

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



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
MEDICAL COLLEGE NAMED AFTER PHARMACIST-ARTIST LEVON SARGSYAN**

Yerevan – 2024

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of the Medical College Named after Pharmacist-Artist Levon Sargsyan (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 Medical College Named after Pharmacist-Artist Levon Sargsyan funded the accreditation process.

The institutional accreditation is aimed not only at external evaluation of quality assurance but also at continuous improvement of the quality of management and academic programmes at the institution. Special emphasis was paid to the cooperation between the institution and employers and its impact on education content.

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

Context of the Evaluation of the College's Activities

The activities and history of the TLI

"Medical College named after Pharmacist-Artist Levon Sargsyan" LLC is the legal successor of the "Humanist" Medical School, which was founded in 1998. Since its establishment, it has been operating at 30 Isahakyan Street, Yerevan, under a lease. The founder was artist and provisor (pharmacist) Levon Hovhannes Sargsyan. After his passing in 2000, the college was renamed in his honor.

In 2007, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia granted state accreditation for three specialities: "Midwifery," "Nursing," and "Dental Technology." The college is undergoing its first institutional accreditation.

Development Directions and Educational Programs of the College

The educational activities defined by the college's mission aim to train highly qualified and competitive specialists in the healthcare and service sectors through the implementation of secondary vocational education programs that align with labor market demands.

Throughout its existence, the college has graduated 1,716 students, the majority of whom are now employed in their respective fields. Many graduates have continued and are continuing their studies at various universities. The college annually admits 90 to 105 applicants. Currently, 272 students are receiving education at the college based on secondary and basic education.

The college employs 38 lecturers, including 12 full-time and 26 part-time lecturers. Among them, 11 are employers, 28 hold higher education degrees, and 10 have secondary vocational education. Additionally, some former students now work at the college as part-time lecturers (in the field of pharmacy) and as administrative staff.

According to the college's license, the allocated seats per course are as follows:

- Nursing: 30 seats for students with basic education and 20 seats for those with secondary education
- Dental Technology: 25 seats for students with basic education and 10 seats for those with secondary education
- Midwifery and Pharmacy: 10 seats each
- Cosmetology and Makeup Art: 15 seats

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

The independent expert panel, formed in accordance with the requirements of the “Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel” by the National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation, carried out an assessment of the institutional capacities of the Medical College named after Pharmacist-Artist Levon Sargsyan. 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, the expert group noted that the college is undergoing its first institutional accreditation and is in the process of establishing a culture of quality assurance. The expert panel also considered that, as a non-state, self-financed educational institution, the college has established stable trust among its applicants and partners. The expert panel highlights the changes that have taken place in the college in recent years, which relate to several processes within the scope of institutional accreditation criteria evaluation, including governance and administration, curriculum modernization, the enhancement of the research component, and the development of the education-research connection. The college has also initiated steps to clarify its external relations, establish international connections, and implement mechanisms to ensure transparency in its activities for both internal and external stakeholders.

In the field of data-driven management, the institution's main achievement can be considered the introduction of strategic planning tools, with the first experience conducted in 2018. It is essential to note that these tools have been somewhat aligned with quality assurance principles. The current 2020-2024 Strategic Plan defines mission-aligned goals and objectives involving both internal and external stakeholders in their development. There is also a certain level of monitoring and evaluation tools for the strategic plan, including a planning schedule and indicators for assessing results. However, the strategic planning areas identified by the institution are not clearly distinguished from one another. Specifically, goals and objectives from the same area can be found in different separate fields, whereas they could have been consolidated into a single domain. For example, financial resources, human resources, and infrastructure (or material resources) are presented as distinct fields. At the same time, the expert panel emphasizes that governance and quality assurance are not presented as distinct areas, and there are no clearly defined goals and objectives for their development. Although almost all areas contain goals and objectives related to these domains, this approach has not enabled the institution to fully systematize processes and implement targeted improvements.

The issues have led to certain shortcomings in the strategic planning mechanisms and the fragmented application of the PDCA cycle. From a strategic planning perspective, the institution needs to interconnect its existing planning documents. Specifically, mid-term and

short-term planning are not yet derived from the long-term strategic plan, and the planning of individual departments and units is also not aligned with it. Ensuring the logical sequence of planning documents will enable the institution to monitor and effectively evaluate the implementation of its strategic plan.

It is essential to note that although the strategic plan includes indicators for assessing results, these indicators are not directly linked to specific strategic objectives, which makes it challenging to evaluate their objectivity and measurability. On the positive side, the strategic plan's action timeline outlines the expected outcomes of the planned activities; however, these outcomes cannot be directly linked to the established evaluation indicators of the strategic plan.

Additionally, there are visible mismatches in responsibilities and functions or incorrect distribution of duties, which arise from overlapping functions in job descriptions. Regarding the distribution of tasks among administrative and academic staff, it is evident that some positions are overloaded, such as the Deputy Director for Academic Affairs. Moreover, some responsibilities assigned to this position are not appropriate. In this context, the expert panel finds it concerning that the oversight function of the quality assurance process is included in the job description of the Deputy Director for Academic Affairs. At the same time, the Quality Assurance Officer is assigned responsibilities related to the oversight of the academic process. This situation compromises the independence of the quality assurance officer, resulting in an overlap of evaluation, execution, and supervision functions, which ultimately risks the objectivity of assessments and data-driven decision-making. The implementation of control over different components of education by the internal quality assurance unit may also lead to misconceptions among internal stakeholders regarding the role of the quality assurance center.

The expert panel considers the establishment of the Quality Assurance Center a positive development, as relevant internal regulatory documents have been developed for its operation. In essence, the work carried out by the center, primarily through the efforts of its responsible officer, has had a notable impact on curriculum improvement. However, the quality assurance culture is still in its initial stage, and at the institutional level, the institution is currently in the planning and implementation phase of quality assurance. The evaluation processes mainly involve satisfaction assessment surveys conducted among various stakeholders; however, the resulting improvements are still being implemented in a fragmented manner. Reassessing the role of the Quality Assurance Center, diversifying quality assurance mechanisms, evaluating the effectiveness of the applied quality assurance tools, and expanding their application to all institutional processes will enable the institution to achieve its strategic goals and enhance data-driven management successfully.

From the perspective of implementing academic programs for specialized fields, the expert panel highlights significant positive developments. These include the development of program specifications based on predefined learning outcome frameworks, the articulation of final program outcomes by integrating learning achievements within modular curricula, and the incorporation of employer feedback into these processes.

The integration of elective courses into curricula and the revision of preference-based course offerings in alignment with specific program requirements are also of strategic importance. The selection of elective and preference-based courses (modules) has been selected by consultations with employers and faculty members to ensure relevance to industry needs. Furthermore, the college has undertaken initiatives to strengthen the link between research and education by introducing a research component course, initially piloted for nursing students, with plans for broader curricular integration. Efforts have also been made to encourage collaborative research between students and faculty, support group research initiatives, and allocate financial resources for research publication and participation in international conferences and seminars.

To facilitate continuous monitoring of program implementation, the college has established mechanisms for overseeing the revision of teaching and learning materials and the application of assessment tools that enhance the achievement of intended learning outcomes. Comprehensive practical task packages have been developed for modular programs, incorporating case-based problem-solving exercises, assessments, and procedural algorithms for professional practice. The expert panel's evaluation indicates that formative assessment elements are being utilized; however, a fully integrated multi-component assessment system has yet to be fully realized. The localization of assessment rubrics within evaluation methodologies will enhance the objectivity of student assessment by clearly defining the scoring process (methodology) and delineating the levels of theoretical knowledge and practical skill acquisition. Institutional resources play a critical role in the effective implementation of academic programs. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the college's proprietary resources, including infrastructure, training laboratories, and material and technical provisions, remain limited. Nonetheless, strategic measures have been undertaken to expand resource availability. Notably, dental technology and cosmetology laboratory facilities have been established in leased spaces equipped with the necessary instruments and equipment. Additionally, the college utilizes laboratory facilities in public schools and supplements its resource base through collaborations with medical centers, cosmetic clinics, and dental polyclinics, where additional training facilities are available on a rental basis. Significantly, the institution has engaged practicing physicians and industry professionals as faculty members. Their involvement within collaborative training sites strengthens the synergy between the college and the labor market, ultimately facilitating the seamless

transition of graduates into employment immediately upon program completion and, in some instances, even during their studies.

The college has established a student-centered environment that facilitates the identification of student needs and fosters active engagement among students, their parents, and the institution. Notably, the college is dedicated to supporting students in their career development, with career guidance playing a pivotal role in facilitating both further education and workforce integration.

A key strength of the college's strategic initiatives is its commitment to promoting research activities. Through internal mechanisms, it actively encourages collaborative research between faculty and students. Furthermore, steps have been taken to regulate research-related activities. However, the expert panel emphasizes the need to introduce institutional mechanisms for systematically documenting and evaluating research outcomes, thereby ensuring long-term sustainability and impact.

In terms of internationalization, the college's current efforts can be considered ambitious, given that these processes are still in the early stages of development. Nevertheless, the institution is proactively engaging in various initiatives, including benchmarking academic programs, participating in Erasmus+ projects, implementing strategies to enhance foreign language proficiency, and contributing to international conferences and seminars. To ensure effectiveness, the college must conduct a comprehensive assessment of its institutional capacities and implement targeted strategies, structuring its internationalization efforts based on defined priorities and anticipated outcomes.

Additionally, strengthening communication mechanisms with the public is crucial for enhancing transparency and ensuring the visibility of institutional initiatives to both local and international stakeholders. Improving these mechanisms will reinforce the college's credibility and foster stronger partnerships within the academic and professional communities.

Strengths of the Institution:

- A team-oriented approach, a staff united around the mission and goals, the university's development vision, and a high level of collaboration.
- A student-centered environment.
- Faculty members invited from the employer sector.
- Close collaboration with the employer sector.
- Career-supporting initiatives for students, including employment and further education opportunities.

Weaknesses of the Institution:

- Being in the phase of developing strategic planning mechanisms, leading to incomplete planning of the implementation paths for strategic goals and objectives.
- Insufficient application of mechanisms linking the analytical component in departmental reports with the evaluation indicators of strategic plan outcomes.
- Weak implementation of institutional mechanisms for promoting research activities and integrating the research component into learning.
- Insufficient material and technical resources and the absence of library infrastructure.
- The lack of independence in the quality assurance infrastructure.

Recommendations:

Database management

- Review the strategic sectoral directions of the College's development, define and clarify long-term strategic priorities, as well as the objectives and goals for each direction.
- Revise the strategic plan's (long-term) schedule, specifying responsibilities, resources, deadlines for problem-solving, and accountability mechanisms.
- Clarify the evaluation indicators for the strategic plan's outcomes by defining measurable (both quantitative and qualitative) and realistic characteristics and linking them to the strategic goals and objectives.
- Review the organizational structure to clarify the vertical and horizontal relationships between departments.
- Revise job descriptions to define functional relationships and responsibilities explicitly.
- Review planning tools, linking the college's short-term and mid-term planning documents to the strategic plan and other long-term planning documents, ensuring alignment between strategic goals and departmental work plans.
- Implement effective mechanisms to ensure transparency and the publication of information regarding various processes.
- Enhance the mechanisms linking departmental accountability to the strategic plan's performance indicators, ensuring a clear connection between evaluation metrics and the expected results outlined in planning documents and fully implementing the PDCA cycle.
- Define the strategic priorities, sectoral objectives, and tasks for developing the internal quality assurance system.
- Ensure the independence of the Internal Quality Assurance Center and its personnel responsible by reviewing and aligning the documentation framework with the center's objectives and functions.
- Review the content and methodology of surveys used to identify needs, with a focus on the use of tools for collecting and analyzing objective and unbiased information.

- Develop and implement effective internal quality assurance mechanisms to assess the efficiency of various processes.
- Expand the circle of internal and external stakeholders of the Internal Quality Assurance Center, develop and implement mechanisms and tools ensuring the transparency and publicity of quality assurance processes.

Credible award of qualifications

- Implement a unified approach to selecting teaching, learning, and assessment methods.
- Develop and introduce mechanisms for applying assessment methods aligned with outcomes, clarifying evaluation criteria.
- Create a task repository designed to develop research, analytical, and practical skills.
- Diversify the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of academic programs to assess the effectiveness of implemented improvements.
- Enhance faculty recruitment and selection mechanisms to ensure the availability of necessary specialists, including those with specialized expertise in relevant modules.
- Continuously promote faculty participation in pedagogical and professional training, implementing internal training mechanisms when possible.
- Enhance faculty evaluation and incentive mechanisms by using impartial, objectively measurable, and reliable indicators, ensuring transparency for internal and external stakeholders.
- Continuously improve the college's infrastructure and resources by equipping laboratories and classrooms, integrating modern educational technologies, and developing library infrastructure.
- Develop a clear strategy and schedule for resource allocation, assessing the resources required for each academic program and their cost-effectiveness.
- Develop and implement a clear strategy for diversifying financial resources, implementing relevant policies and programs, and enhancing the linkage between strategic planning and financial resources.
- Introduce an electronic document management system, enhancing the college's technical capabilities.

Long-term development

- Define the responsible units for the college's research activities, creating a foundation for evaluating the implementation of research and innovation objectives within the strategic plan.
- Clarify the roles and functions of departments in integrating research and learning by defining research directions aligned with the challenges of the professional field.

- Implement effective mechanisms to integrate research and learning, ensuring process continuity.
- Develop and introduce institutional mechanisms to encourage research activities among faculty and students.
- Review the documentation framework related to the activities of the External Relations and Internationalization Department, aligning it with ongoing processes and clarifying its functions.
- Continuously improve and expand collaboration with local and international colleges.
- Develop mechanisms to promote and ensure the involvement of students and faculty in internationalization processes.
- Review the methodology for organizing foreign language proficiency courses, clarify responsibilities, and define measurable expected outcomes.
- Assess the effectiveness of student recruitment mechanisms and establish priorities.
- Clarify and systematize the graduate database.
- Define and enhance the role of student councils and committees to ensure active engagement.
- Enhance the accountability system by introducing a unified reporting mechanism that incorporates analytical components and links reports to the evaluation indicators of the strategic plan's outcomes.
- Ensure the uninterrupted operation of the college's website as a tool for promoting process and document transparency and publicity.
- Improve feedback mechanisms and assess their effectiveness.
- Develop and implement mechanisms that support the continuous transmission of knowledge and values, actively involving the student body.

Asya Simonyan, Chair of Expert Panel

27.12.2024

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The following expert panel conducted an external evaluation of the institutional capacities of the Medical College named after Pharmacist-Artist Levon Sargsyan.

1. **Asya Simonyan** – Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Assistant at the Department of Sports and Arts of Shirak State University named after M. Nalbandyan, head of the expert panel.
2. **Gohar Sargsyan** – Responsible for Quality Assurance in Education at Yerevan Support Medical College, member of the expert panel.
3. **Shushanik Asryan** – Quality Assurance Responsible at Mesrop Mashtots University and its affiliated Basic College, member of the expert panel.
4. **Angelina Tonoyan** – Student at Kotayk Regional State College, Student Member of the Expert panel.

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

Anahit Utmazyan, head of the Secretariat of 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 submitted an application in the prescribed format on February 19, 2024, to undergo state institutional accreditation. The application included copies of the license and its annexes, as well as state accreditation certificates for three specialities issued by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia. 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 on March 22, 2024. The timetable of activities was prepared and approved.

Self-evaluation

The College submitted its institutional capacity self-evaluation on May 30, 2024. The self-evaluation was conducted by the institution's staff, including representatives from the management, administrative, teaching, and academic support teams.

Preparatory phase

The expert panel, after reviewing the college's self-evaluation and the accompanying document package, conducted a preliminary assessment following the prescribed format. Existing issues and questions requiring clarification were identified, along with the target groups, for further inquiry. A list of additional documents needed for further examination was compiled. Subsequently, the expert panel summarized the preliminary assessment results and developed a plan and schedule for the expert visit.

Preparatory visit

Before the site visit, a preparatory visit to the college was conducted on 10 September 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 took place from September 16-18, 2024. During the week preceding the site visit, the members of the expert panel and the coordinator visited the college, observed its infrastructure and resources, conducted class observations, and reviewed 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 interim expert assessment results, and at the conclusion of the visit, the main findings were summarized.

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

Expert panel report

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

The college had no comments or objections regarding the preliminary expert report.

The expert panel and the ANQA coordinator prepared the final version of the report, which the group members approved on December 27, 2024.

Anahit Utmazyan

Coordinator of the Expert Panel / 20.12.2024

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

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