

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



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
GYUMRI STATE MUSIC COLLEGE NAMED AFTER KARA-MURZA**

Yerevan – 2025

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of Gyumri State Music College named after Kara-Murza (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

In 1924, composer, choirmaster, and public figure Daniel Ghazaryan founded a music studio in Leninakan, which led to the establishment of a music school in the same year. In 1934, the Leninakan Music College was founded.

In 1954, the music college was named after Kristapor Kara-Murza, the founder of Armenian polyphony. In 2004, the “Gyumri Kara-Murza Music College” was reorganized as the “Gyumri Kara-Murza State Music College” State Non-Commercial Organization (SNCO). In 2006, the “Gyumri Kara-Murza State Music College” SNCO was renamed the “Gyumri Kara-Murza State Music College” SNCO (college status).

The College is currently undergoing the first cycle of institutional accreditation.

Development Directions and Educational Programmes

In the 2025–2026 academic year, the College delivers five intermediate vocational education programs aligned with Level 5 of the National Qualifications Framework, namely: Instrumental Performance (by instrument specialisation), Vocal Studies, Design, Music Theory, and Dance Art.

The College currently enrolls 123 students admitted based on basic and secondary education, all of whom study full-time on campus.

The academic staff comprises 58 lecturers (including accompanists), 29 of whom are part-time. In the 2025–2026 academic year, 35 lecturers from professional practice are involved in program delivery. During the same academic year, 22 College graduates are engaged in teaching activities.

25.7% of graduates, approximately 40% are employed in their field of specialisation, primarily in music and art schools, orchestras, and studios, while approximately 60% continue their education in higher education institutions in the same field.

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

The expertise of the Gyumri State Music College named after Kara-Murza and its institutional capacities were assessed by an independent expert panel formed in accordance with the requirements of the “Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel” of the «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.

During the expert evaluation, the Panel noted that the College plays a significant role in the regional arts sector. At the same time, it was noted that the College is undergoing its first institutional accreditation and is at an early stage in developing a quality assurance culture.

In conducting the evaluation, the Expert Panel considered that the College is a mid-level professional educational institution whose mission is to prepare competitive and responsible specialists in the relevant fields, capable of creative work and committed to the preservation and development of cultural values, while ensuring compliance with contemporary educational requirements and the application of innovative approaches.

The Gyumri Kara-Murza State Music College is a key component of the Shirak Region's cultural and educational system. The College ensures the continuity of the educational pathway from music and art schools through higher education institutions into the professional environment. This continuity supports a steady inflow of applicants to the College, contributes to the sustainability of its activities, and facilitates the systematic supply of future professionals to the labor market.

The College’s mission and strategic priorities reflect the important role of arts education in the region: the institution not only ensures access to professional education but also preserves cultural continuity, fosters the creative potential of the community, and serves as a regional centre for music and arts education.

The analysis of the mission and strategic management indicates that, in recent years, the College has adopted a more structured approach to planning and has sought to establish links among strategic objectives, educational processes, and resource management. However, the lack of a clearly articulated mission still prevents a full understanding of how strategic planning is oriented toward the development of academic program directions. Clarifying the mission may become an important development tool for the College, enabling alignment of educational provision with labor market demands and regional expectations for cultural education, as well as a more coherent alignment of academic programs, resources, and development priorities, ensuring consistency across all levels of governance.

The review of governance processes shows that decision-making, particularly in academic processes, partnerships, and resource allocation, is gradually becoming more inclusive and participatory; however, it is not yet fully grounded in data analysis. Information collected from stakeholders primarily concerns perceptions and satisfaction levels, and its structure limits the possibility of in-depth interpretation and causal relationship identification. As a result, decisions are

often based on individual meetings or personal observations rather than on systematic analysis.

The College's internal quality assurance system is at an early stage. The actions taken lack measurable outcomes, making it difficult to assess their impact on the educational process, the learning environment, or stakeholder satisfaction. At the same time, the prerequisites for developing a quality culture are evident, including internal evaluations, periodic discussions, and the identification of specific issues. If this trend is complemented by measurable indicators, mechanisms for in-depth data analysis, and systematic monitoring of strategy implementation, it can ensure greater predictability of governance processes and strengthen the links between evidence, decisions, and outcomes.

The analysis of the College's academic programmes, academic capacity, and resources demonstrates that the institution has established an authentic, practice-oriented professional learning environment. Teaching is delivered predominantly by experienced lecturers actively engaged in professional practice, ensuring the applied nature of the programmes and their alignment with labour market requirements. This strength reinforces the College's role in the region as a centre for secondary professional arts education, where students gain direct exposure to real processes in the music and cultural sectors through formal agreements as well as informal partnerships and collaborations.

At the same time, coherence among program objectives, intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods, and assessment criteria remains insufficient. The mapping of learning outcomes to course content and assignments is currently implemented in a non-systematic manner and largely depends on lecturers' individual approaches.

The academic staff constitute one of the College's key resources. The involvement of practitioners from the professional field ensures a strong practice-oriented focus in teaching and fosters a supportive environment for the development of students' performance skills. However, imbalances in teaching workload, the absence of unified assessment mechanisms, and the lack of a formalized mentoring system may constrain the professional development potential of early-career lecturers. The absence of a structured approach to continuous professional development results in the transfer of experience occurring in an unsystematic manner, while the introduction of innovative teaching methods largely depends on individual initiative rather than institutional policy.

Regarding resources, despite the College's continuous efforts to implement improvements, including renovation works, spatial reorganisation, replenishment of musical instruments, and the use of partner resources for design-related fields, the learning environment still requires long-term investment. At the same time, the targeted, phased development of the College's resources reflects a management approach that seeks to ensure the continuous enhancement of the learning environment, even under limited resources.

The expert panel considers it essential for the College to integrate three key dimensions: clarifying and mapping academic program objectives and intended learning outcomes; aligning teaching methods, learning tasks, and assessment criteria; and strategically planning resource development. This integrated approach will enable the establishment of a learning environment in which creative, analytical, and practical competences are developed systematically and predictably. Such an approach will contribute not only to improving the quality of the teaching and learning process

but also to the sustainable competitiveness of graduates, thereby further strengthening the College's role in the region as an institution of arts education.

Student support at the College is primarily delivered through individualised approaches. One-to-one instruction, rehearsal-based learning, and feedback from academic staff play a significant role in developing professional competencies. This model, characteristic of arts education, ensures personalised engagement with students and provides favourable conditions for the development of performance skills.

Research culture is a key prerequisite for the long-term development of an arts college. The analysis indicates that while creative and analytical elements are present at the College, they are not yet integrated into a coherent research system. In the field of arts education, research is directly linked to methodological thinking, the justification of interpretation, the comparison of performance practices, and the analysis of creative processes and stylistic choices. These elements are present across the College's academic programmes as isolated initiatives; however, they have not yet evolved into a unified approach that systematically connects creative practice with research-based thinking.

If the College succeeds in defining research competences as intended learning outcomes and designing student assignments on a clear methodological basis, it will enable a new level of creative education. Within such a framework, the student is positioned not only as a performer but also as an analytical professional capable of substantiating and critically reflecting on their creative output.

The College has already established accountability mechanisms, which form an important foundation for a controllable and predictable governance system. However, the effectiveness of these mechanisms could be significantly enhanced by strengthening the analytical component of reporting. This would entail not only presenting completed activities and quantitative indicators but also interpreting their impact, identifying the root causes of challenges, recognising emerging trends, and defining evidence-based improvement actions derived from the analysis.

One of the key prerequisites for enhancing transparency is the establishment of an official website and its continuous, systematic updating. The website can serve as a central platform for publishing processes, outcomes, and key institutional documents, with a clear delineation of responsibility for which structural unit is accountable for the disclosure and maintenance of specific information. This approach not only ensures public awareness and transparency but also contributes to the development of an internal accountability framework in which each unit clearly understands its role and scope of responsibility.

The wide range of partners indicates that the College is well integrated into the regional cultural landscape, while existing links with international partners, primarily established through individual initiatives, demonstrate potential for international visibility. However, internationalisation currently lacks an institutionalised framework and remains largely dependent on individual contacts. Should the College develop a structured internationalisation strategy, strengthen foreign-language competences, and systematically involve students in mobility schemes, joint projects, and collaborative initiatives, it would enhance not only institutional visibility but also access to new educational experiences. These developments would contribute significantly to the College's long-term

sustainability and continuous development.

Strengths of the Institution:

- Delivery of academic programs aligned with the College's mission, ensuring the graduation of specialists who respond to regional needs in the fields of music and arts.
- Availability of a flexible change management model, enabling timely responses to emerging demands and the implementation of development-oriented actions.
- Enhancement of students' performance competencies through the involvement of lecturers with substantial professional and practical experience.
- A clear trend toward rejuvenation and generational renewal of the academic staff, contributing to the sustainability and continuity of teaching capacity.
- Continuous and planned improvement and modernisation of the learning environment, alongside the effective joint use of resources in cooperation with employers.
- Ongoing initiatives and events aimed at transmitting cultural values and shaping musical and artistic appreciation within society.
- Sustainable operation of the "music/art school-college-higher arts educational institution-professional field" continuum, ensuring applicant recruitment and the continuous preparation of qualified specialists for the sector.

Weaknesses of the Institution:

- The lack of measurable indicators for assessing strategic objectives, the predominantly non-analytical nature of reports, and the insufficient use of analysis results in subsequent annual planning.
- Weak alignment mechanisms between student assignments and intended learning outcomes, limiting the coherence of teaching, learning, and assessment.
- Non-systematic application of assessment tools and criteria specific to the fields of music and arts across all academic programs.
- A weak link between the assessment of academic staff needs and the planning of professional development and training activities based on those needs.
- Insufficient integration of research-oriented assignments aligned with the specific features of the College's academic programs, along with the absence of clear mechanisms for their

assessment.

- The absence of institutional mechanisms for the systematic involvement of students and academic staff in internationalisation processes.
- Limited data collection mechanisms within the quality assurance system covering all areas of institutional activity, resulting in incomplete data for informed managerial decision-making and program improvement.

Main recommendations:

Data-Driven Management

- Develop clear mechanisms for evaluating the College's strategic plan, including measurable indicators (e.g., graduate employment rate, number of local and international partnerships), to ensure regular monitoring and accountability.
- Ensure the periodic identification and analysis of stakeholder needs to determine the knowledge and skills required by employers, and based on this evidence, further improve the College's strategic and academic programs, ensuring their alignment with sectoral development trends.
- Define the scope of data required for managerial decision-making (e.g., resource allocation) and ensure the regular collection, analysis, and use of this data.
- Clarify the responsibilities within the management and review processes of academic programs, clearly defining the scope and functions of the cyclical (program) committees.
- Strengthen the analytical component of reports by systematically analysing the outcomes of previous plans, achievements, and areas for improvement, and, on this basis, setting objectives and actions for the subsequent year.
- Clarify the link between the quality assurance policy and the annual action plan, ensuring that planned activities align with the policy's objectives and indicators.
- Define measurable indicators for assessing student and staff satisfaction, the effectiveness of academic programs, and the outcomes of improvement actions.
- Develop and implement a range of needs-assessment mechanisms, complement surveys with

class observations, focus group discussions, regular meetings with the student council, and consultations with employers.

- Ensure the regular analysis of survey results by educational program, identifying program-specific issues and developing targeted improvement plans.

Credible Awarding of Qualifications

- Clarify and institutionalise the mechanisms for the periodic review of academic programs, ensuring the systematic involvement of employers, graduates, and academic staff, through analysis of labor market demands and their alignment with graduates' competencies.
- Review and refine the mapping of learning outcomes to modules, clearly demonstrating the alignment among intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods, and assessment tools.
- Develop detailed descriptions of internship and practical training for each educational programme, specifying student tasks, expected competencies, and assessment criteria.
- Establish clear assessment criteria for final attestation, encompassing not only technical and performance quality, but also analytical, creative, and interpretative components.
- Consider introducing elective and optional modules based on an assessment of labor market–required competences, with the aim of enhancing graduate employability and highlighting graduates' competitive advantages.
- Introduce a structured system for planning and conducting class and peer observations, analysing the outcomes at the program level, and using the findings as a basis for academic staff professional development activities.
- Develop mechanisms to identify, document, and disseminate internal best practices in teaching and learning, fostering regular professional dialogue and experience exchange at both program and institutional levels.
- Implement targeted professional development activities for academic staff, tailored to the specificities of academic programs and encompassing methodological, pedagogical, and practical skills development.
- Systematise the professional development of early-career academic staff by introducing a

mentoring system that enables experienced staff to transfer their methodological and professional expertise to new faculty in a structured way.

- Ensure the continuity of planning for resource enhancement and facility renovation, defining priority areas and considering the specific needs of educational programmes.
- Strengthening the College's engagement in grant-funded projects and partnership initiatives and attracting additional financial resources to improve infrastructure and diversify the resource base.

Long-Term Development

- Introduce mechanisms for the systematic tracking of graduates' career paths (at 6-month and 1-year intervals), using the collected data as an evidence base for the continuous improvement of academic programs.
- Clearly define research directions in the fields of music, design, and dance, ensuring their alignment with program objectives and learning outcomes.
- Plan and embed mandatory stages for research-based assignments throughout the entire academic program, specifying their formats (e.g. analytical paper, creative project) and clearly linking them to the intended learning outcomes and competences acquired by students.
- Include a mandatory research component in diplomas and creative works, and define technical requirements for submission (scope, structure, format) to ensure a unified and comparable approach to student outputs.
- Operationalise the official website, ensuring stakeholders' access to comprehensive and up-to-date information on academic programs, admissions, events, and institutional documentation.
- Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the public relations officer, PR, and SMM functions, with the aim of enhancing public awareness and visibility of the College.
- Clarify the objectives and expected outcomes of partnerships, and establish measurable indicators to assess the effectiveness and impact of cooperation.
- Take steps to engage the College in Erasmus+ capacity-building programs, supporting academic staff professional development and enhancing institutional capacities.
- Promote the practical use of foreign languages by integrating foreign-language assignments,

learning materials, and professional literature into the teaching and learning process.

Armenuhi Mheryan, Chair of Expert Panel / 29.12.2025

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The following expert panel conducted an external evaluation of the institutional capacities of Gyumri State Music College Named after Kara-Murza.

- **Armenuhi Mheryan**, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor, Head of the Department of Economics and Finance at the European University of Armenia - Chair of the Expert Panel.
- **Hripsime Maronyan**, Lecturer at the Department of Fine Arts of the Faculty of Art Education, Khachatur Abovian Armenian State Pedagogical University; Director of “Maronyan Fashion Studio” - Member of the Expert Panel.
- **Naira Khachatryan**, Lecturer at the Yerevan Arno Babajanyan State Music Pedagogical College -Member of the Expert Panel.
- **Ani Shahbazyan**, Student of the Yerevan State College of Light Industry -Student 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 Meri Barseghyan, Specialist at the Policy Development Division of the 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 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, 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 self-evaluation of Gyumri State Music College, named after Kara-Murza, was submitted on May 26, 2025. The self-evaluation was conducted by the college's staff, including administrative, teaching, and support staff.

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 online visit to the college was carried out on 06.10.2025. 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 October 20-22, 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

With the ANQA coordinator, the expert panel members prepared a preliminary version of the expert report, which the experts reviewed and agreed to. The preliminary report was provided to the college on 23 December 2025. The college did not submit any comments or objections to the preliminary report. Upon receipt of the college's written confirmation, the expert panel prepared the final version of the report.

Meri Barseghyan

Coordinator of the Expert Panel

23.12.2025

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