

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



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
"KOTAYK REGIONAL STATE COLLEGE" SNOC**

Yerevan – 2025

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of the Kotayk 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

Development Directions and Educational Programs of the College

The Kotayk Regional State College (KRSC) was established in 1966 as the Hrazdan Industrial-Technological Technical School. In 2000, it was renamed Hrazdan State College, and in 2011, it adopted its current name. The college is in Hrazdan, Kotayk Province, at 96 Kentron District.

The institution is currently undergoing its second institutional accreditation. Following the previous accreditation process, it was granted a two-year conditional accreditation.

Development Directions and Educational Programs of the College

The Kotayk Regional State College is a multifunctional regional educational institution offering primary (vocational) and secondary professional education. Its primary role in the region is to train highly qualified specialists who meet the demands of the local labor market.

Academic Programs

The main academic programs include the following areas:

- Transport Management
- Accounting
- Software Development
- Design
- Tourism Services (with an emphasis on foreign language proficiency)
- Technical Operation of Gas Equipment
- Medical Professions (Dental Technology, Nursing, Pharmacy)

The college provides licensed places on a paid and free basis, with about 50-60% of students studying for free.

Total number of students: about 800,

- Faculty: about 70, including:
- Key employees: 40,
- Coordinators and employers: 30

The college cooperates with local employers, ensuring internships and further employment of students. Graduate employment rates exceed 75%, depending on the specialty.

Additional information that affects the activities of the educational institution.

In 2020, the college merged with Hrazdan State Medical College, expanding its academic programs in medical specialties. The institution's activities and academic programs are aligned

with the regional development strategy, which prioritizes the growth of tourism, agriculture, and technological industries.

Reference Sources

- Self-evaluation Report
- Strategic Development Plan
- Regional Development Strategy

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 Kotayk 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 Kotayk Regional State College is undergoing institutional accreditation for the second time. In its assessment, the expert panel was guided by the college's mission: "to ensure the training of qualified specialists in line with the changing demands of the economy and labor market, to develop the potential for regional and international cooperation, to provide flexibility in educational services in response to labor market changes, to create favorable conditions for effective and quality education anytime and anywhere, and to promote the implementation of the dual education model."

The college's 2020-2025 strategic plan includes developing key areas such as quality education, public engagement, and financial stability. It also defines the needs of internal and external stakeholders, which serve as benchmarks for the strategic plan's goals. The expert panel's analysis revealed that the college has not implemented specific planned actions, such as steps towards internationalization and establishing an electronic library. However, most of the strategic plan's goals have been achieved, leading to improvements across all areas. The structure of the strategic plan allows for consistent planning, risk mitigation, phased implementation of objectives, and the identification of stakeholder needs, which in turn enables the development of more targeted strategic goals.

The college operates under a system of collegial and unilateral governance. According to the expert panel's evaluation, this governance structure has helped clarify the roles and regulations of specific departments. Implementing annual reports from the college's departments ensures the monitoring of commitments. However, there is a need to enhance the involvement of the governing board, which, in the future, would strengthen the board's role in defining strategic directions, identifying key issues, and outlining steps to address them.

The college's internal quality assurance system was introduced in 2015, and a quality assurance center has been operational since 2018. The center monitors ongoing processes through the development of reports, evaluation of functions, and planning. Improvements in educational methods and management decisions have positively impacted the institution's progress.

The academic programs implemented by the college align with its mission. They are based on state standards, ensuring the reliable awarding of qualifications by verifying the final learning outcomes of modules. These programs incorporate diverse student assignments and assessments within a professional context, involve instructors from the practical sector, and utilize employer resources. These processes contribute to acquiring and testing students' practical abilities, especially when there is an appropriate professional environment. One of the college's successes is the effective implementation of the dual academic program for the "Tourism Services Management with Advanced Foreign Language Proficiency" specialization, which includes employer involvement and practical work opportunities, allowing students to familiarize themselves with the real working environment. However, the program development and improvement benchmarking mechanisms are not established. There is a need for a comparative analysis of academic programs at the international level to facilitate student mobility.

The college has planned to improve the quality of its faculty and support staff by introducing new mechanisms and reforms aimed at development. The selection of faculty members is carried out through competitions. Still, the college has recently been able to recruit new specialists without competition, based on the human resources available in the relevant professional fields. The professional qualifications of the college's lecturers align with the subjects they teach, and their evaluation system includes surveys, classroom observations, and training programs. To ensure the stability of the faculty, the college is planning the professional development of young staff members. The faculty participates in methodological training and events to implement innovative approaches through internal and external initiatives. However, the effectiveness of the training system has not yet been fully realized, and strategic planning is necessary to make training more targeted and expand international cooperation to integrate global experience and create new opportunities for lecturers.

Since the previous accreditation, the college has focused on enhancing students' research skills, leading to the development and implementation of the "KRSC Student Research Work" procedure. Research assignments are incorporated into all courses, allowing students to apply their knowledge to analytical problem-solving. The college's faculty members are engaged in professional research and have authored study materials. However, student assignments primarily involve information collection and reproduction rather than in-depth analysis. In the future, the college should focus on developing students' analytical skills within their professional fields of interest.

The college is making significant efforts to improve the learning environment. In the 2020-2025 strategic plan, the modernization of infrastructure and resources is a top priority. The college is equipped with modern classrooms, laboratories, a sports hall, and practical

training resources that enhance students' hands-on skills. At the same time, the college needs to develop and implement new investment models to increase funding and resources.

The institution ensures a transparent student admission process, continuously assesses students' educational needs, and involves students in the college's governance processes. The Career Center's activities are also highly valued as they increase graduates' competitiveness in the job market.

The college ensures information transparency through social media and its official website; however, reports from different departments are not publicly available, limiting external stakeholders' awareness of institutional processes. To improve public relations, feedback mechanisms through social media interactions and student surveys are needed. The college organizes educational and social events, encouraging student participation in volunteer work, which fosters their professional and social responsibility.

The expert panel recognizes the importance of the college's initiatives for external relations and internationalization but believes that the lack of international cooperation experience and a clear policy hinders this process. A systematic approach, including the involvement of a responsible department or coordinator, would facilitate the effective development of international connections. Additionally, strengthening cooperation with other colleges would improve academic programs and expand professional development opportunities. The lack of English proficiency also poses a challenge, necessitating a clear strategy to address this issue. Moreover, the college's initiative to register on LinkedIn and publish materials in English could enhance its international visibility, though this would require additional resources.

Strengths of the Institution:

1. The presence of effective mechanisms for assessing the needs of internal and external stakeholders,
2. Data-driven decision-making in the governance system,
3. The successful implementation of the dual academic program in the specialty of "Tourism Services Management with Advanced Foreign Language Proficiency,"
4. The presence of processes aimed at the professional development of the faculty,
5. The continuous improvement of the educational environment,
6. The joint use of resources and organization of internships through collaboration with employers,
7. The impact of the quality assurance system on the continuous implementation of improvements in all areas.

Weaknesses of the Institution:

1. The lack of key measurable indicators for assessment,
2. The lack of planning for internationalization processes and the absence of responsible personnel,
3. The lack of comparative analysis of academic programs,
4. The insufficient organization of experience-sharing events for the faculty through international cooperation,
5. The weakness of systematic measures aimed at improving foreign language proficiency,
6. The limited avenues for attracting financial inflows,
7. The lack of systematic mechanisms for stimulating faculty research activities.

Recommendations:

Database management

- Clearly define human, financial, and material-technical resources according to strategic objectives when developing the new strategic plan and introducing the KPI system.
- Analyze the reasons for unimplemented actions and incorporate consistent evaluation and monitoring tools in the new plan.
- Implement mechanisms for diversifying financial sources to ensure the institution's sustainable development.
- Formalize external stakeholders' involvement in quality assurance processes by conducting meetings and surveys with various employers and graduates.
- Continue strengthening the quality assurance culture by ensuring departments and staff engage in the quality system's operations.

Credible award of qualifications

- Conduct a comparative analysis with local and international educational institutions to ensure that academic programs align with international standards and that best practices are applied.
- Combine practical skills assessment into the final certification process for all specialties to guarantee a high level of students' practical preparedness and alignment with labor market demands.
- Develop and implement clear assessment criteria for all specialties to ensure comprehensive and accurate measurement of learning outcomes.
- Strategically plan professional development training to enhance the competencies of all specialists.
- Introduce a "Young Lecturers Development Program," including mentorship by experienced professionals, training in teaching methodologies, and self-assessment mechanisms for continuous growth.

- Expand the scope of international cooperation through global programs, enabling lecturers to apply new teaching methods and explore international best practices.
- Diversify alternative revenue sources in the budget to effectively implement the college's strategic goals and ensure institutional sustainability.
- Explore opportunities for acquiring professional resources through participation in international programs and grants.
- Introduce an electronic library.
- Establish a unified electronic document management system.

Long-term development

- Implement long-term tracking mechanisms for graduates to assess the demand for specialties in the labor market dynamically.
- Review and improve research methodologies to ensure that students collect information and analyze, compare, and propose practical solutions.
- Increase faculty involvement in research activities by encouraging participation in international conferences, publishing research, and engaging students in scientific projects.
- Organize platforms for presenting research findings, allowing students to showcase their studies, test scientific approaches, and receive constructive feedback from experts.
- Diversify research activities by promoting interdisciplinary studies involving both faculty and students.
- Ensure transparency of procedures and processes provided to the public through the institution's website and launch a foreign-language version of the site.
- Systematize knowledge transfer mechanisms to enhance their effectiveness.
- Ensure that all departmental reports include an analytical component, and a SWOT analysis based on data.
- Develop and implement a clear strategy for external relations and internationalization, including cooperation directions, mechanisms for establishing partnerships, an action plan for participation in international programs, and initiatives to improve foreign language proficiency.
- Appoint a responsible person to oversee international collaborations systematically.
- Take steps to enhance internal stakeholders' proficiency in English.
- Explore opportunities to apply for Erasmus+ capacity-building programs, ensuring additional funding sources.
- Strengthen connections with other colleges for experience exchange and alignment of educational programs.

Hermine Grigoryan, Chair of Expert Panel

21.02.2025

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The following expert panel carried out an external evaluation of the institutional capacities of the Kotayk Regional State College.

1. **Hermine Grigoryan**- Candidate of Physical and Mathematical Sciences, Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences at Vanadzor State University named after H. Tumanyan, Associate Professor of the "Mathematics and Informatics" Department, head of the expert panel.
2. **Gohar Mkrtchyan**- Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor, Head of the Education Quality Assurance Center at the Armenian Medical Institute, expert panel member.
3. **Aida Dabaghyan**- Education Quality Assurance Officer at the French Armenian Vocational Training Center and expert panel member.
4. **Areg Khalapyan**- Student at Yerevan Support Medical College, Student Member of the Expert Panel.

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

Varduhi Gyulazyan, Head of ANQA's Institutional and Program Accreditation Department, 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 (01.02.2024), 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 10.06.2024. 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, together with the process coordinator, set the site visit schedule.

Preparatory visit

Before the site visit, a preparatory visit to the college was carried out on 09.12.2024. The ANQA coordinator, the head of the institutional program accreditation department, and the expert panel head 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 16 to 18, 2024. 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 29.01.2025.

The college did not submit observations regarding the preliminary report. The expert panel prepared the report's final version on 21.02.2025.

Varduhi Gyulazyan

Coordinator of the Expert Panel / 21.02.2025

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

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

