

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



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT
ON THE PROGRAM ACCREDITATION OF THE “NURSING” ACADEMIC PROGRAM OF THE
VANADZOR STATE MEDICAL COLLEGE SNCO**

Yerevan – 2026

INTRODUCTION

The program accreditation of the “Nursing” Academic Program at Vanadzor State Medical College SNCO was conducted based on the application submitted by the institution. The program accreditation process is coordinated and implemented by the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA).

In carrying out its activities, ANQA was guided by the Procedure for the State Accreditation of Educational Institutions Implementing Professional Educational Programs and Their Specialities, approved by the Government of the Republic of Armenia under Decision No. 978-N of June 30, 2011, as well as by Government Decision No. 959-N of June 30, 2011, On the Approval of Accreditation Criteria for Professional Education in the Republic of Armenia. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the 7 criteria for program accreditation established in the Republic of Armenia.

The review was conducted by an independent expert panel formed in accordance with the requirements of the Procedure for the Formation of Expert Panels of the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation. The panel comprised five local experts. The accreditation process was funded by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia.

The accreditation process placed particular emphasis on the effectiveness of the academic program in terms of specialist preparation, the development of learner competencies, and the continuous improvement of the program, ensuring alignment with labor market requirements and the National Qualifications Framework.

This report presents the results of the expert evaluation of the College’s academic program in accordance with the program accreditation criteria for professional education in the Republic of Armenia.

CONTEXT OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

The Nursing Academic Program (AP) at Vanadzor State Medical College was established in 2012 in accordance with the State Educational Standard approved by Order No. 254-N of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia, dated 5 April 2012. The program's primary mission is to prepare professionally competent, ethically responsible, and psychologically mature nurses capable of delivering safe, high-quality, and patient-centred nursing care to individuals, families, and communities. The program places particular emphasis on professional ethics, teamwork, evidence-informed practice, and continuous professional development.

Vanadzor State Medical College is the only secondary vocational education institution in the Lori region that offers healthcare education and prepares nursing professionals for both urban and rural healthcare institutions. In this context, the Nursing Academic Program plays a strategically important role in strengthening the region's healthcare workforce and ensuring the availability of qualified mid-level healthcare professionals to meet regional healthcare needs.

Feedback from employers indicates that nurses working in regional healthcare institutions frequently take on a broader range of responsibilities due to staffing shortages. Consequently, nurses not only support physicians but also serve as key healthcare professionals who maintain direct contact with patients and actively participate in the organisation and delivery of healthcare services. This context further highlights the importance of ensuring that graduates develop strong professional competencies, clinical reasoning, independent decision-making, and the ability to assume professional responsibility across diverse clinical settings.

The implementation of the Nursing Academic Program is supported by 38 academic staff members, of whom 21 deliver specialised professional modules, and 17 teach general education and socio-economic subjects. The academic staff comprises 26 full-time faculty members and 12 part-time (adjunct) lecturers. 11 members of the academic staff are practising physicians, contributing valuable clinical expertise to the teaching and learning process.

Graduate employment data indicate that the professional employment rate of graduates was 56.7% in 2022, fell to 48.51% in 2023, and remained relatively stable at 48.33% in 2024.

On 29 April 2024, Vanadzor State Medical College was granted institutional accreditation for a four-year period. The accreditation is valid until 29 April 2028.

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

The analysis of the Nursing Academic Program at Vanadzor State Medical College indicates that the College generally provides the fundamental conditions necessary for program implementation. However, several systemic challenges continue to hinder the full achievement of the Intended Learning Outcomes and the program's continuous enhancement.

The Academic Program is developed in accordance with the requirements of the State Educational Standard and is designed to prepare nursing professionals with the knowledge, practical competencies, and professional attributes required for contemporary nursing practice. The program maintains an appropriate balance between theoretical instruction and practical training, and the available resources are, in principle, sufficient to support the development of the intended competencies. Nevertheless, the continuous enhancement of the program content has progressed relatively slowly and does not fully address the rapidly evolving developments and emerging needs of the healthcare sector.

The application of innovative teaching and learning approaches remains inconsistent and largely depends on lecturers' individual initiative rather than on a systematic institutional approach. Evidence from classroom observations and stakeholder surveys reveals several methodological shortcomings in teaching practice. Although improvement measures are introduced based on these findings, their effectiveness is not systematically monitored or evaluated over time. In addition, the College lacks clearly defined institutional mechanisms and accountability measures to ensure the consistent implementation of recommended improvements and to promote the systematic enhancement of teaching practices across the Academic Program.

A variety of active learning methods are used in teaching and learning. However, their depth, consistency, and effectiveness vary considerably. During practical training sessions, opportunities for all students to participate actively and repeatedly in practical exercises are not always provided. As a result, some students do not fully achieve the practical competencies envisaged by the Intended Learning Outcomes. This finding is further supported by observations of students' practical performance, which revealed difficulties in performing essential clinical procedures and nursing interventions.

The assessment system is one of the most critical areas requiring further development. Although assessment tools and mapping have been developed, their implementation does not consistently ensure objective, valid, and reliable assessment of students' competencies. The Expert Panel identified discrepancies between the grades awarded to students and their demonstrated practical performance, as well as limitations in the effectiveness of the assessment mechanisms used during clinical practice placements. These findings indicate that the current assessment system has not yet fully adopted an outcomes-based, competency-oriented approach and does not generate sufficiently reliable evidence or feedback to effectively support the continuous enhancement of the Academic Program.

In the context of enhancing the assessment of practical competencies, the Expert Panel considers the introduction of the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) particularly important. The assessment mechanisms currently employed do not fully ensure objective, reliable, and comparable evaluation of students' practical competencies, underscoring the need for more standardised, performance-based assessment approaches. The OSCE methodology assesses students in structured, simulation-based clinical scenarios in which they perform specific professional tasks within defined time limits and according to standardised assessment criteria. Such an approach enables assessment not only of students' theoretical knowledge but also of their ability to apply knowledge in practice, demonstrate clinical reasoning, and perform professional skills in authentic clinical situations.

Given the College's existing resources and the specific characteristics of the Academic Program, the Expert Panel considers it appropriate to introduce the OSCE methodology through a phased implementation, initially incorporating a limited number of simulation-based assessment stations and gradually expanding their scope. This approach would improve the objectivity, reliability, and validity of student assessment while providing valuable evidence to support the continuous enhancement of the Academic Program.

The research and scholarly component of the College remains in an early stage of development. Although several initiatives have been introduced, they have not yet been institutionalised or systematically integrated into the Academic Program, nor are they sufficiently linked to the development of students' professional competencies. The limited engagement of academic staff in research activities also hinders the ongoing updating of program content and the integration of evidence-informed practice into teaching and learning.

The learning environment and resource base are generally adequate to implement the Academic Program. The College is equipped with appropriate laboratories, simulation models, and teaching materials, and the library collection has been further enriched in recent years. Nevertheless, the Expert Panel observed that available resources are not always utilised systematically or to their full potential, limiting their educational impact.

The College has established a quality assurance system. However, it primarily focuses on monitoring educational processes (e.g., surveys and classroom observations) rather than systematically evaluating the achievement of the Intended Learning Outcomes. A structured approach to evidence-based decision-making is not yet fully embedded, and clear mechanisms for the continuous enhancement of the Academic Program remain underdeveloped. Although feedback is collected from employers and graduates, it is not consistently translated into systematic program improvements, resulting in recurring issues over time.

Overall, the Expert Panel concludes that the College possesses the fundamental conditions and institutional capacity necessary to implement the Academic Program effectively. However, program

governance, monitoring, and continuous enhancement are not yet fully guided by an outcomes-based approach centred on the systematic achievement and evaluation of the Intended Learning Outcomes.

Strengths of the Program:

- The ratio of theoretical and practical components within the educational program generally provides opportunities for the development of practical competencies.
- The College is equipped with adequate material and technical resources, including laboratory facilities (manikins, specialised classrooms, and equipment).
- The teaching staff includes specialists from the professional field (physicians and nurses), which contributes to the practice-oriented nature of teaching and learning.
- Cooperation with employers is established, and employers demonstrate a willingness to contribute to the improvement of the program.
- Certain active learning methods are used (case-based learning, role-playing, and teamwork).
- In recent years, several improvements have been implemented, including the division of student groups, enrichment of learning resources, and an increase in the number of practical training hours.

Weaknesses of the Program:

- The content of the educational program is not fully updated on a regular basis and does not sufficiently meet the contemporary requirements of the healthcare sector.
- Methodological challenges arise in the teaching process, and not all students are sufficiently engaged in practical activities.
- The assessment system does not fully ensure objective evaluation of students' practical competencies.
- The organisation and assessment of internships and practical training are not implemented consistently and do not always adequately reflect students' actual skills.
- The quality assurance system of the academic program does not fully contribute to the continuous and systematic improvement of the program, teaching and learning processes, and assessment methods.
- The management system for the teaching staff lacks mechanisms to ensure the mandatory and monitored implementation of measures to improve teaching quality; currently, improvements largely depend on individual initiatives.

Recommendations:

1. Evaluate and review the content of the educational program to ensure its alignment with current professional and technological developments in the healthcare sector.
2. Review the structure and sequencing of modular programs to ensure the logical development of interdisciplinary links and the continuity of module content.

3. Introduce learning outcomes mapping as a program monitoring tool by analysing the achievement of learning outcomes and, based on the findings, revising modular programs and teaching approaches.
4. Ensure the systematic development of students' practical skills by providing sufficient opportunities for repeated practice of procedures and manipulations and for consolidating skills through automation.
5. Ensure the full and equitable use of available educational and simulation resources to support students' achievement of learning outcomes.
6. Introduce structured clinical assessment methods (OSCE – Objective Structured Clinical Examination) to ensure a more objective, measurable, and comprehensive assessment of students' practical competencies.
7. Continue activities to implement the OSCE assessment system by organising professional development training for teaching staff, developing simulation stations, clinical scenarios, and relevant assessment checklists.
8. Review the mechanisms for assessing practical competencies to ensure the consistent application of assessment criteria and checklists by all teaching staff.
9. Organise intermediate examinations to assess the learning outcomes of specialised professional modules, with the involvement of independent examination committees to ensure a more impartial evaluation of practical competencies.
10. Develop a more in-depth format for cooperation with employers by organising focus group discussions and conducting analyses with the participation of sector professionals.
11. Introduce a systematic mechanism for repeated classroom and peer observations among teaching staff to ensure the monitoring of identified issues and to facilitate the exchange of good practices.
12. Promote the systematic application of the outcomes of teachers' professional development activities and of innovative and digital tools within the teaching and learning process.
13. Ensure a planned policy for generational renewal and staff continuity within the teaching body by engaging young professionals.
14. Continue modernising the library collection by ensuring access to up-to-date professional literature.
15. Review and further develop the quality assurance system by transforming it into a data-driven, learning-outcomes-based management tool that ensures systematic monitoring and continuous improvement across the educational program, teaching, learning, and assessment processes.

Expert Panel

1. Naira Hunanyan
2. Ishkhan Sokhakyen
3. Gohar Mkrtchyan
4. Tereza Ghazaryan
5. Anna Stepanyan

July 01, 2026

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The external evaluation of the Nursing academic program at Vanadzor State Medical College, conducted as part of program accreditation, was conducted by the following expert panel.

- **Naira Hunanyan** – Candidate of Biological Sciences, Lecturer in Histology, Embryology and Cytology at the Mkhitar Gosh Armenian-Russian International University and the University of Traditional Medicine; Senior Researcher at the L. A. Orbeli Institute of Physiology, member of the expert panel.
- **Ishkhan Sokhakyan** –Anesthesiologist-Reanimatologist, Candidate of Medical Sciences, Professor at the Department of Medicine and Fundamental Medicine of the International Academy of Medicine and Fundamental Medicine, member of the expert panel.
- **Gohar Mkrtchyan** – Candidate of Philological Sciences, Head of the Quality Assurance Center at the Armenian Medical Institute, member of the expert panel.
- **Tereza Ghazaryan** – Obstetrician-Gynaecologist, Lecturer at the Mehrabyan Medical College, member of the expert panel.
- **Anna Stepanyan** – Student at the Kotayk State Regional College, student expert and member of the expert panel.

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

The work of the Expert Panel was coordinated by Anahit Terteryan and Liana Alaverdyan, specialists at the Institutional and Program Accreditation Department of the ANQA.

All the members of the expert panel and the coordinators have signed independence and confidentiality agreements.

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

Ararat State Medical College applied for program accreditation of its Nursing Academic Program on April 21, 2025, in the prescribed format, accompanied by copies of its license and relevant official orders.

The ANQA Secretariat checked the data presented in the application form and the appendices in the application package.

After deciding to accept the application, ANQA and the College signed an agreement. The activity timetable was prepared and approved.

Self-evaluation

Considering that this was the first experience of colleges conducting a program self-evaluation, ANQA organized both in-person and online workshops for representatives of the institutions undergoing accreditation.

During the workshops, colleges were introduced to:

- the interpretation of the program accreditation standards and criteria for VET (Vocational Education and Training) institutions;
- the program accreditation questionnaire and the self-evaluation report format;
- the principles and methodology of conducting a SWOT analysis.

During the preparation of the self-evaluation report, the colleges were also provided with ongoing advisory support. At ANQA's initiative, interim meetings and consultation sessions were organized to assist institutions in improving the quality of their self-evaluation reports and addressing issues arising during the process.

The self-evaluation report of the Nursing Academic Program of Vanadzor State Medical College was submitted on October 02, 2025. The self-evaluation was carried out by the institution's staff, including members of the management team, administrative personnel, academic staff, and support staff.

Preparatory phase

The Expert Panel, having reviewed the VET's self-evaluation report and the accompanying documentation, conducted a preliminary evaluation in accordance with the prescribed format. As part of this process, the Panel prepared a list of additional documents requiring further examination and identified key issues and questions, indicating the respective structural units or target groups to be addressed. Subsequently, the Expert Panel consolidated the preliminary assessment results and developed a detailed plan and schedule for the site visit.

Preparatory visit

On November 11, 2025, a meeting was held with the management team of Ararat State Medical College. The ANQA coordinator, the head of the institutional program accreditation department, were present at the meeting. During the meeting, the site visit schedule was introduced and agreed upon with the college. Additionally, the meeting participants discussed and agreed on decisions regarding the technical, organisational, and informational aspects of the site visit, as well as the participants' behaviour and ethical norms.

Site visit

The expert panel site visit took place from November 13-14, 2025. The site visit began and ended with meetings with the College's director. All participants in the meetings were randomly selected from a pre-provided list. All scheduled meetings were held. During the visit, the expert panel reviewed documents.

The expert panel reached its conclusion on the criteria through discussions and analyses by all members, always applying the principle of consensus.

Expert panel report

The members of the Expert Panel and the ANQA coordinator prepared the preliminary version of the Expert Report. After approval by all Expert Panel members, the preliminary report was submitted to the College on 08 May 2026.

The College submitted its feedback on the preliminary version of the report to ANQA on 26 May 2026. ANQA forwarded the College's comments and observations to the Expert Panel for consideration. Subsequently, ANQA organised an online meeting with representatives of the College and the Expert Panel to discuss the institution's observations on the preliminary Expert Report.

Considering the feedback received, the Expert Panel prepared the final version of the Expert Report, which was approved by the Panel members on 01 July 2026.

Anahit Terteryan

Liana Alaverdyan

Coordinators of the Expert Panel

01.07.2026

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERION	CONCLUSION
<i>I. Academic Program</i>	Satisfactory
<i>II. Teaching Staff</i>	Satisfactory
<i>III. Teaching and Learning</i>	Satisfactory
<i>IV. Student Assessment</i>	Unsatisfactory
<i>V. Research and Creative Activities</i>	Unsatisfactory
<i>VI. Educational Environment</i>	Satisfactory
<i>VII. Quality Assurance</i>	Unsatisfactory