

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



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
EJMIATSIN STATE COLLEGE NAMED AFTER VARDGES HAMAZASPYAN**

Yerevan – 2023

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of Ejmiatsin State College Named After V. Hamazaspyan (hereinafter referred 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 formed in accordance with the requirements set by the “National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation in regulation on “Formation of the Expert Panel”. The Panel is formed of 4 local experts.

The accreditation process was funded by the College.

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 of the institution and employers and its impact on the content of education.

The hereby report comprises the results of the evaluation of the institutional capacities of the TLI by the State Accreditation Criteria and Standards.

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

The expertise of of Ejmiatsin State College Named After V. Hamazaspyan 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.

While carrying out an expert evaluation, the group considered that the primary goal of Ejmiatsin State College Named After V. Hamazaspyan is the training of professionals with secondary vocational education, ensuring their competitiveness in the labor market. While implementing its academic programs, the college pursues the requirements of socio-economic development of the country, and the implementation of transparent and affordable educational processes. As for the comparability of the international standards of educational content established by the college, in this regard, the college still has a lot of work to do to clarify its vision of internationalization. It should be noted that in the previous strategic cycle, the college set before itself the solutions to such important problems as improvement of the APs, improvement of the QA system, improvement of the faculty, efficiency of the management system, and improvement of building conditions. The college does not operate clear mechanisms and measurable indicators for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the activity, with which it will be possible to form a clear idea and record the resulting scope of the college's activities in the considered cycle. Therefore, during the expert evaluations, and considering the data extracted during the site visit, the expert panel notes that there are certain achievements in terms of solving these problems. Such as improvements of some APs, increasing the efficiency of the QA system in the short term, rejuvenating the faculty, launching a competitive system, and improving building conditions with scarce financial resources. Meanwhile, the college still must carry out affirmative works in terms of increasing the efficiency of the management system, identifying new sources of funding, improving academic programs, and re-equipping the resource base.

The TLI implements nine secondary professional academic programs in full and part-time formats, which are in line with the socio-economic development of the region. According to the external stakeholders of the college, the region also needs other specialists, such as guides, specialists in the field of agriculture, grape growers, winemakers, and technologists of various orientations. In addition, the college aimed to introduce a new speciality, "Computer Art Design", but, considering the material and technical base of the college and the building conditions, it does not get a license to implement the speciality. In the context of the above, due to the expert panel, without the improvement of building conditions and resources, the college will not have the opportunity to introduce new APs and increase professional attractiveness in the near future, which may hinder the further development of the college. It is encouraging that the "Directing" speciality has been reopened, where the dynamics of increasing the number of students can be observed. The expert panel points out that this profession has created a certain vitality and interest in the

educational environment of the college with the originality of its academic program. However, the development of the mentioned profession is also related to the re-equipment of the resource base.

The expert panel expresses its concern about the fact that over four years, about 60% of the graduates of the "Banking" profession, and about 30% of the "Service Organization" profession continued their education in universities, according to the data presented by the "Banking" AP. about 6% of the graduates work, 13% in "Service Organization" AP, as a result of which the satisfaction of the needs of the labor market may be jeopardized. As for the "Software support of computing equipment and automated systems" speciality, here the picture is different. According to four-year data, about 14% of graduates continue their education at the university, in contrast, about 9% work in the profession. In the context mentioned, the college has to carry out certain works, clarifying the needs of the employers of the region, directing the vector of its activities to the introduction of work-based learning processes and the quick service of the labor market. According to the observation of the expert panel, the five APs included in the Chair of Economics can cause difficulties from the point of view of management due to the multi-content of professional directions, workload, and effective implementation of specializations.

College practice bases are diverse, and most of the methods used by the lecturers promote student-centred learning, which results in achieving the objectives set out in the study plan. The expert panel positively notes that the TLI takes active steps to improve the assessment process, in particular, experienced lecturers present reports on effective assessment methods and these, as successful experiments, can be applied by other lecturers. Although the college has not benchmarked APs with international institutions, it cooperated with the Yerevan State College of Informatics on one educational program, as a result, certain improvements were made in the "Software support of computing equipment and automated systems" program. In general, improvements have also been made in other APs, the needs of internal stakeholders have been highlighted, while the needs of the main labor market stakeholders, employers, have not been explored and included in the APs. In the current conditions, the further development of each college as well as the ESC is directly conditioned by the training of competitive personnel in a short period, based on the targeting of practical abilities. In this context, the college is still in the planning stage.

It is welcome that ESC has a faculty with appropriate qualifications to implement its professional academic programs, and in recent years, lecturers from the practical field have been involved. It should be noted that the college's staff policy is aimed at attracting young personnel with professional potential, which led to the effective implementation of educational processes in the college. The faculty of the college needs professional training, cooperation with other specialists in the field and exchange of experience.

It is rather problematic that the general technical condition of the TLI building is assessed as insufficient. The level of seismic vulnerability of the building is high, therefore it is important to increase the seismic protection of the building, especially since the safe learning environment in the college is assessed as high risk. In addition, the increased number of students is also a risk factor from the point of view of the load and safety of the building, so the work related to the safety

of the building is more than urgent. At the same time, the expert panel evaluates the college's efforts to implement certain works aimed at improving building conditions with very limited resources. It is clear that in the absence of alternative funding sources, in the case of a limited external budget, the college cannot carry out large-scale and costly construction work. Therefore, the expert panel claims that it is impossible to improve the college's building conditions without targeted funding from the state or specific investors. It turned out from the site visit that the college has strategic management problems due to the comparability of long-term and short-term plans, and the management of internal and external risks affecting the college's activities. In the context of the above, it should be emphasized, that in the past strategic period, the college did not develop alternative mechanisms for generating income, did not look for new sources of funding, did not develop a clear strategy aimed at the complete improvement and re-equipment of the resource base and building conditions. The college has specified its targets for the management system, which can contribute to general improvements in management processes in the future. However, the expert panel notes that the college should implement and develop effective practices, creating a harmonious partnership between the management and internal and external stakeholders.

It is commendable that the college was able to launch the QA processes in a short cycle, in particular, it formed the documentary and operational basis for quality assurance. It is noteworthy that there are registered positive results, these processes are continuous and have a logical chain, contributing to the development of the quality culture. In the field of research, the college has not developed a policy expressing its capabilities and priorities, tasks containing a research component, coursework and projects are not separated and classified.

In the direction of developing research, the college probably has enough problems, starting from understanding the research content, to developing formats for conducting research works. Therefore, the development and implementation of research-stimulating mechanisms is an important prerequisite for the college.

The expert panel positively notes that the tools for ensuring accountability to internal and external stakeholders are functioning, and the educational environment is accessible to the public. Within the framework of partnership cooperation, the college has implemented significant work and achievements in recent years, from which the expert panel particularly highlights the college's tendency to implement social changes and the removal of problems of correspondence between the demands of employers and the educational services provided by the college.

Strengths of the Institution:

1. Competitive advantage in the region.
2. A clearly defined mission.
3. The presence of APs aimed at the socio-economic development requirements of the region.
4. The steady flow of students.
5. Young faculty.
6. Effective staff policy.

7. Implemented QA mechanisms.

Weaknesses of the Institution:

1. Lack of strategic management tools.
2. Unfavorable building conditions.
3. Safety of the educational environment.
4. The lack of possibility to introduce new APs.
5. Lack of alternative funding sources.
6. Lack of a research component.

Main recommendations:

Mission and Purposes

- Expand and launch a toolkit for eliciting the needs of internal and external stakeholders.
- Introduce and specify the evaluation mechanisms of the SP.
- Develop a plan schedule for the implementation of the strategic plan by year and the entire strategic cycle.
- Review the expected outcomes of strategic directions of the SP and make them measurable.
- Clarify the requirements of internal and external environments, based on reliable data.

Governance and Administration

- Implement performance management by developing and implementing strategic management tools.
- Predetermine the range of internal and external risks and implement effective risk management mechanisms.
- Launch new funding formulas, developing a clear strategy to improve the resource base.
- Ensure the participatory management of internal stakeholders in the activities of the college.
- Align plan-do-check-act chains.
- Derive the annual action plan from the SP.
- Develop mechanisms for evaluating and monitoring the effectiveness of activities.
- Implement a comprehensive internal evaluation of the activity.

Academic programs

- Develop practical skills and capacity-building task packages for individual modules.
- Align the management process of APs with the needs of the labor market.
- Develop new formats of cooperation with the private sector by getting involved in the processes of improvement of APs.
- Clarify and differentiate practice bases and outcomes by specialty.
- Improve the assessment system by emphasizing the assessment of practical skills.

Students

- Ensure the continuity of the PDCA cycle in the process of raising students' problems.
- Ensure the involvement of students in research and analytical work in all specialities.
- Clarify the scope of powers of the SC.

Faculty and staff

- Develop faculties' job descriptions, clarifying the professional requirements for them.
- Based on educational needs, organize professional trainings.
- Form a personnel base by involving as many practical specialists as possible.
- Develop effective mechanisms of promotion based on the evaluation of faculty.
- Complete and launch the faculties' evaluation mechanisms.

Research and Development

- Introduce research-promoting mechanisms and procedures.
- Review the regulations for the preparation and implementation of project works and align the implementation with it.
- Separate the substantive and structural differences of analytical, research tasks, practical, course, and project works.
- Introduce and develop mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of coursework and other works containing a research component.
- Introduce tasks and works containing a research component in all professions and carry out collaborative research works.
- Develop and introduce mechanisms for promoting the implementation of research works of faculty.

Infrastructure and Resources

- Assessing the security risks of the learning environment, and developing urgent strategies to improve building conditions and resources.
- Find alternative sources of income.
- Evaluate the ratio of the number of groups of students to the number of classrooms, considering existing building conditions, and develop the most optimal options for the organization of the educational process.
- Provide the necessary equipment and material resources for resource-intensive professions.
- Acquire new partnerships with employers to jointly use their resources.

Societal Responsibility

- Introduce a uniform reporting format.
- Improve the mechanisms of providing feedback and transferring knowledge to society.

External Relations and Internationalization

- Develop a schedule for continuous improvement of foreign languages.
- Activate international cooperative programs, making them more practical.
- Develop and implement an effective model of working together with employers.

Internal Quality Assurance System

- Increase the involvement of external and internal stakeholders in IQA processes.
- Improve the existing mechanisms of data collection.
- Develop and introduce mechanisms for evaluation and monitoring of IQA processes.
- Ensure full operation of the PDCA cycle.

Armenuhi Mheryan, Chair of Expert Panel

31.07.2023

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

External evaluation of the institutional capacities of Ejmiatsin State College Named After V. Hamazaspyan was carried out by the following expert panel.

- 1. Armenuhi Mheryan** - Candidate of Economic Sciences, associate professor, European University of Armenia, head of the Department of Economics and Finance, head of the expert panel.
- 2. Christine Hakobyan**- Kotayk Regional State College, Deputy Director of Academic Affairs, Lecturer, member of the expert panel.
- 3. Narine Mesropyan** - Head of the distance learning department at the National Center of Educational Technologies, member of the expert panel
- 4. Karina Ganapetyan** - Yerevan Regional State College No. 2 named after N. Achemyan, 2nd-year student, student-expert of the expert panel.

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

The works of the expert panel were coordinated by Lilit Ghazaryan, a specialist of the Secretariat Department of the ANQA.

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 (16.01.2023) filled the application form, presented 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 (27.01.2023) an agreement was signed between ANQA and College. The self-evaluation of the college was carried out by the working group formed by the order of the director of the College.

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 has conducted online workshops with accredited VET institutions. The workshops aimed

to prepare colleges for the organisational stages of the accreditation process. The workshops took place between February 21-22 and March 3-4, 2023, and were attended by TLI's employees. 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 revised self-evaluation of the college's institutional capacity was presented on 31.03.2023. The self-evaluation was carried out by the employees of the institution. External stakeholders did not participate in the self-evaluation process. Each criterion was analyzed by a college staff member considering the work orientation and criterion requirements. The self-evaluation was mainly descriptive and general, which did not allow the experts to get an idea of the real situation in the college during the preliminary evaluation.

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.

To prepare the expert panel members and ensure the effectiveness of the activities, training on the following topics was conducted:

- The main functions of the members of the expert panel,
- The ethics and techniques of holding meetings and doing inquiries,
- Defining the specifics of the VET sector and interpretation of accreditation criteria according to the VET sector
- Preliminary assessment as a stage of preparation of the expert report, the main requirements for the report.

Having reviewed the self-evaluation report and documents of the college, the expert panel conducted the preliminary evaluation. According to the format, the lists of questions and objectives for different departments and target groups, as well as additional documents have been prepared.

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. According to the ANQA manual, the intended close and open meetings with all the target groups, documents observation were included in the schedule, professional meetings etc. The members of the expert panel also had professional meetings with the AP responsible presented by the College, faculty, and students. Before the professional meetings, the experts studied the assignments given to the students and conducted class observations to understand the extent to which these assignments are aimed at achieving the expected outcomes.

Preparatory visit

Because ESC is in the Armavir region, the preparatory visit of the College was done online before the site visit. 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 took place from May 15-18, 2023. One day before the scheduled visit (14.03.2023), all members of the expert panel and the coordinator had a closed meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to highlight 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 director of the College. All the participants of the meetings were selected at random from a pre-provided list. All scheduled meetings were held. During the visit, the expert panel conducted a study of documents. At the end of each working day, the expert panel closed meetings were held to discuss the results of the interim expert assessment, and at the end of the visit, the main results were summarized.

The conclusion on the criteria was reached by the expert panel because of discussions and analyses of all members, 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 approval by the members of the expert panel, the preliminary report was provided to

the college on 31.06.2023.

On 14.07.2023, the College sent its response to the report to ANQA. The ANQA provided observations of the College to experts. On 20.07.2023, 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.

Lilit Ghazaryan

Coordinator of the Expert Panel

31.07.2023

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>	Unsatisfactory
<i>VI. Research and Development</i>	Unsatisfactory
<i>VII. Infrastructure and Resources</i>	Satisfactory
<i>VIII. Societal Responsibility</i>	Satisfactory
<i>IX. External Relations and Internationalization</i>	Satisfactory
<i>X. Internal Quality Assurance System</i>	Satisfactory