

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



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF YEREVAN REGIONAL STATE COLLEGE №1**

Yerevan – 2023

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of the Yerevan Regional State College №1 (hereinafter referred to as YRSC, 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 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 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 Yerevan Regional State College №1 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 YRSC is undergoing institutional accreditation for the first time.

The YRSC implements primary (handicraft) and secondary vocational academic programmes in accordance with the levels 4-5 of the RA National Qualifications Framework (hereinafter referred to as "NQF"). Highlighting the YRSC's role and importance in the primary and secondary vocational education, the expert panel is hopeful this report and recommendations will give a chance to more clearly outline the needs, as well as plan and implement programmes that contribute to the enhancement of educational processes.

The YRSC's academic programmes (hereinafter referred to as "Aps") are based on the state academic standards. The modular programmes have established outcomes, goals, content and performance criteria. Applying appropriate teaching and learning methods, the YRSC is able to produce alumni sought-after in the labour market. The institution also continuously replenishes the teaching staff, ensuring sustainable generational change.

The YRSC has teachers, training masters and young educators, who are active professionals in the field, holding relevant qualifications and pedagogical experience. The expert panel notes that educators demonstrate a creative approach and commitment in imparting professional knowledge, skills, and experience to students based on the peculiarities of the observed academic programmes.

For the implementation of the academic programmes, the YRSC has well-maintained studios, workshops, laboratories, classrooms, and other necessary infrastructures with appropriate devices and equipment. The expert panel highlights that the YRSC distributes resources as evenly as possible among all academic programmes, ensuring each has equal development conditions. The expert panel highly appreciates the student theatre's activities, the idea of designing a small stage, the furnishing of the dance halls and the efforts aimed at to maintain and develop the institution's kitchen management. The events organized in these areas provide a wonderful opportunity to share values and knowledge with the society, which the YRSC and, particularly, students embrace by presenting various cultural projects to the public.

According to the expert panel, the YRSC has a teaching staff with relevant qualifications and necessary material-technical resources for the academic programme implementation. The study shows that the YRSC produces alumni demanded in the labour market. Thus, it can be stated that the institution ensures the credible award of qualifications.

The expert panel took into consideration that researches have distinctive features, particularly in the observed APs "Acting Art", "Directorship", "Cooking". Hence, given the YRSC's activities in this direction, the research component in the APs of the mentioned fields directly pertains to any issue, task and topic carried out with a creative approach, whether it entails role-playing, staging, dish experimentation and preparation, and etc.

The YRSC conducts its activities in line with the approved Strategic Development Plan, which outlines the institution's mission, goals, key issues, and etc. The expert panel considers that it should be clarified in terms of format and be more comprehensible to the stakeholders. The expert panel particularly emphasizes the YRSC's visible positive educational environment and atmosphere, attaching importance to the necessity of continuous enhancement. The administrative and teaching staffs are willingful to provide additional consulting to students. The YRSC's director has a prominent personal reputation among students, teachers, and staff, which fosters the development of positive working relations and ultimately enhances the effectiveness of addressing educational, creative, organisational, and other issues. Meanwhile, the expert panel highlights the YRSC's efforts towards the implementation of processes aimed at the long-term development of the institution.

It is important to record the YRSC's activity on social media platforms. They function quite dynamically, boasting significant numbers of followers and notable visibility. The expert panel considers that this communication method with the public contributes to the promotion of the YRSC's activities, transparency of the processes, accountability and increase in the rating. The platforms also help maintain feedback with stakeholders.

The expert panel highlights the YRSC's cooperative relations and connections with employer organisations. The YRSC boasts the human capital, necessary resources to properly position itself in the labour market and thrive across various sectors of the economy, spanning from business to culture. It should be noted that the expansion of international cooperation or participation in international programmes and the exchange of practice will create an extra opportunity for enhancing the education quality. The YRSC needs to take steps in this direction.

The expert panel considers that the YRSC's quality assurance system at the introductory stage. Let us note that both the management staff, teaching staff and students recognize the need to fully embed the quality culture in the institution. However, the tasks and responsibilities of the quality assurance manager are not fully recognized and clarified. The YRSC's internal quality assurance infrastructure is still unable to collect and analyse the essential and reliable data for informed decision-making. The YRSC needs to coordinate planning and accountability processes in accordance with the Strategic Development Plan. The expert panel considers that stakeholders' more active involvement in the decision-making process will also contribute to the enhancement of the education quality. Enhancing the functionality of the internal quality assurance infrastructure, setting clear and measurable goals will greatly contribute to the YRSC's development.

The strengths of the institution

- 1) The management staff's reputation among stakeholders.
- 2) The efficient distribution of financial resources for the implementation of APs.
- 3) The academic programmes arising from the needs of the labour market.
- 4) The teachers with high professional qualities and relevant qualifications.
- 5) The preparation of alumni specialists demanded in the labour market.
- 6) The assistance provided to students by administrative, teaching and supporting staffs.
- 7) The material-technical infrastructures necessary for the implementation of the APs.
- 8) The creative and research assignments offered to students.
- 9) The implementation of measures aimed at transferring knowledge and cultural values to society.
- 10) The educational environment and creative atmosphere in the institution.

The weaknesses of the institution

- 1) The shortcomings of the surveys for the identification and evaluation of the stakeholder needs and the analysis of their results.
- 2) The absence of a mechanism for planning and reporting the activities of subdivisions in line with the Strategic Development Plan.
- 3) The absence of complete and reliable data collection and analysis by the YRSC's internal quality assurance infrastructure.
- 4) The lack of professional training for educators.

Main Recommendations

Mission and Purpose

1. Consider the possibility of clarifying the YRSC's mission, attaching importance to the institution's peculiarities as well.
2. Clarify the structure of the YRSC's Strategic Development Plan, preparing a schedule for the implementation of the plan, highlighting the actions addressing the core issues, assigning managers responsible for their implementation, the dates, the KPIs.
3. Prepare reports arising from strategic core issues.

Governance and Administration

4. Enhance the data collection process, developing clear mechanisms that will facilitate data-based decision-making.
5. Consider the attraction of external financial sources, taking into account the participation in international programmes.
6. Clarify the YRSC's management structure, ensuring alignment with the current positions.

Academic Programmes

7. Develop and introduce clear rubrics for formative and summative evaluation in accordance with APs.
8. Design packages of practical skills and capacity-building assignments in line with separate APs.

Students

9. Develop requirements, content and assessment criteria for entrance examinations, publishing them and ensuring their accessibility to stakeholders.
10. Consider the possibility of introducing foreign language courses to improve students' proficiency in foreign languages and create the basis for mobility.
11. Observe the need to establish a network for the formation of communication between employers and alumni.

Faculty and Staff

12. Include special requirements in the job description for the teachers, ensuring the peculiarities of the implementation of the YRSC's academic programmes.

13. Provide financial resources and carry out professional trainings for teachers based on educational needs.

Research and Development

14. Turn the research implementation into institutional policy.
15. Encourage teachers' engagement in creative-research activities, integration of outcomes into educational processes, ensuring their dissemination.

Infrastructure and Resources

16. Continue the implementation of short-term projects ensuring access to additional financial sources.
17. Continue the enhancement of the laboratories and educational environment.

Societal Responsibility

18. Incorporate an analytical component into the reports, ensuring the identification of issues and the enhancement planning.
19. Improve the YRSC's official website, providing reliable and comprehensive information to external partners.

External Relations and Internationalization

20. Develop and implement a clear strategy or plan for external relations and internationalization, setting key targets, actions, timeframes and outcomes.
21. Explores the possibilities of applying for Erasmus+ capacity building projects, ensuring the attraction of alternative revenues as well.
22. Continue active cooperation with local employers, ensuring the exchange of practice among students and teachers.

Internal Quality Assurance System

23. Develop and implement a policy for quality assurance policy, outlining the directions of QA processes, work tools, periodicity of processes and expected outcomes.
24. Ensure the participation of quality assurance specialists in capacity building programmes, contributing to their professional development.
25. Develop and apply a clear methodology for preparing and conducting surveys and analyses.
26. Cooperate with QA managers of other primary and secondary vocational education institutions, studying the positive practice of the sector.

Armen Harutyunyan

Chair of the expert panel

December 7, 2023

DISCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The external review of the institutional capacities of the Yerevan Regional State College №1 was carried out by the following members of the expert panel.

1. **Armen Harutyunyan**, vice-rector of Yerevan State Institute of Theatre and Cinematography, Candidate of Arts, Associate Professor, chair of the expert panel.
2. **Kristine Hakobyan**, deputy director for Educational Activities at Kotayk Regional State College, member of the expert panel.
3. **Narine Hovhannisyan**, teacher at Armenian National Agrarian University, Candidate of Technical Sciences, Associate Professor, member of the expert panel.
4. **Janik Apanosyan**, a third-year student at the Department of Management of Yerevan Regional State College N 2 Named after N. Achemyan, student member of the expert panel.

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

The coordinator of the expert panel was **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 12, 2023, the YRSC 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 (January 27, 2023), ANQA and the YRSC signed an agreement. The schedule of activities was prepared and approved.

Self-evaluation

Considering that the YRSC 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 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 institution also carried out a SWOT analysis as part of

the criterion "Academic Programmes", which was observed by ANQA's specialists to provide some guidance.

On March 1, 2023, an interim meeting was also organised to provide support to the institution and answer ongoing questions.

The institution submitted the self-evaluation of the institutional capacities and the package of documents within the schedule set by ANQA. The coordinator studied the report in terms of its compliance with technical requirements presented by ANQA. The self-evaluation did not comply with the standardized format set by ANQA, displaying shortcomings in technical aspects, formatting, and content. On May 24, the self-evaluation was returned to the institution. Within the specified timeframe, the institution corrected the shortcomings and aligned the self-evaluation with the format set by ANQA. On June 6, 2023, the self-evaluation was submitted to ANQA.

The self-evaluation was carried out by the institution's 18 employees, including teachers, representatives from the management and supporting staff. Students were involved.

Preparatory Phase

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.

Preparatory Visit

On September 27, 2023, a meeting took place with the institution's management staff. 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 VSMC'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 October 3-6, 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 conducted class observations and watched two performances. The expert panel also studied the documents and conducted resource observation. 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 agreed upon with the panel members on November 27, 2023. The preliminary version of the report was provided to the institution on November 27, 2023. The institution did not submit any observations on the preliminary report. The expert panel prepared the final version of the report, which was approved by the panel members on December 7, 2023.



Anahit Terteryan
Coordinator of the expert panel
December 7, 2023

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

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



Armen Harutyunyan
Chair of the expert panel

December 12, 2023