

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



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
"KAPAN STATE MEDICAL COLLEGE" (SNCO)**

Yerevan – 2025

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of the Kapan State Medical College (hereinafter referred to as TLI or college) is carried out based on an 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 conducted by an independent expert panel, comprising four local experts, as mandated by the National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation's regulations 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 placed on the cooperation between the institution and employers and its impact on educational 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

Kapan State Medical College was established in July 1960. Until September 29, 1961, it operated as the Kapan branch of Yerevan Medical School. According to Order No. 390 of the Committee on Higher and Secondary Specialized Education of the Council of Ministers of the Armenian SSR, dated September 29, 1961, it was separated and granted independent status.

In 1968, all medical schools in the republic were placed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health of the Armenian SSR. In October 1992, the institution was reorganized as the state-owned CJSC "Kapan Medical School." By Clause 5 of Government Decision No. 1009-N and Sub-clause (d) of Clause 12 of the Charter of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Armenia (Order No. 433-A, dated April 27, 2004), Kapan Medical School was officially renamed Kapan State Medical College SNCO on May 26, 2004.

In 2013, the Government of the Republic of Armenia designated the Ministry of Education and Science as the authorized state governing body for the college. On December 2, 2019, the ministry was renamed the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports of the Republic of Armenia.

The college is undergoing its first institutional accreditation.

Development Directions and Educational Programs of the College.

According to the "2017-2025 Development Strategy of Syunik Region of the Republic of Armenia," the key priorities for regional development include improving access to healthcare services, promoting social inclusion, and enhancing employment opportunities.

In assessing the alignment of the college's academic programs with the region's needs, the following specializations are currently offered:

- **Nursing, "Midwifery," and "Pharmacy"** - These programs contribute to the training of mid-level healthcare professionals, addressing the region's demand for healthcare services.
- **"Dental Technology" and "Medical Cosmetology"** - These programs aim to enhance the quality of dental and cosmetology services in the region.
- **"Social Work"** - This program plays a crucial role in addressing social inclusion challenges and supporting vulnerable groups in the region.
- **Newly introduced programs: "Therapeutic Massage" and "Laboratory Diagnostics"** - These programs enhance the healthcare service system by expanding opportunities in physiotherapy and diagnostics.

The introduction of these programs aligns with the strategic directions of the region's development, ensuring human resource development and contributing to the resolution of regional priorities.

At present, the college has 136 students enrolled at both the basic and secondary education levels. The faculty consists of 31 lecturers, of whom 26 hold higher education degrees, while 5 have secondary vocational education. Additionally, 10 faculty members are also active employers, and 8 graduates of the college have returned as lecturers. In the 2023-2024 academic year, 40% of graduates secured employment through the college's guidance.

Each year, the college is allocated the following licensed admission slots:

- 25 slots for Nursing, Pharmacy, Midwifery, Medical Cosmetology, and Dental Technology.
- 20 slots for Social Work and Therapeutic Massage.

10 slots for Laboratory Diagnostics.

However, the college currently has no applicants for the programs in Dental Technology, Medical Cosmetology, Midwifery, Therapeutic Massage, Laboratory Diagnostics, and full-time Pharmacy studies.

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 Kapan State Medical 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.

During the evaluation process, the expert panel noted that this is the first time the college has undergone institutional accreditation.

The panel also considered that the college is a secondary vocational educational institution with the mission to "Ensure the preparation of competitive and highly qualified specialists in the fields of healthcare and social work, equipped with fundamental and applied knowledge and practical skills, in accordance with labor market demands, while fostering education in the spirit of national, moral, and universal values, and addressing individuals' spiritual development needs."

The college plays a unique role in preparing secondary-level medical professionals in Kapan and the surrounding region, a fact acknowledged by both internal and external stakeholders. However, an analysis of admission trends indicates a decline in enrollment, primarily due to the region's demographic challenges. As a result, some programs no longer meet the legally required minimum enrollment threshold, creating a risk for the college and potentially affecting the sustainability of existing programs. The expert panel emphasizes that this situation requires the attention of the governing body, and the introduction of possible incentives could support the college in overcoming its enrollment challenges. Simultaneously, it is essential to enhance career guidance initiatives to increase student engagement. This issue is particularly critical in the preparation of mid-level medical professionals in high demand in the local labor market, such as dental technicians, midwives, and other healthcare specialists.

The analysis of the college's governance system reveals the existence of a multi-layered decision-making structure; however, its effectiveness remains unclear. The college's management is carried out by the Director, the Governing Council, the Pedagogical Council, and the Administrative Council. Additionally, various coordinating bodies, including the Educational, Methodological, Library, and Student Councils, as well as multiple committees and substructures, are in place. However, studies indicate that the same individuals- such as the Director, the Deputy Director for Academic Affairs, the Methodologist, Department Heads, the Quality Assurance Officer, the Career Guidance Officer, the Student Council President, and other staff members- are primarily engaged across these councils, committees, and substructures. This results in excessive workload, multiple administrative responsibilities for the same individuals, and diminished decision-making efficiency.

A positive aspect is that the college engages in long-term strategic planning. Following the previous strategic cycle, certain governance reforms have been implemented, and stakeholder feedback has been considered during the development of the Strategic Plan (SP). However, the objectives and tasks outlined in the SP are not yet clearly interconnected. In some cases, additional goals arise from existing

ones, complicating the precise planning of its implementation. Moreover, some strategic directions of the SP overlap, leading to fragmented and redundant objectives.

Although the college has established key performance indicators for assessing SP progress, these indicators face challenges in terms of measurability and do not effectively contribute to evaluating the plan's implementation efficiency. There is a disconnect between the SP's objectives and its action plan and timeline. From this perspective, the expert panel emphasises the importance of ensuring that the SP action plan and timeline facilitate the phased implementation of the strategic plan, which requires clear planning of responsibilities, deadlines, measurable outcomes, and necessary resources.

At the same time, departmental plans are not aligned with the Strategic Plan, which limits the effective implementation of strategic planning and its consideration as a practical management tool.

The college's data-driven management system is still in the development phase and lacks sufficient structure to support effective decision-making. The quality assurance system is also in its formative stage. While the college has undertaken efforts to establish a framework for both individual and collegial execution of quality assurance activities, the independence of the internal QA system remains unensured. Administrative staff members are involved in the QA substructure, which hinders the objective assessment and improvement of the management system. Currently, QA is primarily perceived as a tool for stakeholder satisfaction and needs assessment, achieved through surveys combined with specific monitoring functions. However, the QA system needs to serve as a strategic planning instrument, ensuring the full implementation of the PDCA cycle across all processes. From this perspective, structural reforms are necessary to enhance the efficiency of the management system, ensure the independence of QA, and clarify operational linkages.

At Kapan State Medical College, the credibility of qualifications awarded is based on APs designed in compliance with national educational standards. The expert panel acknowledges the existence of a collaborative environment with the practical sector. The college engages practitioners as instructors, familiarizing students with real work environments and providing industry-related assignments, which contributes to the development of their professional practical skills. Practical competencies are assessed in relevant professional settings, utilizing both the college's laboratories and employer resources.

Nevertheless, it is crucial for the college to clearly define the learning outcomes of academic programs, ensuring their alignment with the specific requirements of professional practice and labor market demands. Establishing effective mechanisms to connect learning outcomes with employer expectations is crucial for enhancing graduate employability. The implementation of mechanisms that support curriculum improvements, such as continuous monitoring and benchmarking, will facilitate the ongoing development of curricula, ensuring their alignment with labor market needs and enhancing students' professional readiness.

It is worth noting that the college's significant achievements include the high quality of teaching and the effective utilization of employer resources. However, some programs still require a stronger connection with the professional work environment. Certain steps have been taken toward faculty professional development, particularly through the provision of methodological support. Additionally,

the college has established a practice of supporting novice instructors based on peer observations. The expert panel emphasizes the importance of initiating professional development and training activities, which could be further enhanced through collaboration with industry partners and experience-sharing initiatives.

Regarding the college's resource base, there is a significant need for major renovations to its building, which requires substantial financial investments. At the same time, the college's financial resources are highly dependent on student enrollment numbers. This limitation prevents the institution from fully utilizing its potential to recruit students across all academic programs. Nevertheless, efforts are being made to diversify financial sources through short-term programs, grants, and additional funding opportunities.

The college has taken steps to promote student research activities by developing relevant policies and regulations and incorporating research components into the academic process. Educational assignments include elements designed to foster analytical and creative skills, thereby contributing to the development of students' critical thinking. However, the lack of a clear methodology for assessing research work, along with limited research opportunities for faculty, hinders the effective integration of research and learning.

The college has implemented mechanisms to identify students' educational needs and enhance the learning environment through student participation. Student autonomy is relatively well established, while the college also provides necessary support for student initiatives. Additionally, the institution ensures that students are aware of career opportunities and tracks alumni career paths, using the results to improve its academic programs continually.

In terms of societal responsibility, the college fulfills its mission by transmitting values and knowledge to the broader society. It organizes various events and initiatives that contribute to raising educational standards and fostering local community development. While the college provides internal and external stakeholders with feedback channels, such as its Facebook page, the mechanisms for transparency and public reporting are relatively underdeveloped. Strengthening analytical components within reports could enhance the effectiveness of accountability.

The institution actively collaborates with both local and international partners. The expert panel acknowledges that the college has a clear vision on internationalization and has undertaken specific steps in this direction. However, the effectiveness of these processes currently depends on clearly defining the responsibilities of those managing external relations, which would facilitate more structured implementation of agreements and partnerships. In this context, improving the language proficiency of faculty and students is crucial, as it would make the college's long-term internationalization goals more attainable.

Strengths of the Institution:

- The employability of graduates in the local labor market.

- The involvement of experienced professionals from the industry and the joint utilization of resources with employers.
- The feasibility of implementing short-term programs (availability of sufficient resources) and their demand from the industry.
- The availability of career-support services.
- A broad network of collaborative partnerships that contribute to the college's development.
- The presence of stable feedback mechanisms within the community.
- An established culture that fosters the transmission of knowledge and values to society.

Weaknesses of the Institution:

- Insufficient development of mechanisms for strategic planning, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Lack of alignment between departmental work plans and the Strategic Plan.
- Limited application of analytical components in reports.
- Restricted opportunities for faculty professional development.
- Incomplete enrollment across all academic programs.
- Physical deterioration of facilities (need for major renovations).
- Lack of independence in the quality assurance system, with a focus primarily on educational processes.
- Slow progress in fostering a quality culture.

Recommendations:

Database management

- Revise the sectoral directions of the Strategic Plan by setting clear, outcome-oriented goals and objectives.
- Refine the KPIs for assessing the progress of the Strategic Plan, aligning them with defined goals and objectives while ensuring clear, measurable quantitative and qualitative descriptors.
- Review the college's organizational structure to clarify vertical and horizontal linkages, ensure accountability between governance levels from top to bottom and bottom to top, and eliminate functional redundancies between evaluators and implementers.
- Establish links between long-term planning documents (Strategic Plan and its implementation timeline) and short-term planning documents (annual departmental plans), while clearly defining those responsible for implementing the Strategic Plan (leaders and departments).
- Ensure a strong correlation between the implementation of Strategic Plan goals and objectives and departmental reports, incorporating analytical components based on the Strategic Plan's key performance indicators.
- Foster active engagement of internal and external stakeholders in collegial governance bodies and consider optimizing councils, committees, and substructures.

- Enhance and diversify mechanisms for studying factors that influence the college's activities, evaluating the efficiency of various processes, and collecting, analyzing, and utilizing data.
- Ensure the independence and planned development of the internal quality assurance system as an integral part of strategic planning, fostering a culture of quality.
- Review the role and functions of the quality assurance responsible for eliminating overlaps between evaluator and implementer responsibilities.
- Enhance survey methodologies by ensuring regular implementation, data-driven analysis, and the practical application of results.

Credible award of qualifications

- Develop and implement the outcomes of VET programs, aligning them with labor market requirements to ensure clear connections between learning outcomes and industry needs.
- Establish a unified student assessment system that includes multi-dimensional assessment criteria, ensuring alignment with educational outcomes and academic integrity principles.
- Conduct benchmarking of VET programs with local and international higher education institutions, study and adapt best practices.
- Diversify mechanisms and tools for continuous monitoring and assessment of the effectiveness of academic programs.
- Develop requirements for the professional qualifications of lecturers, aligning them with the specifics of academic programs, and continuously implement policies for engaging young professionals, including experts from the practical field.
- Organize joint training and experience exchange programs with employers to support the professional development of lecturers and strengthen ties with the labor market.
- Clarify and systematize lecturer evaluation mechanisms, linking them with professional development initiatives for lecturers.
- Regulate the processes of engaging and supporting novice lecturers by developing and implementing relevant procedures and guidelines.
- Diversify alternative sources of financial resources, including promoting participation in grant programs.
- Expand collaboration with partner institutions for various academic programs by introducing an institutional approach to shared resource utilization and continuously enhancing the resource base and library infrastructure to support program implementation.
- Implement a system for managing information and documentation processes, with a focus on leveraging modern IT tools for enhanced applicability.

Long-term development

- Expand recruitment and selection mechanisms for students.
- Diversify and clarify mechanisms for identifying students' needs.
- Develop and implement priorities for higher education institutions in research, as well as procedures and mechanisms that encourage and support the research activities of students and faculty members.

- Improve and institutionalize mechanisms for linking research activities with the educational process, ensuring the inclusion of research components in all academic programs.
- Implement mechanisms to ensure transparency in internal and external accountability, launching the college's website to provide public and partner access to processes.
- Clarify the processes for ensuring external connections (including internationalization), define the leadership structure and responsibilities, and align them with the documentation base, policies, and procedures.
- Implement effective mechanisms to improve foreign language proficiency among internal stakeholders.

Asya Simonyan, Chair of Expert Panel

17.03.2025

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

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

1. **Asya Simonyan**- Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Lecturer at Shirak State University, head of the expert panel.
2. **Lusine Manucharyan**- Responsible for Professional Orientation and Career Guidance at Yerevan Basic Medical College, expert panel member.
3. **Ruzanna Khurshudyan**- Lecturer at Shirak State University and Gyumri State Medical College, expert panel member.
4. **Alla Nikoghosyan** – Student at Ararat Regional State College, Student-Expert.

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

Liana Alaverdyan, a Specialist in the Institutional and Program Accreditation Department at ANQA, coordinated the work of the expert panel.

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 (02.03.2024).

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 22.05.2024. Representatives of the institution's administrative and educational staff, lecturers, and students were involved in the self-evaluation process.

Preparatory phase

After the TLI submitted the self-evaluation report and the attached documents, the ANQA coordinator reviewed the package to ensure it met the ANQA's requirements. 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 conducted on 21.10.2024. 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. Mutually agreed-upon decisions were made regarding the technical, organizational, and informational issues of the site visit, as well as the behaviour and ethical norms of the meeting participants.

Site visit

The expert panel site visit occurred from October 28 to 30, 2024. During the week preceding the site visit, the members of the expert panel and the coordinator visited the college, observed the infrastructure and resources of the college, conducted class observations, and observed exams. Then, the experts and the coordinator had a closed meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the college according to the standards, clarify the questions to be asked of the target groups, and discuss the procedures for the meetings and the next steps.

The site visit started and ended with meetings with the college director. All the meeting participants were randomly selected from a pre-provided list. All scheduled meetings were held. During the visit, the expert panel studied documents.

At the end of each working day, the expert panel held closed meetings to discuss the results of the interim expert assessment, and at the end of the visit, the main results were summarized.

The expert panel reached its conclusion on the criteria after discussing and analyzing all members' work, always applying the principle of consensus.

Expert panel report

The expert panel members and the ANQA coordinator prepared a preliminary version of the expert report. After the expert panel members approved it, the preliminary report was provided to the college on 28.02.2025.

The college did not provide feedback on the preliminary version of the report. The expert panel prepared the final version of the expert report, which was approved by the group on 17.03.2025.

Liana Alaverdyan

Coordinator of the Expert Panel / 17.03.2025

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>	Satisfactory
<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>	Unsatisfactory