

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



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
"AVIATION TRAINING CENTER" (CJSC)**

Yerevan – 2025

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of the Aviation Training Center (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

Civil aviation in Armenia was established in 1933. In 1961, a training squadron was created, which, after several renamings, received its current name, "Aviation Training Center," in 1993. In 2001, it acquired its current organizational and legal status as a CJSC (Closed Joint-Stock Company).

Development Directions and Educational Programs of the College

The Aviation Training Center is the only institution in the Republic of Armenia that offers academic programs in core civil aviation specialities, preparing specialists with secondary vocational education. It also provides qualification enhancement and training for active aviation professionals.

The center offers three VET programs:

- **Air Transport Traffic Management**
- **Organization and Management of Transportation in Air Transport (by type of transport)**
- **Technical Operation of Aircraft and Aero Engines**

The study duration for aviation technicians is three years, while for air traffic control officers and air transport management specialists, it is 2.5 years.

The centre currently enrolls 142 students. The faculty comprises 24 lecturers, of whom 21 hold higher education degrees, including one with a PhD. Three lecturers have secondary vocational education, and five are industry professionals.

TLI does not have a structured database or collected data on graduates' professional career paths. However, potential employers for graduates include:

- "Armenia International Airports" CJSC (operator of Zvartnots and Shirak airports)
- "Armenian Air Navigation Service" CJSC
- "Diligence Airlines" LLC
- "Armenian Airlines" CJSC
- "Cross Technics" Airline
- "Azimuth" Airline
- "Cargo" Company

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 Aviation Training Center 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 Center is a secondary vocational educational institution established to generate profit through economic activities, including training, retraining, and qualification enhancement services for specialists in secondary vocational education. According to its charter, the Center ensures the provision of educational services and the training of qualified specialists in line with national and international requirements.

The Center develops three-year business plans for long-term planning based on discussions with partner employers and the Civil Aviation Committee, periodically reviewing them in response to industry demands. The expert panel believes that developing a strategic plan will enable the Center to define its long-term strategic priorities, objectives, and tasks, along with a clear implementation timeline. If the format of the director’s reports is aligned with strategic development directions and includes analytical insights into the educational process, achievements, and shortcomings, it will provide a comprehensive view of the Center’s development and support more well-founded management decisions. Engaging the faculty and students in governance bodies and establishing corresponding regulations will ensure their participation in decision-making processes, enhancing the efficiency of educational processes and increasing stakeholder involvement. A systematic study of external factors affecting the Center’s operations, incorporating developed tools for identifying internal and external risks, will lead to better planning, risk forecasting, and faster adaptation to changing environments.

The Center has successfully established effective cooperation with airlines, enabling the introduction of new academic programs and short-term courses. This contributes to the continuous updates of modern specialists' training, professional skills improvement, and qualification enhancement programs.

The Center’s management decisions are directed toward improving academic programs and ensuring credible qualifications. However, the lack of a stable data collection and evaluation mechanism could hinder the foundation for making well-grounded administrative decisions.

To form a quality culture and regulate processes, in 2024, the Center developed the relevant documentation base, including the Quality Manual, which creates the necessary

foundations for forming a quality system. However, the efforts toward the objectives set by the quality policy have not yet yielded tangible results.

The center's quality assurance system is still in its early stages. Processes are in the planning and partial implementation phases. The Center's leadership values the role and development of quality assurance; however, the quality manager's planned activities are primarily focused on inspections, re-inspections, and monitoring of the educational process. As a result, less attention is given to identifying the needs of all stakeholders and collecting qualitative data, which should serve as a foundation for improvement processes.

The Center's academic programs align with its mission and labor market demands. The development of new educational programs based on labor market research ensures the competitiveness of graduates. The Center follows the standards of the ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization) and EASA (European Union Aviation Safety Agency), contributing to academic programs' compliance with international requirements.

Modular programs define the format for assessing learning outcomes, but there are no established criteria for practical training, making it difficult to evaluate students' practical preparedness comprehensively. The state final certification does not fully cover the assessment of professional program outcomes, but there are plans to transition to comprehensive exams that include practical skills evaluation.

Students complete essays and term papers, but they are mainly theoretical and do not contain research elements. Developing a research component in the learning process will contribute to forming students' analytical skills and deepening their field knowledge.

Considering its unique and specialized nature, the Center recruits specialists with practical experience and industry employers to expand its faculty. By involving employers, the Center ensures the inclusion of highly qualified professionals familiar with the industry, contributing to students' achievement of educational outcomes and professional preparedness. The Center's location within the territory of "Zvartnots" International Airport creates unique opportunities for collaboration with industry partner organizations. This strategic position allows students to participate in study visits, internships, and practical training sessions, utilizing real workplace resources. The expert panel believes that integrating modern computer programs and virtual simulation tools for practical assignments would help overcome resource shortages and provide students with more up-to-date and effective methods for developing valuable skills. Implementing these tools will also enhance students' technological competencies and foster an innovative approach to the learning process. The expert panel believes that the Center should conduct periodic and systematic surveys among students to identify educational needs and expand these surveys to include other stakeholders.

This approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the learning process, facilitating targeted and effective improvements.

The Center must also establish mechanisms for collecting and analyzing data on graduates' professional paths. This would enable the evaluation of academic program effectiveness, strengthen collaboration with employers, and support graduates' career development by improving their employment opportunities.

Research activities are not considered a strategic priority for the Center. There is a disconnect between learning and research activities, and no significant steps have been taken in this direction. The Center has not yet established methodological guidelines for conducting analytical research or set regulations for presenting individual research projects. The expert panel believes that if the Center develops an accountability system covering all key areas of activity, it will provide a more transparent and comprehensive picture of its operations to the public. As a result, trust in the Center will increase, enhancing the engagement of both internal and external stakeholders.

The Center's efforts and steps towards transferring additional knowledge (values) to society are noticeable. This is also emphasized by the fact that the Center has committed to organizing sectoral training and qualification improvement courses as a unique educational institution in the field.

The Center has taken specific steps toward external relations and internationalization, leading to close collaborations with industry employers. Regulating these processes and clarifying the expected outcomes could enhance the effectiveness of partnerships and contribute to the continuous improvement of academic programs. Regarding internationalization, the Center is improving academic programs based on ICAO and EASA requirements. In accordance with ICAO, EASA, and IATA (International Air Transport Association) standards, the Center's relevant specialists develop and implement training and professional development programs for aviation specialists.

Strengths of the Institution:

- Development of business plans as a result of discussions with cooperating employers and the Civil Aviation Committee and their periodic review in line with changes in sectoral requirements,
- The functioning system of internal accountability,
- The availability and regular revision of VET programs and qualification enhancement courses in accordance with labor market and industry needs.
- Expansion of student recruitment mechanisms, leading to an increase in admissions and the formation of a stable student body.

- Involvement of industry professionals as instructors to enhance the development of practical skills.
- Development of practical and hands-on skills at employer organizations to bridge resource gaps.
- Implementation of knowledge and value transfer initiatives for society and industry organizations.

Weaknesses of the Institution:

- Lack of a long-term strategic plan outlining the Center's strategic directions, objectives, and tasks, along with a timeline for implementation and a mechanism for analytical reporting.
- Absence of collegial governance bodies that involve key stakeholders in decision-making.
- Lack of a stable mechanism for data collection and needs assessment across all areas of the Center's activities.
- Deficiencies in data collection and analysis mechanisms related to academic programs and a lack of comparative analysis with similar international programs.
- Weak connection between the current assessment system and outcomes, particularly in evaluating practical and hands-on skills.
- Challenges in replacing experienced industry professionals cause issues related to faculty stability and the absence of mechanisms for workforce rejuvenation.
- Lack of mechanisms to conduct and promote research activities.
- Inefficiencies in career support initiatives for students and lack of a system for tracking graduates' career paths.

Recommendations:

Database management

- Develop a long-term strategy by defining the center's strategic development directions, objectives, tasks, implementation plan, and timeline. This plan should include necessary actions, deadlines, responsible parties, and key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Establish a collegial governing body by enhancing stakeholder involvement in governance processes and form a collegial management body that includes employers, faculty members, and students.
- Implement a stable data collection mechanism by creating and integrating a sustainable data collection system to support decision-making processes, ensuring a comprehensive database that covers all aspects of the Center's operations.

- Align short-term plans with long-term development goals by interconnecting departmental short-term plans with the overall long-term strategy and introducing an analytical reporting system.
- Review quality assurance functions by Reassessing quality assurance functions, focusing on identifying needs and implementing improvement-oriented measures.
- Introduce stakeholder needs assessment mechanisms by conducting both qualitative and quantitative research involving all stakeholders and ensure accessibility of the findings to facilitate informed decision-making and continuous development.

Credible award of qualifications

- Define responsibilities for quality assurance representatives by assigning roles to responsible individuals who will collect and analyze data on academic programs to ensure continuous improvement.
- Standardize international benchmarking mechanisms by establishing a system for aligning with international standards, comparing similar academic programs, and localizing best practices.
- Develop a professional assignment package for students by creating a structured package that allows tracking students' academic progress and professional development.
- Clarify teaching and learning method selection by defining a clear framework for selecting teaching and learning methods, emphasizing practical assignments in the educational process.
- Set clear evaluation criteria by establishing well-defined assessment standards for all types of evaluations applied at the center, ensuring constructive feedback.
- Promote faculty renewal and generational transition by rejuvenating the faculty and ensuring a smooth generational transition.
- Define research implementation frameworks by establishing clear guidelines for conducting research within professional fields and introduce mechanisms to encourage faculty and student research activities.
- Continuously improve the learning environment by implementing ongoing improvements to the educational environment, including virtual laboratories and software to bridge resource gaps and enhance students' skills.

Long-term development

- Enhance the student council's activities by developing an action plan that includes efforts to protect students' rights and identify their needs.
- Strengthen career development initiatives, collect data on graduates' career paths, and regularly update the database to improve student career support.

- Engage students in research assignments by utilizing internal resources and integrating research-based tasks within internships to enhance student participation in research activities.
- Establish a structured reporting system on the center's operations and educational programs to implement a comprehensive reporting mechanism and ensure external accountability and alignment with strategic development plans.
- Enhance the center's website by ensuring the website provides complete and up-to-date information on the center's activities and educational programs.
- Develop external relations and international cooperation plans by establishing measurable indicators for assessing collaboration processes and outcomes.
- Establish partnerships with international educational institutions by collaborating with similar institutions globally to conduct comparative analyses of educational programs and adopt best international practices.

Gagik Qtryan, Chair of Expert Panel

20.02.2025

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The following expert panel conducted an external evaluation of the institutional capacities of the Aviation Training Center.

1. **Gagik Qtryan** – Candidate of Physical and Mathematical Sciences, Lecturer at the European University of Armenia, Head of the Quality Assurance Department at the Armenian State Institute of Physical Culture and Sports, head of the expert panel.
2. **Oleg Gevorgyan** – Candidate of Technical Sciences, Associate Professor, Deputy Director for Scientific, Scientific-Technological Cooperation, and External Relations at the Institute of Information and Communication Technologies and Electronics of the National Polytechnic University of Armenia, member of the expert panel.
3. **Gayane Hambardzumyan** – Deputy Director for Academic Affairs at Vagharsh Hamazaspyan State College in Etchmiadzin, member of the expert panel.
4. **Zaruhi Hakobyan** – Third-year student majoring in "Information Security" at the National Polytechnic University of Armenia, Student Member of the Expert panel.

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

Meri Barseghyan, an ANQA Policy Development and Implementation Division 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, 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 26.09.2024. 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 19.11.2024. 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 December 4-6. 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 10.02.2025.

The Center approved the preliminary version of the expert report on February 18, 2025.

Meri Barsegyan

Coordinator of the Expert Panel / 20. 02.2025

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