

“NATIONAL CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE”
FOUNDATION



EXPERT PANEL REPORT
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
BERD MULTIFUNCTIONAL STATE COLLEGE

Yerevan – 2025

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of the Berd Multifunctional State College (hereinafter referred to 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

Activities and History of the Institution

The "Berd Multifunctional State College" SNCO was established in 2019 as the legal successor of the Berd State Vocational School (founded in 1972) and the Berd State College (founded in 1981). It is located in the town of Berd, Tavush region.

Berd Multifunctional State College offers preliminary (vocational) and middle-level professional academic programs and is undergoing the institutional accreditation process for the first time.

Development Directions and Educational Programs of the College

The Berd Multifunctional State College is the only vocational education institution in the Berd-enlarged community, currently serving 317 students. The college operates across three buildings, located up to three kilometers apart. According to the five-year development plan of the Berd community, the main priority sectors for development are tourism, entrepreneurship, and agriculture.

The college can implement 18 academic programs, including 11 middle-level professional programs and 7 preliminary (vocational) programs. As of the first semester of the 2024-2025 academic year, the college has admitted students in 7 middle-level professional programs, namely:

- Finance
- Tourism
- Veterinary Medicine
- Software Development for Computing Equipment and Automated Systems
- Pharmacy
- Fermentation Production Technology and Winemaking
- Marketing

Among the 7 licensed preliminary (vocational) programs, 6 are currently active, including:

- Culinary Arts
- Operation and Repair of Transport Vehicles (Auto Electrician)
- Operation and Repair of Transport Vehicles (Auto Mechanic)
- Sewing Production Technology
- Computer Operation
- Hairdressing and Decorative Makeup

The college also offers distance learning programs in Management, Preschool Education, and Pharmacy.

Starting in the 2023-2024 academic year, the college introduced a dual education system for Veterinary Medicine, and in 2024-2025, the same model was implemented for the Fermentation Production Technology and Winemaking program. Most of the academic programs are aligned with the community's priority needs.

The faculty includes 36 lecturers and 5 production training masters, only 4 of whom are industry professionals.

An analysis of graduate career paths reveals the following key trends:

Graduates Continuing Their Studies in Higher Education	Employed graduates
• 2021-2022: 15% • 2022-2023: 22% • 2023-2024: 29%	• 2021-2022 academic year: 35% (of which 21% are in the specialty) • 2022-2023 academic year: 37% (of which 23% are in the specialty) • 2023-2024 academic year: 33% (of which 16% are in the specialty)
Graduates Enlisted in Military Service	Unemployed graduates
• 2021-2022 year: 31% • 2022-2023: 26% • 2023-2024: 22%	• 2021-2022: 17% • 2022-2023: 13% • 2023-2024: 16%

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 Berd Multifunctional 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.

The mission of the College is "the creation, transmission, and dissemination of knowledge within the framework of the state strategy for the development of education." Based on state policy principles in education, the College promotes the intellectual and personal development of its students and faculty. The College consistently strives for excellence and innovation in teaching and public service. As a key part of its mission, the College aims to become a student-centered educational environment that prepares its graduates for active public life, professional careers, and lifelong learning in accordance with the modern demands of a globalized society and labor market.

The College provides education corresponding to levels 4 and 5 of the NQF of the Republic of Armenia. The expert panel emphasizes that the Berd Multi-Functional State College, as a unified educational institution, has successfully established a unified and effective management system that ensures continuous and systematic development. The management system is characterized by a clear division of functions and a collaborative approach, contributing to the efficient implementation of organizational processes. Notably, the College's leadership takes a proactive approach to securing alternative financial resources through grants and donations, significantly contributing to the institution's growth and improvement. The College's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan defines its objectives. However, to ensure the effective implementation of these objectives, the expert panel considers it necessary to establish a clear action plan with timelines and measurable outcome indicators. This would enable the institution to enhance its strategic management.

It is positive that internal stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process at the College, which improves communication and cooperation among them. This aspect is crucial for achieving the strategic plan's goals and mission and for continuously improving professional educational programs. At the same time, the expert panel notes that quality assurance efforts should focus on the systematic and periodic collection and analysis of data, which would allow for data-driven decision-making based on the College's significant achievements and existing challenges. From this perspective, the establishment of an internal quality assurance system, as well as the introduction of mechanisms and tools for assessing process efficiency, is of great importance.

The Berd Multifunctional State College offers 13 active secondary vocational and craftsmanship academic programs in various fields, primarily supplying the region with skilled professionals. The College actively collaborates with regional employers to train specialists in high demand in the labor market. The institution has initiated the implementation of two academic programs in a dual format to enhance students' practical skills. However, the expert panel emphasizes the necessity of developing and implementing a monitoring toolkit for academic programs to ensure continuous and systematic improvement. This toolkit would facilitate the evaluation and ongoing enhancement of dual and all other academic programs.

In recent years, the College has adopted a strategy for recruiting and rejuvenating its faculty, including the involvement of employer representatives. The expert panel highlights the importance of this employer-lecturer engagement policy, as it significantly contributes to developing students' practical skills. Professional training and methodological support for faculty members enable the integration of modern teaching methods, which contribute to the continuous improvement of teaching quality. However, according to the expert panel, there is a need to deepen and expand training initiatives for the targeted development and modernization of faculty competencies. When necessary, financial resources should also be allocated for these purposes. Additionally, it is crucial to implement transparent and well-defined mechanisms for evaluating instructors, ensuring their continuous professional growth and the overall effectiveness of the educational process.

The institution is consistently improving its material and technical base, including professional laboratories and specialized classrooms, to enhance the efficiency of the educational process.

In summary, the existing academic programs, faculty, and available resources largely ensure the credibility of the awarded qualifications. The expert panel positively assesses the College's initiatives to create a student-centered environment where students actively participate in student council activities, career orientation events, skill development programs, and social and grant-based initiatives. However, the group also emphasizes the importance of student involvement in research activities, which is currently not sufficiently encouraged at the College.

Implementing effective mechanisms to link research with learning would foster the continuous development of academic programs and enhance students' analytical skills. While some research activities are conducted, such as within the "Tourism" AP, the expert panel underscores the need to encourage greater joint participation of students and faculty in research processes.

The expert panel highlights the importance of the College's demonstration of societal responsibility, which is reflected in various initiatives aimed at transferring knowledge and values to different segments of society. These initiatives, actively involving students and faculty members, enhance the College's reputation and visibility. However, the absence of an official website limits the widespread dissemination of information about the College. It restricts broader audiences from accessing up-to-date and objective information regarding institutional processes.

The College consistently develops its external relations by collaborating with local employers, non-governmental organizations, and international partners. However, one of the main obstacles to increasing participation in international programs is the insufficient proficiency in English, which hinders the College's full integration into international educational initiatives. The expert panel emphasizes the need to organize foreign language courses aimed at improving the language skills of faculty, administrative staff, and students. Enhancing linguistic competencies would significantly expand the College's opportunities to establish international collaborations and actively engage in global academic programs.

Strengths of the Institution:

1. The involvement of internal and external stakeholders in the decision-making process.
2. Clear differentiation of employees' functions based on job descriptions and performed activities.
3. Teamwork and collaboration between departments, regardless of operating in different buildings.
4. The leadership's proactiveness in ensuring diversified financial flows.
5. Experience in engaging students in social and grant programs.
6. Effective staff selection and the institution's mentoring policy.
7. The availability of a generally sufficient resource base for implementing all academic programs.
8. The college's public and social activity.
9. The college's wide network of partners contributes to the advancement of its operations.

Weaknesses of the Institution:

1. The unclear interconnection between the strategic plan and the scheduled timeline and the vague and incomplete definition of key performance indicators.
2. The lack of systematic mechanisms for monitoring and improving academic programs and the slow pace of program enhancements.

3. Being in the implementation phase of the quality assurance system and the absence of precise results.
4. Not always having analyzed data as the basis for decision-making.
5. The institution's reports are incompletely aligned with the strategic plan's objectives and lack analytical data.
6. The research component is not being integrated into all academic programs.

Recommendations:

Database management

- Clarify the college's mission, focusing on training competitive professionals by the economy's demands.
- Develop the next strategic plan based on the evaluation results of the previous plan and the needs of internal and external stakeholders by defining measurable qualitative and quantitative key performance indicators, clear implementation timelines, responsible parties, and financial resources.
- Implement monitoring mechanisms for the strategic plan, regularly assessing the achievement of its objectives.
- Review the College's organizational structure by clarifying the hierarchical relationships between departments and allocating human resources to ensure more effective management.
- Continue developing and applying alternative revenue-generating mechanisms to ensure the College's continuous progress and stability.
- Review the quality assurance system and develop clear reform actions and a detailed timeline accordingly.
- Develop and implement data collection and monitoring mechanisms to support identifying needs and objective analyses.
- Conduct capacity-building activities for staff involved in quality assurance processes to ensure proper understanding and establishment of the QA system.
- Implement clear planning for quality assurance processes by defining expected outcomes, timelines, and responsible parties.

Credible award of qualifications

- Develop and implement a clear policy and mechanisms for continuously monitoring and reviewing academic programs based on in-depth labor market analysis, student and employer feedback, and program implementation outcomes.

- Develop and implement a clear and transparent assessment system across all academic programs, incorporating practical assignments, internships, and final certification processes.
- Develop and implement a benchmarking policy to compare academic programs with those of other institutions, promoting content modernization and the introduction of innovative approaches.
- Identify and implement professional development training for faculty members based on a prior assessment of their professional needs.
- Diversify faculty evaluation mechanisms to ensure objective and comprehensively verified results.
- Calculate the necessary resources for implementing each academic program (per student) to enable more effective program planning.
- Improve mechanisms for assessing the applicability, accessibility, and efficiency of resources, particularly by revising surveys developed by the QA department that measure resource satisfaction levels, incorporating questions that reveal qualitative insights.

Long-term development

- Expand students' involvement in various social, public and grant programs, contributing to the formation of students' entrepreneurial and public thinking.
- Consider organizing additional seminars, foreign language development sessions, and motivational meetings with successful professionals by establishing connections with organizations and accomplished individuals in Yerevan, enhancing student motivation and transferable skills.
- Define the key potential research directions in all academic programs and develop research-based student assignments accordingly.
- Introduce mechanisms to promote research activities among faculty members by ensuring appropriate conditions and incentive tools.
- Introduce a unified format for submitting reports, ensuring their analytical nature and connection with the strategic plan.
- Conduct in-depth labor market analysis before implementing short-term academic programs to ensure their periodicity and continuity.
- Organize intensive foreign language courses for students and faculty to expand opportunities for participation in international programs.

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

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

1. Narine Sirakanyan – Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Head of the Teacher Professional Development Department at the National Center for Education Development and Innovations Foundation under the RA ESCS, head of the expert panel.
2. Naira Arshakyan – Lecturer at the Department of Pharmacognosy, Yerevan State Medical University, member of the expert panel.
3. Elena Martirosyan – Deputy Director for Academic Affairs at the French Armenian Vocational Training Center, member of the expert panel.
4. Albert Tadevosyan – Second-year student in the Finance Department at Yerevan State University of Economics, Student-Expert

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

Anahit Terteryan, 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 (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 09.08.2024. 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 31.09.2024. 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 November 4-6. It 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 23.01.2025.

The college did not submit observations regarding the preliminary report. The expert panel prepared the report's final version on 24.02.2025.

Anahit Terteryan

Coordinator of the Expert Panel / 24.02.2025

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

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