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ESTABLISHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF
QUALITY ASSURANCE
CENTERS IN AZERBAIJAN UNIVERSITIES

Assessment of the needs analysis of Baku Business University

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Baku Business University (BBU) is a relatively young institution, founded in 1993. Transition to market economy created need for highly-qualified specialists with new thinking, as well as economists in international relations, commerce, business and other fields of entrepreneurship.

The mission of Baku Business university is “Training highly-qualified specialists in the fields of business and entrepreneurship, playing a significant role in the formation and development of relations concerning to a market economy in the Azerbaijan Republic.

Teaching process at Baku Business University is carried out on 18 specialties according to training students for Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees, by 2 schools and 8 chairs. The schools are: Business and Management and Economy and Management.

The Academic council is the governing body of BBU. The council consists of respected scholars from Azerbaijan Republic. The Academic Council decides about organization and management of the teaching process. The council has also the control over these processes. It also decides about fulfilling scientific-research works, problems concerning to printing, and organizational matters and educational-training works, sport and other mass measures.

The needs analysis – general comments

The university has presented a needs analysis aimed to identify weak and strong sides of the education management system of Baku Business University and then preparing what needs to be implemented or to be improved. The needs analysis can be seen as a kind self-evaluation from the university about its quality assurance system. But it differs from “traditional” self-evaluations in several aspects:

It has to be noted that the report mentions “education management system” instead of “Quality Assurance system” and the question remains if these both concepts cover the same area.

The needs analysis has been written and collected by the Quality Assurance Center at the university. This leads to the question: who is responsible for the conclusions in the needs analysis? Are the conclusions accepted by the rector, academic council and the teaching staff? Have the students taken part of the report?

Another level at the university that needs to be described and defined is the “top management”. Is this the administration? What positions are included in the “top management”. How does it relate to the rector and academic council?

The conclusions of the needs analysis rests on focus group discussions and interviews with staff at central positions within the university. There is no discussion why these people were selected. It would have been fruitful to include some members of the academic council and also representatives of the students. Omitting the students is perhaps the weakest point in this report. The students are defined as “customers” and not important partners within the university.

Quality assurance policy

ESG: Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is public and forms a part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes while involving external stakeholders.

Does the institution have a policy for QA? How well known and accepted is the policy within the

institution?

Who decides about the QA policy and the organization of the QA-work?

How is this policy executed? What actions are undertaken? Is there an annual report about QA at the institution?

University assessment report:The university does not seem to have a developed Quality Assurance policy or system although it is under development. It seems that this has been an initiative of the rector, who also decided to establish a quality center. However the operations of the center is still rather limited.

The knowledge of the QA system within the university seems to be limited and it is quite understandable as it is not entirely settled. There is also some resistance from senior staff.

As the university is at the starting point for writing and implementing a QA system is the report not outspoken who will decide about the QA system. Until now it seems to be the rector.

So far there are no annual reports about quality work and/or evaluations undertaken.

Unit for Quality Assurance

A QA center / unit has been established quite recently. It is not clear from the report what role and responsibility this unit is going to have. The place in the organization is also quite unclear.

The university reports: "There is not any integration between QA Management system and university's business processes, as it does not have any business processes." What is meant with "business processes"? If it is the planning process and strategic planning then this may be a better wording.

The staffing of the QA unit I seems also to be at the beginning.

Quality Assurance process

The university has not developed any clear QA process. The responsibility and design of this process is still very unclear. Who will receive and take care of the results and be responsible for the improvements?

The university reports: "Overall, quality policy is conducted spontaneously and needs to be organized and planned."

The university reports: "Top management does not report performance of the quality management system and opportunity for improvement. They might prepare report upon request of the rector once in a semester usually at the end of the semester."

Summary and recommendations

At the end of the report the university has given a summary of the weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and threats for the future. From this summary it is obvious that the university faces a lot of work for the future when it comes to develop a quality assurance system and a well-functioning process.

The following recommendations can be seen as a starting point for this work

- Develop a QA policy that is understood and accepted by staff and students at the university. The development of this policy has to involve both teachers, students and stakeholders outside the university.
- The structure for decision about QA policy and QA process must be clear. Is it the Academic council or the rector?

- Decide where the results and improvement from the QA work are discussed and decided. Who is going to be responsible for the improvement work?
- Quality assurance unit: define the role and responsibility of the unit. Decide where in the organization the unit is placed. The staff at the unit must be given the possibility to develop and deepen their competence with contacts outside the country.
- Appoint a quality assurance advisory board, which should consist of teachers, students, stakeholders outside the university and the QA officer. The board should advise in the process of developing a QA policy and system of the university. The board should also discuss the result of the annual QA reports.
- Develop a QA process for the university. This process should contain annual reporting about QA from various departments, subjects etc. It should also contain a plan for external evaluation in a five or six year process.