

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



EXPERT PANEL REPORT

YEREVAN REGIONAL STATE COLLEGE N 2 NAMED AFTER N. ACHEMYAN

Yerevan – 2023

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of the Yerevan Regional State College N 2 named after N. Achemyan (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 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 Yerevan Regional State College N 2 named after N. Achemyan 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 and is in the process of the formation of quality assurance culture.

The expert panel also took into consideration that the Yerevan Regional State College N 2 named after N. Achemyan is a secondary vocational education institution with a mission "to prepare small and medium business specialists, by implementing basic secondary vocational academic programmes in accordance with the requirements of the economy and the labour market, as well as provide trainings for service sector workers and individuals through supplementary academic programmes and short-term courses.

The Yerevan Regional State College N 2 named after N. Achemyan implements secondary vocational and primary (handicraft) vocational academic programmes in compliance with the level 3 and 5 of the RA National Qualifications Framework (hereinafter referred to as "NQF").

The YRSC implements eight secondary vocational and one primary vocational academic programmes (hereinafter referred to as "Aps"). Three APs "Refrigeration Management", "Cosmetics and Makeup", "Installation, Repair and Maintenance of Renewable Energy Power Plants", have been introduced in the last three years. The AP "Service Organization in Hotels and Tourist Complexes" has been implemented through dual education since the academic year 2019-2020. This demonstrates the institution's goal to introduce new Aps and in respond to the requirements of the labour market.

The YRSC's AP descriptions, curricula, module descriptions and lesson plans are created based on the state academic standards established by National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development (hereinafter referred to as "NCVETD"). The YRSC uses the opportunity to make 10 percent changes in the state academic standards, mainly as part of the distribution of class hours and elective courses. Modifications in course content are made due to changes in the state academic standards or based on the recommendations from employer teachers. These modifications mainly concern the content update and removal of repetitive topics. In regard to the formulation of the learning outcomes, they fully correspond to the standards set by the NCVETD. The YRSC's

subject committees and the academic council discuss their practicality, sometimes submitting package of recommendations to NCVETD. However, no great progress has been made in this direction.

In a number of YRSC's APs, such as "Accounting", "Organization of Service in Hotels and Tourist Complexes", "Insurance Case", the learning outcomes align more closely with the requirements of the NQF level 5. As a result, the alumni find job without further education. Conversely, in the APs like "Marketing" and "Management", the job is often combined with part-time education at the HEI. In this regard, it is necessary to note that there are no steps for cooperation with the HEIs to align program content and ensure logical coherence. The YRSC does not benchmark academic programmes against those of other colleges in Armenia, as they all follow the same state academic standards. An exception is the dual AP "Organization of Service in Hotels and Tourist Complexes", for which the College studied the practice of colleges that previously introduced dual education to ensure effectiveness. The expert panel considers that the benchmarking of the practice of not only Armenian, but also international secondary vocational education institutions would have greatly contribute to the enhancement of the YRSC's academic programmes.

The study on the descriptions of the modular courses and lesson plans as part of the implemented Aps, shows their compliance with the NCVETD format and do not provide specific details regarding the tasks and topics of the assignments. The teaching and learning methods are not diversified as well. As part of most professional modules and general education subjects, students are provided with assignments requiring independent and team work, which are aimed at the development of research, analytical and creative thinking. In this context, the documentation of best practices and the introduction of exchange mechanisms can ensure the continuity of academic programmes in the conditions of rejuvenation or possible changes in the teaching staff. The expert panel believes that attaching importance to the research or practical component during the final attestation exams will lead to a more accurate assessment of the student's skills and competencies.

The YRSC is consistently engaged in the recruitment and rejuvenation of the teaching staff. Taking into consideration the growing number of the YRSC's students and the introduction of new professions, in the last two years, the institution recruited more than 20 teachers, including candidates of sciences, through a competitive selection process. Candidates of sciences are also among adjunct teachers. However, the YRSC still lacks qualified specialists, particularly for the new APs "Refrigeration Management" and "Installation, Repair and Maintenance of Renewable Energy Power Plants". The teaching staff's efforts towards creating professional manuals, particularly for language teaching, are appreciated. Some of them have been approved by NCVETD and are used in other colleges as well. The YRSC's Strategic Plan (hereinafter referred to "SP") and action plan schedule, attaches importance to the training of the teaching staff. However, only methodical trainings are planned with the institution's internal resources. Teachers also undergo methodological trainings on teaching modules at the NCVETD. Some teachers have to pursue professional trainings on their own initiative, taking into consideration the needs of updating the content of the subjects/modules they teach. The expert panel finds that regular evaluation of the teaching staff, consistent evaluation of the

outcomes, discussion in the relevant bodies and the implementation of incentive mechanisms based on that can greatly promote the teacher motivation and attract new staff members.

One of the YRSC's strategic priorities is the enhancement of material-technical resources. For this purpose, the institution allocates some funds in the annual budget. However, the allocated resources are not enough for large-scale activities, particularly reconstruction and furnishing of the kitchen and prototype hotel rooms, which are crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of the relevant academic programmes. Currently, the YRSC has sufficient resources for the implementation of APs and tries to fill in the possible gaps with the resources of the organisations where students undergo internships. The expert panel considers that state or other grant programmes may provide an opportunity for reconstruction, since most of the YRSC's budget is dedicated to salaries and the institution does not have statutory right to operate a business.

Considering that the YRSC provides APs aligned with the RA NQF levels 3 and 5, with the effectiveness ensured through regular training of the teaching staff, most of whom apply student-centered teaching and learning approaches to nurture students' research and analytical skills and competencies, facilitates student internships in various organisations alongside continuous enhancement of infrastructure and resources, it indicates credible award of qualifications.

Observing the YRSC's management processes and studying the documents suggest that the issues arise from the incomplete implementation of the PDCA cycle of quality assurance and the absence of reliable data collection and decisions based on their analysis, except for one or two cases. This is apparent from the comparison of the development plan outlined in the YRSC's strategic plan and its action plan schedule. The YRSC's SP focuses primarily on material-technical enhancements, while other needs are overlooked. The action plan schedule is a more comprehensive document, which provides a detailed breakdown of several areas of the YRSC activities. Before the SP development, conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the activities of all the bodies of the management system and analysing the results would have raised a number of other issues that the YRSC could address through various measures. Furthermore, the KPIs have not been developed for the evaluation of the implemented actions. The issues of the accountability system largely arise from the shortcomings of the above-mentioned processes, particularly, the work plans for individuals and subdivisions, as well as the annual reports are not drawn up according to the action plan. Therefore, they do not provide an opportunity to evaluate the SP implementation.

Generally, the introduction of a series of procedures necessary to ensure the management system's quality will enable long-term planning with the inclusion of all possible areas of the YRSC's activity, preventing situational management approach.

The study of the management system highlighted other shortcomings as well. Thus, for instance, the study of the regulations of various management bodies, the meetings minutes, position passports shows that there are duplications of functions, which can hinder the coordination of a number of actions. This is particularly problematic for achieving a comprehensive and consistent result analysis, such as in terms of employers' opinions on internships or class observations. On the other hand, it is worth noting the positive aspects of the YRSC's cooperative environment, efforts to

jointly solve issues like organising internships, and the motivation. The exception is the stakeholders' participation in internal quality assurance processes. This can be explained, on the one hand, by the frequent turnover of long-term employees and their very wide range of functions, on the other hand, by internal stakeholders' incomplete awareness of the importance of quality assurance processes in enhancing the YRSC's activities. The expert panel considers that the organisation of targeted awareness activities among internal stakeholders, the clear limitation of the quality assurance manager's functions and the consistent implementation of the PDCA cycle in all areas of the YRSC's activities with the use of clear mechanisms for result evaluation and analysis, will contribute to the formation of a quality culture in the institution.

Enhancing the management system, clarifying functions and coordination can also significantly improve the research field, public relations, and external relations. Despite the YRSC's steps and accomplishments in the aforementioned directions, action coordination, result analysis and further planning based on it remains incomplete. Incorporating research into the next SP as one of the priority directions for the development, the definition of possible research areas aligned with APs, can stimulate the YRSC's research activities.

The YRSC uses several ways for information dissemination, including participation in expos, informational visits, effective use of the official website and social media platform with feedback opportunities. The introduction of mechanisms for free transfer of knowledge acquired by the YRSC teachers and students to the broad sections of the society will greatly contribute to the increase of the YRSC's reputation and the information dissemination about the institution.

The YRSC's demonstrates commendable activities towards the creation of external relations across all its subdivisions. However, the coordination of these activities is incomplete, which would have ensured the evaluation of the effectiveness of the activities, the establishment of stable cooperation. Activities in this direction can create a sufficient basis for integrating internationalization into strategic planning in the future.

The expert panel is hopeful that the report and recommendations will contribute to the enhancement of the institution's management processes, internal quality assurance and strategic planning.

The strengths of the institution

1. The alignment of the YRSC's mission with the RA NQF level 3 and 5.
2. The YRSC's cooperative environment.
3. The implementation of academic programmes and introduction of new ones in line with the requirements of the labour market.
4. The steady increase in the number of students, transparency of their recruitment process.
5. The Career centre's active work with students, feedback with alumni and cooperation with other subdivisions.
6. The alumni working in their professions.

7. The continuous expansion of the teaching staff.
8. The teaching staff's motivation and initiatives, particularly in the development of education manuals.
9. The involvement of employers teachers.
10. The course assignments for the development of students' research skills and analytical thinking.
11. The YRSC's efforts towards continuous enhancement of infrastructure and resources.
12. The YRSC's efforts towards diversification of external relations, ensurance of internships and further employment of students.

The weaknesses of the institution

1. The inconsistency of the SP's development plan and the action plan schedule.
2. The absence of appropriate strategic planning procedures, mechanisms, and KPIs.
3. The absence of interrelation between the SP, the annual planning and accountability system.
4. The too broad range of functions in job descriptions and duplication the functions across different positions.
5. The incomplete application of mechanisms for monitoring and quality assurance of academic programmes.
6. The incomplete implementation of mechanisms for the identification of internal stakeholder needs.
7. The absence of steps and resources for teachers' professional training.
8. The absence of strategic goal setting in the research field.
9. The absence of steps towards internationalization and mobility of students and teachers.
10. The absence of quality culture.

Main Recommendations

Mission and Purpose

1. Align the SP's capacity building programme section with the action plan of the SP.
2. Before developing the next SP, conduct an implementation analysis on the previous SP's action plan and the stakeholder needs.
3. Develop quantitative KPIs for the evaluation of the results outlined in the SP's action plan.
4. Develop a new format of annual work plans and reports, which will be based on the performance of the SP's action plan and be evaluated according to the developed KPIs.

Governance and Administration

5. Review the position passports and clearly separate the functions of the administrative staff, defining the scope of responsibilities.

6. Review the hierarchical relations within the YRSC structure to remove any duplicative supervisory roles.
7. Carry out a multifaceted evaluation of the management system's effectiveness, fix the ways of solving the identified issues and introducing necessary new mechanisms in the next SP.
8. Develop quantitative and qualitative KPIs for evaluating the management system.
9. Implement mechanisms for regular data collection and analysis, distributing activities among responsible subdivisions.
10. Base decisions on detailed, documented, reliable data-driven analyses.

Academic Programmes

11. Carry out continuous enhancements of the APs, particularly the modular courses, based on the regular application of the comprehensive toolset for monitoring mechanisms, as well as on benchmarking of the comparative programmes of foreign secondary vocational education institutions.
12. Design assignment packages that build practical skills and capacities in accordance with separate APs.
13. Design lesson plans based on the modules' content requirements, diversifying teaching and learning methods according to the topic, also provide details about the requirements of practical tasks and assignments.
14. Introduce internship journals for all professions that contain an analytical component and evaluate capacities and skills in accordance with the Aps' outcomes.
15. Include assignments that test practical skills as part of the final attestation exams, considering the nature of the learning outcomes of the given academic programme.

Students

16. Develop and implement clear mechanisms for identifying the students' educational needs.
17. Introduce mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of provided educational, consulting and other services.
18. Introduce procedures for planning the annual activities of the Student Council based on the scope of their functions and annual accountability.
19. Expand the involvement of various students in the events of the Science and Innovation Department's events.

Faculty and Staff

20. Based on educational needs, provide financial resources for teachers' professional training.
21. Form a staff pool, comprising a wide range of employer teachers from all professional fields.

22. Develop effective incentive mechanisms, based on regular evaluation of teachers.

Research and Development

23. Make the research component an important part of strategic planning, specifying the priority directions in line with the APs.
24. Introduce mechanisms and procedures promoting research activities.
25. Define the research component within each AP and create a set of pertinent research assignments.
26. Develop and implement mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of activities containing a research component.

Infrastructure and Resources

27. Raise extra-budgetary funds, applying for state or other grant programmes.
28. Expand the possibilities of using employer resources, entering into appropriate contracts.
29. Allocate the budget according to the needs of specific APs, based on their result analysis.

Societal Responsibility

30. Maximise the use of the YRSC's official website, making information available to the wide range of stakeholders, both in Armenian and foreign languages.
31. Show initiative in the implementation and dissemination of information on the APs and knowledge transfer activities.

External Relations and Internationalization

32. Take steps to coordinate the formation of external relations.
33. Plan measures to expand external relations and create opportunities for internationalization, based on the analysis of the YRSC's needs and potential.

Internal Quality Assurance System

34. Review the job description of the quality assurance specialists and clarify their functions.
35. Introduce a culture of planning QA processes, including the quality assurance toolset for each field.
36. Organise trainings for teaching and administrative staff and improve cooperation with subject committees.
37. Clearly define the objectives, periodicity and method of presenting the results of the conducted surveys, focus groups, round tables to stakeholders.

38. Ensure the cooperation of the quality assurance manager with the relevant centres and employees of other TLIs.



Lilit Badalyan
Chair of the expert panel

September 6, 2023

DISCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The external review of the institutional capacities of the Yerevan Regional State College N 2 named after N. Achemyan was carried out by the following members of the expert panel.

1. **Lilit Badalyan**, head of the Chair of Linguistics and Communication Theory of the Brusov State University, Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor, chair of the expert panel.
2. **Kristine Hakobyan**, teacher and deputy director of educational activities at the Kotayk Regional State College, member of the expert panel.
3. **Violeta Davidan**, teacher at the Regional State College No.1, member of the expert panel.
4. **Albert Tadevosyan**, a student at the Department of Finance, Yerevan State Humanitarian-Technical College, 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 **Liana Alaverdyan**, assistant to ANQA's director.

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

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

On January 13, 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, 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 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. The institution carried out a SWOT analysis, which was discussed with ANQA's specialists.

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. 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 May 2, 2023, the self-evaluation was submitted to ANQA.

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 the 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

The preparatory visit took place on June 12, 2023. The head of ANQA's Institutional Programme Accreditation Division, the coordinator 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 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 June 26-29, 2023.

A week prior to the site visit, all members of the expert panel and the coordinator visited the institution, observed the infrastructure and resources, conducted class observations. Then the experts and the coordinator had a close meeting. The meeting aimed to bring out the strengths and weaknesses of the institution based on the criteria, clarify questions for the target groups, discuss the meeting procedures and further steps.

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 studied the documents.

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 August 25, 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 September 6, 2023.



Liana Alaverdyan
Coordinator of the expert panel

September 6, 2023

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERIA	CONCLUSION
<i>1. Mission and Purpose</i>	Satisfactory
<i>2. Governance and Administration</i>	Unsatisfactory
<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



Lilit Badalyan
Chair of the expert panel

September 6, 2023