

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



National Center For Professional
Education Quality Assurance
Foundation

**EXPERT PANEL REPORT
ON INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
VANADZOR STATE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE**

Yerevan – 2020

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of Vanadzor State Agrarian College (hereinafter referred to as VSAC) is implemented within the framework of Provision 5 of EU-funded “Better Qualification for Better Jobs” budget support project. The accreditation process was organized and coordinated by National Center For Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (hereinafter referred to as ANQA).

In the course the process organization, ANQA was guided by the regulation on "RA educational institutions implementing vocational education programs and state accreditation of their specialties" approved by Government Decision N 978-N of June 30, 2011 and Decision N 959-N of June 30, 2011 “On Approving the Criteria for Accreditation of Professional Education in the Republic of Armenia”.

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EVALUATION SUMMARY

EXPERT EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

THE STRENGTHS OF THE INSTITUTION ARE:

- 1) Internal and external stakeholders share VSAC mission and goals, value the role of the College in the region.
- 2) The activities of governing bodies are regulated and cooperative by nature.
- 3) Document circulation is carried out according to a clearly defined procedure.
- 4) Most lecturers are involved in different levels of management and are aware of the processes.
- 5) For the implementation of educational and other purposes, the College is provided with the necessary professional human resources.
- 6) The APs of the College are complete and include detailed descriptions of the qualifications awarded.
- 7) Brevity and accessibility are preserved in the learning materials; student individual practical tasks prevail in them; the aim of the course is clearly defined.
- 8) Clear student recruitment and admission mechanisms are available.
- 9) Mentoring is efficiently implemented for identifying the needs of students and protecting their rights.
- 10) The college has dedicated and experienced faculty and support staff.
- 11) The college is one of the few institutions providing vocational education where students write term papers and graduation papers.
- 12) The college has implemented a system of accountability with a clear timetable.
- 13) The College has established effective mechanisms for providing information to the public.
- 14) The College Career Center is known for its proactive activities in the region.
- 15) The College has established partnerships with important players in the region.
- 16) The internal stakeholders of the College are well informed and attach importance to the internal quality assurance processes.

THE WEAKNESSES OF THE INSTITUTION ARE:

- 1) Not all of the qualifications awarded by the College are clearly stated in the mission of the College.
- 2) The College strategic plan does not specify the terminal outcomes; quantitative and qualitative indicators are not available.
- 3) The monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in the college management and administration processes are incomplete; improvement mechanisms are not in place.
- 4) Some courses are conducted by means of traditional lecturing, which does not meet the requirements of modular education.
- 5) Academic integrity mechanisms are not yet in place.
- 6) Student Council lacks initiative in College governance, decision making, rectification processes.
- 7) The age range of the teachers and the lack of young specialists does not create a favorable environment for the modernization of the educational and other processes of the College.

- 8) The College lacks a policy reflecting its ambitions and interests in the field of research that would meet the requirements of NQF Level 5.
- 9) Mechanisms for linking education and research are not developed.
- 10) Infrastructures and material resources required for the formation of learning outcomes are insufficient.
- 11) Knowledge transfer mechanisms to society are not available; short-term educational and consulting services are not provided.
- 12) The college has no ambitions in the field of internationalization.
- 13) Quality assurance mechanisms and tools need replenishment.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Mission and Purpose

- 1) Redefine the mission to reflect more comprehensively the content of the qualifications awarded.
- 2) Develop quantitative and qualitative evaluation indicators for the outcomes of the Strategic Plan goals; implement effective process evaluation mechanisms.
- 3) Review and diversify the evaluation mechanisms of the college mission and goals, and clarify their application procedures.

Governance and Administration

- 1) Implement the College governance through the quality assurance cycle, with particular attention to the introduction of evaluation and improvement mechanisms.

Academic Programs

- 2) Within the scope of teaching and learning processes, make the most of modern teaching methods and provide students with ready-made learning materials.
- 3) Utilize the potential of employers, graduates, and alumni for providing resources, reviewing academic programs and adapting to market demands.
- 4) Organize practices and internships in a more targeted way for improving their efficiency.

Students

- 5) Consider parents of school-age children as external stakeholders for improving the efficiency of student recruitment.
- 6) Organize and provide various extracurricular trainings / courses for students based on their interests.
- 7) Introduce mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of outcome-oriented internships.

Faculty and Staff

- 8) Develop motivation mechanisms for staff development and self-development.
- 9) Within the scope of possibilities, replenish the staff with young specialists, encouraging the involvement of foreign volunteers.

Research and Development

10) Carry out activities in the educational and academic processes, directed to the introduction and promotion of the research component in line with the requirements of NQF Level 5.

11) Implement teacher-student joint research projects, which may contribute to the modernization of educational programs and formation of extra-budgetary means.

Infrastructure and Resources

12) Seek grant programs for the development of agricultural laboratories, smart greenhouses, barns and other infrastructures that will simultaneously help students develop their practical skills.

13) Develop start-up business plans with college students and direct the proceeds to the replenishment and upgrade of laboratory resources.

Societal Responsibility

14) Carry out continuous monitoring of vocational education demand to identify the list of courses in demand and ensure their development and improvement.

15) Represent the College on Facebook at an official page level instead of a personal account, which will make it possible to collect statistical data on the auditorium, post views and engagement.

External Relations and Internationalization

16) Carry out cooperational activities with national and international vocational education institutions for studying and implementing best practices.

17) Take steps to establish international partnerships for student and staff mobility, ensuring the proper and transparent dissemination of the relevant information.

18) Increase the motivation of foreign language mastery among the stakeholders to contribute to the internationalization of the College.

19) Develop and apply benchmarking mechanisms to study and adopt best practices of similarly qualified educational institutions.

Internal Quality Assurance

20) Review QA procedures; coordinate mechanisms; develop appropriate instruments for the implementation of plan-do-check-act cycle in all processes.

21) Provide the necessary material, human and financial resources for effective internal quality assurance processes.

Date

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

EXPERT PANEL STAFF

The expertise was carried out by the expert panel formed in accordance with the “Procedure of National Center For Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation for the Expert panel Formation”. The expert panel consisted of 4 local and 1 international experts. The members of the expert panel were:

1. **Margarita Poghosyan**, head of Management and Organization of Procurement Department of the RA State Supervision Service, assistant professor in ASUE, Faculty of Management, PhD in Economics, head of the expert panel, Armenia,
2. **Christine Hakobyan**, Head of Human Resource Department, Kotayk Regional State College, lecturer, member of the expert panel, Armenia,
3. **Liana Amiraghyan**, teacher at Yerevan Regional State College N2, Career Center responsible, member of the expert panel, Armenia,
4. **Rolf Otto Kuchenbuch**, professor at Rostock University, agriculture consultant, member of the expert panel, Germany
5. **Regina Baghdasaryan**, 3rd year student of Accounting at Ararat State Regional College.

Lilit Zakaryan, senior specialist of the ANQA Policy Development and Implementation Division, Candidate of Historical Sciences, coordinated the activities of the Expert panel.

Armine Matevosyan, Quality Assurance Auditor of the QA Center of Vanadzor State University, ensured the translation.

Vice-rector on Quality Assurance and Accreditation of the Bulgarian University of Agribusiness and Agricultural Development Patricia Georgieva participated in the process as an observer.

The expert panel staff was agreed with the College and assigned by the decision of the ANQA Director.

All the members of the expert panel, including the translator, coordinators, and observer, signed agreements of independence and confidentiality.

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

Application for state accreditation

The College submitted an application form in due format to ANQA with a copy of the License and its Appendices for receiving state institutional accreditation.

The ANQA Secretariat examined the data presented in the application form, the documents attached to the application, and the ANQA electronic questionnaire completed by the institution. The ANQA made a decision on accepting the application, drew up, and approved a timetable for implementation.

Preparatory phase

The College submitted the self-assessment of institutional capacity and the set of supporting documents in the format set by ANQA. ANQA organized the translation of the Self-Assessment with the involvement of an external specialist.

ANQA coordinators examined the self-assessment and the set of documents attached in order to verify the compliance with ANQA requirements. The College self-assessment and attached

package were accepted by ANQA after receiving positive feedback from the accreditation process coordinators. The self-assessment report was provided to the expert panel for preliminary evaluation, the composition of which was agreed with the College in advance and approved by the ANQA director's order.

In order to prepare the expert panel for the activities and ensure the effectiveness of the processes, responsible people carried out trainings on the following topics:

1. accreditation process, peculiarities of expert work, expert ethics and code of conduct;
2. preliminary evaluation of institutional self-assessment through examples from practice;
3. site visit through role-play scenarios;
4. preparation of expert report.

After studying the College self-assessment and the attached set of documents, the expert panel carried out a preliminary evaluation, as a result of which the strengths and the weaknesses of the College were determined. A list of necessary documents for further study, as well as issues and questions subject to further clarification was prepared in due format, indicating the relevant units and target groups.

The panel summarized the results of the preliminary evaluation within the set deadlines, and the Process Coordinators together with the panel leader prepared the schedule of site Visit.¹ Guided by the ANQA Accreditation Manual, the timetable included expert meetings with all groups envisaged, open and closed meetings, study of documents, visits to institution units, etc.

Preliminary visit

On December 26-27, 2019, the schedule of the site visit and other organizational and technical support issues were discussed and agreed with the College Principal by telephone and online. Conversations with the Principal revealed that the College building was being renovated and the educational processes were temporary organized in the building of the Vanadzor branch of the Agrarian University. The initial visit took place the day before the expert visit, on 11 January 2020. Meetings were organized not only with the Principal of VSAC but also with the responsible person for the campus of the Agrarian University. The rooms allocated to the expert panel, the meeting hall were examined, their furnishing and equipment issues were discussed.

Organizational, technical, informational issues of the expert visit, as well as the conduct and ethics of the meeting participants, were discussed and mutually agreed upon.

Site visit

On the day before the scheduled visit (11.01.2020) all members of the expert panel (including international expert), coordinator Lilit Zakaryan and the translator had a closed meeting in Vanadzor. During the meeting, the panel agreed on the expert evaluation framework, the benchmarking scale, which according to the ANQA procedures, includes two levels: 1) meets the requirements of the criterion, 2) does not meet the requirements of the criterion. Issues to be studied during the visit were finalized; strengths and weaknesses of the institution as per the criteria, focus group meetings procedure, ethics of conducting meetings, and further steps were clarified. The international expert got acquainted with the system of vocational education in Armenia and the specifics of college management, development and implementation of academic programmes.

The site visit took place in the period between 12 and 14 January 2020. The site visit started and ended with meetings with the College Principal. The expert panel selected participants (lecturers, students, alumni, employers, self-assessment task force) for focus group meetings from the

¹ APPENDIX 2. SCHEFULE OF SITE VISIT

lists initially provided by the College. All the meetings envisaged by the schedule took place. During the visit, the expert panel studied the documents, held focus group meetings, and met with staff from different departments.² The site visit coincided with the 3rd year students' internship for organization of transportation and transport management / motor transport /, so the expert panel organized a site visit to Vanadzor bus station. Since the College building was undergoing major repair during the site visit, instead of monitoring the resources as provided for by the procedure, the panel visited the college building under construction, observed the college campus, and got acquainted with the construction project. According to the contract with the constructing group, the building will be commissioned in 2021.

The panel highly appreciates open and frank discussions with the participants.

The information obtained during the various meetings, as well as the main findings of document reviews and observations were summarized at the end of each day and during the final meeting organized at the end of the site visit. The expert panel discussed the main findings and came to a general agreement, first on meeting certain accreditation standards and then on meeting the criteria. The final conclusions on meeting the criteria were obtained from all the members of the panel in the course of open discussions, applying the principle of consensus.

EXPERT PANEL REPORT

After the site visit, the expert panel prepared the expert panel report based on discussions and the College self-assessment and expert observations. The assessment was carried out on 10 institutional accreditation criteria approved by Government Decision N 959-N of June 30, 2011.

The head of the panel, with the assistance of the coordinator, prepared the draft version of the expert panel report. All the members of the expert panel brought their contribution to the compilation of their observations on each criteria as well as the preparation of the full version of the report. The comments of the panel members were taken into account when summarizing the draft version of the report. When completing the report, the head of the panel also took into account the opinion of the international expert on each criterion, his findings and recommendations. The panel finalized the report based on the feedback received from the Institution.

Lilit Zakaryan,
Coordinator

24.01.2020

² APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

I. MISSION AND PURPOSE

CRITERION: The TLI's policies and procedures are in accordance with the institution's mission which is in line with ANQF.

FINDINGS

Vanadzor State Agricultural College has a 95-year-old history. It was launched in 1925 as an agricultural school; soon it became a collective farm college, and later it was transformed into an agricultural technical school. In 2001, by the RA Government Decree, Vanadzor Agricultural State College and Vanadzor State Rural Construction College were merged and re-organized as "Vanadzor State Agricultural College".

VSAC has a defined mission: the College is an education institution the main mission of which is to prepare high-quality specialists in agriculture and other fields in the region by implementing pre-vocational /craftsmanship/ and vocational educational programs". The teaching and learning processes are implemented in accordance with the state educational criteria; the mission and objectives of the College are mainly in line with ANQF.

The site visit revealed that meetings were organized for the development of the College Mission; the Principal had a number of discussions with external stakeholders and determined the specializations currently in demand in the labor market. College teachers and students had their participation in the process within the scope of their operation in various councils. The Directory Board discussed the matter. The site visit revealed that both internal (governing bodies, professors, students) and external (employers, graduates, alumni) stakeholders realize and recognize the mission, role, and importance of VSAC as a regional vocational educational institution and have certain expectations especially in the field of agriculture. The role of the College in the region is also important in terms of providing access to free education for the socially disadvantaged. During a meeting with the College Board, it was confirmed that agriculture is one of the important areas of the region and the role of the College is conditioned by the fact that there are livestock farms in the region, a smart barn program, and small dairy companies that need high quality specialists.

The expert panel finds that the College's mission needs clarification and the general wording of "agricultural and other areas" should be redefined so that it reflects the content of the qualifications actually awarded.

The mission of the College is stipulated in the Development Strategic Plan (SP) 2017-2021 of the College, where the strategic priorities, goals and their realization measures are also defined.

The 6 main goals of the SP are:

- ✓ oriented applicants and students;
- ✓ high-quality education;
- ✓ highly qualified staff potential;
- ✓ financial sustainability, efficient management, modern infrastructure;
- ✓ quality assurance;
- ✓ implementation of social-educational activity.

The objectives of the SP show that the College does not have a clear idea of the QA system yet; otherwise, "Quality Assurance" would not be considered a separate goal, since both general management and academic programs of the College must be implemented through the QA cycle. The

Strategic Plan also does not include financial resource planning, which does not provide financial grounding for the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

In order to achieve the goals of the SP, the college has set 12 objectives, developed separate actions and an implementation schedule. The examination of the documents by the expert panel revealed that the structural units plan and implement their activities based on the Strategic Plan and the schedule. However, according to the expert panel, the action timetables are not clearly set and cover an overly lengthy period; the SP does not have defined measurable qualitative and quantitative indicators for the evaluation of terminal outcomes.

The College has developed a "Procedure for Stakeholder Assessment" where it considers the graduates and alumni as external stakeholders, and students, faculty and staff as internal stakeholders. Taking into consideration the age of the applicants, the inclusion of parents of students and schoolchildren into the list of external stakeholders may contribute to the efficiency of VSAC student recruitment and other processes.

In 2018, the College developed a "Mission and Outcomes Assessment Policy", which aims to identify periodically the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of the College, implement focus groups and surveys to evaluate the outcomes. Self-analysis is also considered as an evaluation tool in this document, which can be viewed as the College's first attempt to evaluate outcomes.

One of the plus sides is that the College organized surveys and meetings with external stakeholders for identifying the educational needs and the overall satisfaction of the stakeholders with the educational services provided. VSAC carries out an evaluation of mission and goals by means of the analysis of the annual reports of the College Principal and units. They outline the implementation of the SP goals, identify gaps, and add to the actions and timelines for the following year.

The College has developed questionnaires designed to assess the relevance of the work accomplished to the goals set; however, the site visit revealed that the College still lacks experience, the analyzes are not always targeted, the improvements are oftentimes situational, and there are no clear improvement procedures and mechanisms in place. The College has developed a "Mission and Goals Review Policy" that plans to review them every 5 years, and if necessary, more often. The document envisages the necessary mechanisms for review, but they have not been developed yet.

Thus, the Panel finds that VSAC has a formulated mission in line with the NQF, the goals and objectives of the College reflect the needs of internal and external stakeholders, and the College has streamlined the mission and goals development, implementation, and evaluation processes.

CONCLUSION:

The correspondence of VSAC's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 1 is satisfactory.

II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

CRITERION: The TLI's system of governance, administrative structures and their activities are efficient and are aimed at the accomplishment of mission and goals of the institution preserving ethical norms of governance.

FINDINGS

The governance of VSAC is carried out based on the RA Constitution, sub-constitutional acts and VSAC Statute, on the principles of autonomy, one-person governance and collegiality. The collegial body of governance is VSAC Governing Board, which is formed for a period of 5 years, the

Principal manages the day-to-day operations of the college. The board of directors, pedagogical, educational and methodological Councils assist in the processes of College governance by means of providing counseling. Each of the aforementioned bodies is formed and operates for a period of 1 year based on the relevant statute and provides counseling assistance to the relevant governing body. The panel appreciates the fact that policies and procedures for all College units and councils are in place. The Principal has 3 deputies for academic, educational and administrative-economic affairs, who coordinate the work of their subordinate units.

The expert panel states that the teaching staff is limited in number and the involvement of the same person in different councils and governing bodies leads them to possess multifaceted information on various functions and direct participation in decision-making processes. Although the students are represented on the Governing Board, the meeting with the Board drove to the conclusion that they do not demonstrate proactive involvement. The SC is mainly involved in organization of cultural and sports events, and the issues raised by the students reach the leadership by the mentorship institute. External stakeholders also participate in decision-making processes; in particular, the College collaborates with some employers, alumni, and institutions, such as the Vanadzor Territorial Employment Center, the head of which is also the chairman of the Governing Board. College decision-making processes are governed by the rules set forth in the Code of Ethics. The college receives funding for educational and other purposes from the state budget according to the number of state-funded students. The budget of the institution also comes from tuition fees, but at the time of the study visit, there were no such students studying at the College. As it became clear from meetings with internal stakeholders, the College possesses the necessary human resources required to pursue educational and other goals, but there are issues with material and financial resources.

VSAC carries out long-term planning in accordance with the College Strategic Plan for a period of 5 years, and short-term planning based on annual plans, which directly derive from the SP. Evaluation is carried out through annual reports; the criterion of evaluation is whether the action envisaged in the plan has or has not been implemented. It should be noted that the College has no mid-term planning, and the SP for 2017-2021 is still in progress, so it is too early to carry out an evaluation of the results.

For the monitoring and evaluation of long-term and short-term projects, it would be useful to develop clearly measurable quantitative and qualitative indicators that would enable the College to evaluate its performance on the basis of more reliable data.

When making decisions, the College carries out studies of the factors that influence its activities. Particularly, prior to the implementation of new academic programs, the Lori Region socio-economic program, strategic priorities of the Government of the Republic of Armenia were studied, telephone surveys among employers were carried out, due to which new agricultural academic programs were launched – beekeeping, dairy technology and veterinary medicine. However, the college has not been able to recruit the required number of applicants and due to lack of funding from the authorized body, there is currently no training in these specialties. According to the panel, extra-budgetary resources would facilitate the formation of agricultural academic programs. This would allow the College to pilot the specialties at its own expenses in the initial phase in the case of failing to provide the required number of students set forth by the state standard.

Over the last two years, the College has started to introduce quality management principles gradually into its policy and administration processes. At the moment of the site visit, the QA implementation authorized body had not allocated staff and financial resources for QA yet; the processes were carried out on a voluntary basis by staff who already had very heavy workloads.

During the meeting with the Quality Assurance representative and the members of the committees, no examples of processes enclosing the PDCA cycle of process management were mentioned; the planning and implementation processes are available, surveys are being carried out

but the QA tools are not coordinated and holistic yet, often the aim of the surveys is not clarified, the analyzes are not profound; therefore, the results of the analysis lead to situational changes, without aligning clear mechanisms of improvement. There are processes in place for assessing the effectiveness of the recruitment, analysis and application of academic programs, but they have not become mechanisms yet. It would be beneficial for the College to introduce benchmarking policies and evaluate the effectiveness of educational processes through this tool.

There are still no objective mechanisms in place to evaluate the qualitative and quantitative data publications on the quality of academic programs and qualifications awarded, although some studies and analyzes are underway.

Thus, the College governance system provides a regulated process of decision-making in line with ethical rules. VSAC has the necessary human and limited material and financial resources for educational purposes. The VSAC governance system enables professors and students to participate in decision-making processes related to them; long-term and short-term planning mechanisms are in place. The leadership implements certain mechanisms to assess the factors affecting the College performance in the decision-making processes.

CONCLUSION:

The correspondence of VSAC's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 2 is satisfactory.

III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

CRITERION: The programs are in concord with the TLI's mission, form part of institutional planning and promote mobility and internationalization.

FINDINGS

The panel notes that VSAC's licensed vocational academic programs are in line with the College's mission. VSAC holds a license for 9 vocational APs: Agriculture, Accounting, Management, Organization and Management of Transportation in Auto Transport /OMTA/, Construction and Operation of Buildings and Structures, Computer Art Design, Dairy Technology, Veterinary Medicine, and Beekeeping. They are in line with the College's mission of "training high-quality specialists in the field of agriculture and other fields... in the Region". There are state education standards for all the above-mentioned specializations. It should be noted that the College launched three of the agricultural specialties a year ago, taking into account the needs of the region. Prior to that, the College studied the strategic priorities of the Republic of Armenia and the Lori Region Development Strategy for 2017-2025; discussions were held with regional employers and various bodies of Regional Administration responsible for the relevant areas.

Although the state education standards lie on the basis of the curricula and modular plans for the specialties, experts believe that there are some gaps in the curricula and modular course plans. **In particular, modular curricula lack the program details that need to be formulated as topics and questionnaires required for each learning outcome; whereas, the presentation of details in this format would clarify the teachers' work and facilitate the external evaluation.**

The College Self-Assessment states that relevant stakeholders - students, academic staff, employers, and others - are involved in the design and review of academic programs; however,

meetings with the aforementioned parties revealed that their participation in curriculum development and review processes is only possible at the level of curriculum content development, as the College academic curricula are provided by NCVETD. According to the panel, the process of developing and reviewing the College academic curricula would benefit especially with the proactive involvement of employers and alumni and the consideration of the labor market needs.

The college is licensed to provide four agricultural academic programs, but no admission was organized for three of them since there were no applicants. According to the College staff, one of the reasons for this may be the unwillingness of young people coming from villages to return to the village because of the lack of prospect and their search for more up-to-date careers. However, during the meeting with external stakeholders, it became clear that these professions were in high demand in the region and the panel believed that the College should further expand its professional orientation activities by consulting applicants' parents as well. The site visit revealed that the College had already started activities in that direction; in recent years, the College staff also participated in parents' meetings during their visits to schools.

The College implements modular education for which the availability and logistical equipment of laboratories, professional cabinets, and computer classrooms is mandatory. The meeting with students and graduates revealed that there is a shortage of laboratories, innovative technologies, and library funding, which can have a negative impact on the quality of education. The College strives to fill in the mentioned gaps by enrolling high-quality specialists and utilizing the logistic basis of the institutions where internships are organized. The unfavorable conditions of the campus have been a hindrance for the College leadership in terms of a more proactive organization of activities directed to obtaining resources. The College leadership is hopeful that the renovation of the building will give them new opportunities of obtaining alternative funding and replenishing and improving the logistical base.

VSAC has developed a "Policy and Procedure for Regularly Updating Teaching and Learning Approaches and Methods", which also includes a policy for teaching and learning methods appropriate to the expected learning outcomes. The document states that the selection of the method "depends on the specifics of the course /module/ and the learning outcomes set", but the selection of mechanisms is not described in detail. The College has also developed a "Policy and Procedure for Upgrading Teaching Materials and Resources". However, the same teaching and learning methods were envisaged for all the expected outcomes in the self-assessment, which put to question their credibility. At the same time, the site visit and the meetings with the staff and the students revealed that the teaching methods are varied, and the College uses interactive teaching methods that promote the implementation of the student-centered learning system. It is worth appreciating that the learning materials observed by the expert panel were compiled in a concise, accessible way, students' practical assignments prevailed in them and the objectives of the lessons were clearly stated. At the same time, the meeting with alumni and students revealed that despite the availability of learning materials developed for the modules, teachers often use the traditional lecturing /dictation/ method, which according to the interviewees, is tedious and impedes the acquisition of more practical skills. As stated in the self assessment, "Currently, the College undergoes a process of review, improvement, and reforming of the academic programs,... the process of upgrading of the teaching and learning methods and materials is still underway".

The site visit revealed that the College leadership and Faculty are aware of the weaknesses of the learning processes and are determined to improve them. The methodological trainings of the lecturers also promote this process.

VSAC developed "Rules of Procedure for the Monitoring and Assessment of Students' Knowledge" and a "Procedure for Academic Integrity". It is to the advantage of the College that during the state accreditation and interim evaluation, the College attaches great importance to all the norms set for academic honesty; however, the anti-plagiarism mechanisms are not yet reliable. At the

same time, meetings with lecturers and students revealed that some lecturers resort to numerous methods to eliminate plagiarism, such as creating several versions of assessment sheets and encouraging students' individual work.

Currently, there are no established policies and procedures for the benchmarking of best practices for College's academic programs. In recent years, VSAC has not cooperated with similar colleges operating in the Republic of Armenia for benchmarking and exchange of experiences in terms of academic programs.

According to the materials provided by the College, no partnerships with international educational institutions have been established; information about similar specialties abroad is not available; so the student and staff mobility and exchange processes are not yet in place.

VSAC has developed the "Procedures and Mechanisms for the Evaluation of Academic Programs" and the "Procedures for Monitoring and Reviewing the Academic Programs". The monitoring of the APs is planned to be carried out on the basis of the information obtained through class observations, student and academic staff consultations, student and academic staff questionnaires. The document outlines the review procedure.

Thus, the VSAC academic programs are in line with the mission of the College; the teaching and learning methods used throughout the teaching process are varied and contribute to the development of learning outcomes; measures are taken to ensure academic integrity. Student assessment is carried out in accordance with the developed procedure. The college has a number of developed and approved documents regarding the criterion.

CONCLUSION:

The correspondence of VSAC's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 3 is satisfactory.

IV. STUDENTS

CRITERION: The TLI provides support services to students ensuring productive learning environment

FINDINGS

There are clear student recruitment, selection and admission mechanisms in place in VSAC: admission for full-time and part-time education is carried out without entrance examinations, in accordance with the list of professions and scholarships approved by the RA Government. Student admission and recruitment policies are set out in the first goal of the College's Strategic Plan. The panel appreciates the fact that the College conducts a number of student recruitment activities, such as visits to elementary and high schools, printing of booklets, calendars, filming of professional videos, College staff participating in job fairs, advertising on local television, etc. The meetings organized within the framework of the site visit revealed that students also participate in visits to city schools in order to increase the number of applicants, but visits to villages are usually carried out at the academic and administrative staff's own expenses, which does not allow for student participation. This may negatively affect the process of recruiting potential applicants from the villages.

During the meetings organized, the potential applicants receive individual professional counseling; the advantages of the College are being presented. The panel positively assesses the availability of the College's website with the regularly updated information in the "Applicant" window. Recently the College staff has been presenting the College at parents' meetings in schools. According to data from the 4 academic years, there has been an increase in the number of applicants with state scholarships, instead the College currently has no paid tuition students. The meetings

revealed that the main reasons for students leaving college were social - emigration, poverty, unwillingness of conscripts to pursue their education after the military service, and the expulsions from the College were determined by periodic and prolonged violations of internal disciplinary rules. Graduates with good and excellent performance have the opportunity to continue their education in the relevant specialty in the second year of higher education with paid tuition.

VSAC has clear policies and procedures for identifying students' educational needs. The self assessment revealed that meetings and group discussions with students were regularly organized. The College implements a variety of mechanisms to identify students' needs: surveys, website and Facebook feedback; before moving to the Vanadzor Agrarian University building, they also used to have a "Quick Response Box" through which students reported their complaints and concerns. On the basis of student surveys on available resources and the educational environment, analyzes are systematically carried out. However, the improvement phase following the analysis of the survey results is still lacking; in many cases, the issues raised require a financial solution, such as the replenishment of computer equipment, provision of bus transportation for students coming from villages, and so on. These processes are also impeded by the temporary lack of building logistics. In addition, the QA toolkit development is still underway; the questionnaires do not have a clearly defined purpose and often do not target existing problems. Analyzes are not in-depth and comprehensive.

During the meeting with the students, the expert panel revealed the lack of implementation of additional lessons as a mechanism for increasing the effectiveness of study at VSAC. The College provides consulting before the final certification, state exams, and term papers, which is conducted according to the curriculum. Mentors and heads of departments usually provide the consulting services; they organize additional professional counseling on the course disciplines and modules taught by the Subject (Cycle) Commission in a given semester. The well-developed timetable for the counseling services provided before the exams and defense of the theses is considered as an asset.

The site visit revealed that there was no clear regulation and timetable for applying to the College Administration. However, it became clear from the meeting with students that the students could contact the College administration staff at any time with questions they were concerned about, and the students were informed of additional counseling provided by the Administration. According to the timetable, every Thursday at 14: 00-16: 00 the Principal organizes student admission sessions, but students note that they can apply for problems at any time. The experts find that the Administration's direct participation and intervention have a positive impact on student-college relationships and mutual trust. It must be positively noted that all the documents related to the educational process - schedules, exam schedules, timetables, announcements - are posted in a visible place.

VSAC has a very active Career Unit, which cooperates with the Student Council. The majority of the students is aware of and satisfied with the activities of the Career Center. The site visit revealed that the Unit organizes meetings between the College students and Vanadzor Municipality, during which the current demands of the labor market and the scope of professional skills required for the students are discussed. The College Career Unit has clear regulations, annual and semester plans. It is considered as an asset that most of the students are satisfied with the services provided by the Career Unit, which although newly launched in 2018, has already been acknowledged in the region as a successful attempt of strengthening the connection between the graduates and the labor market. In close collaboration with the Regional Employment Center, the students get informed about labor market requirements and vacancies, and meetings are organized to share success stories between alumni and students. The site visit revealed that the students took part in short-term trainings; a training for business plan development was held.

The college does not identify research as a strategic priority, though the research component is included in the term and graduation papers; modules on research methods are available in the course of studies.

The College students' rights and responsibilities are stipulated in the RA Code, the College Statute, agreements signed with students, and internal disciplinary rules. The site visit revealed that there is no special body in place for the protection of students' rights. The Student Council is mainly in charge of students' rights protection and other issues; students are mainly aware of the Student Council's activities. However, it became clear from the site visit that the students predominantly address their mentors and the administrative staff for their issues, whereas the Student Council is mainly responsible for the organization of cultural and sports events.

Discussions, observations, and surveys are conducted for the assessment of educational, advisory, and other ancillary services among students. The issues raised by students are usually resolved in case of possibility; however, the main complaints concern building facilities and resources.

Thus, the College provides the relevant assistance to a possible extent for ensuring the efficiency of the educational environment.

CONCLUSION:

The correspondence of VSAC's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 4 is satisfactory.

V. FACULTY AND STAFF

CRITERION: The TLI has a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff to accomplish the institution's mission and to implement the goals set for academic programs.

FINDINGS

VSAC developed "Policies and Procedures for Recruitment and Dismissal of Academic and Administrative Staff", Internal Disciplinary Rules, "Regulation for Promotion and Material Encouragement of the Principal and Teaching Staff", "Regulation for the Organization and Implementation of Vacancy Competition for Teaching Staff or Production Internship Supervisor". At the same time, the site visit revealed that after the approval of the "Regulation for the Organization and Implementation of Vacancy Competition for Teaching Staff or Production Internship Supervisor" developed in 2018 there have been cases of teacher employment without the application of the aforementioned regulation. The College personnel responsible explains the above-mentioned with the application of a single applicant, but the procedure was envisaged to be followed in the case of any number of participants.

The main requirements for the professional qualifications of the teaching staff are also formulated in the state educational standards corresponding to the APs, according to which the College teaching staff has relevant basic education and experience. Currently, work is being carried out to create job descriptions for the teaching staff, which can greatly enhance the transparency of staff recruitment and selection.

The College has a "Procedure for Teacher Professional Qualification and Performance Evaluation " for assessing the teaching staff, which is aimed at collecting, developing, and evaluate information on the educational activities of the teaching staff. The evaluation procedure is based on the principle of triangulation: the teacher is assessed by means of class observations by the educational department and the cycle committees and through student surveys. The evaluation

procedure underlies the processes of re-signing, extending or terminating agreements between the leadership and the teaching staff. According to the teachers, students and graduates, the third component of the three independent process assessment components, that is, student evaluation of the teachers, is not always objective, as the student more often evaluates the teacher's personal qualities. Meanwhile, the panel believes that this component is no less important in terms of organizing efficient work with students; it is necessary to conduct explanatory work among students for raising the efficiency of the assessment component. The College has undergone external evaluation by NCVETD. During each academic semester, NCVETD requires a list of lecturers in need of training from the College and conducts a monitoring visit. During the monitoring, the NCVETD representative reviews the curricula of the APs provided at the College, modular programs, conducts class observations, and provides individual counseling and retraining if needed.

The teaching staff is a permanent staff, which is considered as an asset; however, the age range of the teaching staff is a matter of concern, since there is a lack of young specialists. Meetings with students and graduates revealed that most of them consider the College teaching staff as one of the strengths of the College. According to experts, the College has dedicated and experienced teaching staff; in the meantime, the panel believes that the recruitment of young specialists can help modernize the college and increase the sustainability of teaching staff provision. The lack of young teachers is explained by the lack of motivation to teach in the College, since High School teachers working with students of the same age group get a significantly salary; whereas the College APs require the provision of practical courses in addition to general academic disciplines.

The lack of teachers has led to a situation where the same teacher simultaneously holds more than 5 academic modules, or modules that have no meaningful relation to each other. This may have a negative impact on the quality of education. The panel proposes to develop a clear action plan to recruit young professionals. It is also worth drawing the attention of the Authorized Body to this matter.

29 teachers were enrolled in the trainings for qualification enhancement in 2014-2017. During the reporting period, the College provided free computer courses and English language courses for the teachers by its own initiative and at its own expenses. On the plus side, the College attaches great importance to the review of the teaching staff's professional capacity, and finds that there is a lot to be done in terms of the development of all faculty members' abilities and skills to meet modern requirements, as well as the implementation of modern information technology in the teaching process.

The College does not have policies and procedures to ensure the professional development of the teaching staff, but has a clear focus on promoting young specialists. The study visit revealed that cycle committees and the educational department carry out the work with the College beginner teachers; a favorable environment is created by the experienced teachers for job shadowing and the exchange of experience. According to the panel, it would be useful for the College to develop a staff development program that would define professional growth procedures and standards and contribute to the development of professional potential.

The College has the necessary administrative and support staff to accomplish its strategic goals. There is no specific procedure in place for selecting administrative and support Staff. The Support Staff are hired on the basis of their application; information about the job vacancy is disseminated by means of job market, the official website and the official Facebook page of the College. The Principal appoints administrative staff, the taking into account their professional qualities. Prior to starting their work, employees get acquainted with the security rules, internal disciplinary rules, and job descriptions. The panel believes that highly qualified administrative and support staff are no less important for the College, so it would be beneficial to develop a specific selection procedure for them.

Thus, the College is mainly provided with professionally qualified, motivated, dedicated teaching and support staff needed to carry out academic programs.

CONCLUSION:

The correspondence of VSAC's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 5 is satisfactory/unsatisfactory.

VI RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMNET

CRITERION: The TLI ensures the implementation of research activity and the link of the research with teaching and learning.

FINDINGS

The College does not identify research as a strategic priority in its mission and goals and does not have plans reflecting its interests in research. VSAC does not have a long-term strategy as well as mid and short-term programmes regarding research activity. There are no mechanisms at the College aimed at promoting academic staff's and students' research activities. In addition, both low salaries and heavy workload of the teaching staff hinder the development of research activity. Conditioned by the absence of external financial resources, the College does not have a lot of opportunities for changes. It stands to reason that in these conditions the internalization of research activities is not given a special importance. Likewise, the college does not cooperate with similar regional or national colleges. Whereas the expert panel finds that this approach needs to be reviewed, as according to the National Qualification Framework³ of RA the graduate of the fifth level must be able to collect, process, analyze and interpret relevant quantitative and qualitative data within the specialty area to make reasonable judgments and suggest solutions demonstrating creative approach which is impossible without research-based education. Therefore, the inclusion of relevant level research elements in the teaching process is a necessity. Moreover, the research component is also included in the state educational standards investigated by the expert panel. For instance, according to the state educational standard 3102 /«Agricultural Science»/ the graduate of this specialty is qualified as an agricultural research technician and one of the requirements of that specialist is to <<carry out research, develop new methods for the protection of wild nature and improve the existing ones>>. In some modules the skill to conduct research is identified as a learning outcome.

Even though the College does not prioritize research in its programs, however, the students are assigned and consequently write term papers and graduation papers as well as participate in scientific conferences held in other PEIs. Furthermore, the expert panel found out that students' term and graduation papers contain research components. Expert panel evaluates positively the fact that the subject/cycle committees seek to select up-to-date topics for term and graduation papers.

The inclusion and proper implementation of research component at the College can contribute to the modernization of academic programs and provision of off-budget funds, as well as set a good example for other vocational educational institutions. Conduction of research activity may involve implementation of teacher-student joint research projects and inclusion of their outcomes in the teaching process with the aim of enhancing the efficiency of learning process of students.

³ Government of the Republic of Armenia 2016 Decision No. 714-N of July 7, 2007.

Thus, VSAC does not consider research as a strategic priority and doesn't have a strategy reflecting its interests and ambitions; the academic staff and the students are not motivated to carry out research activities.

CONCLUSION:

The correspondence of VSAC's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 6 is unsatisfactory.

VII INFRASTRUCTURE AND RECOURSES

CRITERION: The TLI has necessary resources to create learning environment and to effectively support the implementation of its stated mission and objectives.

FINDINGS

VSAC used to have convenient buildings, facilities, laboratories, however, not being thoroughly renovated for years they became dilapidated. Currently the College has three buildings, two of which are used for academic purposes (total area of 4344 square meters), one sports hall (648 square meters) and 1 electric substation /24,2 sq. meters). The buildings are state property that has been provided to VSAC for non-compensated use (decree of RA Government N 1250A of 23 October 2013). In 2015, based on the relevant project estimate documents, the reconstruction of all buildings of the College was launched which is carried out with state budget funds. For some time the educational process of the College was implemented in the building in parallel with the reconstruction process. Since the beginning of this academic year the College has been operating as a guest in the building of Vanadzor Agricultural University and will be operating there until the completion of the VSAC's buildings renovation which is scheduled for 2021. The expert panel's impression from the site visit to the College's building under reconstruction was not promising: the building has been under reconstruction for 5 years now, yet the process is far from being completed. However, it is not the College that is to blame for the delay in the process, moreover, the College itself is the victim. The meeting with the students revealed that they are now satisfied with the facilities of the institution their educational process is implemented in, as the building of the Vanadzor branch of Agrarian University is renovated and provided with heating.

However, there aren't sufficient infrastructures and laboratories necessary for the implementation of academic programs; the laboratories that were previously used are dilapidated and in need of modernization. In the hosting building of the Agrarian University several different departments of VSAC operate in a single room. Some laboratory tools and computers are accumulated in one classroom, but the mentioned computers do not have Internet access.

It should be noted that about 92 percent of state budget allocations go to the salary fund, the remaining 8 percent to utilities and necessary equipment. Positive is the fact that having extremely limited resources in recent years the College has acquired some computers and office equipment.

Currently there are neither students studying in paid bases at VSAC nor any external financial inflows, the reason for which the College staff sees in the socio-economic situation of the region: students commuting from rural areas face a number of difficulties including transportation costs. In the meanwhile, the College cannot yet implement entrepreneurial activity using its students' potential conditioned by the existing legislative tax regulations.

The panel is of the opinion that the resources are currently insufficient for the implementation of educational processes and the College has yet much to do to raise additional funding. In this regard, using the potential of both former graduates and employers and participating in international programs as well as undertaking initiatives for fundraising would be beneficial.

VSAC's leadership hopes to get external financial resources after the end of the building reconstruction particularly from offering the sports hall for rent.

The management of information and documentation processes at the College is carried out based on clear policies and procedures in accordance with the regulation of administration. The documentation circulation with authorized state governing body /RA ESCS/ is carried out by means of MULBERRY electronic documentation circulation system.

The College obtains necessary medication on an annual basis; there is a nurse at the College. The meeting with the stakeholders revealed that there was a medical room in the College building saturated with necessary equipment. In the meanwhile, the former building wasn't accessible to students with special needs. The expert panel revealed that the College had never had stakeholders with special needs the reason for which possibly being the absence of conditions for people with these needs. The panel believes that the creation of conditions for the students with additional needs in the building under reconstruction would give the College an advantage over other regional colleges enabling an increase in the number of applicants.

The College has created tools for the evaluation of resources but their implementation has shown that they are not always reliable and need to be reviewed. So, relevant surveys are conducted among students and academic staff to identify the level of their satisfaction with resources. The analysis of the surveys revealed that 60-70% of students and 37% of the academic staff, out of those surveyed, are satisfied with the resources. The high percentage of students satisfied with the resources is probably due to lack of mobility and absence of opportunity to observe and compare the resources and infrastructure of their institution with those of other colleges of both RA and developed countries in particular. The academic staff, who doesn't have an opportunity of using necessary resources during the teaching process, made a more objective assessment. Throughout the expert panel meetings with different stakeholders it became evident that the leadership of the College tries to compensate the lack of resources by selecting necessary internship logistics.

Thus, the College isn't provided with sufficient financial resources and necessary equipments for the accomplishment of its mission and goals. The mechanisms for evaluating the applicability, accessibility and effectiveness of resources provided to students and academic staff are in the process of introduction.

CONCLUSION:

*The correspondence of VSAC's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 7 is **unsatisfactory**.*

VIII. SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY

CRITERION: The TLI is accountable to the government and society for the education it offers and the resources it uses as well as for the research it conducts.

FINDINGS

The expert panel observed that though the College has not developed a separate regulation of accountability, there does operate an accountability system. The mechanisms ensuring transparency and availability of VSAC procedures and processes are stipulated in a number of legal acts. Annual report hearings on the implementation process of College's SP, annual reports of departments, reports of the Principal to the Board as well as reports to senior and responsible bodies are also viewed as accountability mechanisms. VSAC also reports to the RA MESCS, State Revenue Committee, Statistical Committee and other responsible bodies.

Highlighting the importance of transparency and accessibility of its procedures and processes to the public, the College elaborated different mechanism of accountability, including the College's official website and social networks where new information on students' routine and cultural life in the form of text and video publications is regularly posted.

The expert panel ascertained that a great amount of work has been carried out for the improvement of college website over the last year, and at present it disseminates a great deal of information about the College via which the applicants can learn about the available academic programs, organized events and projects. The College's SP, regulations, laws, decrees and decisions are available on the official website. One can get information about the College history, Student Council composition and regulation, Career Centre regulation and activity as well as college contacts. However, it should be noticed that the College website too needs amelioration: some windows such as <<Quality Assurance>> and << Reports>> still need to be completed. The feedback tool on the website and social network is not operational yet.

The mechanisms ensuring transparency and availability of VSAC procedures and processes are stipulated in a number of legal acts (RA law, VSAC Statute) and in other normative documents. The College Strategy Implementation Plan clearly and realistically outlines the directions (website, leaflets, advertising videos) for improving the information dissemination system (in particular, of education process).

A separate, comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms in the College as such is not yet implemented. As a result of the observation of self-assessment report and clarifications throughout the meetings with the staff, it should be noted though that feedback is often assured via personal links and initiative of staff members. The mentioned activity at the College is mainly carried out by the Career Centre. There are informal or non-documented feedback mechanisms.

Each year the Career Centre carries out advisory services, in particular holds meetings for school graduates for the purpose of career guidance. In the last 2 years the College has especially been active in organizing events, meetings and classes on cultural, patriotic and sport themes.

Thus, the College has started to develop public relations in recent years; it has a system of accountability; ensures the transparency of its activities; attempts to establish reliable feedback mechanisms with the society.

CONCLUSION:

The correspondence of VSAC's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 8 is satisfactory.

IX EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

CRITERION: The TLI promotes experience exchange and enhancement through its sound external relations practices, thus promoting internationalization of the institution.

FINDINGS

VSAC has no established policy on external relations. In the meanwhile, as a result of document observation and site visit, it was revealed that the College has many external stakeholders the cooperation with whom contributes to the implementation of educational process. Thus, there is a memorandum signed between the College and Territorial Employment Centre whereby the latter undertakes the following: to provide information on existing and possible job vacancies as well as employer requirements, to organize and hold student meetings with specialists and employers of the field, to conduct non-formal courses aimed at giving the College guidance for the involvement in job

fairs and exhibitions, to support the college in provision of guidance to the graduates on issues concerning labour market and state employment program. The College has contracts with local entrepreneurs, community pasture users, and consumer cooperatives as well as with the following stakeholders and partners: Stepanavan Farm and Veterinary Service Centre, National Veterinary and Phytosanitary Laboratory Service Centre SNCO of the State Food Security by the Ministry of Agriculture, Vanadzor "R & Trans"Co. Ltd / in the field of technical support of agricultural works/, Vanadzor "Shinexpert"Co.Ltd / construction and operation of buildings and structures / Vanadzor Municipality, rural municipalities, "Bee-keepers of Lori NGO", Armenian State Agrarian University, Vanadzor branch of National Polytechnic University of Armenia, Gyumri branch of Armenian State University of Economics, different condominiums and many others. Some years back VSAC also cooperated with Lori Regional State College, Vanadzor State Polytechnic College, and Vanadzor State College of Art. As the contract shows the followings were planned: cross participation in student events/conferences hold in colleges, organization of inter-college trainings, attempts to create internal quality assurance infrastructure, exchange of experience in establishing career centres, shared use of existing logistics.

The College does not consider internalization as a strategic priority; however, it should be noted that the following mission statement "recognizing its responsibility to society, the college contributes to the continuous development of an individual as well as creates a conducive environment for the comprehensive development of an individual and an active citizen educated in the spirit of national and universal values" cannot be implemented completely separated from internalization. It supposes establishment of relations with similar national and foreign institutions deriving from different kinds of events in the field of internationalization, study of international experience, as well as introduction of academic programs and best experience of leading institutions in the College.

The meeting with the Student Council and Career Centre responsible person revealed that currently cooperating with career centres of a number of Armenian colleges, the mentioned units intend to establish links with several regional colleges as well. However, the college has not yet undertaken actions for the establishment of international relations.

The College has neither a department of external relations and internalization nor a staff member representative in charge of establishing international relations and fundraising, which would provide additional funding to the College.

The expert panel evaluates positively the fact that VSAC cooperates with some international organizations (without contracts) which is evidenced by invitations to attend various events and training courses.

The site visit revealed that most of the lecturers are fluent in Russian and only a small part in English. Notwithstanding the internal trainings, most of the staff's knowledge of English is limited to reading and translating, which is not enough for internationalization. There are neither motivation mechanisms (extracurricular activities/ clubs) nor elaborated regulations to increase the academic staff's and students' interest in learning foreign languages which hinders the activation of internalization process.

Thus, there are neither policies and procedures in place to promote external relations at the College nor infrastructure responsible for the promotion of external relations and internationalization; the College lacks cooperation with international stakeholders.

CONCLUSION:

*The correspondence of VSAC's institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 9 is **unsatisfactory**.*

X INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

CRITERION: The TLI has an internal quality assurance system for promoting establishment of a quality culture and continues improvement of all the processes of TLI.

FINDINGS

With the aim of establishing quality assurance the «Quality Assurance Policy» document was developed which was approved at the session of VSAC Governing Board of 12 February, 2018. It is an all-embracing document but does not include quality assurance procedures, mechanisms, and tools. On the same day VSAC quality assurance regulation was ratified. The document outlines the tasks and functions of the QA center. Based on the regulation the Principal of the College appoints the representative in charge of quality assurance to oversee the activities of the committees. With the aim of implementing quality assurance activities, the following three committees were set up: technical, educational-methodical, and student committees. The activities of the QA system are directed to the improvement of educational services provided by the College. The QA policy derives from the College mission and aims to support the preparation of high quality and competitive specialist for the labour market. The document is comprehensive and accurately reflects the functions of the quality assurance structure. However, the expert panel noted that the document has not yet entered into force: The College does not have a separate quality assurance unit and does not provide financial resources for the said process. At the time of expert visit the authorized body did not yet have plans to provide QA staff to carry out this function; the Principal of the College appointed a staff member representative in charge of quality assurance who is also the deputy head on educational-methodical affairs, which, according to the expert panel, is too much of a burden for the same person, and even if his/her great enthusiasm taken into account, the latter cannot accomplish that amount of work. In addition, one employee cannot efficiently coordinate the work of the three committees. Since the College teaching staff is not large, all members of the working group have other responsibilities, and according to the expert group, very little of the total work is allocated to QA activities. Apart from that, the work of quality assurance representative and members of the commission is carried out on a voluntary basis, which, according to the expert group, does not contribute to the introduction of a quality system.

The internal stakeholders of the College are informed about and involved in quality processes, while the external stakeholders are engaged in the mentioned process only when participating in surveys.

The aforementioned statute envisages the creation of QA tools. The site visit revealed that a number of surveys on QA processes are conducted but their objectives are not precise. Besides, the analyses are not deep and comprehensive and cannot yet serve as a basis for improvement planning.

The College website does not yet contain information and reports on QA activities, however, the site visit revealed that realizing the importance of disseminating information on QA, the College outlines activities in that regard.

The expert panel concludes that the quality culture is not yet established at the College and the relevant activities are carried out thanks to the enthusiasm and commitment of the dedicated staff.

Thus, though there are established mechanisms and procedures for evaluating and improving the outcomes resulted from the accomplishment of goals and objectives, however their application is not yet comprehensive. The implementation of the College policy and procedures is not carried out in full accordance with quality management principle; in particular, evaluation and improvement

processes are imperfect. There are no established policies for monitoring, evaluating, and improving academic programs. In this regard, some work is under way; however they need to be coordinated.

CONCLUSION:

*The correspondence of VSAC’s institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 10 is **unsatisfactory**.*

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERION	CONCLUSION
<i>1. Mission and Goals</i>	Satisfactory
<i>2. Governance and Administration</i>	Satisfactory
<i>3. Academic Programs</i>	Satisfactory
<i>4. Students</i>	Satisfactory
<i>5. Teaching and Support Staffs</i>	Satisfactory
<i>6. Research and Development</i>	Unsatisfactory
<i>7. Infrastructure and Resources</i>	Unsatisfactory
<i>8. Social Responsibility</i>	Satisfactory
<i>9. External Relations and Internationalization</i>	Unsatisfactory
<i>10. Internal Quality Assurance System</i>	Unsatisfactory

MARGARITA POGHOSYAN
Head of Expert Panel

Date

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. CVs OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

Margarita Poghosyan in 1995 graduated from the Faculty of Informatics and Engineering of Yerevan Institute of National Economy (at present State University of Economic of Armenia) getting the qualification of an engineer-economist. Throughout 2008-2012 she undertook her PHD studies in Yerevan State University, the Faculty of Economics and Management. In 2015-2015 studied at Yerevan School of Political Studies of the Council of Europe. In 2017 she attended a course organized at the Moscow School of Political Studies of the Council of Europe. In 2004-2015 worked at Armenian State Institute of Physical Training in the Chair of Social Sciences first as a lecturer, then as an assistant professor. Since 2006 till now has been simultaneously working as a lecturer in the Chair of Economics and Management of the Northern University of Yerevan and in 2013-2014 as the head

of the same chair. 2015-2019 was the head of the Division of Administrative Service and Organization of Procurement in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of RA. Since 2019 she is the acting head of Management and Organization of Procurement Department of RA State Supervision Service. Since 2019 is simultaneously working as an assistant professor in ASUE, Faculty of Management. In 2015 she became a candidate of Economical Sciences. Participated in a number of trainings hold both in ANQA and within international workshops organized in Jermuk.

Rolf Otto Kuchenbuch in 1980 completed his studies of Horticultural Science in Hannover University, Germany. In 1980-1984 he undertook his PHD studies in the same university, from 3/1983 at George-August-University, Göttingen, Germany. Since 07/1984 he has been doctor of agricultural sciences. Throughout 08/1984-02/1987 worked as a senior specialist at the “Institute of Agricultural Chemistry” of George-August University Göttingen. In 03/1985-02/1986 he carried out postdoctoral research at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, USA (grant from German Research Council, DFG). Throughout 03/1987-08/1991 was a researcher and manager of field trials at the BASF SE, Plant Protection Branch, Agricultural Research Center, Lemfurgerhof, Germany. Throughout 09/1991-10/1992 worked as a senior specialist at the Institute of Plant Nutrition, Technical University München-Weihenstephan, Germany. Throughout 11/1992-06/1999 he worked at the Institute for Vegetable and Ornamental Crops as a scientific director. In 07/1999-06/2004 worked at the Cnter for Landscape and Land-Use Research, Müncheberg (ZALF), Germany. During 10/1999-07/2000 was a visiting scientist at University of Georgia, Griffin Campus. Throughout 07/2004-06/2011 he was the director and at the same time professor of Applied Plant Nutrition at LUFA Rostock. In 02/2013-03/2015 was the head of LDE Academy, LAND-DATA Eurosoft. Throughout 03/2015-06/2019 was a visiting professor(Langzeit-Dozent at the Faculty of Agronomy and Forestry, National Kyrgyz Agric. University, Bishkek. (within the frames of German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). Since 01/2016 was also a free-lance lecturer at Kyrgyz Turkish Manas University, Bishkek, KGZ.

Christine Hakobyan in 2004 graduated from State Pedagogical University after Khachatur Abovyan, Department of “Teaching in Elementary Classes” (being awarded a Master’s degree in Elementary School teaching). In 2015 she completed five-month courses in "Basics of Tourism", "Ethics and Intercultural Communication", "Human Resource Management" of NAS. In 2011 she participated in the development of the State Educational Standard for the profession "Service organization in hotels and tourist complexes". In 2015 developed and implemented a distance course on the Moodle platform. She is the author of 2 professional manuals: "Service organization in hotels and resort complexes" and "Organization of ancillary and additional services in hotel and resort complexes". Throughout 2008-2014 participated in the annual trainings organized by the National Institute of Education of the RA Ministry of Education and Science. In 2011 and in 2016 respectively, attended courses organized by “British council” and “The Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO”. In 2019, in collaboration with the German GIZ, she developed the dual curriculum modular programs for the specialty of “Organization of Tourism Services with an emphasis on a foreign language proficiency”. Since 2005 till now has been working at Kotayk Regional State College as the head of Human Resource Department and a lecturer.

Liana Amiraghyan in 2010 graduated from Gladzor University, Faculty of Foreign Languages, being awarded a master’s degree. Since 2009 has been working at Yerevan Regional State College N 2 after N. Achemyan as an English lecturer, and since 2012 has been also employed as head of Career Centre at the same callege. She is the author of handbook “English for hotel management”. Since 2018 has been the vice-chairman of Youth Commission of the Confederation of the Trade Unions of Armenia(CTUA). She was a trainer in Friedrich-Elbert-Stiftung and CTUA.

Regina Baghdasaryan is a student of Accounting at Ararat State Regional College. In 2018-2019 she attended a training course organised by British Council. She masters working skills. In 2019 she was trainee in ANQA.

APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT

12.01.2020-14.01.2020

	12.01.2020	<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1.	Meeting with the Principal of the college	09:00	09:30	30 minutes
2.	Meeting with deputy-heads of the college	09:40	10:20	40minutes
3.	Meeting with the self-assessment task force (8-10 people)	10:30	11:10	40 minutes
4.	Meeting with the heads of chairs (Cycle Committee on Subjects /Modules)	11:20	12:20	60 minutes
5.	Lunch, expert panel discussions	12:30	13:30	60 minutes
6.	Meeting with the academic staff (8-12 people)	13:40	14:40	60 minutes
7.	Visit to chairs and review of documentation	14:50	15:50	60 minutes
8.	Documentation review and close meeting of the expert panel	16:00	18:00	120minutes

	13.01.2020	<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1.	Meeting with heads of administrative departments	09:00	09:40	40 minutes
2.	Meeting with the Quality Assurance representative	09:50	10:50	60minutes
3.	Visit to College departments and review of documentation	10:50	11:50	60minutes
4.	Meeting with the members of Student Council (8-12 people)	12:00	13:00	60minutes
5.	Lunch , internal discussions	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
6.	Meeting with alumni (8-12 people)	14:10	15:10	60minutes
7.	Documentation review and close meeting of the expert panel	15:20	17:20	140 minutes

	14.01.2020	<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1.	Observation of the College building under reconstruction	09:00	09:40	60 minutes
	Site-visit to Vanadzor bus station, observation of the place and process of manufacturing intership	10:00	10:25	25 minutes
2.	Meeting with students (8-12 people)	10:40	11:40	60 minutes
3.	Meeting with employers (8-12 people)	11:50	12:50	60 minutes
4.	Lunch	13:00	13:30	30 minutes
5.	Meeting with members of the College Board	13:40	14:20	40 minutes
6.	Open meeting with the expert group	14:30	15:10	40 minutes
7.	Meeting with the staff selected by the panel	15:20	16:00	40 minutes

8.	Documentation review and close meeting of the expert panel	16:10	17:40	90minutes
9.	Final meeting with the Principal of the college	17:40	18:00	20 minutes

APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

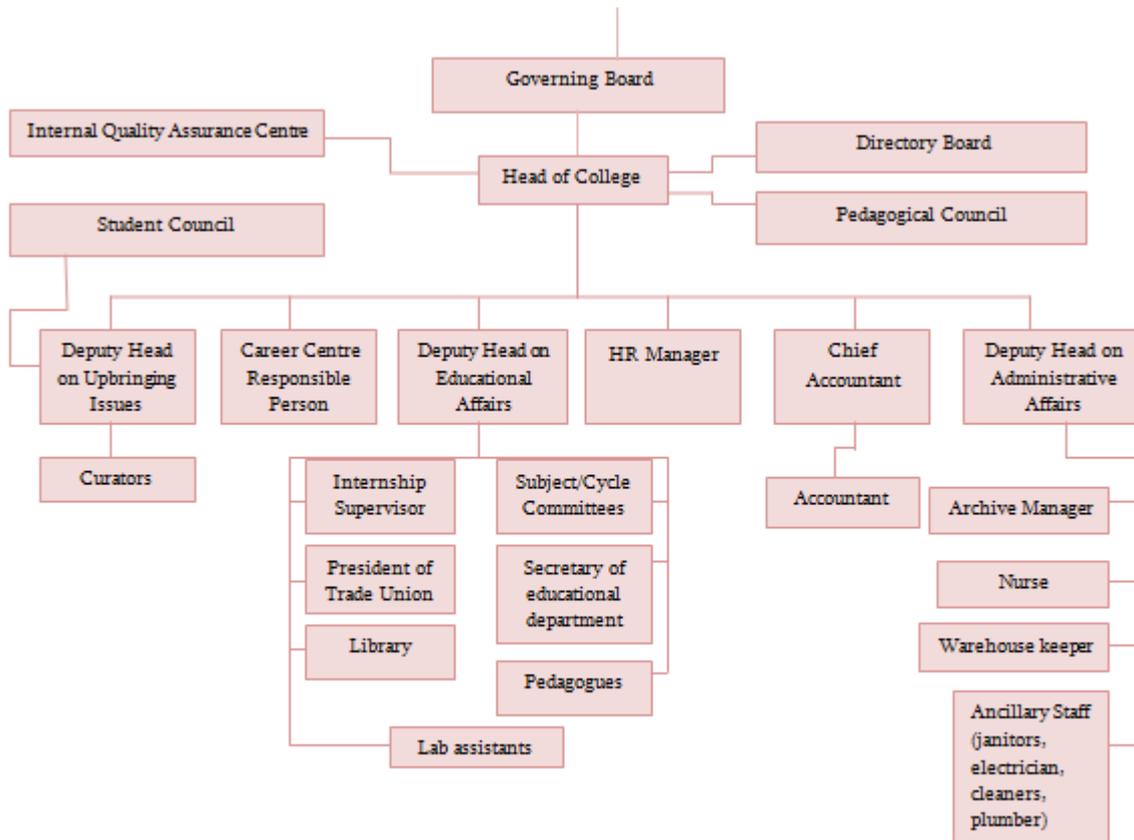
N	DOCUMENTS	CRITERION
	State educational standards for the following academic programs 1041.01.5 Organization and Management of Transportation in Auto Transport /OMTA/, 0411.01.5 Agricultural Sciences	CRITERION 3
	Modular programs	
	Teaching and learning materials	
	Policy and procedures for the systematic modernization of teaching and learning approaches and methods	
	Policy and procedure for modernization of teaching materials and resources	
	Regulation-procedure for monitoring and assessing students' knowledge	
	Policy and procedures on academic integrity (as well as other relevant documents serving as bases)	
	Curricula	
	Regulation for the identification of stakeholder's needs	
	Policy, procedures and mechanisms for the periodic assessment of academic programs	
	Procedure for the monitoring and review of academic programs	
	Leaflet	CRITERION 4
	Description of additional consulting services	
	Policy and procedure of student recruitment/career orientation	
	Time-schedule of consultancies	
	Regulation of submission and discussion of students' suggestions and application-appeals	
	Policy on identification of students' academic needs	
	Regulation of Student Council	
	Number of students	
	Filled-in sample of survey conducted among employers	
	Policy and procedures on admission and dismissal of teaching and supporting staffs	CRITERION 5

	Internal disciplinary rules	
	List of VSAC teaching staff according to subject /cycle/ committees	
	Regulation for promotion and material encouragement of the Principal and teaching staff	
	Regulation for the organization and implementation of vacancy competition for teaching staff or production internship supervisor	
	State educational standards Chapter V	
	Policy and Procedure for Teacher Professional Qualification and Performance Evaluation	
	Mechanisms for teacher professional qualification and performance evaluation	
	Procedure for the conduction of class observations and organization of their discussion	
	List of VSAC teaching staff	
	List of administrative staff according to the institution's structural units	
	List of administrative staff	
	Responsibilities of internship supervisor	
	Responsibilities of lab assisstant	
	Essays of students	CRITERION 6
	Term papers of students	
	Graduation papers of students	
	Calendar report	
	Methodical work	
	Students assessment sheet Learning material Study plan Teaching material	CRITERION 10

APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED

1. VSAC building under reconstruction
2. Computer room provided to VSAC in the building of the Vanadzor Branch of Agrerian University

APPENDIX 5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION



APPENDIX 6. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. **PAP** – professional academic program
2. **NCVETD** – National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development
3. **QA**– Quality Assurance
4. **SC** – Student Council