

**“NATIONAL CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE”
FOUNDATION**



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
GYUMRI CRAFTSMAN STATE SCHOOL No 4**

Yerevan – 2024

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of Gyumri Craftsman State School No 4 (hereinafter referred TLI or School) is carried out based on the application submitted by TLI. The process of institutional accreditation is organized and coordinated by “National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance” Foundation (hereinafter ANQA), guided by regulation on “State Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Academic Programmes in RA” set by RA Government Decree N 978-Ն (dated June 30, 2011) and by Decree N 959-Ն on “Approval of RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation” (dated June 30, 2011).

The expert examination was carried out by the independent expert panel formed in accordance with the requirements set by the “National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation in regulation on “Formation of the Expert Panel”. The Panel is composed of 4 local experts.

The accreditation process was funded by the School.

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

The hereby report comprises the results of the evaluation of the institutional capacities of the TLI by the State Accreditation Criteria and Standards.

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

The expertise of the Gyumri No. 4 Vocational State School institutional capacities was carried out by the independent expert panel formed in accordance with the requirements of “Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel”, «National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance» Foundation. The evaluation was conducted according to 10 institutional accreditation criteria set by the RA Government Decree N 959-Ն, dated June 30, 2011.

When conducting the evaluation, the expert panel considered that the School is the first pre-professional (craft) educational institution to undergo institutional accreditation. The expert panel also considered that the TLI is in the Shirak region and its mission is to provide basic and additional quality pre-professional educational services in accordance with the requirements of the economy and is in close cooperation with employers, armed with educational and technical means.

The 7 pre-professional academic programs (PAPs) implemented at School are based on state educational standards. The APs are oriented towards the market, are requested by external stakeholders, and the groups are filled with almost all academic programs. For the labor market of the region, the School is a leader in at least three specialities: "Jewellery", "Cookery", "Installation, repair and maintenance of renewable energy power plants", and prepares in-demand personnel. The speciality "Installation, repair and maintenance of renewable energy power stations" is the first experimental program in the region, which is implemented with the support of the regional partner - the organization "Ferti." From a partnership point of view, the leading academic program is also "Culinary", which is implemented in a dual format and, as it turned out, the graduates work at least in almost all restaurant complexes operating in Gyumri city. This academic program is also a vivid example of an educational institution-employer-labor market connection.

As for the assignments provided to students, and the teaching methods used, the expert panel notes that students are provided with assignments that develop practical, creative, and analytical abilities, which provide knowledge corresponding to the 3rd and 4th levels defined by the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the acquisition of skills and abilities.

There are highly qualified lecturers, and masters of industrial training at the School. Most of the masters are from the practical field or carry out professional separate activities. The faculty are innovators, seekers and researchers, which also reflects the innovative nature of the assignments and tasks they provide. The main problem with the faculty is related to their stability, the average age of the staff is over 45, and sometimes one master or specialist serves one academic program. While conducting the assessment, the expert panel took into account the lack of specialists in the region and the fact that, along with the shortage of specialists, the TLI was able to fill the faculty with such specialists who work professionally and compassionately with students in the teenage years and record high results.

All the academic programs at TLI are resource-intensive, from the point of view of achieving the outcomes, the latter requires equipped workshops. The School can provide students with a modern material and technical base. It is noteworthy that the TLI annually spends on laboratory teaching materials, professional equipment and other special-purpose materials that are provided to students for practical work. This approach contributes to the development of students'

abilities. It should also be noted that the material and technical base has been supplemented in recent years as a result of various state and international grants, and the resources provided to students are of the latest generation. In this context, it should also be noted that almost all academic programs have been equally filled (the only exception is the "Hairdressing and decorative makeup" AP). In the workshops, each student has his own workspace and tools. In addition to the fact that the TLI has all the necessary resource bases for organizing the practical classes of students, the resource bases of employers are also used within the framework of some academic programs, providing a real working environment for students. Summarizing, we can note that the current academic programs, the faculty and the provided resource base ensure the credibility of the qualifications given to students.

The TLI develops and implements short-term (2021-2026) and long-term plans. In long-term planning, the actions necessary for the implementation of the goals, the expected result, the control evaluation of the result, the period of implementation, investment and financial means, possible risks and responsible persons are indicated. The selected format provides an opportunity to ensure the efficiency of management, but the defined goals of the SP mostly imply mid-term actions, which are not so prospective. As a result, the SP is considered almost complete at the end of 2023. At the same time, the expert panel, observing the entire management process, can note that long-term, progress-providing processes are being implemented at TLI (for example, implementing an academic program with employers, and applying for international grant programs), which have not become part of strategic planning. The expert panel is full of hope that the results of the institutional accreditation will contribute to the implementation of new, more effective long-term planning.

The structure of the financial resources of the School is dominated by the revenues received from the state budget of RA, rents and grants. Grant income has increased in recent years, which has contributed to the improvement of the resource base of the TLI. The School is also aware of the need to diversify the budget and is taking steps to apply for international grants.

From 2020, internal evaluation processes are being carried out in the school, the analyzes of which contribute to pointing out directions for the improvement of the TLI. The expert panel also highlights the fact that the results of the internal evaluation were the basis for the more systematic implementation of the external evaluation processes.

From the point of view of the full implementation of the internal quality assurance system, it is positive that there is a certain culture in the divisions to collect and analyze data for evaluating the effectiveness of the work carried out in the TLI. Referring to the efforts of the TLI to implement the quality assurance system, the expert panel finds that the Quality Assurance division needs to be an independent unit that will create an opportunity for objective data collection and analysis, moreover, the system can serve as an effective internal evaluation mechanism. The expert panel is full of hope that the Quality Assurance System will be fully implemented based on the positive traditions in the TLI, and the evaluation processes will be regulated, all of which will also contribute to the full implementation of the PDCA cycle. Summing up, the expert panel notes that the management processes of the TLI are mostly result-based.

The expert panel also emphasizes the active cooperative policy of the School with partner organizations, which are more practical and active. A vivid example of this is the cooperation with the "Family" organization and the employers of the region, which contributes to the continuous development of the institution. Another important circumstance that received the attention of the expert panel and a positive response, is the activity of student societies, which is a good and well-established experience on the scale of the RA. As for the employment of graduates, the expert panel notes that the available data (graduates working in a profession in 2022-23 make up 7%) are still not satisfactory. The expert panel realizes that about 90% of students are boys, and the issue of being drafted into the army creates additional complications in terms of finding a job, however, there is still a need for in-depth analysis in this direction to find out the main reasons for not finding a job. The analyzes will contribute to the decision-making aimed at solving the problems. The expert panel also believes that the increase in the indicators of graduates working in the profession in the new SP can be expressed as one of the important indicators of management efficiency.

The expert panel positively assesses that a system of accountability has been implemented in the School. There are mechanisms for ensuring accountability to internal and external stakeholders, contributing to increasing the transparency and publicity of the School's activities.

The fact that the TLI takes responsibility for integrating its graduates who have returned from compulsory military service into the labor market has received the attention of the expert panel.

Strengths of the Institution:

1. The important socio-economic role in the city of Gyumri from the point of view of preparing specialists with initial professional qualifications,
2. Availability of state grant programs and financial stability,
3. Academic programs are in demand in the labor market,
4. The experience of implementing joint academic programs with employers,
5. The successful experience of forming student companies,
6. Availability of motivated and highly experienced faculty,
7. Research and creative assignments given to students,
8. The existence of a sufficient resource base,
9. Implementation of annual internal evaluations,
10. The experience of participating in international grant programs.

Weaknesses of the Institution:

11. Absence of perspective of strategic plan,
12. Low motivation of internal stakeholders in the decision-making process of the Management Board,
13. Low indicators of graduates working by profession,

14. The stability of the faculty,
15. Absence of the main position of quality assurance specialist,
16. Incomplete implementation of the quality assurance system.

Main recommendations:

Mission and Purposes

- Revise the Development Plan, by establishing the most prospective and long-term goals for the TLI, considering the problems facing the TLI, and systematically evaluating the opportunities.
- Consider the possibility of aligning the format of internal evaluations with the priorities of the DP, ensuring the full implementation of the DP monitoring.

Governance and Administration

- Develop and implement a human resources engagement policy using the capabilities of partner organizations.
- Continue to work towards the acquisition of new grant programs, ensuring the continuous development of human capital capabilities.

Academic programs

- Develop and implement a clear regulation of student assessment, ensuring the transparency of the assessment.
- Develop and implement a clear regulation for monitoring academic programs, ensuring the continuous improvement of the system of the APs.
- Develop and implement a benchmarking policy for academic programs, contributing to the identification and localization of best practices of other TLIs.

Students

- To activate the work of the SC, motivating students to get involved in the work of the council.
- Systematically study and analyze the reasons for student employment low level, contributing to the development of TLI's policies aimed at increasing employment growth.
- Activate the work of the Career Center in the direction of increasing the employment opportunities of students.

Faculty and staff

- Take steps to stabilize and rejuvenate the faculty teaching professional modules.
- Take steps to find professional training for faculty and ensure their participation, by contributing to the continuous professional development of specialists.
- Regulate the process of mentoring support for novice lecturers, by promoting the continuity of work.

Research and Development

- Develop and implement mechanisms that encourage the research work of the faculty, by contributing to the development of the initial professional field.
- Continue to develop the database of research-practical assignments given to students, by ensuring continuous improvement of assignments.
- Develop and introduce a general policy for conducting research activities, ensuring the continuity and expansion of the good experience of the TLI in the field of research.

Infrastructure and Resources

- Allocate a separate area of the first aid room to provide necessary medical care to the students.
- Consider the possibility of creating science and mathematics laboratories, ensuring the full implementation of basic subjects.

Societal Responsibility

- Carry out the updating of the official website of the School, providing complete information about TLI and increasing its attractiveness among the public.
- Continue to implement short-term courses, by responding to market changes.

External Relations and Internationalization

- Continue to be proactive in engaging in various local and international programs, providing an environment for faculty and student mobility and experience sharing.
- Continue to take steps to improve students' and lecturers' foreign languages, currently evaluating the effectiveness of the courses.

Internal Quality Assurance System

- Develop and implement a QA-responsible position description, defining the employee's functions and responsibilities.
- Apply and evaluate the document base formed for the QA system, by ensuring its full adaptation to the needs of the School.
- Separate and specify the role of internal and external stakeholders in QA processes.
- Introduce mechanisms to ensure the transparency of QA processes.

Christine Hakobyan, Chair of Expert Panel

23.02.2024

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

External evaluation of the institutional capacities of Gyumri No. 4 Vocational State School was carried out by the following expert panel.

- 1. Christine Hakobyan-** Deputy Director for Academic Affairs of Kotayk Regional State College, head of the expert panel,
- 2. Elena Martirosyan,** Deputy Director of Educational Activities of the French-Armenian Vocational Training Center, member of the expert panel
- 3. Khachik Shahbazyan,** Lecturer at the Department of Technology Management at the National Polytechnic University of Armenia, member of the expert panel,
- 4. Aram Hakobyan,** student of "Nursing" speciality of Yerevan base medical college, student member 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, a specialist at the Department of Institutional and Programme Accreditation of the ANQA.

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

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

The TLI applied for state institutional accreditation by submitting to ANQA (10.01.2023) filled the application form, presented 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 making the decision on accepting the application an agreement was signed between ANQA and Gyumri No. 4 Vocational State School. The timetable of activities was prepared and approved.

Self-evaluation

Considering that the educational institution is going through institutional accreditation for the first time and is in the initial stage of the formation of the culture of quality assurance in School, ANQA has conducted 4-day online workshops with the TLI. The workshops aimed to prepare colleges for the organizational stages of the accreditation process. During the workshops, the

interpretations of the institutional accreditation criteria and standards, the electronic questionnaire to be filled in for applying for institutional accreditation, and the features of self-evaluation and SWOT analysis were presented. The educational institution carried out a SWOT analysis, which was discussed with the employees of the ANQA, to provide some guidance to the institution. An interim meeting was also organized on March 1, 2023, to provide ongoing support to the school and answer questions.

The VET institution submitted the self-evaluation of institutional capacity and the package of accompanying documents, according to the format defined by the ANQA. The coordinator studied the report in terms of technical compliance with the requirements of the ANQA. The self-evaluation presented by the TLI was in accordance with the defined unified format, was published on August 23, 2023, and was accepted by the ANQA. The self-evaluation was carried out by 5 groups formed by the institution, involving lecturers, representatives of administrative staff, students and employers.

Preparatory phase

After the submission of the self-evaluation report and the attached documents by the TLI, the ANQA coordinator observed the package to reveal its correspondence to the requirements of the 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 TLI and was confirmed by the order of the ANQA Director.

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

- The main functions of the members of the expert panel,
- The ethics and techniques of holding meetings and doing inquiries,
- Defining the specifics of the VET sector and interpretation of accreditation criteria according to the VET sector
- Preliminary assessment as a stage of preparation of the expert report, the main requirements for the report.

Having reviewed the self-evaluation report and documents of the school, the expert panel conducted the preliminary evaluation. According to the format, the lists of questions and objectives

for different departments and target groups, as well as additional documents have been prepared.

Within the scheduled time, the expert panel summarized the results of the preliminary evaluation, and the Chair of the expert panel, together with the process coordinator, set the schedule of the site visit. According to the ANQA manual, the intended close and open meetings with all the target groups, documents observation were included in the schedule, professional meetings etc. The members of the expert panel also had professional meetings with the AP responsible presented by the TLI, faculty, and students. Before the professional meetings, the experts studied the assignments given to the students and conducted class observations to understand the extent to which these assignments are aimed at achieving the expected outcomes.

Preparatory visit

On November 7, 2023, an online meeting was held with the management staff of the TLI. The ANQA coordinator, the head of the institutional program accreditation department and the head 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 School as well as discussed and mutually agreed decisions was made regarding the technical, organizational, and information issues of the site visit, the behaviour, and ethical norms of the meeting participants.

Site visit

The expert panel site visit took place from November 13-16, 2023. The site visit started and ended with meetings with the director of the TLI. All the participants of the meetings were selected at random from a pre-provided list. All scheduled meetings were held. During the visit, the expert panel conducted a study of documents.

At the end of each working day, the expert panel closed meetings were held to discuss the results of the interim expert assessment, and at the end of the visit, the main results were summarized.

The conclusion on the criteria was reached by the expert panel because of 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 report. After approval by the members of the expert panel, the preliminary report was

provided to the TLI (12.01.2023).

On 31.01.2024, the TLI sent its response to the report to ANQA. The ANQA provided observations of the TLI to experts. On 08.02.2024, ANQA organized a meeting between the TLI and the expert panel to clarify the observations. Then, the expert panel prepared the final version of the report.

Anahit Terteryan

Coordinator of the Expert Panel

23.02.2024

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERION	CONCLUSION
<i>I. Mission and Purposes</i>	Satisfactory
<i>II. Governance and Administration</i>	Satisfactory
<i>III. Academic Programmes</i>	Satisfactory
<i>IV. Students</i>	Satisfactory
<i>V. Faculty and Staff</i>	Satisfactory
<i>VI. Research and Development</i>	Satisfactory
<i>VII. Infrastructure and Resources</i>	Satisfactory
<i>VIII. Societal Responsibility</i>	Satisfactory
<i>IX. External Relations and Internationalization</i>	Satisfactory
<i>X. Internal Quality Assurance System</i>	Unsatisfactory