

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



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT
ABOVYAN MULTIFUNCTIONAL STATE COLLEGE**

Yerevan_2023_

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of the Abovyan Multifunctional State College (hereinafter referred to as AMSC, TLI or College) was carried out based on the application submitted by the institution. The process of institutional accreditation is organised and coordinated by "National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance" foundation (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 expert panel is composed of four local experts, one of whom is a student.

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 Abovyan Multifunctional State 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 external review, the expert panel took into consideration that the Abovyan Multipurpose State College's mission is "... the formation, transfer and dissemination of knowledge and capacities and national mindset of students, the preservation and development of creative potential, as well as the scientific development, ensuring the generational change and continuity of high-quality professionals in the arts, culture, service and craftsmanship" and made all considerations and conclusions based on that. Adhering to the mission and the requirements of the labour market, the AMSC implements ten secondary vocational academic programmes (hereinafter referred to as "APs"), namely "Design", "Painting", "Acting Art", "Accounting", "Banking", " Clerical Work with Profound Knowledge of Foreign Language", "Accounting", "Computing Equipment and Automated Systems Software", "Computer Art Design", "Tourism", "Nursing", as well as one primary vocational academic programme "Cooking". The mentioned APs are carried out through full-time education, on a tuition and tuition-free basis. There is a common understanding among stakeholders regarding the AMSC's mission that the institution should prepare staff to meet the needs of the labour market and ensure the continuity of the student education. Employers value the AMSC's role in the region, including in the field of primary vocational (handicraft) education, in terms of staff preparation.

The AMSC's goals are quite ambitious, which include admission of applicants with academic progress, modernization of APs, classrooms, replenishment of the material-technical resources, preparation of critical-thinking specialists, embedment and development of the quality assurance system. During the external review, the expert panel made sure that the AMSC gradually achieves a number of goals, while others still remain unfulfilled.

It was revealed that the AMSC has refined its mission, improved the building conditions, and created a conducive educational environment for students in recent years. Aligned with its goals, the AMSC has started to place more emphasis not only on the quantity, but also on the quality of students. External stakeholders highlighted that admitting students with higher progress and gradually elevating the learning standard serve as competitive advantages for the institution.

The expert panel faced a controversial situation where the AMSC's governing bodies, while successful in solving key issues, did not give a due attention to internal governance

problems. Consequently, issues arose within the institution that could have been avoided had the administration's effectiveness been increased.

Thus, the effectiveness of AMSC's APs varies. For instance, the APs "Design", "Painting", "Clerical Work with Profound Knowledge of Foreign Language", were implemented with higher effectiveness. Both the teachers and students engaged in those academic programmes were more motivated and directed towards quality enhancement. The effectiveness of those APs is attributed to good teaching staff, various teaching methods, and outcome-oriented assignments. During the evaluation, experts also identified several issues with certain APs, such as "Banking". The expert panel regarded the lack of evaluation and dissemination of best practice to other APs as one of the governance weaknesses.

The AMSC has a wide array of external relations. However, steps towards internationalization are yet to be taken. Thanks to external relations, the AMSC has achieved the improvement of the material-technical resources and the educational environment.

The quality assurance system is in the stage of formation. There are no developed mechanisms and tools, the enhancement activities are situational and not clearly planned. The AMSC's management and the teaching staffs do not have a clear idea about the quality assurance system. The PDCA cycle partially functions only in some APs.

The strengths of the institution

1. The clearly formulated mission and goals in the strategy.
2. The implemented academic programmes' compliance with the characteristics of the multifunctional college.
3. The motivated, dedicated, highly qualified teaching staff.
4. The formation of a conducive educational environment for students and implementation of a student-centered policy.
5. The continuous improvement of building conditions and resources.
6. The wide array of external relations aimed at improving the learning environment.
7. The use of employer resources for effective implementation of APs.

The weaknesses of the institution

8. The absence of strategic management, inconsistency between short-term planning and the strategic plan.
9. The insufficient financial resources for attracting necessary human resources in the management system.
10. The gaps in the AP management.
11. The absence of a well-developed accountability system.
12. The absence of policies and procedures reflecting research interests and ambitions.
13. The lack transparency in activities.
14. The stakeholders' low awareness of policies implemented in the institution.
15. The absence of ambitions in education internationalization of.

16. The absence of internal quality assurance system.

Main Recommendations

Mission and Purpose

1. Introduce institutional mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of the strategic plan, ensuring the monitoring of its implementation.
2. Combine the strategy evaluation with the mapped stakeholder needs.

Governance and Administration

3. Develop and implement plan schedule for strategy implementation, with clearly defined outcomes, KPIs, responsible persons and deadlines.
4. Implement the short-term planning of all subdivisions based on the plan schedule of the strategic plan.
5. To increase the governance effectiveness, create a database that will enable its monitoring.
6. Develop and implement sustainable mechanisms to raise stakeholder awareness of decision-making.
7. Clarify the functions of heads of subdivisions.

Academic Programmes

8. Generalize and disseminate best practices of certain professions, contributing to the development of competencies and skills outlined in the outcomes of all APs.
9. Implement a multifactor assessment system, ensuring its application across the outcomes of all Aps.
10. Plan and implement benchmarking for the AP enhancement.
11. Introduce elective courses in the curricula, taking into account the employer needs.
12. Introduce effective systematic and regulated mechanisms for the monitoring and review of the APs, contributing to their continuous enhancement.

Students

13. Improve the mechanisms for applicant recruitment, considering the newly introduced professional orientation opportunities in schools.
14. Increase the activeness of the Career Centre, by planning and introducing clear mechanisms for the implementation and enhancement of the plans.
15. Diversify the mechanisms aimed at the protection of student rights, ensuring the visibility of the Student Council's role.

Faculty and Staff

16. Introduce effective mechanisms for the evaluation of the teaching staff, with the aim of enhancing their performance.
17. Introduce mechanisms for identifying and evaluating the needs of the teaching staff for professional progress and development.
18. Take measures to ensure the sustainability of the teaching staff, establishing a staff reserve.
19. Clearly define and effectively distribute the administrative staff's functions for the effective implementation of strategic goals.

Research and Development

20. Clearly define research ambitions and directions, as well as procedures in alignment with the AMSC's peculiarities and APs.
21. Introduce mechanisms to engage teachers and students in research activities aimed at professional progress and development.
22. Integrate an analytical, research component into the student assignments of all APs.

Infrastructure and Resources

23. Develop and implement financial diversification mechanisms to ensure sustainable income growth.
24. Improve library infrastructure, incorporating professional and digitized literature.
25. Set up biology laboratories equipped with proper furnishings.
26. Improve the information and document circulation processes.
27. Develop a toolset and conduct an evaluation of the availability and effectiveness of resources provided to internal stakeholders.

Societal Responsibility

28. Develop and implement an accountability policy that will ensure information transfer in both upward and downward directions, integrating an analytical component into the reports.
29. Introduce mechanisms for knowledge (values) and information transfer to society.

External Relations and Internationalization

30. Develop clear policies/procedures for external relations to ensure regularity and sustainability of external cooperation.

31. Take steps to study international practice and establish relations with education institutions in alignment with the AMSC's APs.
32. Take steps to increase the proficiency level in foreign languages of the teaching staff and students.

Internal Quality Assurance System

33. Specify the mission, goals and scope of functions of the quality assurance system, ensuring the development of relevant regulations.
34. Develop and implement mechanisms for data collection, ensuring the stakeholders' involvement in the implementation of the mechanisms.
35. Ensure the professional growth of the quality assurance manager, contributing to the embedment of the internal quality system and the formation of the quality culture.
36. Introduce mechanisms for data collection, effective evaluation and analysis of the processes, based on the PDCA cycle.
37. Implement reliable mechanisms that will ensure transparency and publicity among stakeholders regarding the AMSC's quality assurance processes.

November 29, 2023

Signed by the expert panel's chair

DISCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

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

1. **Lilit Zakaryan**, director at the Quality Assessment and Assurance Center of the Armenian National Agrarian University, Candidate of Historical Sciences, Associate Professor, chair of the expert panel.
2. **Lilit Abelyan**, teacher and head of Internal Quality Assurance Center of the Kotayk Regional State College, member of the expert panel.
3. **Marine Galubyan**, accountant at Sanare-Pharm LTD, member of the expert panel.
4. **Robert Grigoryan**, a student at the French College in Armenia, 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 **Lilit Ghazaryan**, specialist at ANQA's Secretariat.

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

DISCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

On January 10, 2023, the AMSC 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.

The institution's self-evaluation was carried out by the group formed under the the order of the institution's director.

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 four-day online workshops with the institution. The workshops aimed to prepare the institutions for the organisational stages of the accreditation process. The workshops took place on February 21-22 and March 3-4. During the four-day 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 to reveal its compliance with technical requirements presented by ANQA.

The institution's 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 twice. Within the specified timeframe, the AMSC corrected the report's content and technical shortcomings and aligned the self-evaluation with the format set by the ANQA. On July 17, 2023, the AMSC submitted the revised self-evaluation of institutional capabilities submitted to ANQA. The self-evaluation was carried out by four employees of the institution. External stakeholders did not participate in the self-evaluation process. Each criterion was analysed by an employee of the AMSC, considering the work orientation and criterion requirements. The self-evaluation was mainly descriptive and general, which did not allow the experts to get insights into the institution's real situation during the preliminary evaluation.

Preparatory Phase

After the submission of the self-evaluation report and the attached documents, ANQA's coordinator studied the package to reveal its compliance 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 AMSC and was 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 the coordinator set the schedule of 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 documents, "professional talks", etc. During the "professional talks", the expert panel is divided, with each expert focusing on their specific field. Each expert (except the student expert who joined one of the other experts) had the opportunity to have separate "professional talks" with the teachers, managers and the students of the APs. Prior to the "professional talks", the experts in their respective fields studied the student assignments to understand how these assignments are aimed at achieving the performance criteria set forth in the modules.

Preparatory Visit

Taking into consideration that the AMSC is located in the Kotayk region, the preparatory visit took place online. 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 AMSC. 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 18-21, 2023. One day before the scheduled visit (August 17, 2023), all members of the expert panel 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 AMSC's director.

To clarify the issues, the focus group meetings took place. The participants, including teachers, students and alumni, were selected randomly, from a pre-provided list.

All the scheduled meetings took place. The expert panel also conducted class observations. During the site visit, the expert panel studied documents, conducted observation of resources and internship locations and held focus group meetings.

At the end of each working day, the expert panel held closed 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 with the experts on November 19 and was provided to the institution on November 21, 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 November 29, 2023 and provided to the institution.

Signed by the coordinator

November 29, 2023

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

<i>CRITERION</i>	<i>CONCLUSION</i>
<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>	Unsatisfactory
<i>7. Infrastructure and Resources</i>	Satisfactory
<i>8. Societal Responsibility</i>	Unsatisfactory
<i>9. External Relations and Internationalization</i>	Satisfactory
<i>10. Internal Quality Assurance System</i>	Unsatisfactory

November 29, 2023

Signed by the chair of the expert panel