

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



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT  
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF  
VAYOTS DZOR REGIONAL STATE COLLEGE**

**Yerevan – 2024**

## INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of the Vayots Dzor 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 institution's and employers' cooperation 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.

## SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

The expertise of the Vayots Dzor Regional State College institutional capacities was carried out by 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. The evaluation was conducted according to 10 institutional accreditation criteria set by the RA Government Decree N 959-Ն, dated June 30, 2011.

The College implements pre-vocational and vocational academic programs by the 4th and 5th levels of the National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Armenia. When conducting the evaluation, the expert panel considered that the Vayots Dzor Regional State College is the only institution in the region providing VET education. Its activities aim to address educational and socio-cultural issues in the region, preserve regional and national values, and contribute to the development of the economy.

The expert panel also considered that the College underwent the institutional accreditation process in 2021, resulting in a two-year conditional institutional accreditation. Based on the deficiencies and recommendations mentioned in the expert report, a follow-up plan was approved in 2022.

An analysis of the Vayots Dzor Regional State College's management and quality assurance systems shows that the College has taken steps toward implementing its strategic goals. The College's SP aims to improve academic programs and optimise management processes based on the demands of the regional labour market. A more precise definition of assessment indicators and responsibilities will help evaluate progress and actions taken. Clarifying actions and refining the planning timeline will also enable effective implementation of short-term and long-term programs, ensuring more efficient management.

The college still faces the issue of incomplete data collection mechanisms. Activating data-driven decision-making will contribute to better planning and management. Identifying the needs of stakeholders, students, and employers will allow for more informed decisions regarding academic programs and management processes. Available surveys and research can be improved, becoming more systematic and used to support the implementation of strategic objectives.

A positive factor is that, despite having limited financial resources, the college can ensure the implementation of its academic programs, make flexible decisions to achieve objectives with available resources and utilize partner organizations' resources and infrastructure.

Strengthening the internal quality assurance system is also important for developing a data-driven management culture. Analyses based on surveys conducted to identify needs can provide a solid foundation for internal quality assurance, contributing to continuous improvement. Thus, considering the college's strategic management and quality assurance processes, the expert panel believes that implementing data-driven analytical mechanisms will effectively link strategic planning with quality assurance, contributing to the college's sustainable development and forming a quality culture.

The academic programs of the Vayots Dzor Regional State College are based on state educational standards, with defined outcomes, objectives, content, and performance criteria for modular programs. By applying appropriate teaching and learning methods, the college can produce graduates who meet the demands of the labor market and whose professional knowledge and skills are generally acceptable to employers. Based on the in-depth analysis of ongoing labor market monitoring, making more informed decisions about which new academic programs are necessary and updating existing programs to address regional development needs is possible.

Promoting dual academic programs can connect education's theoretical and practical components closely. This approach is especially important for deepening cooperation with employers, as employer lectures contribute to developing students' practical skills in line with industry requirements. Expanding dual academic programs into new specialties will contribute to developing students' skills, making them more competitive in the labour market.

Following the previous accreditation, the next important step in improving vocational academic programs is the active involvement of students and employers in developing elective and preferential subjects. This approach will ensure that the programs meet market demands and satisfy the students' expectations and needs. Furthermore, improving the mechanisms for assessing practical skills will help objectively evaluate students' progress through a multi-component assessment system, providing more flexibility and justification in the qualifications awarding process. A comparative analysis of academic programs with similar programs is also important for localizing the best practices at the college.

The college employs faculty members with the appropriate qualifications and pedagogical experience and young instructors who are active professionals in their fields. The expert panel notes that based on the characteristics of the observed educational programs and the vision of the region's development prospects, employer-teachers' special interest in transferring their professional skills and experience to college students is appreciated.

The College employs qualified lecturers, educational masters, and young educators who are active professionals in their respective fields. The expert panel notes that, based on the

specifics of the reviewed academic programs and the vision for the region's development, the special interest of employer-lecturers in transferring their professional skills and experience to the college's students is commendable. Implementing a regular evaluation mechanism for the faculty will enable an objective assessment of lecturers' needs and competency levels. Planning professional development activities based on the results of the evaluation will contribute to the enhancement of the faculty's abilities and the improvement of teaching effectiveness. In the context of increasing lecturer motivation, the expert panel also emphasizes the need for programs focused on professional retraining, research support, and encouraging innovative initiatives.

The College has sufficient infrastructure, a corresponding technical base, and resources to implement academic programs requiring continuous improvement and development. The expert panel emphasizes that the College distributes its existing resources evenly across all academic programs, ensuring equal conditions for development. The expert panel positively evaluates that, within the framework of internships, students can fully benefit from partner organisations' resources, with the possibility of future employment within the same organizations.

The expert panel has considered that research can directly relate to the development and operation of the professional practical field at the initial and secondary vocational education levels. In this context, it is important that the college clarify the possible research directions of the academic programs it implements and plan the necessary steps for their implementation. No significant changes have been made in the field of research since the previous accreditation process. The college needs to emphasize the research component in the educational process for students and, in line with its strategic goal, to create favourable conditions for involving faculty members in research projects.

The College has a framework for cooperation with public institutions and private sector organizations, enabling effective student internship organisation. The expert panel believes that close cooperation with other VET institutions will allow for comparisons and improvements in the content of academic programs and will contribute to the exchange of experience among the faculty. The expert panel believes that the College, in its effort to consider the socio-economic development opportunities of the region, as well as its risks and threats, is taking steps toward development, focusing on the increase in the number of students, the work with potential applicants, the effective implementation of academic programs, including the expansion of external relations, the need for international cooperation, accountability, and responsibility.

### **Strengths of the Institution:**

1. Flexibility of the management system allows for decision-making that contributes to the college's development in constantly changing circumstances and conditions.
2. Trust in the college by the region's public and private sectors.
3. Implementation of VET programs based on the demand for necessary specialities in the region and meeting the region's needs.
4. Collaboration with employers for the implementation of internships and the involvement of employer lecturers,
5. Availability of the necessary learning environment and resources for implementing academic programs.
6. Implementation of projects by the college that convey values to the community and involve the region's youth in these projects.
7. External relations and cooperation with local representatives of the business sector.

#### **Weaknesses of the Institution:**

1. Ambiguous perception among the college stakeholders regarding the processes of forming and spreading a quality culture.
2. Imperfection of the mechanisms and tools used by the quality assurance system.
3. Unmeasurable definition and ambiguity of the indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of the strategic development plan.
4. Inadequacy of the mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of ongoing processes at the college and the incompleteness of subsequent planning based on identified needs.
5. Incomplete understanding of research in initial and VET programs and the weak expression of the research component in academic programs.
6. Lack of collaboration and experience exchange with sectoral vocational educational institutions and an absence of comparative analysis of academic programs.
7. Lack of professional development for the college's teaching and administrative staff and insufficient financial resources allocated for such development.

#### **Recommendations:**

##### **Database management**

1. Improve strategic planning processes by clarifying the scope of responsibilities, implementation deadlines, and indicators for evaluating objectives.
2. Continue management system improvement activities, assessing the effectiveness of changes.
3. Take steps to implement joint programs with employers that will attract additional financial resources and enable long-term financial planning.

4. Review quality assurance objectives by clearly planning the system's operation and the directions for identifying needs.
5. Analyze the results of surveys from internal stakeholders and labor market representatives by mapping the college's needs.
6. Review the methodology of tools used for needs assessment to enhance their effectiveness and optimize the resources used.
7. Improve data collection and analysis mechanisms by defining them according to the objectives of the areas to be evaluated, ensuring reliable data for decision-making.
8. Take steps towards the retraining and professional development of quality assurance responsible staff.

#### **Credible award of qualifications**

9. Conduct in-depth labor market monitoring analyses to strengthen the alignment of VET programs with regional needs and justify the need for new academic programs.
10. Promote the development of dual education programs, expanding them to other professions based on student and employer feedback.
11. More actively involve employers and students in selecting elective and preferential subjects, ensuring alignment with market demands and students' needs.
12. Fully implement a multi-component assessment system to improve the mechanisms for assessing practical skills and provide a more objective evaluation of student progress.
13. Conduct a comparative analysis of VET programs with similar academic programs to identify and adapt best practices.
14. Continue involving employer-lecturers to ensure the educational process's practical component and develop students' practical skills.
15. Implement periodic evaluation mechanisms for the faculty, and plan professional development activities based on the results of these evaluations.
16. Continuously encourage the involvement of college graduates and other young professionals in the faculty to ensure a smooth generational transition.
17. Improve mechanisms for encouraging lecturers, including opportunities for professional advancement.
18. Implement a strategy for attracting alternative financial resources, including partnerships with state, private, and international institutions.
19. Enhance the college's library resources, ensuring access to electronic libraries and other online sources.
20. Ensure a high level of knowledge of safety regulations among students within the framework of the implemented academic programs.

#### **Long-term development**

21. Continuously collect data on the professional trajectory of graduates, using it both to increase interest among new applicants and to form the basis for improving academic programs.
22. Review the format of reports, emphasizing the evaluation of results, quantitative and qualitative data analysis, and measuring progress.
23. Clarify the scope of responsibilities for public awareness and communication, involving students and college staff to ensure the continuity of information dissemination processes.
24. Continuously expand the scope of knowledge transfer events to the public, based on the community's needs.
25. Provide analytical and creative assignments to students within all academic programs, considering the specific characteristics of the programs.
26. Introduce mechanisms for involving and encouraging faculty in research processes.
27. Allocate resources to improve internal stakeholders' foreign language proficiency, creating opportunities for student and staff mobility and ensuring the long-term development of the college.

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**Armen Harutyunyan, Chair of Expert Panel**

**18.10.2024**



## DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

### COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

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

1. **Armen Harutyunyan**- Candidate of Arts, Associate Professor, Vice-Rector for Development of Yerevan State Institute of Theatre and Cinema, head of the expert panel.
2. **Yasaman Avagyan**- Chief Specialist of the Quality Assurance Department of the Armenian State University of Economics, member of the expert panel.
3. **Sudarik Petrosyan**- Head of the Department of Crafts of Yerevan Regional State College No. 1, member of the expert panel.
4. **Angelina Tonoyan**- Student of the "Organization of Tourism Services" department of Kotayk Regional State College, student member of the expert panel.

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

Meri Barseghyan, a specialist at the ANQA Policy Development and Implementation Division, 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 (02.02.2024), 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, current discussions were organized by the ANQA to clarify the issues.

The self-evaluation of the college's institutional capacity was presented on 07.05.2024. Representatives of the institution's administrative and educational staff, lecturers, and students were involved in the self-evaluation process.

### **Preparatory phase**

After the submission of the self-evaluation report and the attached documents by the TLI, the ANQA coordinator observed the package to reveal its correspondence to the requirements of the ANQA. The self-evaluation and the attached documents were provided to the expert panel for the preliminary evaluation. The composition of the expert panel was agreed upon with the College and was confirmed by the order of the ANQA Director. Within the scheduled time, the expert panel summarized the results of the preliminary evaluation, and the Chair of the expert panel, together with the process coordinator, set the schedule of the site visit.

### **Preparatory visit**

Before the site visit, a preparatory visit to the college was carried out on 12.06.2024. 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 as well as 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 June 17-19, 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 bring out the strengths and weaknesses of the college according to the standards, clarify the questions to be asked to the target groups, and discuss the procedure of 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 07.10.2024, the College sent its response to the report to ANQA. On 17.10.2024, ANQA organized a meeting between the College and the expert panel to clarify the observations. Then, the expert panel prepared the final version of the report.

**Meri Barseghyan**

**Coordinator of the Expert Panel /18.10.2024**

## EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

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