

# LEPL – National Center for Educational Accreditation

## Report

### 2009

#### 1. NCEA New Mission

The National Center for Educational Accreditation together with each member of the society and educational institutions is concerned with the quality of education, its continuous development and enhancement of confidence in Georgian Education Area among local and the international community.

The basic principles of the NCEA activities have changed: from a controlling authority it was turned into a supporting agency that conducts its everyday activities in cooperation with the society, each individual and takes decisions on the basis of a consensus.

The NCEA initiated a new alternative way of democratic decision making by arranging thematic secondary and academic summits in line with traditional methods of discussions such as meetings, workshops and conferences.

Accreditation procedures are conducted according to the standards elaborated by the participation of interested parties. These standards create the ground for self-evaluation as well as confirmation of authenticity by the NCEA.

#### 2. Institutional and Structural Amendments

Revising the mission of the NCEA triggered changes in the institutional organization of the center. The reorganisation was effected on the basis of Decision No.35 of the NCEA Director, dated August 13, 2009. Currently, the NCEA consists of the following structural units: Department for Strategic Development and Legal Affairs, Department for Accreditation Administration, Department for Institutional Arrangement and Development of Educational Programmes, Department of Information and Mobility, Department for Register (Administration).

The NCEA operates the Council for the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Council for the Accreditation of Educational Programmes to ensure Professional Development of Teachers. Each Council is independent in its activities and makes decisions with due consideration of experts' opinions, filed documents and positions of interested parties. Publicity of Council meetings guarantees transparency of a decision-making process.

According to the Decision No. 269, August 26, 2009 by Prime Minister of Georgia a new composition of the Council for the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions was approved, which does not include

representatives of the executive power. The foregoing is an important change to meet membership requirements of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

### **3. Perfection of the Procedures for the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions**

By Decision No.1030 November 20, 2008 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia the Regulation for the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions, Rules for Determination of Student Quota and Threshold Amount of Accreditation Fee were approved.

The approval of the new Accreditation Regulation was preceded by intensive discussions of its content with stakeholders. Due to comments and suggestions a number of standard- related requirements were reduced by four times. At the end, the document was approved by a full consensus.

The Accreditation Regulation provides for the standards of institutional accreditation of higher education institutions, methods of their evaluation and rules for administration of accreditation procedures. The goal for institutional accreditation is to establish systemic self-assessment and support the development of quality assurance mechanisms. Compatibility of a higher education institution with its mission is established by such standards as: material and financial resources, educational programmes and human resources.

By Order No.73, October 29, 2009 of the NCEA Director the forms for Thematic Conclusions of Accreditation Experts and Summary forms for groups of Accreditation experts were approved. By Order No.75, November 26, 2009 and Order No. 29 of December 17, 2009 forms of self-assessment questionnaires for Higher Education Institutions and thematic and summary conclusion forms of Accreditation expert groups according to the new accreditation regulations were approved.

The draft self-assessment questionnaire for institutional accreditation of higher education institutions was discussed on November 21, 2009 during the first academic summit held at LEPL- Tbilisi State Medical University. Comments and views expressed by summit participants were reflected on the development of accreditation self-assessment questionnaires.

### **4. Selection of Accreditation Experts for Higher Education Institutions**

During 2009 the NCEA announced twice a competition for selection of higher education institution accreditation experts. In total 85 applicants participated in the competition, 26 of them were granted the status of an accreditation expert after passing all steps envisaged by the competition.

On October 10-11, 2009 a special training was arranged for experts, which aimed at mastering basic principles of teamwork, interviewing, self-assessment questionnaires and analysis of documents, presented by an applicant for accreditation, also the familiarisation with accreditation related normative framework.

## **5. Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions**

In 2009 total 22 higher educational institutions applied for institutional accreditation, all of which were recognised as applicants and assessed by accreditation experts. Four applicants requested the NCEA to conduct accreditation procedures according to new standards. Accreditation was granted to 10 institutions.

In 2009 the hearing of 7 cases regarding accreditation were conducted in different institutional courts. Two disputes referred to the court of first instance; one case was dismissed due to the withdrawal of the suit and the other case was decided in favour of the NCEA. Four disputes were reviewed by the appellation court; a negative decision for the NCEA was delivered in one case only. The appeals court met one appeal of the NCEA.

In 2009 the Accreditation Council reviewed a case of accreditation of one institution for the second time in order to implement the decision of the court and grant accreditation to the institution.

## **6. Determination of Student Quota**

In order to determine the student quota four newly-founded licensed higher education institutions applied to the NCEA three of which were set with the student quota. The statement to increase the student quota was made by 17 accredited institutions and 7 newly-founded licensed higher education institutions in total. Two accredited institutions ceased the process and one case was cancelled. The student quota was increased to 14 accredited and 7 newly-founded licensed higher education institutions.

## **7. Self-Assessment Reports of Higher Education Institutions**

Based on the Order of the NCEA Director N46 October 2, 2009 self-assessment report forms of accredited and newly-founded licensed higher education institutions and submission deadlines were approved. Self-assessment forms define the compatibility of the institution with the criteria of institutional accreditation. The self-assessment reports were presented by 63 accredited and newly-founded licensed higher education institutions. Based on the self-assessment reports 61 higher education institutions were given recommendations to improve defaults. All higher education institutions took the NCEA recommendations into account.

## **8. Compatibility of Master's Degree Programs with Directions of Educational Programs**

To ensure compatibility of higher education programs with master's degree educational programmes approved by the Resolution of the Government of Georgia N 84 April 29, 2009 the NCEA accepted applications from 39 institutions. The Council of Experts approved the compatibility of 696 specialists offered totally by 33 institutions with Master's degree educational programs. One institution refused to verify its programmes and withdrew its application from the NCEA, as to 5 other higher education institutions did not have sufficient places to accept students.

## **9. Higher Education Qualifications Framework and Sectoral Standards**

In 2009 the development of a draft Higher Education Qualifications Framework was successfully accomplished by active involvement of the NCEA. The draft Qualifications Framework was published on a webpage of the NCEA for interested parties. The document provides for higher education qualifications, described on the basis of 5 key criteria: knowledge and understanding, ability to apply knowledge in practice, ability of sound judgement, communication skills and language skills.

II and III Academic Summits, held under the auspices of the NCEA, were dedicated to the discussion of the National Qualifications Framework.

II Academic Summit was held on December 5, 2009 at the Ltd – Tbilisi Free University. After the presentation of the National Qualifications Framework a number of interesting comments and suggestions were made. It was decided at the meeting that participants would be given an opportunity to make comments, views and suggestions known to the NCEA via email, which then would have been discussed by the working group, set up for the development of the National Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

On December 11, 2009 Tbilisi Vano Sarajishvili State Conservatoire hosted III Academic Summit. The Summit discussed the issues regarding the reflection of arts education in National Qualifications Framework, planning to develop the standards for higher education in arts, and agreeability of legislative amendments and specifications of higher education in the field of arts. . It was decided at the meeting that the National Qualifications Framework will take into account the specifications of higher education in the field of arts and a working group would be set up for the development of standards for the higher education in arts.

The following drafts of sectoral papers were published on a webpage of the NCEA in the following fields: Business and Management, Biology, Education Sciences, Geography, European Studies, History, Medicine,

Banking, Nursing, Jurisprudence, Civil Engineering, Physics, Psychology, Chemistry. A number of presentations and discussions of sectoral documents were arranged under the auspices of the NCEA.

On December 16, 2009 the NCEA, with the assistance of the EU Twinning Project, organised a discussion of the sectoral paper in Medicine at the Hotel Sheraton-Metechi-Palace in Tbilisi. Under the participation of the NCEA the sectoral standards in the fields of medicine and jurisprudence were presented on November 30, 2009 and December 11, 2009 and respectively, within a framework of the University Curriculum Development Programme project. The proposals and amendments offered by participants of the meeting were duly reflected in draft sectoral papers.

## **10. Student Mobility**

By the end of 2009 the NCEA elaborated the Procedure of student mobility from one Higher Education Institution to the other Higher Education institution. The NCEA electronic portal was set up in order to administer the student mobility procedures – this portal provides information about registered mobility placements according to the faculties of education institutions or programs, data of student applicants and later, a list of candidates of mobility is published.

On December 25, 2009 at IV Academic Summit held at Ilia State University a draft mobility regulation was discussed. The comments and proposals delivered during the meeting were reflected in a draft document.

During monitoring the student mobility by the Center over 3800 personal files and other data of applicants were verified.

## **11. Pilot Project for Accreditation of Secondary Education Institutions**

In May 2009 a pilot project for Accreditation of Secondary Education Institutions was prepared on the basis of the Regulation for Accreditation of Secondary Education Institutions. The aforementioned project was implemented under the assistance of the UNDP Project.

Within a framework of this Project guidelines for external and self-evaluation of schools were designed. In May-June 2009 the training for preparation of self-evaluation reports was held. The majority of secondary education institutions participating in the pilot project presented their self-evaluation reports.

Furthermore, 64 candidates were selected for the Project and trained by a foreign expert. The experts' site visits to schools were arranged under the assistance of the Consultancy and Training Centre. The reports drafted by experts were studied by the NCEA.

## **12. Accreditation of Educational Programs for Teachers' Professional Development**

In February-June 2009 the educational programmes for teachers' professional development were accredited commensurate with the procedure, envisaged by the Regulation for Accreditation of Educational Programmes for Teachers' Professional Development, adopted on the basis of Order No.800 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia (dated September 19, 2008). The applications were filed by 32 legal entities for 255 educational programmes, of which total 172 educational programmes were accredited. The main deficiency revealed during the evaluation of programmes was determined by the neglect of program evaluation content standards.

A new Regulation for the Accreditation of Educational Programmes for Teachers' Professional Development was approved by Order No.1102 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia on December 4, 2009. Accreditation of educational programmes for teachers' professional development aims at ensuring program quality and professional development of teachers. The Regulation established a new procedure of evaluation for educational programmes. During the accreditation of educational programmes elements of institutional accreditation were abandoned and a focus was shifted to the program content and quality.

## **13. Recognition of Already Received Education**

On August 10, 2009 amendments were made to the Law of Georgia on Higher Education. The Decree No.406 of the President of Georgia (dated July 14, 2009) was also amended, as a result of which changes to the procedure of establishment the authenticity of educational documents issued in Georgia was cancelled and the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia was nominated as an authority responsible for the legalisation of educational documents issued in Georgia and issuance of information concerning this procedure instead of the NCEA.

The procedure of Recognition of Higher Education Acquired on the Occupied Territories was elaborated and approved by Order No.1067 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia on December 1, 2009. Under this Regulation the NCEA is entitled to conduct administrative proceedings in relation to the aforementioned issue. The NCEA has initiated 5 administration proceedings.

In 2009 the NCEA reviewed 1827 applications in total for the recognition of educational documents issued and education acquired abroad. Commensurate with the established procedure the circumstances specified by applicants were double-checked with foreign educational institutions, also the status of educational institutions and evaluations of students were established.

In order to enrol Georgian citizens and foreign nationals into accredited higher education institutions without unified national examinations the NCEA recognised 160 educational documents in total during the second half of 2009 within a framework of the programme.

In order to promote the recognition procedures two NCEA staff members took distance learning courses – Evaluation of Foreign Educational Programmes, Diplomas and Qualifications – organised by ENIC/NARIC Netherland's office at the end of the course participants were awarded certificates at the Cyprus Conference.

#### **14. Development of Information System and Administration of State Study Grants**

The NCEA maintains the Registers of Higher Education Institutions, Students and Academic Personnel. Administration of the Register covers system monitoring and technical support. Also, new modules have been elaborated. The data of total 211 840 individuals are registered in the Register for Students of Higher Education Institutions, among them, the data of 95 495 students and 116 345 graduates. Based on these data it became possible to implement a joint programme of Tbilisi Municipality and the JSC - Bank of Georgia – Students' Tickets.

As a result of launching the special software in October 2009 the data of total 23 285 students, who enrolled for a 2009-2010 academic year through national examinations were integrated into the Students' Register. In the meantime, the data on state study grants awarded to 8405 students were automatically integrated into the grants' module, which eliminated the probability of potential errors. Up to 30 000 students were registered within the grants module who have state study grants and 2 035 students who have state study grants within a framework of the social programme, among them: 168 foreign nationals, also 1 159 students who became victims of Russia's Aggression of August 2008 and received one-time financial aid.

By Order No.913 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia (dated October 26, 2009) the Procedure of Issuance of State Study Grants and Transfer of a Study Grant from One Higher Education Institution into Another was approved. Commensurate with this Procedure, in addition, to citizens of Georgia, a grant may be awarded to foreign nationals and stateless persons residing on the territory of Georgia commensurate with the established order.

In October 2009 special software was developed for the Register of Academic Personnel and in total 5344 professors of 63 higher education institutions were registered in the Register. In 2009 the World Learning launched a project for improvement of the institutional arrangement of the NCEA, funded by the USAID. Within the framework of the project the NCEA registers will be integrated into a common network system.

## 15. Webpage and Record Keeping Software

The NCEA webpage serves information and communication purposes. The information about planned events are regularly published on it. The NCEA is currently working on a new design of the webpage, diversification of functions thereof and improvement of an English-language version. From December 2009 the NCEA operates the record keeping software.

## 16. Correspondence

In 2009 the NCEA received 7 428 letters in total, among them: 5 727 letters were received from legal entities and 1 701 letters were from natural persons. The number of outgoing letters totalled 6 533.

## 17. Financial Report

The budget assignments for the Legal Entity of Public Law (LEPL) – National Center for Educational Accreditation amounted to GEL 580 000.. The NCEA expenditures amounted to 578,816, among them:

- Wages (including income tax) 435 902 GEL;
- Goods and services 118 601 GEL;
- Social security 9 500 GEL;
- Other costs and expenses 162 GEL;
- Increase of non-financial assets 14 651 GEL.

Commensurate with Orders No.233 of March 27, 2006 and No.1030 of November 20, 2009 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, the fees, paid by higher education institutions for accreditation purposes amounted to 161 660 GEL. The balance of amount paid as accreditation fee amounted to 47 574 GEL in 2009.

In total, 82 812 GEL were expended for the remuneration of invited specialists and accreditation experts, business missions and also for other purposes, among them:

- Goods and services 51 518 GEL;
- Other expenditures (taxes and payments to the budget, also, the other duties) 26 669 GEL;
- Increase of non-financial assets 4 625 GEL.

Thank you for taking interest in our Report and for cooperation!