

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



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
ALAVERDI STATE COLLEGE**

Yerevan – 2024

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of the Alaverdi State College (hereinafter referred to as ASC, TLI or college) is carried out based on the application submitted by the College. 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, which is made up of four local experts and was formed by the requirements set by the National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation in regulation on “Formation of the Expert Panel.”

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia funded the accreditation process.

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 between the institution and employers and its impact on education content.

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

Context of the Evaluation of the College's Activities

Alaverdi State College, founded in 1966, is the legal successor of the Alaverdi Industrial-Technological Technical School. It is in the town of Alaverdi, in the Lori region. ASC implements secondary vocational education programs and is undergoing the institutional accreditation process for the first time.

Development Directions and Educational Programs of the College

Alaverdi State College is the only secondary vocational education institution operating in Alaverdi and its adjacent villages. It has approximately 228 students enrolled. According to the "Five-Year Development Program of Alaverdi Community," the community's key development sectors are industry, agriculture, and tourism.

ASC has the authorization to implement 11 academic programs, of which 10 are secondary vocational programs and one is a craftsmanship program. As of the first semester of the 2024-2025 academic year, the college offers admissions in only five secondary vocational programs: "Service Organization," "Software Engineering for Computing and Automated Systems," "Production of Ferrous and Non-Ferrous Metal Casting," "Public Catering Technology," and "Banking." It is important to note that only three of these programs- "Service Organization," "Production of Ferrous and Non-Ferrous Metal Casting," and "Public Catering Technology" align with the community's development priorities. Among the other two programs, "Software Engineering for Computing and Automated Systems" lacks local employers, while "Banking" faces a situation where employers hire only specialists with higher education degrees.

Admissions are not conducted for the remaining six programs: "Accounting," "Open-Pit Mining," "Veterinary Medicine," "Technical Support for Agricultural Work," "Mechanical Metal Processing on Machines and Lines," and "Welding Technology." Although most of these programs align with the community's priorities, they fail to attract interest from applicants.

The college has 29 faculty staff members, but currently, only one is an employer-based lecturer. A study of the graduate database from the 2021-2022 academic year to the 2023-2024 academic year indicates that out of 164 graduates, approximately 27% continue their education in higher education institutions, 32% are employed (of whom 21% work in their field of study, while 79% work outside their field), and unemployment among graduates stands at approximately 38%.

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

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, carried out the expertise of the Alaverdi State College institutional capacities. 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 group considered that Alaverdi State College is undergoing institutional accreditation for the first time and is forming a quality assurance culture. Additionally, the college plays a vital role in training mid-level professionals in metallurgy and the service sector for the northern region, where there is a high demand for such specialists in the labor market.

The mission of Alaverdi State College is to "become a college that prepares competitive specialists in the field of vocational education, based on the unified principles of scientific, educational, economic, cultural, and social processes, as well as patriotic and humanistic values."

The college implements five academic programs corresponding to the 5th level of the NQF. Some of the implemented programs, such as "Service Organization" and "Public Catering Technology," are of great importance for the region's socio-economic development, as they meet the demands of the local labor market and contribute to the community's sustainable development. However, there are certain issues with some APs related to internship organization and graduate employment. Specifically, the programs "Computer Engineering and Automated Systems Software" and "Banking" face challenges due to the lack of relevant employers in the region or the unwillingness to hire mid-level specialists. This situation requires the college's leadership to make clear decisions to find alternative solutions for establishing cooperation with employers or, if that is not feasible, to discontinue these programs.

The college also needs to improve student assignments by incorporating tasks that reflect real workplace environments, such as case studies, projects, and other practical assignments. The teaching staff's role in this process will be crucial in engaging in dialogue with employers. There are also positive experiences in the state final certification process, where joint task development with employers has been implemented. The expert panel considers this a successful practice.

Overall, the faculty meets the requirements for implementing VET programs. However, the college faces stability issues when the implementation of an entire program depends on a single lecturer, which may hinder the continuity of the VET program

implementation. From a resource perspective, the expert panel notes that, in general, they meet the minimum requirements for AP implementation, but continuous improvement is needed, including infrastructure and modern technology.

Thus, Alaverdi State College mainly has a faculty with the appropriate qualifications for implementing academic programs and the necessary material and technical resources to ensure the credible awarding of qualifications.

The goals and actions of the college's development program often lack logical connections and result-oriented planning. Strategic planning requires more profound analysis. However, the college's data collection and analysis processes are not systematically conducted. The institution needs to implement quality assurance mechanisms to obtain objective and analyzed data and strengthen the position of the quality assurance department, which is responsible for ensuring a systematic approach to quality assurance processes.

The college's budget is limited, and although the administration attempts to implement improvements, particularly in terms of resources, through certain cost-saving measures, the pace of development remains slow. The lack of clear mechanisms for extrabudgetary funding constrains the college's ability to attract financial resources. The institution must engage in grant programs and strengthen ties with local and international partners to ensure financial stability and continuous development.

In summary, the management processes are not yet result-oriented and are not based on efficiency indicators. There are no stable mechanisms or systems for data collection.

Research activity at Alaverdi State College is not yet considered a strategic priority, and the faculty lacks a clear understanding of involving students in research projects. The college needs to define research priorities clearly, establish unified regulations, and foster collaboration with employers to clarify research directions and resources.

Regarding the mechanisms the college uses to provide information to the public and its public accountability, the expert panel highlights the importance of creating an official website, publishing strategic documents, and disseminating information about the qualifications awarded, contributing to greater transparency. To establish partnerships, equal attention should be given to all APs to ensure their balanced development.

Alaverdi State College actively cooperates with local employers, facilitating students' internships. However, its collaboration with international partners remains limited. The college should focus on increasing the number of lecturers proficient in foreign languages and developing partnerships with other local educational institutions to promote the exchange of best practices.

Strengths of the Institution:

- The strategic importance of the college for the city of Alaverdi and neighbouring communities by training mid-level professional personnel.
- Employers' participation in creating the final certification questionnaires for the "Organization of Services" VET program.
- Mechanisms for recruiting applicants and the increase in the number of students.
- The presence of a qualified faculty.
- Ongoing improvement of the resource base.
- Cooperation with employers in organizing internships and open lessons.

Weaknesses of the Institution:

- The absence of measurable qualitative and quantitative indicators for achieving objectives in the strategic plan.
- The lack of analyzed data for decision-making.
- The reports' descriptive nature and lack of connection to strategic objectives.
- The absence of mechanisms for generating alternative sources of income.
- The lack of experience in participating in grant programs.
- The unregulated processes of improving academic programs.
- The absence of employer participation in the "Computing Technology and Automated Systems Software" VET program.
- The teaching of 16-19 modules by a single lecturer.
- The vacancy of the quality assurance responsible position hinders the implementation and effective operation of QA mechanisms.
- The lack of research activities among both students and faculty.
- The absence of an official website.

Recommendations:**Database management**

- Clarify strategic objectives based on a systematic study and analysis of the needs of internal and external stakeholders, define the paths to achieve them, including key quantitative and qualitative assessment indicators, set a more detailed timeline, and calculate financial resources.
- Identify external funding sources, including grants, donations, and short-term programs, to help bridge budget constraints and ensure the development of strategically essential directions.

- Implement monitoring mechanisms to evaluate the implementation of the Development Program and align the institution's accountability formats with the program's objectives by assessing its effectiveness.
- Introduce systematic processes for improving academic programs, ensuring the continuous enhancement of APs with the involvement of employers.
- Assess and revise the internal legal documentation framework, aligning it with the college's specific characteristics and needs.
- Staff strategically essential positions for the institution (such as practice and quality assurance responsables), ensuring data-driven decision-making and continuous development.
- Set priorities for the implementation of quality by developing a corresponding QA policy, procedures, and job descriptions to ensure their structured execution.
- Develop mechanisms to engage internal and external stakeholders in quality assurance activities.
- Review data collection questionnaires, making them more targeted and data-extracting.
- Develop and implement diverse data collection mechanisms to ensure objective and comprehensive data extraction.

Credible award of qualifications

- Conduct continuous monitoring and revision of curricula by studying labor market needs and analyzing the experience of local and foreign VET institutions.
- Extend the college's best practices to all APs, including the joint development of assignments with employers, ensuring students' readiness to meet labor market demands.
- Collaborate with employers to diversify and expand the range of assignments that develop student's analytical skills and professional thinking.
- Implement unified approaches and standards for conducting and evaluating research projects to ensure their effectiveness and consistency.
- Provide professional training programs for faculty members, considering opportunities for collaboration with employers.
- Strengthen efforts to engage practical lecturers, fostering the development of students' hands-on skills.
- Develop mechanisms to encourage faculty members to conduct research, ensure their exposure to international best practices, and develop their professional competencies.
- Acquire resources based on identified needs, focusing on ensuring the resource adequacy of curricula.

Long-term development

- Study and analyze the reasons for the low employment rates of graduates and take steps to address them.
- Explore the possibilities of creating an official website for the college.
- Conduct market research before implementing short-term academic programs and consider the possibility of employer involvement in the program implementation process.
- Introduce quantitative and qualitative analyses and problem-solving approaches in reports and internal evaluations, linking them to the objectives of the SP.
- Based on the study of the best local and international practices, define research priorities and topics, ensuring their applicability in the college's educational and community environment.
- Establish unified requirements for presenting and evaluating research work, organizing training and experience-sharing programs for the faculty if necessary.
- Strengthen ties with VET institutions, compare VET programs and other processes, and exchange best practices.
- Improve the level of foreign language proficiency among internal stakeholders.

Hermine Grigoryan, Chair of Expert Panel

27.12.2024

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The following expert panel conducted an external evaluation of the institutional capacities of Alaverdi State College.

1. **Hermine Grigoryan**-Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences at Vanadzor H. Tumanyan State University, Associate Professor of the "Mathematics and Informatics" Department, Candidate of Physical and Mathematical Sciences, head of the expert panel.
2. **Amalya Grigoryan** -Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor, Independent Expert, member of the expert panel.
3. **Amalya Navasardyan**- Lecturer at Sevan Multi-Functional State College, Responsible for the Educational Program of "Service Organization in Hotels and Tourism Complexes."
4. **Artak Khachatryan**- European University in Armenia, Student-Expert

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

Anahit Terteryan, ANQA's Institutional and Program Accreditation Department Specialist, coordinated the expert panel's work.

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

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

The College applied for state institutional accreditation by submitting to ANQA (28.02.2024), filling out the application form, and presenting 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 deciding to accept the application, ANQA and the College signed an agreement. 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 college, ANQA conducted four-day online workshops in February. 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. During the implementation of the self-evaluation, the ANQA organized discussions to clarify the issues.

The self-evaluation of the college's institutional capacity was presented on 29.05.2024. Representatives of the institution's administrative and educational staff, lecturers, and students were involved in the self-evaluation process.

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 College and was confirmed by the order of the ANQA Director. Within the scheduled time, the expert panel summarized the preliminary evaluation results, and the Chair of the expert panel and the process coordinator set the site visit schedule.

Preparatory visit

Before the site visit, a preparatory visit to the college was carried out on 24.09.2024. 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 college and discussed, and mutually agreed decisions were 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 occurred from September 30 to October 2. It started and ended with meetings with the college director. All the meeting participants were randomly selected from a pre-provided list. All scheduled meetings were held. During the visit, the expert panel studied documents.

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

The expert panel reached its conclusion on the criteria after discussing and analyzing all members' work, always applying the principle of consensus.

Expert panel report

The expert panel members and the ANQA coordinator prepared a preliminary version of the expert report. After the expert panel members approved it, the preliminary report was provided to the college on 17.12.2025.

The college did not submit observations regarding the preliminary report. The expert panel prepared the report's final version on 27.12.2024.

Anahit Terteryan

Coordinator of the Expert Panel / 27.12.2024

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERION	CONCLUSION
<i>I. Mission and Purposes</i>	Satisfactory

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