



WP1. Scoping and Analysis of Quality Assurance in Azerbaijan Universities

NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT **Azerbaijan Technological University**



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Introduction

Azerbaijan Technological University (UTECA) was founded on the initiative of national leaders in 1970 in Ganja. The university provides education in a compact campus consisting of six educational and one administrative building. Besides, for the incoming students there is a dormitory, which can host 1,000 students in the city. The university offers 22 bachelors, 17 masters, and 5 doctoral degree programs and serves to 2,500 students with a teaching and research staff of 550.

UTECA's main educational fields are IT and Computer Science, Electronics and Telecommunication Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Material Science and Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Textile Engineering, Food Sciences and Technology, Tourism, Machinery, Business Administration, Industrial Management, Public Administration, Management and Training-Education Technologies of Human Resources.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS OF ASSESSMENT AREAS OF UTECA

1. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

a. Strategic Management Process of the university

The University establishes its structure independently and forms various internal organizational units. The Charter defines the establishment of those units. The supreme governing body of the University is the Scientific Council. The Scientific council is the elective body. The Ministry of Education of Republic of Azerbaijan and the charter itself regulates its activities. The Rector leads the activities of the University. The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan assigns and dismisses the Rector of the university. Vice-rectors of University are appointed by the Minister of Education among candidates recommended by the rector of the University. Faculty is academic, scientific and administrative unit of the University. The Scientific Council carries out general management of the university faculties.

b. Vision and Mission statement of the university

The University Scientific Council determines vision and mission of the university. The Vision of the university is to become a world leading technological higher education institution in the region and compete with world universities. The Mission of the University is to prepare

skilled technologists - engineers for the Azerbaijani marketplace who satisfy the market's demand.

c. Strategic Planning Documents and Their Content

Strategic planning documents of the university are Statutes of the university and the Strategic Plan. The Statutes is the foundation document of the university, which defines all strategic aspects, and limitations of the university's activities.

d. Relevance of the Strategy and Its Coherence with Vision and Mission

Azerbaijan Technological University builds strategic plans in 5 year round. Currently UTECA has a 5-year Strategic Development Program for 2016-2020. Every faculty administration decides a five-year roadmap roundly and proposes it to the university authority for final decision. The authority raises the proposed plan in the monthly university academic board for vote. If approved the plan is permitted for implementation. The short term and medium term goals are clearly stated in the strategic plan and they are to be consistently applied under supervision of the faculty administrative board periodically. Although it's always topical in the faculty, it is hard to say that these plans are verbally implemented because of staff capacity and timely dissemination.

e. Implementation of the strategy and monitoring of indicators

The assigned delegates by the rector regularly control the steps of the Strategic Plan. Besides, by the end of the year all faculty Deans and Head of Departments have to present their yearly report to the Scientific Council. The report is monitored by the Council members and is open to comments. At length, the report is proposed for vote. Based on the latest survey students and staff of the university are partially aware of the overall strategy of the institution. Although UTECA builds and implements staff development programs, the staff argues that there is not enough effort to improve staff quality. Besides, not all staff performs in correlation with the strategic plan of the university.

2. UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

a. University organizational management structure

The Rector as advised by the University Scientific council approves the Structure of the University. The Rector assigns heads of the administrative units (with the exception of branches) of the University. The system consists of the Rector, Vice-rectors, Faculty and Departments, Administrative Departments, Centers, and Student Unions. All departments and faculties are represented in University Scientific Council. Strategic amendments and changes are subject to the Council's approval.

b. The Effectiveness of Decision-making

Since decisions pertaining to the development of the university units are discussed in the Scientific Council, the decision making process is relatively effective at UTECA. The Council members approve new teaching materials, PhD dissertation topics and supervisions, budget allocation issues.

c. Student involvement in institutional governance

Student Union, Student Scientific Union, Student Sport Union enroll in university activities. Heads of these Unions have to report their yearlong activities at the University Scientific Council. The faculty administration considers student complaints about teaching and examination procedure. However, a routine survey of student satisfaction is not implemented within the university. Based on the last survey among the students, student involvement in decision-making of the university is low. Students argue that their arguments are not considered while preparing the study programs.

3. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

a. Selection, appointment, promotion and dismissal of academic and administrative staff

Selection, appointment, promotion and dismissal of academic and administrative staff are implemented by the approval of the Rector. Centre for Human Capital Management is in charge of recruitment and dismissal procedures in the university. In special cases the selection and

dismissal decisions are consulted in the University Scientific Council. All the procedures are coherent with the Labor Code of Azerbaijan Republic

b. Staff development

UTECA prioritizes personnel development and training activities. Sustainable Development Educational Technologies Centre and Centre for Human Capital Management directly involved in human capital development and training. The centers operate under the charter of the university. Successful managers (practitioners) are regularly (once a month) invited to the university to deliver Master Classes to students and staff. Human Recourses Development and Training Center also delivers some masterclasses for updated Scientific Soft wares due to different specialty such as SPSS. These are usually CEOs or leading experts of industries or well-known motivators or education professionals. However, according to the survey results among the university staff, employees are not satisfied with these activities and complain about the lack of dissemination of trainings among staff.

c. Remuneration of work and motivation of staff

Remuneration is implemented according to the state legislations and Labor Code of the Azerbaijan Republic. Beginning from 2017 a new remuneration strategy has been approved which highlights differentiation in staff salaries based on individual performance (40% Teaching performance, 40% Academic performance, 20 % Self-development). The performance appraisal of academic staff was held in 2016-2017 and results were announced. However, monetary incentives have not been introduced yet because of budget constraints. Based on survey results, the university has not succeeded to implement successful remuneration program of staff. Since the infrastructure needs renovation an evaluation of the administration is not organized, the staffs feel isolated from the administration.

d. Staff satisfaction

Currently, staff satisfaction is evaluated through faculty meetings. Individual faculty member applications for betterment, complaints and open discussion meetings are main methods for measuring staff performance. However, no anonymous staff satisfaction survey exists.

e. Participation of staff in international cooperation projects and mobility programs

UTECA appreciates international cooperation in academic field. The university has more than 70 international cooperation and mobility agreements with foreign higher education institutions. Academic staffs of the university participate in mobility activities and visit partner institutions. After the mobility, the respective staffs must share their experience and thoughts with the faculty members. They are encouraged to apply newly adapted skills and knowledge during teaching and research activities. Currently no special treatment is considered for the exchange staff and students. However, these faculty members generally have privilege in promotion processes. Seven teaching staff members participated in Mevlana (Turkey) mobility program. Four students participated in Erasmus Mobility.

4. THE INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE UNIVERSITY

- a. Strategies and Procedures for Quality Assurance
- b. Structures and Policies for Quality Assurance
- c. Use of internal quality process outcomes in decision making and strategic planning
- d. Periodic Assessment Procedures of the Quality of the Staff
- e. The Quality of Teaching and Research Staff
- f. Surveys
- g. Feedbacks

UTECA does not have a Quality Assurance Center. IT implements strategy in accordance with the Vision and Mission and the 5-year Strategic Plan. Each faculty Dean and Head of Departments ensure the quality of the lectures by observing the lectures periodically.

There is a Quality Assurance Commission, which periodically assesses quality of the teaching staff. Evaluation criteria involve readiness, using of technology, using interactive methods, class management skills and documentation. Final reports of the evaluation are presented to the university administration (namely Vice-rector for education) and presented in the University Scientific Council if needed. The evaluations are limited to academic performance and do not involve administrative activities. There is no specific unit for staff quality evaluation within the university management structure apart from these temporary or long-term commissions.

The outcomes of periodical internal evaluation are considered in decision-making (lecture and other duty assignments for next year) by the faculty and Scientific Council. The feedbacks by the aforementioned commission and delegates are passed to the respective units to recover deficiencies.

Very rarely are surveys conducted among students to measuring staff and teaching quality. However students are welcome to express their ideas to the university administration both verbally and in written form.

5. TEACHING AND LEARNING

a. Procedures for Initiating, Monitoring and Periodic Review of the Programs and Activities

The Faculty professors and staff, as well as the university administration initiate the University programs and activities. All lecture materials and programs need to be approved by the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs and the Academic Committee who are members of the Scientific Council of the university. Unfortunately, periodical review and update of study materials are not common. Discussions over renewal of study materials are not held frequently and no other parts (stakeholders) are involved in the process. Another issue is a fixed study program standards determined by the Ministry of Education, which are not eligible for any change.

b. Renewing of the study programs considering student oriented studies

Rector of the university periodically assigns delegates to monitor and evaluate faculty performance and lecture materials. However, study programs are not easily renewed due to government standards determined by Ministry of Education.

c. Academic support

All faculties have faculty library facilities supported by the University Main Library. University lecturers have consulting hours where they meet students for further discussion of the lecture topics. All students are eligible for excellence and academic achievement stipends. The university authority provides financial support (stipends) for students based on their semester

final grades. Successful students are paid stipends on monthly basis for the following five months (one semester).

d. Evaluation and recognition of prior learning achievements

Students attending international mobility programs and those are moving from another university apply for recognition of their prior transcript credits. UTECA participates in Bologna Educational Process and recognizes international credit mobility grades.

e. The system of observing graduate employment and career and its usage for improvement of studies

Department of Alumni and Career is in charge for internships of the students in partner industries and they collaborate with regional businesses and industries to recruit university graduates. The department organizes career exhibitions every year with the aim of uniting industries and graduate students. Many students get jobs. However, there is no systematic tracking program of the alumni employment.

f. Collaboration with academic, social and business partners and their influence on University studies

UTECA cooperates with local and international higher education institutions and organizes joint conferences, field trips, and academic student and staff mobility with the partners. Besides, UTECA faculties prioritize collaboration with local and national industries to foster quality of graduates. Based on the agreement with the industries, UTECA faculties benefit from the laboratories and field trips to the production zones. Authentic learning environment provides a better learning outcome for the students. UTECA receives research grants from cooperating industries. Research results are disseminated through co-organized seminars, roundtables or conferences. However students are not actively involved in the research process.

g. Dynamics of Lecturers and Students' International Mobility and Its Influence on University activity

Currently UTECA cooperates with more than 70 international institutions. University Lecturers and students have participated in Mevlana and Erasmus+ international mobility programs. The participants of the mobility programs become more motivated. They are encouraged to share their knowledge with students and staff. However, there is no specific performance measuring tool for the mobility effectiveness.

h. Current regional and national labor-market situation

Azerbaijan situates on the transit roads from east to west and north to south. The country's oil and gas reserves have contributed to recover from poverty and war disaster in 1990s. Currently Azerbaijan runs policy to change oil dependent economy to diversified one based on human capital. The situation requires experts and engineers mostly. Unfortunately, majority of such kind experts are expats. The government encourages institutions to prepare skillful graduates to fulfill the vacancies in non-oil sectors. Labor market has high demand for engineers in different fields.

i. Use of educational technology in teaching and learning

UTECA lecturers use projectors and white boards in their lectures. There is only one smart board in the university. Lecture materials and selected books are being uploaded to the electronic system of university library. However, they are not accessible online for now.

j. Ensuring the competitiveness of graduates

To ensure the quality and competitiveness of the graduates, senior students are sent to internships to partner industries. Optional training is available for mastering specific topics. According to the latest survey results, academic programs and curriculum in the university should be modernized and updated.

k. Student involvement in research activities

University students take part in laboratory researches. However, they are less likely to be employed in research projects. Successful senior students are encouraged to apply for the faculty vacancies. Occasionally, they are employed as teaching assistant rather than research assistants.

However, successful graduates are encouraged to continue their education on master and doctoral programs at UTECA. Weak university research facility is another reason for lower participation.

l. Level of Satisfaction of Students in Relation to Personal and Professional Development provided by the University

Azerbaijan Technological University administration tries its best to ensure students and staff satisfaction. According to the recent survey held among the university students, majority of the correspondents are relatively satisfied with the university's performance. However, they are less satisfied with the library (up-to-date materials) and research facilities, lecture syllabi, and consideration of student opinion in building lecture programs.

m. Monitoring and supporting students' academic progress

There is no specific methodology or procedure for monitoring student academic progress. At the end of each semester faculty discusses the results of student achievements. However this is general statistical review of faculty performance based on student achievements. Students are not invited to discussions. Student academic progress is supported through extra reading materials plus frequent meetings with practitioners.

n. Student assessment

Students' academic progress is monitored and evaluated throughout the semester activities. 50% of the final grade derives from students' semester performance (attendance, class assignments). Another 50 % comes from final exam. Examinations conducted either on computer, through lab work, or in the written form.

o. Feedback from graduates

Currently, UTECA does not have graduate feedback mechanism to self-evaluate its performance. A graduate track database and periodical contact with graduates is needed for a better contribution for the community.

6. STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

a. Student handbook

UTECA brochures are available for the newcomers. However, student handbooks are not foreseen for current students. Freshmen get small leaflets in their first arrival explaining the educational system, students' rights and responsibilities at UTECA. University administration also organizes orientation programs for new comers at the beginning of each educational year.

b. Academic and career counseling support system for students

UTECA lecturers and administrative staff are open for consultations by the students. In the faculty plan there exists student consulting hours for every student, however, it is mostly applied for master's degree supervisions. No specific division exists for career counseling.

c. Supporting international mobility of students

UTECA administration supports international mobility of the students. However, financial support for the mobility if the students are not available within the current university budgeting.

d. Student clubs

There are Student Trade Union, Student Scientific Organizations, and Student Sport organizations in the university. The activities are supported by the university authority. Different clubs such as music, art, start-ups are common. UTECA has Sport Complex with minor equipment and is open to students only on class hours.

e. Library and Information Resources

UTECA libraries are serving the students during workdays of the week. Currently, there are not centralized information services in the university. UTECA is just working on e-education system, which is planned to be launched from next academic year.

7. SUMMARY

a. Strengths

Based on the survey held among the students and staff, UTECA administration and staff behavior towards students is fair enough. The university acknowledges students about the measurement and evaluation criteria of courses in the beginning of the semester. UTECA supports student attendance in extracurricular and international events and mobility. The staffs are satisfied with the administration's treatment. UTECA is unique in terms of its engineering programs on light and food industry. Transparency and accountability are crucial. University has administrative staff with international experience and up-to-date knowledge and skills. UTECA managed to build strong cooperation with industries.

b. Areas of improvement

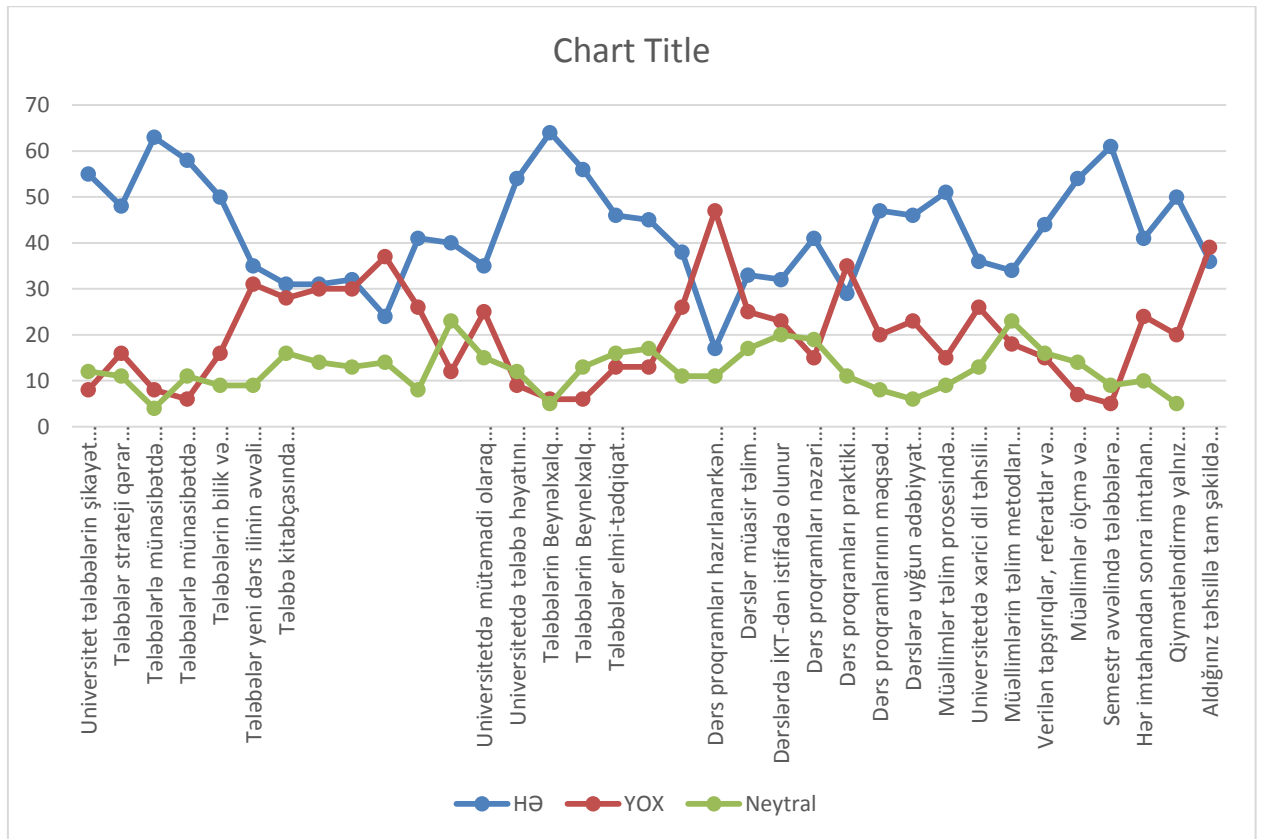
There is a need for defined criteria for evaluation of administrative staff performance. Besides, students should be acknowledged of their rights with a booklet. Currently the university does not have Quality Assurance Center. The university's library is not accessible electronically. Additionally, the university laboratory and infrastructure should be renovated. Student and staff satisfaction surveys should be implemented periodically. UTECA is a 48 year old university in the West of Azerbaijan. The university has been in inertia and needs to return its reputation. Quality Assurance Center may improve educational and administrative operations quality. University's infrastructure and classrooms should be repaired. Curriculum programs need to be updated.

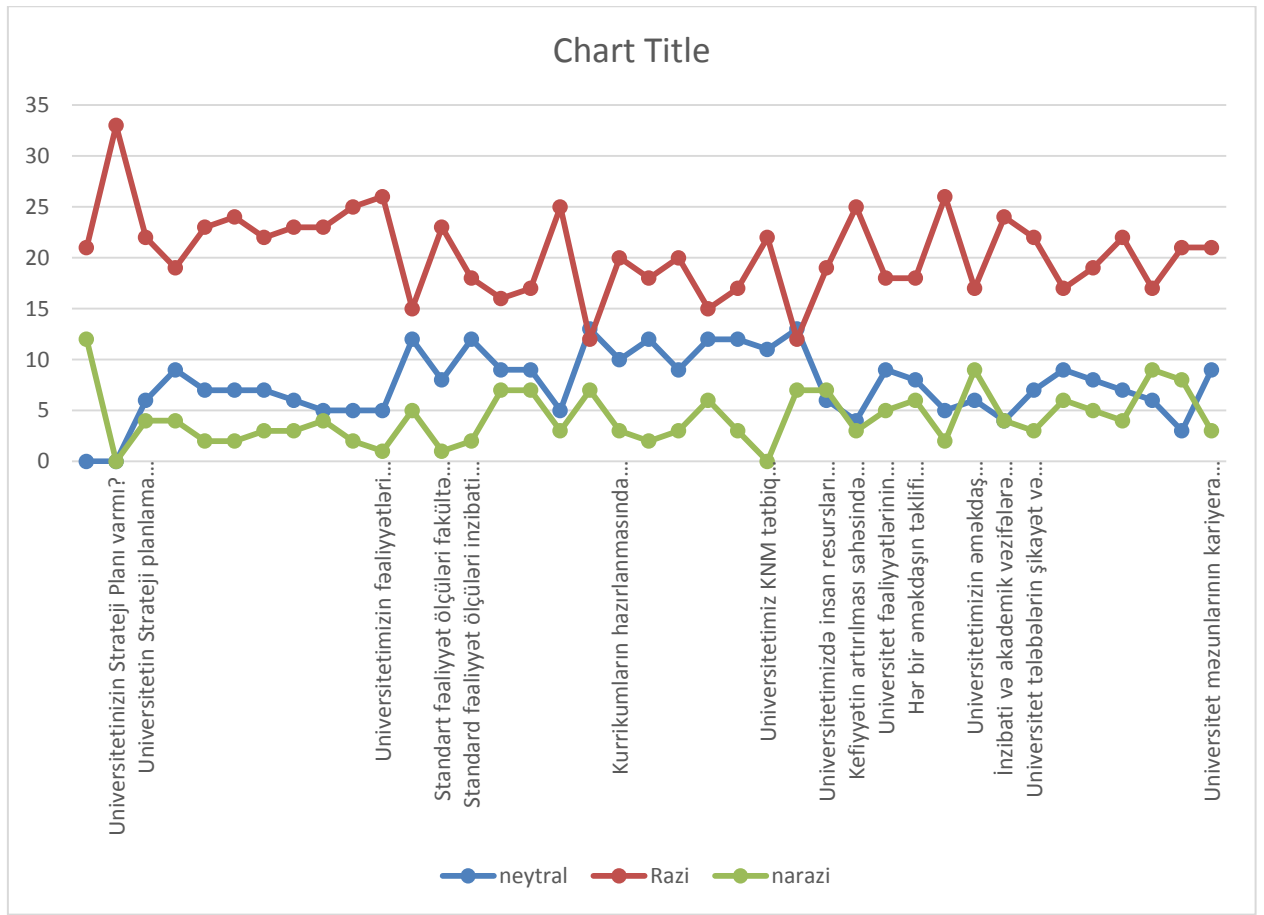
c. Weaknesses and threats

Strength and improvement areas are mentioned above. University's location in the western region of the country and falling apart from the capital universities network may be stated for the source of weakness. The average age of professors is quite high. UTECA needs substantial update of course materials and lecture contents. Besides, no specialization provides degree courses in English. Students with higher admission marks chose to study in capital universities. Lower number of admission is a threat to financial stability of UTECA. One of the main objectives of all institutions is to contribute to the surrounding community and region. Ganja is not a crowded city and fewer job opportunities exist for graduates. In comparison to Baku universities, graduate employment in UTECA is low.

d. The SWOT analysis of the current state of UTECA.

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <p>Among the students and staff, UTECA administration and staff behavior towards students is fair enough. The university acknowledges students about the measurement and evaluation criteria of courses in the beginning of the semester. UTECA supports student attendance in extracurricular and international events and mobility. The staffs are satisfied with the administration's treatment. UTECA is unique in terms of its engineering programs on light and food industry. Transparency and accountability are in place. University has administrative staff with international experience and up-to-date knowledge and skills. UTECA managed to build strong cooperation with industries.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <p>University's location in the western region of the country and falling apart from the capital universities network may be stated as the source of weakness. The average age of professors is quite high. UTECA needs substantial update of course materials and lecture contents. Ganja is not a crowded city and fewer job opportunities exist for graduates in comparison to Baku universities, graduate employment in UTECA is low. Currently the university does not have Quality Assurance Center. The university's library is not accessible electronically.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <p>UTECA adopted a rejuvenation policy of teaching staff, which opens chances for younger professionals to be employed at UTECA. The region is seen as a major industrial area and new industries are under construction. This offers opportunities for future cooperation and graduate employment. Post oil era has made technological development a top priority in the country. From this aspect UTECA has drawn more attention from the government. This creates an opportunity for UTECA to involve more finance and reputation.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <p>No specialization provides degree courses in English, which limits admission of international students. Students with higher admission marks (higher IQ) chose to study in capital universities. Lower number of admission is a threat to financial stability of UTECA. Lack of younger teaching staff in technical specializations puts a threat for future prospects of these programs. One of the main objectives of all institutions is to contribute to the surrounding community and region.</p>





SWOT analysis