

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



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
"ARMAVIR REGIONAL STATE COLLEGE" (SNCO)**

Yerevan – 2024

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of the Armavir Regional State College (hereinafter referred to as 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

The activities and history of the TLI

The Armavir Regional State College was founded in 1928 as the Hoktemberyan Cotton Technical School. In 1933, its successor became the Hoktemberyan "Lukashin" State Agricultural Sovkhoz-Technical School, with the "Lukashin" State Sovkhoz serving as its practical training base. The region has always held significant agricultural importance, specializing in crop production. As a result, the technical school played a crucial role in training various specialists in the agricultural sector, including agronomists, agriculturalists, accountants, economists, and winemakers.

Reforms in the education sector and various fields of the national economy led to the transformation of the Hoktemberyan "Lukashin" State Agricultural Sovkhoz-Technical School into the Armavir Agricultural College. The specialists educated and qualified at the college have met and continue to meet the demands of the labor market both in the region and beyond. In response to contemporary requirements, the next successor of the college became the "Armavir Regional State College." Although the name changed, the primary focus remained on training agricultural specialists, while new professions in high demand in the labor market were also introduced. The name did not change the college's focus, and many other specialties in demand in the labor market were added to training specialists in the agricultural sector.

Today, Armavir Regional State College is the successor of the Armavir State Medical College and the Armavir State Industrial-Pedagogical College. The college offers training in about 25 different specialties. The college has regularly organized training programs for regional agricultural specialists to develop modern agrarian directions. The Armavir Regional State College is undergoing institutional accreditation for the first time.

Development Directions and Educational Programs of the College.

Armavir Regional State College is an educational institution operating in the Armavir region of Armenia. It offers various academic programs to develop professional skills and knowledge. The college aims to provide students with vocational and technical education, equipping them with the necessary skills for employment in local and international markets.

The college primarily educates secondary vocational education students, offering various specializations, including economics, information technology, agriculture, and other fields.

Armavir College plays a significant role in the region's economic and social development by aligning its academic programs with the strategic priorities of the regional development plan.

Priority Directions for the Development of the Armavir Region

The strategic development program of the Armavir region highlights several key priorities, including:

- **Agricultural Development** – The region has a rich agricultural heritage, and agriculture remains the primary economic activity. The focus is on enhancing agricultural production, processing, and market expansion.
- **Industrial Sector Development** – To diversify the economy, the region promotes the growth of agricultural processing, light, and food industries.
- **Tourism Development** – With its numerous cultural and historical landmarks, the region has significant potential for tourism expansion.
- **Technological and IT Services Development** – Promoting digital skills and expanding IT professions is strategically important, mainly to increase employment opportunities for young people.

Demanded professions in the region

Based on the region's strategic directions, the most in-demand professions in Armavir include:

1. Agronomy, Agriculture, and Agricultural Processing
2. Food Technologies and Production
3. Tourism Management
4. Information Technology
5. Industrial and Technical Specialization

Educational Programs at Armavir Regional State College

Armavir Regional State College offers programs to train qualified specialists in the abovementioned areas. These programs include:

- **Agricultural Academic Programs** – Agronomy, agricultural machinery management, food preservation, and processing.
- **Food Technologies** – Organization of food production, management of production processes.
- **Tourism and Hospitality** – Tourism management, hospitality services.
- **IT and Technologies** – Programming, computer network management, and IT services.

These programs aim to train specialists who contribute to the region's economic growth, which is important for the development of the region and the entire republic.

The college currently has 1,400 students enrolled in full-time and part-time programs.

In the 2023-2024 academic year, the college had 148 graduates, of whom:

- 11 students (7.4%) continued their education at higher education institutions.
- 27 graduates (18.24%) are employed in their field of study.
- 9 graduates (6.08%) work outside their field of study.

The faculty comprises 117 lecturers, including 21 part-time lecturers and 5 graduates who have returned as lecturers.

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 Armavir Regional 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 panel considered that the college is a secondary vocational educational institution with a defined mission. The panel also considered that TLI, as a secondary vocational educational institution, holds significant importance for the region and the Republic of Armenia. It was noted that the institution has undergone a restructuring process for about a year and is currently in a transitional phase, as well as that the college is undergoing institutional accreditation for the first time.

The expert panel highlights that the college has a unique mission for the region as an institution implementing multi-sectoral vocational academic programs, and this understanding is present within the college. The college has attempted to develop a strategic plan. However, the formulated objectives and key issues have not been based on thorough analyses and sufficient stakeholder involvement, nor have they been transformed into a clear action plan.

The college has certain mechanisms for data collection, but the process is not yet regulated and does not serve as a basis for data-driven decision-making. The expert panel believes such mechanisms should be developed in alignment with the college’s research objectives. It also finds that no identified issues or comprehensive analyses could serve as a foundation for managerial decisions. Therefore, the expert panel considers that the college still faces challenges establishing management and quality assurance systems.

The college offers multidisciplinary educational programs that are in line with NQF requirements. However, these programs are primarily unresponsive to necessary changes, indicating that the college has significant work to do. The assignments given to students and the assessments are mainly focused on theoretical knowledge acquisition and evaluation. The institution has involved some lecturers from the practical field and has a diverse professional staff, which is positive. However, challenges remain in terms of lecturers specializing in narrow professional fields.

TLI also faces issues with its resource base in creating an adequate educational environment and providing the necessary laboratory conditions and technical tools for modern teaching methods that foster professional knowledge and skills. Some laboratories, didactic materials, and technical tools are available at the college. Additionally, the college collaborates with employers and, to some extent, utilizes their resource base, with some successful examples. However, overall, these resources are not used to their full potential. At the same time, there is a need to modernize the resource base and expand and enhance cooperation with employers.

Although the college offers academic programs aligned with NQF standards, has some resources, and employs qualified lecturers, the expert panel finds that there are issues regarding the credible awarding of qualifications.

The college has implemented several mechanisms for attracting applicants, contributing to increased student enrollment. Additionally, the college has some mechanisms for identifying students' educational needs and is developing new ones. However, these needs have not yet been thoroughly studied, and no comprehensive analyses or identified issues serve as a basis for reforms. The college provides students with some career orientation and organizes various events. It also collects specific data on graduates, mainly for reporting purposes. These data are not subjected to further study and analysis within the institution, nor does the college systematically track graduates' professional progress.

The college does not have clearly defined goals and strategies for research, and it does not have active incentive mechanisms. Faculty members generally do not engage in research activities (including studying local and international best practices), except for isolated cases driven by personal initiative. Apart from a few positive examples, assignments aimed at developing students' analytical and research skills are also largely absent.

While some accountability processes exist within the college, they require clearer regulation, structured frameworks, and analytical components. The college is working on developing an official website and maintains a presence on social media, but significant efforts are still needed to ensure transparency.

In terms of external relations, the college mainly focuses on maintaining existing partnerships rather than expanding them, with no substantial progress in this area. The expert panel believes that current collaborations are insufficient to meet the college's educational and institutional needs. However, it is noteworthy that the college has successfully engaged industry professionals as lecturers. Although internationalization was highlighted as a strategic goal, expert assessments revealed that the college has not yet defined specific objectives and key issues. There are also no incentive mechanisms to promote internationalization, and the institution has not yet laid the groundwork for establishing international partnerships.

Based on the above, the expert panel concludes that TLI is making efforts towards development by focusing on student recruitment, identifying student needs to some extent, and involving industry professionals in teaching. However, the existing challenges remain significant barriers to the college's progress and development.

Strengths of the Institution:

1. The presence of multi-sectoral professions.
2. The availability of multidisciplinary staff.
3. Good practice of jointly utilizing partner resources in medical professions.
4. Unique role and significance in the region.

5. Mechanisms for student recruitment and a steady increase in the number of students.

Weaknesses of the Institution:

1. Imperfections in teaching, learning, and assessment methods.
2. Lack of a sufficiently systematic approach to academic programs' monitoring and improvement mechanisms.
3. Shortage of instructors in several specialized fields.
4. Deficiencies in the mechanisms for the professional development and advancement of the faculty.
5. Issues with efficiently utilizing the existing material and technical resources.
6. Severe shortcomings in the effective management and quality assurance system.
7. Deficiencies in the strategic management process.
8. Inadequate mechanisms for identifying student needs.
9. Low employment rate of graduates in their respective fields.
10. Low engagement of faculty and students in research and analytical activities.
11. Limited collaboration with employers based on the needs of academic programs.
12. Lack of policy and initiative in the direction of international programs.

Recommendations:

Database management

1. Clarify the college's mission and strategic objectives, ensuring the development of the newly established college based on its regional role while engaging internal and external stakeholders.
2. Develop and implement a clear action plan for achieving strategic goals (including KPIs, budget allocation, and responsibility distribution) while ensuring continuous monitoring for short-term and mid-term outcomes.
3. Establish an effective management and quality assurance system, improving existing processes by optimizing available human resources and adhering to all activities' fundamental quality management principles (PDCA cycle).
4. Take steps to ensure financial diversification by leveraging existing opportunities.
5. Research factors influencing the college's activities and assess the effectiveness of ongoing processes to support data-driven and efficient management.
6. Develop and implement appropriate mechanisms and tools for conducting research and improving data collection processes.

Credible award of qualifications

7. Implement effective monitoring mechanisms for academic programs, ensuring content improvement based on labor market demands and comparative analysis.
8. Enhance teaching and learning methods by incorporating innovative and interactive approaches aimed at developing the competencies and skills outlined in the educational programs.

9. Revise assessment mechanisms and methods to ensure a gradual evaluation of learning outcomes.
10. Ensure the recruitment of faculty members for specialized fields.
11. Establish faculty development and incentive mechanisms based on assessing needs and challenges.
12. Provide the necessary material, technical, and infrastructural resources in accordance with academic program requirements, ensuring their effective utilization.

Long-term development

13. Diversify the mechanisms for identifying student needs to enhance the effectiveness of the process.
14. Clarify the role of the Student Council and ensure active participation to increase student engagement.
15. Improve career support services to enhance graduate employment rates by field of study and strengthen graduate-employer connections.
16. Ensure faculty involvement in research activities by implementing incentive mechanisms.
17. Integrate research and analytical components into educational programs through various mechanisms (essays, coursework, independent projects, and other relevant assignments).
18. Clarify the hierarchy of accountability and enhance reporting mechanisms by incorporating analytical components.
19. Develop and implement effective mechanisms to improve public relations and ensure the transparency of the college's operations.
20. Expand collaboration with employers in alignment with academic program directions and further develop cooperation beyond internship arrangements.
21. Study and adapt international and local best practices.
22. Work towards participation in international programs, emphasizing the need for foreign language proficiency.

Armenuhi Sargsyan, Chair of Expert Panel

26.12.2024

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

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

1. **Armenuhi Sargsyan**- PhD in Physical and Mathematical Sciences, Associate Professor, head of the expert panel.
2. **Karine Mnatsakanyan**- Lecturer at the Department of "General Medical Modules, Microbiology, Hygiene and Ecology, Infectious, Dermatological, and Sexually Transmitted Diseases" at Yerevan Basic Medical College, Methodologist, member of the expert panel.
3. **Aida Dabaghyan**- Quality Manager at the French-Armenian Vocational Training Center, Assistant to the Director for Human Resources.
4. **Inna Melkonyan**- Student-Expert, Student at the Russian-Armenian University.

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, filling out the application form, and presenting copies of the license and respective appendices(05.02.2024).

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 revised self-evaluation of the college's institutional capacity was presented on 02.07.2024. 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 26.09.2024. A meeting was organized with the institution's management team and the expert panel, during which class observations were conducted, resources were reviewed across the college's three buildings, and a visit was made to the internship base (Armavir Medical Center). 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 October 1-3. During the week preceding the site visit, the members of the expert panel and the coordinator visited the college, observed the infrastructure and resources of the college, conducted class observations, and observed exams. Then, the experts and the coordinator had a closed meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the college according to the standards, clarify the questions to be asked of the target groups, and discuss the procedures for the meetings and the next steps.

The site visit 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 28.11.2024. The college submitted its feedback on the preliminary report version to ANQA on December 12, 2024. ANQA then forwarded the college's observations to the expert panel. Subsequently, ANQA organized a meeting between the college and the expert panel to discuss the institution's observations on the preliminary expert report. The meeting took place at ANQA on December 25.

Considering these observations, the expert panel prepared the final version of the expert report, which the group approved on December 26, 2024.

Lilit Ghazaryan

Coordinator of the Expert Panel / 26.12.2024

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>	Unsatisfactory
<i>VIII. Societal Responsibility</i>	Satisfactory
<i>IX. External Relations and Internationalization</i>	Unsatisfactory
<i>X. Internal Quality Assurance System</i>	Unsatisfactory