

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



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT  
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF GAVAR STATE MEDICAL COLLEGE**

**Yerevan – 2023**

## INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of the Gavar State Medical College (hereinafter referred to as GSMC, TLI, 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 (hereinafter 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 panel consisting of four local experts, 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 institutional accreditation is aimed not only at external evaluation of quality assurance but also at continuous enhancement of the management quality and academic programmes of the institution. Special emphasis was placed on the cooperation between the institution and employers and its impact on the implementation of the education process.

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

## SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

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

The external review of the Gavar State Medical College 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 conducted 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 GSMC is undergoing institutional accreditation for the first time, and is in the process of establishing a quality assurance culture. The GSMC implements secondary vocational academic programmes (hereinafter referred to as "Aps") in medical education in alignment with the level 5 of the RA National Qualifications Framework (hereinafter referred to as "NQF").

The expert panel also took into consideration that the GSMC has an important mission to provide regional medical institutions and pharmaceutical companies with medical staff of necessary professional qualities. The stakeholders understand the GSMC's mission, and the employers value its role in the region, trying to support its continuous development through cooperative relations.

The GSMC's three complementary mission statement require a clarification and a unified approach to presentation, consolidating the separate core mission, the mission and a crucial aspect of the mission, and aligning it with the real perceptions of a wide range of stakeholders and reflecting the institution's role in the region. The clarification of mechanisms for identifying the stakeholder needs and their reflection in the strategic plan are crucial for the effective implementation of strategic management. It is noteworthy that, during the development of the new strategic plan, the institution took into consideration the outcomes of the evaluation of the previous strategic plan implementation, redefined its key issues and introduced new directions, leading to the mission fulfilment.

It is significant to note that the GSMC has adopted a policy for the formation of quality culture. The efforts made since 2021 have positively influenced the implementation of the GSMC's mission. Many processes have been regulated, as well as regulations and procedures have been established to define the goals and development areas of the processes. However, the GSMC still has work to do in the dissemination of quality culture, with a focus on the stakeholder needs and the implementation of enhancement processes accordingly. It is important that the GSMC has also taken steps to ensure the transparency of the quality assurance processes. The expert panel views the launch of the institution's platforms and newly established official website as a means to broaden access of these ongoing processes for a wider range of stakeholders.

The GSMC has also recorded some progress in governance, which is particularly related to the embedment of quality assurance system. It is an outcome of the regulation and documentation processes as well, laying groundwork for external review. Despite the reported enhancements, the

connection between planning and accountability, as well as the inclusion of an analytical component in reporting remain problematic. The expert panel emphasizes the fact that the introduction of data collected by the GSMC's quality assurance manager in the basis of decision-making processes will significantly increase the effectiveness of managerial decisions. The non-institutional use of the principles on the PDCA cycle of quality management, as well as the weak connection between evaluation and improvement, hinder the continuous operation of the enhancement chain. To shift towards more outcome-based governance processes, the GSMC also needs to correlate the defined goals with its human, material and financial resources. From this perspective, the Governing Council's involvement and provocativeness in decision-making processes related to the GSMC is noteworthy. However, the GSMC's financial resources still need to be diversified to ensure the long-term development of the institution. The expert panel is convinced that the full use of the Governing Council's potential can contribute to the diversification of the financial sources and the realization of the strategic goals.

Thus, according to the expert panel's evaluation, the GSMC fulfils its unique mission in the region and in the Gavar city, the quality assurance processes contribute to its implementation, the governance bodies support the embedment of the quality assurance system. However, the GSMC needs to ensure the stakeholders' proactive participation in the management processes, particularly in decision-making and discussion of issues related to them. This is essential to make accountability processes more analytical and connect them to strategic goals.

The GSMC implements secondary vocational APs in medicine that are aligned with the descriptors of the NQF Level 5 and meet state academic standards. The expert panel emphasizes the fact that the GSMC has not implemented the localization of academic programmes based on the analysis of the labour market's needs. Furthermore, the APs' planning remains disconnected from the main areas of the GSMC's activities, which is also hindered by the issues of the AP management, the absence of programme managers and insufficient perception of the functions and roles of the chairs among the stakeholders. The expert panel notes that despite the periodic reviews of methods and assessment criteria used in the APs, the GSMC has yet to implement them in a unified and institutional manner. It is noteworthy that the GSMC also plans to carry out benchmarking of the APs. The successful implementation of this initiative will lead to the adaptation of the identified best practice in the institution's APs. It is positive that the GSMC uses some mechanisms for the evaluation and monitoring of academic programmes. In this context, the expert panel emphasizes the need for a comprehensive analysis of the used toolset and the evaluations' outcomes. This includes incorporating employers' needs into the APs, as well as ensuring the interrelationship between the evaluation and enhancement processes of the APs to make the provided education more attractive and prepare competitive alumni.

The GSMC has adopted a policy for the recruitment of the teaching staff with medical specialists possessing practical experience, which contributes to the formation of students' practical skills and the alumni's professional progress. It is also important to highlight the GSMC's approach for rejuvenating the teaching staff and ensuring a smooth generational transition involves replenishing

the teaching staff with its own alumni. Addressing the needs of the teaching staff and implementing measures towards professional development can lead to achieving the goals of academic programmes. Given the lack of the GSMC's financial resources, the regular use of the mechanisms for the dissemination of internal best practice by the practical teachers can also contribute to the modernization of the professional knowledge and skills of the teachers.

The GSMC's management staff consistently attaches importance to the replenishment of resources and infrastructure and tries to ensure the provision of resources and materials necessary for the AP implementation. To ensure the uninterrupted implementation of the educational process and the formation of student skills, the GSMC also collaborates with partner organizations in using resources for practical classes and internships.

Considering the cost-effectiveness of the GSMC's APs, the expert panel concludes that evaluating their cost-effectiveness and distributing financial resources accordingly, are important for guaranteeing the sustainability and continuity of the APs. Using the resources for short-term programmes can also increase the financial income to a certain extent and ensure the implementation of strategic goals.

Thus, the expert panel considers that for ensuring the credible award of qualifications, the GSMC continuously endeavours to attract qualified teaching staff, cooperates and jointly uses the resources of partner medical institutions and pharmaceutical organizations. However, for the effective implementation of the APs in line with the requirements of the labour market, the GSMC should identify employer needs, carry out comprehensive benchmarking of the APs, regulate monitoring mechanisms and link programme revisions with evaluation outcomes. From this perspective, the GSMC's steps towards developing a policy for choosing the APs' methods, clarifying the assessment criteria, defining the suitable rubrics and providing feedback to the students are positive prerequisites for the production of competitive alumni.

The GSMC regularly conducts activities in the direction of raising awareness of student recruitment and admission, engaging stakeholders in the process. The implemented processes have contributed to the stable influx of students and the dynamic growth in the number of applicants. It is noteworthy that the employers are also actively involved in this process, presenting the attractiveness of the professions and the staff demand in the labour market during recruitment processes and meetings with applicants.

Ensuring a student-centered environment is crucial as it allows responding to student needs and providing relevant support to improve the learning environment. The expert panel also highlights the importance of clarifying the Student Council's role in the GSMC among students and holding events aimed at protecting and raising awareness of their rights.

It should be noted that the GSMC's development and further progress are closely linked to partnership relations, which greatly enhance the effective implementation of the educational process, and create opportunities for the alumni's professional activities. The mutual efforts of the GSMC and employers greatly contribute to strengthening the cooperation and creating career opportunities for the institution's key stakeholders, the students. It is important that the external relations are

somewhat coordinated by the careers' manager and the director, leading to the establishment of a multidisciplinary collaborative environment with local partners. This is aimed at providing additional educational services for students, ensuring effective organization of learning, and supporting the alumni's careers.

The GSMC's strategic plan does not include internationalization as a goal. However, the necessary studies and evaluations in this direction can create positive prerequisites for evaluating the institution's internationalization opportunities and planning of the necessary steps, the first of which may be directed towards increasing the level of proficiency in a foreign language.

The expert panel notes that the GSMC has mechanisms for the link between learning and research. Students conduct studies and assignments in line with the peculiarities of medical professions. The expert panel considers that the clarification of research directions, their interrelation with the APs' peculiarities, the introduction of incentive procedures and toolset will facilitate the participation of both students and teachers in research processes.

The expert panel emphasizes the significance of GSMC's demonstrations of social responsibility and events related to the transfer of knowledge and values. They hope for the continuation of these efforts and increased accessibility of information to the public through social platforms and the website.

Thus, referring to the GSMC's long-term and sustainable development, the expert panel highlights the institution's necessary efforts in the continuous improvement of the educational environment, applicant growth, effective cooperation with local partners, establishment of stable partnerships, strive for students' involvement in research activities, provision of analytical and cognitive assignments, and steps towards enhancing accountability and the information dissemination about the institution.

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

1. The production of secondary vocational medical staff necessary for the regional labour market.
2. The presence of a relevant educational environment for the AP implementation.
3. The involvement of specialists with the necessary professional qualifications and practical experience in the teaching process.
4. The trends in the rejuvenation of the teaching staff and efforts in the ensurance of sustainability.
5. The student-centered environment and services provided to students.
6. The processes that enhance career prospects for the alumni.
7. Measures aimed at transferring knowledge and values to society,
8. The expansion of the cooperative framework and formation of partnership relations.
9. The joint use of resources with employers for the development of students' skills.
10. The steps towards the embedment of the quality assurance system and the importance attached to these processes.

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

1. The shortcomings of the KPIs for evaluating the strategic plan's goals.
2. The stakeholders' weak involvement and lack of initiative in decision-making and quality assurance processes.
3. The imperfection of the link between planning and accountability mechanisms.
4. The partial and fragmented implementation of the PDCA cycle of quality management.
5. The imperfection of the AP management system and the slow progress of enhancements.
6. The lack of professional trainings for the teaching staff and the shortcomings of the toolset encouraging professional progress.
7. The absence of mechanisms for the involvement and encouragement of research activities among teachers and students.
8. The inadequate presentation of the quantitative and qualitative analytical components in the reports.
9. The lack of relevant professional literature and membership in library databases.
10. The internal stakeholders' low level of proficiency in foreign languages for the promotion of the exchange of practice and internationalization processes.

### **Main Recommendations**

#### **Mission and Purpose**

1. Clarify the definition of the GSMC's mission, consolidating the three presented missions into one unified whole.
2. Introduce mechanisms to incorporate the stakeholder needs into the strategic plan.
3. To clarify the KPIs for each goal, mechanisms for evaluating their effectiveness.

#### **Governance and Administration**

4. Enhance the governance system, focusing on the vertical and horizontal relations and improving accountability processes.
5. Interrelate the processes of strategic management and short-term planning, taking into consideration the GSMC's resource capabilities.
6. Clarify and optimize the responsibilities of the administrative and teaching staff, preventing functional redundancies and position overload.
7. Foster stakeholder engagement in decision-making and the identification of their respective needs.
8. Introduce the PDCA cycle in the basis of the governance and administration processes to contribute to the continuous development of the management processes.

#### **Academic Programmes**

9. Define clear AP outcomes, connecting them with the descriptors of the NQF Level and professional activities of the students.
10. Introduce unified approaches to the selection of teaching and learning methods to increase the planned nature of the achievement of learning outcomes.
11. Ensure unified approaches to evaluation that are understandable to stakeholders, clarifying the assessment methodology and connecting it with learning outcomes.
12. Provide tools for evaluating students' research activities within academic programmes, reflect them in academic programmes.
13. Carry out a benchmarking of the APs, taking into consideration their peculiarities and localizing the best practices.
14. Improve the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of the APs, linking analyses to further enhancements.

#### **Students**

15. Enhance the mechanisms for identifying the students' educational needs to improve the learning environment and achieve the APs' outcomes.
16. Hold events to raise the awareness of the Student Council's activities, allocating appropriate financial and material resources.
17. Strengthen the Student Council's role as a body for the protection of student rights.

#### **Faculty and Staff**

18. Establish requirements for the selection of teaching staff tailored to the peculiarities of the APs.
19. Introduce mechanisms for planning and ensuring the teaching staff's professional progress.
20. Coordinate the evaluation processes of the teaching staff, clarifying the criteria and goals of peer reviews.

#### **Research and Development**

21. Define the GSMC's research aspirations and interests of the chairs, connecting these with the strategic development processes.
22. Develop a policy for research activity arising from the peculiarities of the APs, leveraging the chair's potential.
23. Introduce incentive mechanisms for the teaching staff's engagement in research activities.
24. Consistently improve the mechanisms for student involvement in research processes and the link between research and learning.

#### **Infrastructure and Resources**

25. Continuously improve and replenish the resources arising from the requirements of the APs for the achievement of the defined outcomes.



26. Introduce mechanisms for the procurement of alternative financial resources for the realization of the goals outlined in the strategic plan and the formation of financial stability.
27. As a result of evaluating the APs' cost-effectiveness, improve the policy for the distribution of financial resources.

#### **Societal Responsibility**

28. Introduce unified reporting approaches, ensuring the connection between planning and accountability through the evaluation of the KPIs.
29. Continuously improve the mechanisms and tools to ensure transparency and public awareness of the GSMC's processes.
30. Evaluate the applicability and effectiveness of tools for feedback with external stakeholders to promote the participation of a wider range of external stakeholders in the enhancement processes of improving the academic programmes.

#### **External Relations and Internationalization**

31. Carry out an analysis of external relations and define the areas for cooperation.
32. Take measures to enhance the internal stakeholders' proficiency in foreign languages.
33. Encourage internal stakeholders' engagement in academic mobility and exchange programmes.
34. Introduce mechanisms and tools to study international practice and forge collaborations for the realization of the GSMC's goals in the direction of internationalization.

#### **Internal Quality Assurance System**

35. Evaluate the ensurance of human and material resources necessary for quality assurance processes and provide the necessary resources for the implementation of the goals of the quality assurance system accordingly.
36. Improve the mechanisms for data collection and processing, put their outcomes at the basis of enhancements.
37. Improve the surveys used for the evaluation of the GSMC's processes, aligning them with the institution's development directions and peculiarities.
38. Diversify the mechanisms for the stakeholder engagement in quality assurance processes and hold discussions with them about the GSMC's processes.

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

November 30, 2023

## DISCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

### COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The external evaluation of the institutional capacities of the Gavar State Medical College was carried out by the following members of the expert panel.

**Asya Simonyan**, Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, teacher at the Department of Sports and Art of M. Nalbandyan State University of Shirak, chair of the expert panel.

**Meri Sargsyan**, deputy director for educational activities of Yerevan State Basic Medical College, member of the expert panel.

**Naira Arshakyan**, teacher at the Yerevan State Medical University's Chair of Pharmacognosy, member of the expert panel.

**Garik Sargsyan**, third-year student at the Department of Dental Technician of the Yerevan State Basic Medical College, student member of the expert panel.

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

The coordinator of the expert panel was **Meri Barseghyan**, specialist at ANQA's Policy Development and Implementation 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 11, 2023, the GSMC applied for state institutional accreditation, submitting to ANQA the filled application form, copies of the license and orders.

The ANQA's Secretariat studied the data presented in the application form and the documents attached.

After the decision on the acceptance of the application, ANQA and the institution signed an agreement. The schedule of activities was prepared and approved.

#### **Self-evaluation**

Considering that the institution 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 online workshops with the institutions in the accreditation process. The workshops aimed to prepare the institutions for the organisational stages of the accreditation process. 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. During the implementation of the SWOT analysis, ANQA organised discussions to address the arising issues.

On May 5, 2023, the institution submitted the revised self-evaluation of the institutional capacities. The self-evaluation process involved representatives from the institution's administrative and supporting staff, teachers and students.

### **Preparatory Phase**

After the submission of the self-evaluation report and the attached documents, ANQA's coordinator studied the package to reveal its compliance with the requirements presented by ANQA.

The self-evaluation and the attached documents were provided to the expert panel for the preliminary evaluation. The composition of the expert panel was agreed upon with the institution and confirmed by the order of ANQA's Director.

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 the 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 for the site visit.

Following ANQA's Manual for External Review, the schedule included intended close and open meetings with all the target groups, study of document, parallel meetings, etc. The expert panel's members also had "professional talks" with the managers, teachers and students of the selected APs. Before the "professional talks", the experts studied the student assignments and conducted class observations to understand the extent to which these assignments are aimed at achieving the expected outcomes.

### **Preparatory Visit**

A week prior to the site visit, an online meeting took place with the institution's representatives. The head of ANQA's Institutional Programme Accreditation Division, the coordinator and the chair of the expert panel were present.

During the meeting, the schedule of the site visit was introduced and agreed upon with the institution's management staff. 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 September 25-28, 2023. The site visit started and ended with meetings with the institution's management staff. To clarify the issues, the focus group meetings took place. The participants, including teachers, students and alumni, were selected from a pre-provided list, based on the principle of representativeness. All scheduled meetings were held. During the site visit, the expert panel also observed the resources of the GSMC and its partner Gavar Medical Center's resources, which are used by the institution. The expert panel carried out class observations and study of documents as well.

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 after the approval of the panel members.

On November 24, 2023, the institution submitted observations regarding the preliminary report to ANQA. Having studied the preliminary version of the expert panel report, the institution did not raise any objections. The expert panel prepared the final version of the report, which was approved by the panel on November 30, 2023.

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**Meri Barseghyan**  
**Coordinator of the expert panel**

November 30, 2023

## EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

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

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

November 30, 2023