disclosed in compliance with laws on privacy (e.g., removal of names and other identifying information). These may be published internally (through e-mail to the university community or intranet).

¹⁸ Your institution may report this information in a manner most suitable to its current practices, however, ratings indicating satisfaction level, by program, along with an explanation of ratings and survey methodology, are encouraged

VI. Information Management

A. Information Management Capacity and Access	<p>i. Has your institution appointed an official responsible for provision of freedom of information at your institution? If yes, please specify. Please also indicate the designated staff member serving as point-person for compliance with the Law on Information Freedom.</p> <p>ii. Does your institution publish information required by the Law of Freedom of Information on a webpage? Particularly, does your institution arrange and publish all documents on a webpage or webpages related to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate status of the university • Services provided to the society • Decisions of governing bodies • All internal regulations (e.g, competitions, statutes, tuition fee reduction policies) • Orders of the Rector • Financial information • Dates and times for reception of citizens • Prices and price-formation order for services provided • Other [specify] <p>iii. Please provide the relevant website address(es)</p> <p>iv. Do you publish the materials listed in section (ii) above in Armenian? Other languages [specify the language or languages for each category]?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Are the webpages of your institution translated into multiple languages? [Specify languages and categories]</p> <p>v. Does your institution operate an internal network (intranet) for staff? For students? Please indicate the types of information that is exchanged on this network¹⁹. If yes, please, provide brief description of the system.</p> <p>vi. Does your institution utilize a university e-mail system for staff? For students? For alumni? Do each these groups receive a dedicated university domain address?</p> <p>vii. Does your institution routinely send news and information to students and staff through e-mail? Please indicate the types of information, frequency, and groups to whom the information is disseminated.</p>
B. Key Information	<p>i. Does your institution publish the following information on tuition fees? Is this information available internally or externally? Please provide the relevant information for each item.</p>

¹⁹ These may include internal orders, periodic reports on disciplinary board activities, etc.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payment dates • Available deductions • Eligibility for postponing payment²⁰ • Eligibility for paying in installments²¹
	<p>ii. Does your institution publish information on graduates detailing employment statistics and other post-placements? Please provide the relevant information.</p>
	<p>iii. Does your institution collect information on students in the following areas? With whom is this information shared?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students with disabilities and procedures for accommodating special needs • Students in poverty • Students' region of origin • Information on parents [specify]
	<p>iv. Does your institution publish and disseminate information to students on the following internationalization activities? Please, specify.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for scholarships for study abroad • Opportunities for student exchange • Opportunities for study abroad for credit
	<p>v. Does your institution publish information to students on eligibility and procedures for internal mobility? Please, specify.</p>
	<p>vi. Does your institution provide information to students on student rights, appeals procedures, and other administrative processes? [Please specify]</p>
	<p>vii. Does your institution accept and respond to electronic communication from students and the public? Please, specify, provide some statistics and indicate the webpage addresses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-mails to the Rector or Dean • Questions and Answers tool on webpage • Social Networks tools (Facebook page, Twitter account) • Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section of the webpage • Other [specify]

²⁰ This may include exceptions to payment deadlines given to students awaiting a scholarship decision

²¹ This may include arrangements made to accommodate civil servants receiving social funds on periodical basis

Guidelines on Toolkit to Enhance Transparency and Accountability in Governance of Higher Education Institutions in Armenia

The toolkit consists of the below-mentioned six main parts, which are divided into several sections with each section having a number of questions/indicators. The relevant questions or indicators of the toolkit are selected based on the result of various surveys, which identified certain potential corruption risks in corresponding areas of HEI governance. The provided information in regards to toolkit indicators will ultimately bring to the reality where various internal and external stakeholders and generally the public are able to get corresponding information, actively participate in decision making process or effectively react to the decisions taken by various governing bodies and evaluate the implemented projects.

- i. Financial
- ii. Governing Boards
- iii. Strategic Planning
- iv. Human Resources Management
- v. Admissions, Student Assessment, Academic Discipline and Student Feedback
Information Management

The toolkit includes various questions, which often require YES/NO answers; there are also a number of questions which require a brief description (maximum 1-2 paragraphs) or the provision of existing internal documents. At the same time the proposed questions can be considered as criteria for indicating effective governing models, transparent attitudes towards decision making processes, an open and democratic decision making environment, active participation of university community members (academic staff, students, administrative staff, etc.), unbiased approaches, and accountability of the institution to the public, etc. Therefore, the relevant questions of the toolkit serve both as indicators for transparency/accountability and as guiding principles for university administrators to ensure this transparency/accountability.

Description of Toolkit Sections

1. Financial

Generally, it is recommended that the detailed standards or guidelines for financial management processing and accounting specific to HEIs are developed determining all aspects of financial management of HEIs. However, the main, important principles and methodologies of proper financial management are considered in this toolkit, which are considered important from a transparency and accountability point of view to address some corruption risks and strengthen anticorruption policy. In particular, the existence of an annual budget²² for a HEI is considered as a first step and a very important factor. However, the existence of a budget itself does not necessarily mean that the expected level of transparency has been provided.

²² The term “budget” is used as a generic term to refer to HEI financial document indicating estimate annual (financial year) incomes and expenditures.

The detailed representation budget and proper justification of relevant articles²³ especially are very important both for transparency and effective management points of view. Salary related expenses (main salaries, overtime wages, bonuses, rewards, vacation payments, etc²⁴.) are derived from staff lists and human resource policy instruments (bonuses, rates, social packages, etc.), and non-salary expenses require relevant descriptions and based on their nature may require specific programme based approaches as well.

A detailed breakdown of the budget is selected as an important criteria and 3%²⁵ of the total non-salary expenditures is chosen as a maximal threshold for the specific budget article. Some expenditures can obviously increase this 3% threshold (for example utility services expenditures), but it is obvious that it can be further divided by the particular type of service or other criteria. It is more important that even in case of large (more than 3%) budget articles, there is a further distribution to corresponding sub-articles. If all budget articles (or their relevant sub-articles) are less than 3% of the total non-salary expenditures then the HEI can provide a positive answer to the relevant question.

The justification of budget articles as an important criterion is understood by both descriptions of activities (derived from Annual Action Plan²⁶ reflecting strategic (long-term) programs and other documents) and provision of relevant calculations (for example, in the case of equipment it can be the title and main technical parameter of equipment, expected quantity and price per unit). The previous year's actual expenditures can be used as justification for specific budget articles only, including for unpredicted expenses. The justification of budget income articles leads to some projected or forecasted estimations that HEI administration has to deal with and describe in annual activity plan or other relevant documents. The budget justifications are presented with main budget document.

The proper Reporting System of HEI is strongly linked with planning documents and correspondingly, the Reports on Implementation of Strategic (long-term) Development Programmes, Annual Activity Plan and Annual Budget²⁷ provide a framework for overall monitoring and evaluation. Similar to justification of budget articles, the expenditures can be reported with proper detailed breakdown reflecting corresponding parts of the Report on Implementation of Annual Activity Plan.

Transparency and accountability in finances require both active community involvement and the availability of all relevant documents through a web page and/or internal communication channels. Wide participation of various HEI bodies and organisational units, internal and external stakeholders (academic councils, student organizations, faculty councils, professional/trade union organisations and employers, etc.) in budget drafting and discussion, will provide the opportunity to influence on proper decisions and ensures an open and transparent budget planning process. All relevant draft and final documents (including a staff

²³ The term "budget article" is used conditionally. Generally the budget consists of annual incomes and expenditures which itself has to be divided into various sections, which often is called article (it can be called item or line as well). The articles itself can be divided into sub-sections (sub-articles, sub-lines, sub-items) which in terms of this toolkit also can be also considered as budget articles.

²⁴ The List of salary and equivalent payments are defined by RA Government 853-N dated on 08.08.2013.

²⁵ This 3% indicator is chosen complementary and it can be decreased from year to year

²⁶ The term "Annual Activity Plan" is used as a generic term to refer to a document describing the main priorities, tasks and activities (including timeframe, responsible organisational units) planned for coming year and adopted by relevant HEI Governing body. The adoption of Annual and Strategic Programs by highest governing bodies of HEI is often directly envisaged by their statutes.

²⁷ Report on Implementation of Annual Budget is used as a generic term to refer a financial document providing the Report on implementation or fulfillment of estimate annual (financial year) incomes and expenditures.

list²⁸, procurement documents, and invoices) have to be available either through HEI web page or other on-line/offline sources in due time.

2. Governing Boards

The highest governing body of the HEIs in Armenia is the Board of Trustees (if the HEI has the status of Foundation) or the HEI Council (if the HEI has the status of State non-commercial organisation). In both cases there are procedures and regulations governing the formation of these bodies. Some members are elected (representatives of professorial staff and students) and some members can be nominated (appointed) by authorised persons²⁹ and in both cases it is very important to provide wider public transparency and accountability.

The toolkit underlines the importance of the election process of members of HEI governing bodies, and particularly ensures competitive election by secret ballot (number of proposed candidates is more than available seats). In the case of faculty councils the HEI should provide the average ratio between proposed candidates and available seats and provide the list of basic data (ratio per faculty) as an appendix (the data should be indicated from corresponding meeting protocols).

The open and competitive process for the nomination (appointment) of members of the HEI Governing Bodies can be ensured by announcing an open call for expression of interest, publication of selection criteria (e.g. preliminary division of seats among various profiles: Ministry official, educational expert, representative of economy sector, employer, etc.) and justification of the decision taken by presenting short profile summaries (2-3 paragraphs of text) for each nominated member.

The democratic process of the work of collegial governing bodies requires the active participation of its members and constructive dialogue. A unanimous (or almost unanimous) decision making process in HEI governing bodies does not indicate real democratic governance. The indicator on the number of taken decisions which had at least 20% opposing votes is included in the toolkit to detect the variety of votes and discover the existing democratic decision making process in collegial governing bodies. In the case of faculty councils the HEIs should provide average figures among all faculties (or analogous units).

The substantial opportunity for outside groups (members of HEI community who are not a member of governing body or external stakeholders) to provide the input for the Governing boards is emphasised in the toolkit. These opportunities includes open sessions, opportunities for the media to be present, web broadcasting of sessions, participation in sessions with deliberative voice rights, obligatory discussion of written proposals, special question and answer sessions and other opportunities for specific outside groups.

The indication of major decisions adopted by each governing body in the current year, except the adoption of annual/strategic plans, budget and relevant reports, will support providing

²⁸ The RA Law on Freedom of Information considers HEIs as information holders (Article 3) and stipulates to publish annually organizational staff lists (position titles and relevant salaries) along with other documents (Article 7). Many Armenian HEIs have the status of foundations and according to RA Law on Foundations the Board of Trustees of Foundation approves the staff list and this information as well as all other decisions of the Board of Trustees should be open to the public.

²⁹ Regulation of Formation of the Council of Higher Educational Institution, RA Government Decision No. 975-N, 23.06.2005.

content-wise accountability of the governing bodies. If there are no such specific decisions, the HEI in their answers can point out separate fragments from the above-mentioned exception documents³⁰. The availability of outputs of the work of governing bodies and Rectorate³¹, including Reports (Minutes/Protocols) and final decisions through the HEI's web site and/or internal communication channel is an important element to provide public transparency and accountability.

3. Strategic Planning

The strategic planning process of the HEI's activity is considered a key element to provide transparency and accountability and the process for its preparation, implementation, evaluation and reporting is of vital importance to ensure its effectiveness.

The relevant parts of toolkit consider the participation of various internal and external stakeholders in the process of preparation of the strategic plan, which often can be formalised by specific regulations. There are a variety of options (working groups of governing bodies, discussion in separate units, inputs for student, alumni and professional organisations, etc.) and the HEI should provide a brief description of the process with reference to specific evidence if available.

The next important element for strategic planning is the selection of priorities and the provision of measurable target indicators to allow evaluation of the progress achieved. Priorities should also align with national priorities, declared in relevant government documents or other authoritative sources, and explanations for each HEI priority should provide evident compliance with national ones.

The toolkit envisages the distribution of strategic and annual plans among faculties (schools) and/or administrative departments by the development and adoption of corresponding plans for relevant units, allocation of funding to units, setting up indicators for their activities, development of implementation report of units' strategic and annual plans. The progress is measured also by the dynamics of targeted indicators (current year, last 3 year, last 5 years).

The availability through the HEI's website and relevant units' (faculties/administrative departments) strategic and annual plans, as well as the reports on their implementation is emphasised by the toolkit.

4. HR Management

HEI staff is divided into 2 main parts: Academic and Non-Academic Staff. The academic staff in its turn consists of 2 main subgroups – teaching (all categories of professorial-teaching staff) and research staff (all categories of scientific-research staff). The non-academic staff is mainly constituted from administrative³², educational-support³³ and technical staff³⁴; in some

³⁰ The answer for this question and relevant comments should be provided by the rector of HEI and/or chair of highest governing body of HEI.

³¹ Consultative body under the Rector envisaged by HEI statute; discusses HEI activity issues between the Sessions of HEI Governing Bodies.

³² top-managers, senior and junior managerial staff, supervisors, inspectors, specialists and assistants of administrative units and other administrative staff positions .

special cases non-academic staff may include also personnel of university clinics (doctors, nurses, etc.), secondary and high schools, industrial enterprises and other subsidiary units. The toolkit questions on HR Management envisage relevant questions for both academic and non-academic staff.

The important components of HR management such as open and competition-based hiring professional development, training activities for almost all staff categories are emphasised in the toolkit. Proper and open announcement of vacant positions considers publications which took place for at least two months before selection, with at least one re-posting, on an institutional webpage (special section for job announcements) and other sources (e.g., newspaper, job boards such as jobfinder.am/careercenter.am). A special question on 2 or more candidates per position underlines the real competitive hiring process.

The publishing of announcements on newly hired staff members, including those who have renewed their position term through public and/or internal channels is recommended by the toolkit to provide appropriate publicity of the hiring process and the proper welcome of new community members.

The next important step for HR management in HEIs is the availability of detailed Terms of Reference³⁵ (ToR) for each non-teaching/non-research employee (mainly for administrative, support and technical positions). A sample of ToR for each group/type of positions should be attached.

The existence of an overall HR policy with detailed internal regulations and procedures is a very important factor for transparent HR management. Internal regulations should determine the procedures for the selection of employees (preliminary adoption of criteria, formation of selection independent (composed from representatives of various HEI units) commission, interviews, applicant's evaluation (marks per criteria), formal documenting of the selection process and final selection decision, etc.). The existence of a formal selection procedure and its obligatory application for all administrative (non-teaching) positions is covered by the relevant toolkit question.

The employer should ensure a professional development process for employees and this process should be provided by relevant HR policy documents. This process includes periodical professional retraining and other activities for academic staff as well as for other staff categories. HR policy should also envisage periodical attestation of non-elective employees. At the same time those who do not pass the retraining process or attestation should terminate employment at the HEI or his/her further employment should be seriously reconsidered by top management.

³³ heads of training laboratories, senior laboratory technicians, laboratory technicians, assistants of educational units, librarians, etc.

³⁴ staff providing the functionality of engineering-technical infrastructure of university campus (utility services, communication, security) as well as operation of transportation, maintenance and other services, including manufacturing infrastructure.

³⁵ The Term of Reference is a conditional title of the document describing the duties and tasks of the employee, his/her responsibilities, subordination, knowledge, skills and other issues related to the particular position. The terms Job Description or Position Passport are often used instead of ToR in HR management of Armenian public and private organizations, including HEIs.

5. Admissions, Student Assessment, Academic Discipline and Student Feedback

The publication of detailed application procedures and criteria for admission to HEI Bachelor's, Master's and PhD programs is considered as a first important step towards the provision of transparency and accountability for the admission process. The HEI should report on admissions which take place outside of the centralised (organised by the Government) admission process.

Student assessment processes may vary among HEIs, but the adoption and publication of the examination process and grading criteria, as well as the provision of a complete list of examination questions or sample tests (when appropriate) using anonymous grading are highlighted in the toolkit. The percentage of students expelled due to failure to pass academic standards and failed to pass state graduation examination (if the practice of state examination is applied) is asked by the toolkit.

The code of ethics, special handbooks and policies providing comprehensive explanations and clarification on plagiarism and other academic violations, introducing mechanisms to identify them, presenting detailed regulations and procedures for subsequent penalties, as well as introducing effective opportunities for grievance and redress are covered by toolkit questions. The existence of plagiarism and other non-ethical cases are subject to proper disciplinary procedures, which can have consequences (disciplinary sanctions) both for students and HEI employees, including exclusion from the HEI. The cases can always be appealed and sometimes overturned through appeal, which is a part of an important university unique environment. The publishing of information on disciplinary proceedings and outcomes, if necessary with the removal of names and other identifying data is an important part of the whole process. The provision of information and data on the above-mentioned issues is requested in the Toolkit.

6. Information Management

The RA Law on Freedom of Information (FOI law) as well as the RA Government Decision on "Registration, Classification, and Storage of Information developed by or delivered to information holders, as well as the definition of order of provision of Information or its copy by State and Local Self-governing bodies, State Organizations and Institutions" No. 1204-N dated on 15.10.2015 (hereafter Government Decision on FOI Law) formed the logic and content of many questions of this section.

The Government Decision on FOI Law establishes that the head of an information holder or an official appointed by an information holder is responsible for the freedom of information in their respective institution. At the same time the FOI Law envisages that the information holder should annually publish, including through the web page, information related to its activities (the list of required questions is presented in article 7, point 3 of the FOI Law).

The webpage of the institution and its availability in other languages as well as other information channels (internal network for staff and, students, corporate e-mail system, newsletters, etc.) are outlined in toolkit questions to identify any corporate communication potential. The answer on the availability of the webpage in other languages should be specified by providing the categories of information (webpage menus) which are supported in particular languages.

The publication of information on tuition fees, and particularly opportunities for reductions, to postpone payment or to pay in several instalments are especially important and the provision of information on these specific issues, means the publication of detailed regulations, eligibility of students and exact deadlines. The toolkit also encourages HEIs to develop graduates' employment and post-placement statistics, as well as collect information on vulnerable students (students with disabilities, poor students, originating from rural areas, etc.)

The answers on dissemination of information to students on opportunities to study abroad or be involved in exchange programmes (e.g. special section of the webpage dedicated for student international opportunities, regular newsletters, etc.) should be specified by indicating the tools applied for this task and the relevant webpage addresses, if available. The information on student internal mobility should include a HEI internal formal document regulating how students can get credits from other Armenian HEIs or other educational institutions, and practical guidelines on how the process can be initiated and implemented. The information on student rights, appeals procedures, and other administrative processes may also include both HEI internal legal acts adopted by governing bodies of HEI and practical guidelines for the practical implementation of a particular right (e.g. often the rights are formulated in a declarative style and the exact actions in this regards are not provided). The answers on information on student rights, appeals procedures, and other administrative processes should be specified by indicating the internal legal acts and other documents (guidelines, advice, practical handbooks, etc.) and by relevant webpage addresses, if available.

The electronic communication tools (e-mail communication, questions and answers through webpage specific instruments, social networking tools etc.) are emphasised by relevant toolkit questions and their proper functionality will enhance transparency and accountability in the HEIs activities. Statistics for such communication and relevant web addresses must be specified.