

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



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
ARARAT STATE COLLEGE (SNCO)**

Yerevan – 2025

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of Ararat State College (SNCO) (hereinafter referred TLI or College) is carried out based on the application submitted by the College. The process of institutional accreditation is organised and coordinated by “National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance” Foundation (hereinafter ANQA), guided by regulation on “State Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Academic Programmes in RA” set by RA Government Decree N 978-Ն (dated June 30, 2011) and by Decree N 959-Ն on “Approval of RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation” (dated June 30, 2011).

The expert examination was carried out by the independent expert panel formed in accordance with the requirements set by the “National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation in the regulation on “Formation of the Expert Panel”. The Panel is composed of 4 local experts.

The accreditation process was funded by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia.

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

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

Context of the Evaluation of the VET Institution's Activities

Background and History of the Institution

Ararat State College (ASC) is a state mid-level vocational education institution located at 67 Khanjyan Street, Ararat City, Ararat Region, Republic of Armenia. The College is the legal successor of the Ararat Industrial and Technological Technical School (state registration No. 13.0004.20.11.1996).

Pursuant to Decision No. 601 of the Government of the Republic of Armenia dated 4 July 2001, the institution was granted state registration as a legal entity by the RA State Register on 25 December 2002 (Certificate No. 03 A 057860). Since 19 August 2014, the position of Head of the Executive Body (Director) has been held by Ms. Ella Gagik Gasparyan.

In accordance with Order No. 1167-A/2 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia dated 3 December 2019, the Ararat State College SNCO operating under the RA Ministry of Education and Science was reorganised into the Ararat State College SNCO under the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport.

By Order No. 1306-A/2 of the RA Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport dated 12 August 2021, the Ararat State College SNCO was awarded institutional accreditation for a period of four years, confirming its compliance with the national standards for vocational education institutions.

Over the past five years, ASC has graduated more than 1,000 students, who have been successfully integrated into various sectors of the national economy as qualified mid-level specialists, thereby contributing to workforce development and the socio-economic advancement of the region.

Development Directions and Educational Programmes

The role of Ararat State College (ASC) in the region, particularly in Ararat Region, is significant in terms of training specialists across educational, economic, social, and technological fields. The College cooperates with local agricultural, industrial, and public service sector organizations in the region, aiming to ensure the organization of students' practical training and internships in real working environments.

The College continues to fulfill its mission by preparing qualified professionals both for Ararat Marz and other regions of the Republic of Armenia within the frameworks of initial vocational and secondary vocational education systems.

The primary objective of ASC is to provide students with opportunities for the fullest realization of their potential in secondary and initial vocational fields. In this context, the College prioritizes the effective implementation of initial and secondary vocational education programmes, particularly considering regional labour market demands and workforce needs.

According to data for the 2024–2025 academic year (as of January 2025), approximately 527 students are enrolled at ASC. The presented data represent the College's core performance indicators, including the licensed capacities of academic programmes, the number of students and academic staff, and graduate employment data.

Academic Programmes

At present, the College implements educational programmes in the following areas:

Secondary Vocational Education Programmes (9 specializations)

- Finance
- Marketing
- Accounting
- Preschool Education
- Cosmetics and Make-up Art
- Computer Graphic Design
- Software Engineering of Computer and Automated Systems
- Service Management
- Organization of Tourism Services with Advanced Foreign Language Proficiency

Initial Vocational Education Programmes (2 specializations)

- Culinary Arts
- Winemaking and Juice Production

In addition, the College offers short-term training programmes (lasting 2–6 months), aimed at developing professional competencies for different target groups.

ASC aspires to become an innovative, student-centred educational institution that promotes moral, national, and universal values and provides accessible, inclusive education for learners of all ages.

Academic Staff and Human Resources

The College places particular importance on aligning its academic and support staff with its institutional mission and on continuously enhancing educational quality. Currently, the educational process is delivered by 44 lecturers, including 4 employer-practitioner lecturers and 4 graduate lecturers. Among the academic staff, 41 lecturers hold higher education qualifications, while 3 hold secondary vocational qualifications.

Students and Graduate Outcomes

At present, 527 students are enrolled at the College. According to 2023–2024 academic year data, out of 197 graduates:

- 27 graduates continued their education at higher education institutions in fields relevant to their qualifications.
- 41 graduates are currently employed, including 31 employed in their field of specialization.

Student Distribution by Programme and Licensed Capacity

(as of September 2024)

- Finance – 81 students (licensed capacity: 55)
- Accounting – 48 students (licensed capacity: 55)
- Service Management – 85 students (licensed capacity: 55)
- Marketing – 46 students (licensed capacity: 50)
- Software Engineering of Computer and Automated Systems – 76 students (licensed capacity: 30)
- Computer Graphic Design – 46 students (licensed capacity: 30)

- Preschool Education – 57 students (licensed capacity: 50)
- Cosmetics and Make-up Art – 21 students (licensed capacity: 50)
- Winemaking and Juice Production – 60 students (licensed capacity: 40)
- Culinary Arts – 29 students (licensed capacity: 40)

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

The expertise of the Ararat State College institutional capacities was carried out by the independent expert panel formed in accordance with the requirements of “Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel”, «National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance» Foundation. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with 10 institutional accreditation criteria outlined in the RA Government Decree N 959-Ն, dated June 30, 2011.

The College previously underwent institutional accreditation, was granted accreditation for 4 years, and submitted the follow-up Plan, with certain actions already implemented.

Ararat State College delivers nine secondary vocational education programmes and two initial vocational education programmes, implemented alongside basic (9-year) and general secondary (12-year) education. The programmes are aligned with Levels 4 and 5 of the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (ANQF).

The mission of the College is to ensure the provision of relevant knowledge, skills, and competences, thereby contributing to the socio-economic development of the region. In addition, the College implements professional training and retraining programmes for employees and individuals in the service sector.

Following the previous accreditation, the College developed governance policies and procedures that define the core objectives of management and clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of participants in governance processes. Decisions are discussed at relevant committees before approval by the Governing Council, thereby enhancing transparency and accountability in institutional management.

In its decision-making processes, the College relies on data generated through internal evaluation mechanisms. These data relate to resource management, student academic performance, implementation of academic programmes, and cooperation with employers.

The expert panel positively assessed the College’s efforts to improve governance, enhance stakeholder involvement, develop institutional resources, and strengthen academic staff capacity. At the same time, it was noted that further work is required to consolidate a quality culture and to improve the strategic planning framework and its monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The College’s Strategic Development Plan does not comprehensively cover all areas of institutional activity. In particular, research, external relations, and internationalisation lack clearly defined action plans and implementation timelines. Moreover, unit-level development plans are not sufficiently aligned with the overall strategic plan, resulting in fragmented planning and reporting practices and limiting the coherence of institutional development processes.

The analyses of surveys, internal evaluations, and reports are not consistently translated into concrete improvement actions. The roles and responsibilities of the quality assurance responsible and the quality assurance committee are not clearly delineated, which limits the effectiveness and systematic nature of quality assurance activities.

The College is developing new academic programmes in response to labour market needs.

During the 2024–2025 academic year, a new programme in the field of tourism was introduced. In addition, steps are being taken to implement AHU and dual educational programmes. At the same time, there remains a need to further strengthen academic staff capacity, particularly through the increased involvement of employer-practitioners. Shortages in material and technical resources, including classrooms and computer equipment, are also observed.

The educational process is implemented in accordance with approved curricula. Assessment mechanisms are in place, and a variety of teaching and learning methods are applied. Internships and practical training play a significant role in the programmes, contributing to the development of students' practical skills and professional competencies. Nevertheless, it is necessary to clarify which teaching and learning methodologies are applied and to what extent they align with the intended learning outcomes of the educational programmes. In addition, a clear, structured approach to developing students' research skills and to effectively integrating research components into the learning process needs to be developed.

The College has defined a research strategy; however, certain components of this strategy extend beyond the scope of secondary vocational education. The involvement of academic staff and students in research activities remains limited, and the research carried out is neither systematically documented nor formally evaluated.

Students actively participate in educational, cultural, and sports activities, and the College encourages their engagement in extracurricular life. Mechanisms for identifying students' needs are in place, primarily through course advisors. The College also seeks to maintain contact with its graduates and to monitor their career pathways and professional progression.

APC plays an active role within the local community by delivering short-term training programmes and providing public-oriented services. Cooperation with employers continues to expand, while emerging links with colleges in the Republic of Armenia and abroad constitute an important foundation for the further development and enhancement of academic programmes.

Strengths of the Institution:

- Alignment of academic programmes with the College's mission and the socio-economic development trends of the region.
- Introduction of new programmes responsive to labour market needs, including active cooperation with employers in the development of WBL (work-based learning) and dual education models.
- Availability of minimum required resources for the implementation of the educational process and continuous steps toward infrastructure development.
- Presence of a young and motivated academic staff, along with established policies for recruitment, professional development, and performance evaluation of teaching personnel.

- Gradual implementation of the student-centred learning principle, including the use of preventive and remedial tools for managing student progression.
- Strengthening cooperation with employers, graduates, and the community, particularly in the organization of internships and the reinforcement of the education–labour market linkage.
- Practical manifestations of accountability across different levels of institutional governance.
- Existence of a public communication policy and application of tools to ensure transparency and access to information.
- Initial steps toward internationalisation and student participation in national and international events.

Weaknesses of the Institution:

- Insufficient alignment of learning outcomes specified in programme specifications and internship curricula with teaching, learning, and assessment methods.
- Lack of systematic integration of a research component within academic programmes.
- Limited involvement of academic staff and students in research and analytical activities.
- Incomplete application of quality assurance mechanisms for academic programmes.
- Absence of systematic mechanisms for forming a professional staff reserve.
- Overly general formulation of objectives in strategic documents and the absence of clearly defined KPIs.
- Limited coherence between strategic documents and unit-level development plans, along with the absence of phased planning.
- Weak interlinkage between development plans, annual action plans, and reporting mechanisms.
- Insufficient involvement of internal and external stakeholders in strategic planning and quality assurance processes.
- Inadequate use of survey results for evaluating effectiveness and informing improvement actions.
- Weak linkage between documentation and actual practices within quality assurance processes.

Main recommendations:

Data-Driven Management

1. Review the formulation of strategic objectives to ensure their alignment with the requirements for training specialists corresponding to Levels 4 and 5 of the National Qualifications Framework for Vocational Education and Training.
2. Translate strategic objectives into measurable and achievable outcomes and reflect institutional priorities in action plans with clearly defined performance indicators and timelines, ensuring process controllability and accountability.

3. Explicitly define the main directions of internationalisation and research activities within the strategic plan to ensure the completeness of institutional policy and sectoral coherence.
4. Introduce regulatory clarifications to clearly differentiate the functions of the Quality Assurance Committee and the Quality Assurance Responsible, thereby enhancing the committee's independence, strengthening accountability, and ensuring a more systematic organisation of activities.
5. Assess the potential impact of planned structural changes on the distribution of functions, staff workload, and management effectiveness to prevent organisational instability and duplication of responsibilities.
6. Ensure that targeted improvement plans are developed and consistently implemented based on deficiencies identified through internal evaluations.
7. Enhance annual and unit-level reports with a strong analytical component, including analysis of the achievement of strategic objectives, performance assessments, identified challenges, and improvement proposals, to support evidence-based and well-grounded managerial decision-making.
8. Review the questionnaires currently in use, clearly defining the purpose of each question and the intended use of the collected data within the improvement cycle.

Credible Awarding of Qualifications

9. Encourage the active involvement of faculty in the development of academic programmes, particularly in the formulation of learning outcomes, the selection of teaching and learning methods, and the design of expected internship/practical training outcomes.
10. Ensure that teaching methods and learning assignments are clearly reflected in course syllabi and thematic plans, enabling the development of an assignment bank and safeguarding programme continuity in cases of changes within the teaching staff.
11. Review and update internship/practical training programmes by explicitly defining expected learning outcomes aligned with the programme-level learning outcomes.
12. Develop assessment tools through the introduction of rubrics, particularly in cases where assessment includes practical and performance-based tasks.
13. Initiate benchmarking analyses aimed at improving academic programmes and course content, allowing for comparison with national and international best practices and the identification of evidence-based improvement directions.
14. Develop and implement an institutional-level professional development strategy and action plan for teaching staff, prioritising training activities focused on the enhancement of professional competencies, the development of research capacities, and the application of modern teaching and learning methodologies.
15. Ensure a structured presentation and analysis of the results of periodic faculty evaluations and the provision of feedback, so that identified weaknesses serve as a basis for individual development plans and targeted team-based training activities.
16. Develop mechanisms for the continuous improvement of the teaching and learning process, based on feedback from students, employers, and teaching staff, and ensure the integration of analytical results into management and decision-making processes.

17. Develop a funding diversification strategy, enabling the College to generate additional income through participation in grant-funded projects, social and community partnerships, and the provision of fee-based short-term training programmes.
18. Review the library development strategy, focusing on the targeted acquisition of professional and foreign-language literature and expanding access to electronic and open educational resources in line with the requirements of educational programmes.

Long-Term Development

19. Further deepen the implementation of the student-centred learning approach by systematically reviewing and organising the teaching and learning process in line with students' needs. In this context, it is essential to link student feedback analysis to concrete improvement actions within the educational process.
20. Translate strategic objectives in research into measurable and achievable outcomes, and align strategic priorities with action plans and assessment indicators to ensure process monitoring, accountability, and effective implementation.
21. Establish methodological frameworks for the organisation and assessment of student research activities, including essays, project-based assignments, and final qualification (diploma) works, ensuring their systematic implementation and alignment with programme learning outcomes.
22. Update the structure of institutional reports by strengthening their analytical component. The analyses should include assessments of goal achievement, identified challenges and weaknesses, and improvement proposals, serving as a basis for evidence-based decision-making.
23. Clarify and plan short-term internationalisation actions, based on the "Internationalisation Policy and Strategy" document, ensuring a structured and phased approach to implementation.
24. Implement measures to enhance foreign language proficiency among students, academic staff, and administrative personnel, in support of internationalisation objectives.
25. Formalise and systematise cooperation with employers by developing clear cooperation agreements and action plans, and by analysing the outcomes of such partnerships.

Lilit Badalyan, Chair of Expert Panel / 14.07.2025

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The following expert panel conducted an external evaluation of Ararat State College's institutional capacities.

- **Lilit Badalyan** – Associate Professor, Head of the Chair of English Communication, V. Brusov State University, Chair of the Expert Panel.
- **Oleg Gevorgyan** – Associate Professor, Deputy Director for Research, Technological Cooperation, and External Relations, Institute of Information and Communication Technologies and Electronics, National Polytechnic University of Armenia, Member of the Expert Panel.
- **Elina Grigoryan** – Armenian National Agrarian University, Member of the Expert Panel.
- **Karine Mkhitarian** – Student at Yerevan State College of Informatics, Student Expert, 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 Lilit Ghazaryan, Specialist at the Secretariat Department of ANQA.

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

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

The College applied for state institutional accreditation (12.08.2024) by submitting an ANQA application, including the application form, copies of the license, and the respective appendices.

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

After deciding to accept the application(14.01.2025), ANQA and the College signed an agreement. The timetable of activities was prepared and approved.

Self-evaluation

Given that the educational institution is undergoing its first accreditation process and is in the initial stages of establishing a culture of quality assurance, ANQA has conducted online workshops

with accredited VET institutions. The workshops aimed to prepare colleges for the organisational stages of the accreditation process. During the workshops, the interpretations of the institutional accreditation criteria and standards, the electronic questionnaire to be filled in for applying for institutional accreditation, and the features of self-evaluation and SWOT analysis were presented. The educational institution conducted a SWOT analysis, which was discussed with ANQA employees. During the implementation of the self-evaluation, current discussions were organized by the ANQA to clarify the issues.

The revised self-evaluation of Ararat State College's institutional capacities was submitted on 11.03.2025. Representatives of the institution's administrative and educational staff, lecturers, and students participated in the self-evaluation process.

Preparatory phase

The Expert Panel, having reviewed the VET's self-evaluation report and the accompanying package of documents, 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 results of the preliminary assessment and developed a detailed plan and schedule for the site visit.

Preparatory visit

Before the site visit, a preparatory visit to the college was carried out on 08.04.2025. The ANQA coordinator, the head of the institutional program accreditation department and the head of the expert panel were present at the meeting. During the meeting, the site visit schedule was introduced and agreed upon with the college. Additionally, the meeting participants discussed and mutually agreed on decisions regarding the technical, organisational, and information aspects of the site visit, as well as the behaviour and ethical norms of the participants.

Site visit

The expert panel site visit took place from April 14-16, 2025. During the week preceding the site visit, the expert panel members and the coordinator visited the college, observed its infrastructure and resources, conducted class observations, and observed exams. Then the experts and the coordinator had a closed meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to identify the college's strengths and weaknesses

against the standards, clarify the questions to be asked of the target groups, and discuss the meeting procedures and next steps.

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.

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

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 expert panel members and the ANQA coordinator prepared the preliminary version of the expert report, which, following the panel's approval on May 09, 2025, was provided to the College.

On 19 June 2025, the ANQA received the College's consent regarding the preliminary report. Based on these observations, ANQA organized a meeting between the College and the Expert Panel, during which the institution's comments regarding the preliminary version of the expert report were discussed. The meeting was held on 4 July 2025 at the ANQA office.

Based on the comments and clarifications provided, the Expert Panel prepared the final version of the report, which was approved by the Panel on 14 July 2025.

Lilit Ghazaryan

Coordinator of the Expert Panel

14.07.2025

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

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