

**"NATIONAL CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE"  
FOUNDATION**



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT  
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF ARTIK STATE COLLEGE**

**Yerevan – 2023**

## INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of the Artik State College (hereinafter referred to as ASC, TLI or College) was carried out based on the application submitted by the institution. The process of institutional accreditation is organised and coordinated by "National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance" foundation (referred to as ANQA), guided by the Statute on State Accreditation of Tertiary Level Institutions and their Academic Programmes in the Republic of Armenia approved by the RA Government Decree N 978-N of June 30, 2011 and by the RA Government Decree N 959 on the Approval of the Accreditation Criteria for Tertiary Education of June 30, 2011.

The external review was carried out by the independent expert consisting of four local experts, panel formed in accordance with the requirements set by the Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel of "National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance" foundation.

The accreditation process was funded by the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (hereinafter referred to as the "ESCS Ministry").

The institutional accreditation is aimed not only at external evaluation of quality assurance but also at the continuous enhancement of the management quality and academic programmes of the institution. Special emphasis was placed on the cooperation of the institution and employers and its impact on the education content.

The herby report comprises the results of the evaluation of the institutional capacities of the TLI according to the State Accreditation Criteria and Standards.

## EXPERT PANEL EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO THE RA ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

The external review was carried out by an independent expert panel formed in accordance with the requirements set forth in the Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel. The evaluation was carried out according to the 10 criteria of institutional accreditation approved by the RA Government Decree N 959-N of June 30, 2011.

While carrying out the evaluation, the expert panel took into consideration that the Artik State College's vision and mission is "the creation, transfer and dissemination of knowledge within the scope of the state education strategy. The ASC strives to meet the demands of the labour market, fully using its human and material resources and preparing qualified specialists. It is an institution disseminating cutting-edge technologies, offering a student-centered educational environment and providing access to education". Holding educational and social strategic significance in the given region, the ASC implements academic programmes that play an important role in the development of Artik city and nearby villages.

The ASC's strategic goals arise from the needs of its stakeholders, with their implementation completely aimed at enhancing the educational processes. The expert panel highlights the absence of clearly defined mechanisms for involving stakeholders and identifying their needs. The introduction of data collection mechanisms is urgent, as only in this case targeted and data-based management can be achieved. At the current stage, the decision-making processes appear to be more situational, tailored to the immediate problem-solving needs. However, that does not outline the roadmap for achieving the ASC's most overarching goals aimed at the continuous enhancement of its processes. The KPIs are not introduced for the implementation of the goals outlined in the development plan. The connection between planning and implementation are not ensured. The director is the primary responsible and executor of all the processes. The absence of planning necessary resources and timelines for goal achievement may jeopardize the continuity of ongoing enhancements.

The actions taken by the management staff of the ASC to improve the management system are apparent to the expert panel. An attempt has been made to clarify the vertical and horizontal management relations, as well as to separate and regulate the functions of employees and councils. The documentation has been established, but it is not yet fully localized. The processes implemented in the ASC are somewhat detached from the reality presented in the documents. Regarding the management of financial resources, it should be noted that the budget is solely formed from state-funded student tuition fees. The number of students in the paid education system is low. Vacancies are consistently available due to the relatively limited financial means of the local population. Budget expenditures are mainly allocated to salaries, utility bills and certain repair works. Presently, the diversification of financial resources is an urgent issue. That will enable planning the course of development, providing the necessary conditions for the implementation of academic programmes (hereinafter referred to as "APs"), and contributing to the professional progress of the teaching staff.

It is welcoming that the ASC's management staff is open to change, embraces the support from social partners and tries to find new like-minded people. It is important to emphasize that all these efforts have led to some resource enhancement in recent years. Of course, the management staff's policies bring

about some positive changes. However the expert panel attaches importance to the introduction of clear and targeted management mechanisms, which will determine the ASC's success not only based on people and situations, but on the introduced robust management system.

While the ASC's development plan prioritizes quality assurance and quality education, quality assurance processes have not yet become a basis for enhancing educational and other processes. The ASC almost lacks systematic mechanisms for data collection and analysis. The absence of a clear methodology is evident from the lack of analyses summarizing objective data used for the enhancement of APs and decision-making processes. The expert panel is hopeful that the self-evaluation and expert panel reports will serve as a basis for the introduction of the quality assurance system and dissemination of the quality culture in the ASC.

The ASC implements eight secondary vocational academic programmes, namely "Accounting", "Physical Culture and Sports", "Organization and Management of Transportation in Transport", "Computing equipment and automated systems software", "Clothing Manufacturing Technology", "Preschool Education", "Law", "Design". It is noteworthy that since 2022, the AP "Clothing Manufacturing Technology" has been delivered in a work-based learning (WBL) format. The ASC tried to adapt the curriculum to that format. However, the expert panel notes that the revision processes have been carried out by individuals who are not specialists in the relevant professions, and employers have not participated in the process. Therefore there are some inconsistencies between planning and implementation. On the other hand, there are no clear mechanisms for the APs' monitoring. Representatives from the labour market, as well as other specialists in the field are not regularly involved in the process. Systematic data on the APs' effectiveness are not collected, posing a risk to their full implementation.

Regarding the teaching staff, it is positive that the ASC has attached importance to the involvement of industry professionals in recent years. Some steps are being taken in that direction. The expert panel highlights the importance of more actively engaging industry professionals, which will contribute to the APs' enhancement and the development of students' practical skills. It is concerning that the ASC experiences teacher turnover due to the region, leading to a significant proportion of young teaching staff (around 21 teachers). The expert panel draws its attention to this circumstance, emphasizing the regulation of mentoring processes.

The ASC has relevant physical facilities, classrooms with professional resources, newly established sewing laboratories, computer labs. The expert panel praises the ASC's efforts in improving and updating the resources. In terms of resource enhancement, the ASC's main priority at this stage is the major renovation of the gymnasium and the installation of local heating to facilitate the implementation of the AP "Physical Culture and Sports". Regarding resource acquisition, the expert panel prioritizes the development and implementation of a policy for joint property use with partners. That will also contribute to the use of more contemporary resources for the implementation of academic programmes.

The ASC does not prioritize the research implementation, as it does not consider itself a research-oriented education institution. The ASC has introduced almost no mechanisms for promoting the continuous development of students' creative, analytical skills and encouraging research activities.

Students carry out some works containing research elements. However, the expert panel considers that the lack of teachers' and students' practice in research negatively affects the content and quality of these works. As a result, the complete achievement of the NQF level 5 may be jeopardized.

The students are generally satisfied with the educational environment provided by the ASC. A positive moral and psychological atmosphere has been formed, which is highly appreciated by the students. However, the necessity of introducing mechanisms for identifying student needs is visible. Regarding student career, it is positive that the steps taken have led to the improvement of the employment rate among alumni in recent years. However, the expert panel notes that the services for student career support need clear regulation and improvement.

The expert panel positively views the presence of certain external and internal accountability system. However, the panel notes that while the internal accountability processes do not arise from the goals of the development plan, the reports of different departments lack an analytical component, hindering the evaluation of the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the processes' implementation. All this can impede the full implementation of the goals of the ASC's strategic plan.

The expert panel appreciates the ASC's framework for partnership cooperation and the management staff's interest in attracting new social partners and employers. In recent years, social partners have played an important role in the ASC's progress. Therefore the ASC indirectly (the development of external relations is not a goal outlined in the development plan) attributes its entire development to partners and has initiated active cooperation. In this regard, the expert panel notes the significance of communicating with partners at different levels to enhance the education institutions, enrich resources, and diversify the educational environment.

#### **The strengths of the institution:**

1. The important socio-economic role in the Artik city and nearby villages from the perspective of preparing specialists with the necessary secondary vocational qualifications for the labour market.
2. The openness of the ASC community and the director to capitalize on the opportunities for the institution's development.
3. The regional demand for the ASC's professions.
4. The existing mechanisms for student recruitment, which have led to the increase in the number of students.
5. The potential of the teaching staff.
6. The active cooperation with local employers and social partners.
7. The replenishment of the resource base and its access to students and teachers.
8. The internal and external accountability system.
9. The ASC's experience in implementing short-term academic programmes.

#### **The weaknesses of the institution:**

1. The imperfect mechanisms for the planning and implementation of the development plan, the absence of clear indicators for evaluating the results.
2. The unsystematic vertical and horizontal management relations.
3. The strictly segmented implementation of the PDCA cycle of management.
4. The absence of the Aps' outcomes.
5. The irregularity of the management and control of the Aps.
6. The non-institutional nature of providing students with tasks that develop analytical, critical and research skills.
7. The lack of professional trainings for the teaching staff.
8. The inconsistency between study and research.
9. The imperfection of the relevant resources for the AP "Physical Culture and Sports", the absence of local heating.
10. Being in the stage of introduction of the quality assurance system and the absence of mechanisms for data collection.

## **Main Recommendations**

### **Mission and Purpose**

1. Revise the plan and schedule of the development plan, incorporating the objectiveness arising from the goals, the steps necessary for addressing the issues, the deadlines for their solution, the resources necessary for implementation, the responsible persons and indicators for evaluating the expected outcome.
2. Develop and introduce mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the strategic plan, enabling the evaluation of the level of action execution and the achievement of strategic goals.

### **Governance and Administration**

3. Revise the ASC's organizational chart and position passports, ensuring clarity and alignment with each other and the processes.
4. Clarify the functions of the councils within the ASC and organize the management processes in accordance with the established regulations, ensuring the hierarchical decision-making processes.
5. Align the departments' short-term plans with the ASC's development plan, outlining clear actions, timelines, responsible persons, resource allocations and outcomes within the plans.
6. Introduce and fully implement the PDCA cycle of management, by developing appropriate tools for data collection and analysis, thus laying the basis for data-based decision-making.
7. Update the chairs and the related professions, putting into practice the requirements for the specialists aspiring to the positions of the head of chairs.

### **Academic Programmes**

8. Develop and introduce complete specifications of academic programmes, by adapting the state academic standards, refining the Aps' outcomes and linking them with the modules' expected learning outcomes.
9. Develop and introduce a policy for the selection of teaching and learning methods, ensuring that teaching and learning methods, as well student assignments, are interconnected and aligned the expected learning outcomes.
10. Develop and introduce clear criteria for the evaluation to showcase the achievement of the modules' expected learning outcomes corresponding to the Aps' outcomes, increasing the transparency and credibility of the evaluation process.
11. Revise the curricula, clarifying and aligning the elective and preferred subjects along with reserve hours for the given AP to meet the needs of the labour market, thereby contributing to the alumni career.
12. Develop systematic mechanisms for monitoring the academic programmes, providing an opportunity to identify current issues and make enhancements as needed.
13. Enhance the APs by carrying out benchmarking with comparable local and international education institutions, identifying and localizing their best practices.
14. Develop and introduce procedures for the performance of individual works, graduation works and theses, linking them with the regulation on academic integrity, ensuring a component for research and analytical skills, while also establishing clear criteria for their assessment.

### **Students**

15. Specify career-focused assignments for students, outlining activities, timelines, and expected outcomes.
16. Manage the alumni database, distinctly categorizing the graduation years, status and feedback data of alumni, etc.
17. Identify student needs and introduce additional studies.
18. Introduce mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of educational and consulting services for students, analysing the effectiveness of the works.
19. Introduce research-oriented assignments as part of the APs, ensuring the requirements of the NQF level 5.

### **Faculty and Staff**

20. Implement planned measures to involve industry professionals, contributing to the development of students' practical skills.
21. Develop and introduce a clear procedure for the preparation of questionnaires for the competition aimed at filling the vacant educator positions.

22. Regulate and provide a systematic methodology for evaluating the effectiveness of teacher performance, applying all existing mechanisms in one unity, with a focus on incorporating analytical components.
23. Ensure effective mechanisms for professional training of the teaching staff, engaging employers and social partners upon necessity.

### **Research and Development**

24. Introduce a clear research policy tailored to the ASC's peculiarities, with a focus on the adoption and dissemination of innovations.
25. Develop and introduce a guide for research activities, outlining a clear structure, requirements and assessment criteria for research work.
26. Introduce incentive mechanisms for the teaching staff to engage in research activities, ensuring the study of international practice and integration of innovative ideas.
27. Develop and diversify assignments that form analytical, critical and research skills.

### **Infrastructure and Resources**

28. Develop and introduce mechanisms for financial diversification to ensure stable income growth and full realization of the goals outlined in the development plan.
29. Improve the library infrastructure, integrating professional, non-professional, modern and digitized literature, establish an electronic library on the website.
30. Continuously demonstrate an initiative in enhancing and modernizing infrastructure and resources, with a focus on major renovations in the gym and the construction of a local heating system.
31. Develop a toolset and evaluate the effectiveness of the resources provided to students and teachers.

### **Societal Responsibility**

32. Introduce a unified reporting format for subdivisions, ensuring analytical reporting and connection with planning.
33. Ensure the ASC's annual reports arise from the goals of the development plan, guaranteeing the evaluation of these goals.
34. Launch the foreign language sections of the website, using internal resources in the process.
35. Develop and introduce mechanisms for transferring knowledge to society, involving employers, students, teachers and other social partners if necessary.

### **External Relations and Internationalization**



36. Introduce a policy for the development of external relations, ensuring clearly planned processes and outlining the expected outcomes.
37. Initiate processes to seek out new partners, thereby contributing to the implementation of new programmes and the attraction of additional financial resources.
38. Develop partnership relations with secondary vocational education institutions, having clear goals in the exchange of teachers' practice, enhancement of academic programmes, etc.
39. Improve proficiency in a foreign language (especially English) of the teaching staff and students.

### **Internal Quality Assurance System**

40. Clarify the ASC's vision on quality assurance and develop mechanisms to involve stakeholders in quality assurance processes.
41. Develop and introduce a work plan for the internal quality assurance centre, discussing and clarifying the ASC's priorities, setting out clear timelines, identifying responsible persons and defining KPIs.
42. Develop and implement toolset for data collection, processing and analysis that meets the ASC's needs and peculiarities.
43. Ensure the professional growth of the quality assurance manager, contributing to the full implementation of the set activities.

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**Asya Simonyan**

Chair of the expert panel

**August 3, 2023**

## DISCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

### COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The external evaluation of the institutional capacities of the Artik State College was carried out by the following members of the expert panel:

1. **Asya Simonyan**, Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, teacher at the Department of Sports and Art of M. Nalbandyan State University of Shirak, artistic gymnastics coach at Gyumri School of Higher Sports Mastery, referee of international class, chair of the expert panel.
2. **Marine Galubyan**, accountant at Sanare-Pharm LTD, member of the board of management of Artashat Basic School N 3 SNCO, member of the expert panel.
3. **Olya Avetisyan**, teacher of the professional modules of the AP "Clothing Modeling and Design" of the Yerevan State College of Light Industry, member of the expert panel.
4. **Robert Grigoryan**, a third-year student of the AP "Computing Equipment and Automated Systems Software" of the French College in Armenia, student expert of the expert panel.

The composition of the expert panel was agreed upon with the institution.

The works of the expert panel were coordinated by Anahit Terteryan, specialist at ANQA's Institutional and Programme Accreditation Division.

All the members of the expert panel and the coordinator have signed agreements of independence and confidentiality.

### PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

On January 13, 2023, the ASC applied for state institutional accreditation, submitting to ANQA the filled application form, copies of the license, and respective appendices.

The ANQA Secretariat checked the data presented in the application form and the appendices in the application package. After the decision on the acceptance of the application, ANQA and the ASC signed an agreement on April 17, 2023. The schedule of activities was prepared and approved.

### Self-evaluation

Considering that the ASC is undergoing institutional accreditation for the first time and is in the initial stage of the formation of the quality assurance culture, ANQA has conducted four-day online workshops with the institution. During the workshops, the interpretations of the institutional accreditation criteria and standards, the electronic questionnaire for the accreditation application, and the peculiarities of self-

evaluation and SWOT analysis were presented. The ASC also carried out a SWOT analysis as part of the criterion "Infrastructure and Resources", engaging in discussions with ANQA's specialists to receive some institutional guidance.

On March 1, 2023, a meeting was also organized to provide ongoing support to the ASC and answer questions.

The self-evaluation of the ASC's institutional capacities was submitted on April 13, 2023. The self-evaluation was carried out by the institution's 10 employees, including members from the management staff, administrative, teaching and supporting staffs. External stakeholders and students did not participate in the self-evaluation process. The self-evaluation was mainly descriptive.

### **Preparatory Phase**

To prepare the expert panel members and ensure the effectiveness of the activities, training on the following topics was conducted:

1. the main functions of the expert panel's members;
2. the ethics and techniques of holding meetings and doing inquiries;
3. the definition of specifics of the VET sector and interpretation of accreditation criteria according to the sector;
4. the preliminary evaluation as a stage for the preparation of the expert panel report, the main requirements for the report.

Having reviewed the self-evaluation report and documents attached, the expert panel conducted the preliminary evaluation according to the format, preparing the lists of questions and objectives for different departments and target groups, as well as additional documents for further study. Then the expert panel summarized the results of the preliminary evaluation and set the schedule of the site visit.

### **Preparatory Visit**

On May 11, 2023, an online meeting was held with the management staff of the institution. ANQA coordinator, the head of the Institutional Programme Accreditation Division and the chair of the expert panel were present at the meeting.

During the meeting, the schedule of the site visit was introduced and agreed upon with the ASC. Additionally, discussions were made and mutually agreed decisions were reached on the technical, organisational, and informational aspects of the site visit, along with the conduct and ethical norms of the meeting participants.

### **Site Visit**

The site visit took place on May 22-25, 2023. The site visit started and ended with meetings with the ASC's management staff.

To clarify the issues, the focus group meetings' participants, including teachers, students and alumni, were selected from a pre-provided list, based on the principle of representativeness.

Guided by ANQA's Manual for External Review, the schedule included expert meetings with all groups, as well as class and resource observations, and etc. The expert panel members also held "professional talks" with the managers, teachers and students of the APs presented by the ASC. As part of the three selected APs, both planned and unplanned class observations took place. Within professional modules, the student assignments and teachers' lesson plans were studied to evaluate the correct planning of the student progress.

At the end of each working day, the expert panel held close meetings to discuss the results of the expert evaluation. At the end of the site visit, the main results were summarized.

The expert panel reached conclusions on the criteria through discussions and analyses of all members, always applying the principle of consensus.

### **Expert Panel Report**

The members of the expert panel and the ANQA coordinator prepared a preliminary version of the expert panel report, which was provided to the institution on July 11, 2023.

The ASC did not send any observations on the preliminary report. The expert panel prepared the final version of the report, which was approved by the panel members on August 3, 2023.

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**Anahit Terteryan**

Coordinator of the expert panel

**August 3, 2023**

## EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

| <b><i>CRITERION</i></b>                               | <b><i>CONCLUSION</i></b> |
|---|--------------------------|
| <i>1. Mission and Purpose</i>                         | <b>Satisfactory</b>      |
| <i>2. Governance and Administration</i>               | <b>Unsatisfactory</b>    |
| <i>3. Academic Programmes</i>                         | <b>Unsatisfactory</b>    |
| <i>4. Students</i>                                    | <b>Satisfactory</b>      |
| <i>5. Faculty and Staff</i>                           | <b>Satisfactory</b>      |
| <i>6. Research and Development</i>                    | <b>Unsatisfactory</b>    |
| <i>7. Infrastructure and Resources</i>                | <b>Satisfactory</b>      |
| <i>8. Societal Responsibility</i>                     | <b>Satisfactory</b>      |
| <i>9. External Relations and Internationalization</i> | <b>Satisfactory</b>      |
| <i>10. Internal Quality Assurance System</i>          | <b>Unsatisfactory</b>    |

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**Asya Simonyan**  
**Chair of the expert panel**

**August 3, 2023**