

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



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

Yerevan – 2025

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of the Syunik 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 "Syunik Regional State College" SNCO was established in 1995 based on the Kapan Construction and Mining-Metallurgical Technical School. It is in Kapan, the regional center of Syunik Province. In 1997, the Government of Armenia decided to reorganize the college into the Kapan branch of the State Engineering University of Armenia. In 2002, by Government Decision No. 1009-N of June 20, the institution was restructured as the "Kapan State Engineering College" SNCO. In 2011, it was reorganized into the "Syunik Regional State College" SNCO.

The college serves not only the Kapan region within a 40 km radius but also the town of Kajaran and the former administrative districts of Sisian, Goris, and Meghri within the province.

The institution is undergoing institutional accreditation for the first time.

Development Directions and Educational Programs of the College.

According to the "2017-2025 Development Strategy of Syunik Province of the Republic of Armenia," the main priorities for the region's development are the mining industry, transportation development and improvement of road infrastructure, development of information technologies and communication, vehicle maintenance, and the advancement of energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Considering the alignment of the college's academic programs and the region's priorities, it is noted that the college currently offers academic programs in "Open-Pit Mining," "Organization and Management of Transportation," "Communication Networks and Transmission Systems," "Operation and Repair of Transport Vehicles," and "Renewable Energy Power Plants."

To implement these academic programs, the college employs 39 lecturers, and only one is currently an employer-lecturer.

According to the "2017-2025 Development Strategy of Syunik Province of the Republic of Armenia," one of the main challenges in the region's education system is the mismatch between vocational education programs and labor market demands, leading to a shortage of specialists needed in the region's priority sectors.

As the only multifunctional VET institution in Syunik, the "Syunik Regional State College" plays a significant role in the region's socio-economic development by contributing to advancing vocational education. The college serves the Kapan region, the city of Kajaran, and the former administrative regions of Sisian, Goris, and Meghri within the province.

The college currently has 358 students enrolled in basic and secondary academic programs. It employs 39 lecturers, including 4 part-time, 2 hourly-paid, and none from the practical sector.

In the 2022-2023 academic year, out of 81 graduates, 13 continued their education at universities, 7 were drafted into the army, 30 are employed in their field of study, 16 are working outside their specialty, and the remaining 15 are unemployed.

Each year, the college allocates 20 licensed places for admission to the following specialties:

- Accounting (Part-time Learning)
- Electric Power Stations, Networks, and Systems
- Operation of Communication Equipment
- Open-pit mining (Part-time Learning)
- Organization and Management of Transportation (Part-time Learning)
- Hairdressing and Decorative Makeup
- Carpentry, Parquetry, and Glasswork
- Computer Operation

For the following specialties, 25 licensed places are allocated:

- Preschool Education
- Service Organization in Hotels and Tourism Complexes
- Communication Networks and Transmission Systems
- Open-pit mining
- Construction and Operation of Buildings and Structures
- Organization and Management of Transportation

28 licensed places are allocated for the Operation and Repair of Transport Vehicles.

33 licensed places are allocated for installing and operating communication equipment and implementing decorative construction works.

For Accounting, 40 licensed places are allocated.

Most of these places are usually filled, except for the following specialties, which often remain unfilled:

- Preschool Education
- Accounting
- Service Organization in Hotels and Tourism Complexes
- Electric Power Stations, Networks, and Systems

- Communication Networks and Transmission Systems
- Operation of Communication Equipment
- Computer Operation
- Implementation of Decorative Construction Works
- Carpentry, Parquetry, and Glasswork
- Hairdressing and Decorative Makeup

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 Syunik 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 assessment, the expert panel considered that the college is undergoing institutional accreditation for the first time.

Additionally, the expert panel considered that the college is a secondary vocational educational institution with the mission of "Providing attractive, accessible, and inclusive vocational education to prepare competitive professionals in line with labor market demands and ensure employment for a dignified future."

The college's 2019-2024 strategic plan was developed based on the experience gained from the 2014-2018 plan. As a result, the mission was revised, and new objectives were established. However, despite having prior experience in formulating strategic plans, the college has not yet developed a strategic plan timeline or integrated its objectives into the plans of individual departments.

Although an accountability system has been established at the college, its ineffective application over the past two years has not contributed to evaluating the institution's or its departments' performance. Moreover, there are no systematic mechanisms for data collection regarding the college's activities, which would otherwise enable the collection and analysis of reliable information. Consequently, strategic reviews are conducted based on situational logic rather than in-depth analytical assessments.

The lack of a quality assurance system has led to management decisions not being based on systematically gathered and analyzed data. As a result, most of the objectives outlined in the strategic plan have not been fully implemented due to both objective factors and the college's actual capacity constraints.

Furthermore, the PDCA principles have not yet been integrated into the administration of policies and procedures, leading to the absence of monitoring mechanisms and efficiency analyses.

Although the college's leadership acknowledges the importance of quality assurance and its development, no systematic assessments or analyses have been conducted for institutional processes or areas. Moreover, none of the procedures or mechanisms defined in the quality assurance policy have been implemented, primarily due to the vacancy of the quality assurance responsible position in recent years.

The college's academic programs are generally aligned with its mission and the demands of the region and labor market. This alignment has been reinforced by the faculty's involvement in developing State Educational Standards, which has led to corresponding adjustments in the academic programs.

Assignments and assessments are given to students mainly in a professional context. However, due to the low effectiveness of professional (industrial) internships, there is a noticeable gap between the existing assessment system and the expected learning outcomes, particularly in developing practical skills for the college's primary fields of study, which have a high student enrollment. The main reason for this gap is the limited institutional resources- the college lacks the financial capacity to purchase expensive equipment such as machinery, specialized transport vehicles, and engineering tools. To address this challenge, the college relies on partner employers' resources for organizing internships. However, these internships typically last only 1-3 days per year, with highly restricted access to employer resources for students during that time. In contrast, the college has developed sufficient material and technical bases for other disciplines. Nevertheless, to fully align its programs with industry requirements, the entire resource base requires modernization, which remains unfeasible due to financial constraints.

The faculty supporting the implementation of the academic programs is relatively stable. The college employs class observations as an evaluation method, which has contributed positively to improving the educational process. However, the faculty requires additional professional training, particularly in specialized disciplines and foreign languages. Additionally, the college does not have lecturers from the practical industry sector, which limits students' exposure to industry-driven assignments and real-world professional environments.

Furthermore, no institutional policies or procedures are in place to promote faculty research activities. Neither faculty nor students are required to conduct research projects, and lecturers are not involved in any research initiatives. This limitation may hinder professional development and the integration of current best international practices into academic programs. While specific APs occasionally incorporate research components into student assignments, this approach has not been systematically extended to all programs.

The college has established mechanisms for identifying students' educational needs, primarily through the course advisor system, which improves the learning environment and strengthens the student-college relationship.

The career services manager provides students with information on career opportunities, tracks graduates' career paths, and has recently analysed employment outcomes. However, these findings have not yet been utilized to improve academic programs.

The college has implemented mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability. However, these mechanisms need to be enhanced in their effectiveness and new tools introduced, particularly an official website, which would improve public awareness of the college's academic programs and decision-making processes.

As part of its societal responsibility, the college actively contributes to the regional community by disseminating knowledge and values.

As a regional state vocational college, the institution can collaborate with major regional employers, forming a broad network of industry partners. This network supports the enhancement of academic programs and facilitates internship opportunities. Additionally, the wide scope of industry partnerships increases graduates' likelihood of employment in their respective fields.

A notable collaboration exists with the Kapan branch of the National Polytechnic University of Armenia, which helps supplement the faculty when needed and enables the shared use of resources.

The college's international collaboration is currently limited to securing international donations for resource development. However, these contributions have not always been strategically allocated toward strengthening the core academic programs. The college must make greater efforts to foster active and effective partnerships with local and international institutions offering similar programs. Such collaborations would facilitate the mobilization of additional resources and enhance student and faculty exchange opportunities.

Strengths of the Institution:

1. APs are in accordance with the needs of the region.
2. Graduation of specialists in priority fields recognized by the state and the demand for graduates in those specialties
3. Implementation of a student-centered approach in academic programs.
4. Relative stability of the faculty.
5. Opportunities provided by employers and partner universities to compensate for resource gaps.
6. Dynamic improvement of cooperation with employers.
7. Mutual connection between the mission and the needs of the region.
8. Experience in developing academic programs.
9. Improvement of student admission and recruitment mechanisms.
10. The existing system of internal accountability.
11. Implementation of activities for the transfer of knowledge and values to society

Weaknesses of the Institution:

1. Weak connection between the assessment system used in academic programs and the outcomes.
2. Insufficient resource base for practical and hands-on skills in the college.
3. Poor integration of research activities in academic programs.
4. The need for professional and foreign language training for the faculty.
5. Actual absence of strategic management
6. Lack of long-term, mid-term, and short-term planning derived from the academic program.
7. Absence of stable mechanisms for data collection in decision-making processes.
8. Lack of experience in implementing a quality assurance system.
9. Scarcity of mechanisms for identifying educational and other needs.
10. The absence of a website necessary to ensure transparency regarding college processes and academic programs.

11. Lack of preparation of the director's report in accordance with the academic program.
12. Weak cooperation with international organizations.

Recommendations:

Database management

- Develop an SP plan-schedule, defining clear responsibilities and progress assessment indicators.
- Implement an SP performance assessment mechanism to evaluate the achievement of strategic objectives.
- Ensure the active involvement of employers in the strategic management process, contributing to the college's development.
- Establish mechanisms for collecting and analyzing reliable data on college processes and academic programs, using the results as a basis for decision-making.
- Integrate the PDCA cycle into the management process.
- Review the quality assurance policy and procedures and effectively implement a quality assurance system in practice.
- Engage internal and external stakeholders in the college's quality assurance processes based on reliable data analyses.

Credible award of qualifications

- Define indicators for assessing the effectiveness of academic program implementation, establish appropriate tools, and conduct continuous monitoring of APs, the results of which will contribute to their improvement.
- Expand the assignment database, develop clear assessment criteria, and monitor students' progress by regularly evaluating the effectiveness of practical activities to ensure the full achievement of practical skills.
- Take measures to enhance the effectiveness of industrial and pre-graduation internships, especially for the college's core specialties.
- Develop task packages/databases for each academic program that aim to develop practical and hands-on skills and research and analytical abilities.
- Conduct a comparative analysis of similar local and international APs to incorporate best practices and modernize the programs.
- Organize professional training for the faculty by utilizing partnerships with employers, including masterclasses conducted by invited specialists.
- Implement procedures that promote the evaluation and professional development of the faculty.
- Introduce research work requirements for lecturers and students and incentive mechanisms based on research outcomes.
- Take steps to secure alternative financial resources to ensure the college's sustainable development and the effective implementation of APs.

- Allocate financial resources received through donations from stakeholders based on priority needs and take steps towards improving resources.

Long-term development

- Introduce a system of accountability based on the SP and ensure the publication of reports.
- Integrate a research component into all academic programs, implementing clear evaluation criteria for research-based work, and foster faculty and student engagement in research activities by actively involving industry stakeholders.
- Diversify career development initiatives to strengthen the connection between career managers and students, enhancing employment opportunities.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of mechanisms for identifying educational and institutional needs, introducing new strategies to ensure continuous improvement.
- Review the structure and operations of the college's student council to ensure its independence, promote collaboration with student councils from other institutions, and prioritize the identification and resolution of student concerns.
- Develop an official website to enhance information dissemination and ensure transparency in institutional processes and academic programs.
- Expand and diversify feedback mechanisms with external stakeholders to strengthen engagement and continuous improvement.
- Broaden local and international collaboration efforts, leveraging partnerships to enhance the quality and relevance of academic programs.
- Implement additional foreign language training programs for students and faculty to support internationalization efforts and global academic integration.

Gagik Qtryan, Chair of Expert Panel

14.01.2025

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

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

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. **Gayane Avetisyan** - Candidate of Geographical Sciences, Head of the Quality Assurance Department at Shirak State University, expert panel member.
3. **Narine Sirakanyan** - Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Head of the Teacher Professional Development Department at the National Center for Educational Development and Innovations, expert panel member.
4. **Arevik Hovhannisyan** - Student at Ararat Regional State College, Student-Expert.

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

Liana Alaverdyan, 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, filling out the application form, and presenting copies of the license and respective appendices (28.02.2024).

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 31.06.2024. 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 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 13.09.2024. 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 September 29 to October 2, 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. The college submitted its feedback on the preliminary report version to ANQA on 19.11.2024.

Syunik Regional State College did not submit any comments on the preliminary report. The expert panel prepared the report's final version, which the panel approved on 14.01.2025.

Liana Alaverdyan

Coordinator of the Expert Panel / 14.01.2025

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