



განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

**REPORT on**  
**Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani Teaching University (SABAUNI) Authorization**

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**Expert Panel Members**

**Chair:**

Prof. Dr. Ciarán Burke, Friedrich Schiller Universität, Jena, Germany

**Members:**

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Tbilisi  
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## Authorization Report Resume

### General information on the educational institution

SABAUNI was founded in 2002. Initially, it had only one faculty – the faculty of Theology.

The University obtained further institutional accreditation in 2009. The same year, Faculty of Law was established and in addition to the BA program - the master program in Theology was launched (within the faculty of Humanities).

Since then, the university has continued to expand.

Nowadays, there are 13 programs, therefore 9 Bachelor (Law, Tourism, Business, Business (ENG), International relations, Theology, Political Science, Psychology and Sociology) and 4 Master programs (Law, Theology, Business and Public Governance) in Sabauni. All of these programs are accredited. These academic programs provide students with scientific, labour market-oriented knowledge with harmonic integration of theory and practice.

The university issues diplomas with state recognition. The university publications, including a number of in-house journals, are recognized and promoted by the university. In terms of internationalization, the university has made efforts to attract international students, with many coming from Nigeria, and an attractive offering, including many courses offered through English. However, the SER only lists 9 active foreign students at present (though the panel had the impression that there were more based on interview data). Covid-19 has led the university to consider long-term distance learning models, which are being explored. Generally, provision for international students is impressive, with a dedicated administrator who oversees any problems that may arise.

The university is running 13 educational programs with 107 academic personnel, from which only 33 are affiliated with the university. Some academic personnel are affiliated with other universities or do not wish to be affiliated.

The total number of HEI staff is 278. Currently, according to the self-assessment report of the university, the required marginal number of the students is 1500. The number of the students with active status is 584. 556 have suspended status. Suspension rates are high in both masters (446:488) and bachelor's (110:96) programs.

The total budget of the HEI is 5,72 Million GEL.

### Brief overview of the authorization site visit

The visit was quite successful. The expert panel found the staff, especially management, to be very co-operative and were made to feel welcome. Technical issues did not arise by virtue of carrying the authorisation out via Zoom, except during the site visit, when the panel chair missed a small amount of the engagement due to technical issues around sound transmission.

During the visit, the panel met with the university administration, the self-evaluation team, the dean and faculty administration, with the programme directors, with academic staff, with invited staff, with quality assurance management, with employers and other stakeholders, and with students and alumni, as well as the student self-government, and IT staff, as well as human resources and the student career services team. The panel also reviewed syllabi, theses, abstracts, and portfolios, as well as a range of other documents.

Several members of the panel also undertook a tour of the university's facilities, including the library, the medical facilities, the classrooms, and dormitories (which are still in the process of being constructed).

### Overview of the HET's compliance with standards

In general, the panel's visit revealed substantial or partial compliance with virtually all areas assessed under standards 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. However, Standards 6 and 7 require serious improvement. With respect to Standard 7, this is likely to be easily rectified, through a few key interventions, such as the appointment of a librarian with better training and the upgrading of fire safety et cetera. However, the failings in relation to Standard 6 are very serious indeed. The research profile of the university is very limited indeed, with no discernible output in leading internationally ranked journals or monographs of high quality, and there is little effective quality assurance (since publications in local journals are effectively equated with those from internationally ranked SCOPUS journals in staff assessment). This area was deemed by the panel to be of special concern, and requires immediate and robust remedial action.

While, according to the criteria, the university seems to have performed rather well overall, the above is a serious failing. **It is the considered opinion of the panel that SABAUNI does not have the resources or experience to offer PhD programmes, and that in doing so, the university is diverting energy away from things it actively does well as a teaching university.** This is a key and central finding of the panel.

Another area of particular concern is internationalization, especially outward student and staff mobility and engagement with high-quality international research. While, as noted, the university has an attractive offer for some international students – who seem to be enticed by the low price of courses, but who are impressed with services when they arrive – the monetary amounts allotted to internationalization are not sufficient to achieve significant progress here at present. The fact that there are plans toward improving things in this area is rather positive than negative; however, it cannot influence the fact that little enough has occurred at the time of the evaluation itself. However, international students have a very positive experience. The general attitude toward students was also praiseworthy, with a good attitude from most staff, and a generally helpful perspective, with a will to make future improvements.

In short, the panel were generally satisfied with the university. With attention to the recommendations below, it can go from being a good institution (which it is) to a great one. However, the direction is wrong; the addition of PhD programmes is beyond the capacities of the university (which has shown us no evidence that it is a centre of research excellence), and should not happen.

### Summary of Recommendations

1. **The university should discontinue its ambition to begin PhD programmes. While it is a good teaching university, it is seriously premature to take this step (key recommendation).**
2. It is essential that the mission statement reflects the reality. The fact that the university sees itself as pursuing high-level research but so few high-level publications result requires attention.
3. Action should be taken to increase awareness of the mission and vision, as students in particular were not aware of it.

4. If the university is to achieve its goals in terms of internationalization, additional resources are required
5. The organizational structure requires reform to better achieve goals. This includes action to prevent overlap between staff roles.
6. The engagement of stakeholder outside the University (i.e. alumni, employers) needs to be more systematic and meaningful especially where academic program appraisal process is concerned;
7. A procedure should be put in place to ensure that the anti-plagiarism software and the way in which it is used by SABAUNI meets international standards, including the threshold (percentage), how it is calculated, and the publications against which it is tested, as well as data protection issues, once it is actually up and running.
8. While the ethical code provided by the university is sufficient, staff should be made to sign it – as should students – on the day of their arrival, as part of their contractual obligations.
9. Foreign students need to be included in the student self-government body
10. The English language tests used should be substantially improved
11. Alternative options should be provided for students who have satisfactory results but don't get the ECTS credits in the Bachelor's programs
12. Alternative data gathering mechanisms should be used, as well as questionnaires
13. Requirements concerning 'partial' completion of courses in foreign languages and resulting exemptions, should be clarified
14. The academic study plan should correspond to that online.
15. Doctoral studies should be elaborated in better detail if they are to be pursued (though they should not be pursued)
16. Exams should be anonymized
17. Methodology should be compulsory for masters theses.
18. Staff performance evaluation requires improvement
19. Overlaps in staff competences and roles should be eliminated
20. Provide a plan outlining requirements and providing incentives for staff to publish in high-ranking international journals, rather than local in-house journals
21. Ensure an updated database of staff CVs
22. Elaborate a clear mechanism for using assessment results in future development activities
23. Increase funding for professional development of staff
24. There is a need to convene upon clear methodology of determining the number of academic, scientific, and invited staff in relation with academic programmes considering best practices, academic personnel affiliation, and ensuring that it is implemented in all educational programmes, since at present, while the teaching loads are more or less okay, this seems to be by accident rather than by design.
25. Organize more training/info sessions to increase the understanding of relevant actors in regards to continuous chain of research planning, evaluation processes and available institutional support mechanisms.
26. Increase the number of affiliated staff and their rate of international publications for ensuring the high reputation of scientific productivity;
27. Establish review/editorial boards for university publications/periodics, ensuring the blind review of the process by integrating external (local and international academic colleagues/experts) for the quality check of institutional publications;
28. Strengthen cooperation with economic agents
29. Develop mechanisms to ensure that research also focuses on regional and international dimensions
30. Support students and encourage to participate in a local as well as international scientific conferences;
31. Create more international projects / seminars/ conference possibilities
32. Develop mechanisms to increase the number of publications in high citation index and impact factor journals
33. Develop and implement more effective mechanisms for involving students in scientific activities
34. Strengthen cooperation with European universities, including in the area of joint research
35. Strengthen cooperation with international educational/research foundations
36. Clarify evaluation criteria for research proposal submitted for university funding;
37. Strengthen support mechanisms for securing external funding for research/scientific activities;

38. Develop more concise recruitment policy for attracting high quality researchers and increasing their involvement in scientific activities;
39. Encourage affiliated academic staff's involvement in international joint projects, obtaining international research funds, increasing the number of international publication in reputable scientific journals; inviting international partners for joint scientific publications.
40. Initiate joint masters study programmes with co-supervision schemes in order to enhance the quality of supervision and research outputs
41. Enhance scientific-research units and affiliated academic staff's awareness in regards to evaluation procedures along with its value/impact and consequences.
42. Emergency exit door must not be made of iron, HEI needs to change it; it should also open from inside outwards;
43. Space for the archive is not sufficient, HEI needs to enlarge it, and the space needs to be used solely for the purposes of the archive, not as a general store room;
44. Conclusion on fire Safety must be provided and recommendations by authorized agency must be performed.
45. Hire a librarian with relevant work experience
46. Involve all interested parties in development and review process of business continuity plan
47. The institution should increase the research budget.
48. More transparency with budget planning would be desirable i.e. the overlap between internationalisation and administration

### **Summary of Suggestions**

1. Involving stakeholders from other institutions that have been successful in creating and implementing strategic plans akin to what is desired is certainly a good plan of action
2. QA Mechanisms, Appraisal Results and Their Application document should accurately describe the input of the QA Office, Faculties, program heads and Deans when reporting to the Academic Council on a), b), c) and d);
3. The roles of the QA Office and the Manager should be more accurately described in Planning, Appraisal of and Support for Research Performance
4. To further increase the effectiveness of the University's appraisal processes, it is suggested that data-collection tools and methods should be adjusted to the specifics of research intensive programs and those with a smaller student sample size.
5. Document measures (remedy in case of poor performance or acknowledgement of efficient scientific/research productivity) undertaken as a result of evaluations.
6. The library should be supplied with some more updated literature, especially in foreign languages.

Summary Table

	Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
1.	<b>Mission and strategic development of HEI</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.1	Mission of HEI	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	Strategic development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	<b>Organizational structure and management of HEI</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.1	Organizational structure and management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2	Internal quality assurance mechanisms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3	Observing principles of ethics and integrity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	<b>Educational Programmes</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1	Design and development of educational programmes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2	Structure and content of educational programmes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.3	Assessment of learning outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	<b>Staff of the HEI</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1	Staff management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2	Academic/Scientific and invited Staff workload	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	<b>Students and their support services</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.1	The Rule for obtaining and changing student status, the recognition of education, and student rights	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.2	Student support services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	<b>Research, development and/or other creative work</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.1	Research activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.2	Research support and internationalization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.3	Evaluation of research activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	<b>Material, information and financial resources</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.1	Material resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.2	Library resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.3	Information resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.4	Financial resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature of expert panel members

1. Prof. Dr. Ciarán Burke (Chair)



2. Ms. Nino Oragvelidze (Education System Monitoring Division)



3. Ms. Nino Patariaia (Ilia State University)

ნ. პატარია

4. Ms. Nino Taliashvili (European University)

ნ. ტალიაშვილი

5. Mr. Davit Tepnadze (Georgian Aviation University)

დ. ტეპნაძე

6. Ms. Nino Zhvania (Ilia State University)

ნ. ჯვანია

## Compliance of the Authorization Applicant HEI with the Authorization Standard Components

### 1. Mission and strategic development of HEI

Mission statement of a HEI defines its role and place within higher education area and broader society. Strategic development plan of HEI corresponds with the mission of an institution, is based on the goals of the institution and describe means for achieving these goals.

#### 1.1 Mission of HEI

Mission Statement of the HEI corresponds to Georgia's and European higher education goals, defines its role and place within higher education area and society, both locally and internationally.

#### **Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements**

SABAUNI has existed for 20 years. The idea of the university's mission is to reflect the goals that the university and its leaders wish to achieve as a matter of reality. This goal includes being more involved in the field of human sciences. Three crucial interests were examined: what the university's leaders wanted to do; what the ministry and social policy allowed for; and the leaders' vision, to connect and realise their ambitions. It was a dynamic process. The mission has evolved over time.

The university began as a small theological institute. After this, the founders saw the necessity to broaden its work. Broadening the number of programmes was necessary, and they viewed the necessity to broaden the university's capacities to reflect the academic realities.

No specific guidelines from outside were used while elaborating the mission statement. However, the founder was involved in schools in Italy, Poland, and Germany. He tried to use the contacts he had from those countries involved. But during interview, he was not able to furnish any specific examples of this.

At interview, the founder noted that «University is a place where you have to grow yourself as a free person, express individuality, and work together on how to grow. My idea is that our university is that our university should not just be a clerical university where everyone thinks alike. Staff and students should all think and act together.»

The university has been involved in the process of creating PhD programmes for three years. The programmes are not merely educational; they involve concrete research. They have involved international partners. Lublin, Ukraine Catholic University, Notre Dame. They have identified a clear demand for their PhD programmes, and stated during interviews that they have many international funders. This has been incorporated into the mission and strategy. There is no secular theology PhD in Georgia at present, so the university's programme will fill a gap in the market.

SABAUNI's mission statement defines its role locally and internationally (albeit the latter only to a limited extent).

The desiderata listed in the mission statement are commendable. However, knowledge creation can only be achieved through adequate investment in excellent research, and this did not seem to be a priority in reality. Interviews revealed that most staff were not publishing in SCOPUS ranked journals or internationally. This has been the case for a long time, and interviews revealed that many staff and senior management did not even know what the SCOPUS system was.

Staff at senior levels seemed mostly to be aware of the university's mission, which was described as having several foci, which correspond broadly with those set out in the university's mission document. However, much emphasis was placed on internationalization, a field in which more should be hoped for. Students, however, displayed patchy knowledge of the university's mission.

The university identifies itself as having a number of unique selling points, both in the documentation submitted and during interviews with staff. These included the fact that it is a small university with good infrastructure; individual attention is paid to each student and they get good contact with staff. These points undoubtedly reflect reality.

Freedom of academic and intellectual creativity is mentioned in the mission, but is not borne out in reality, since the university has a very poor research profile. Independent research by panel members on SCOPUS databases found very few examples of peer reviewed international publications. While the relative share of an article published in Scopus is 3,5 times higher than the relative share of Georgian publications (see The rule of planning, evaluating and support of scientific-research activities" (the order #20/20 of 17 January 2017, annex 1.1.)), in



practice, this has not resulted in a high level of research output in top journals. Rather, interviews revealed that in practice, publication in the university's internal journals seems to be treated as equivalent to publishing in high-quality peer reviewed international journals, as when questions were asked during interviews about internationally high-ranked publications, reference was usually made to Georgian-language publications instead.

The priorities for the country (Georgia) are taken into account in assessing changes to existing programmes and new programmes.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- SER
- Strategic development plan
- Action plan
- Interviews
- Independent research by panel members on SCOPUS, Google Scholar, and other databases.
- The rule of planning, evaluating and support of scientific-research activities

#### **Recommendations:**

- It is essential that the mission statement reflects the reality. The fact that the university sees itself as pursuing high-level research but so few high-level publications result requires attention.
- Action should be taken to increase awareness of the mission and vision, as students in particular were not aware of it.

#### **Suggestions:**

- Involving stakeholders from other institutions that have been successful in creating and implementing strategic plans akin to what is desired is certainly a good plan of action

#### **Best Practices (if applicable):**

#### **Evaluation**

☒ Substantially complies with requirements

#### **1.2 Strategic Development**

- HEI has a strategic development (7-year) and an action plans (3-year) in place.
- HEI contributes to the development of the society, shares with the society the knowledge gathered in the institution, and facilitates lifelong learning
- HEI evaluates implementation of strategic and action plans, and duly acts on evaluation results.

#### **Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements**

The formulation of both the university's mission and its strategy are linked to what is realistically achievable. The university employed used accreditation experts, as well as academics and other experts to assist them in elaborating the mission and strategy. The university also used SWOT analysis and used consultants from outside. They also also undertook PECL analysis, using specialist facilitators.

The structure was updated by a specialist in organisational structure and organisational strategy – an expert consultant.

According to the SER, in order to ensure implementation of the university' strategic plan, the university made several significant and efficient steps: The university analyzed the strategy, and human resources, updated statutes of the structural units, created non-bureaucratic, simple organizational structure adjusted to the ongoing

requirements of the university. Furthermore, the university hired a consulting firm, which analyzed the ongoing processes at the university.

The university created a special unit for academic support, a manager who deals with affiliated academic staff and PhD researchers. They have a guide for how to apply to and publish in SCOPUS and COPENICUS journals. However, this has not resulted in a slew of publications. The institution has a motivation system based on financial and non-financial rewards. They have their own journals and are trying to ensure that they will be represented in interational indexes. However, for the present, they are not listed. They are also not properly peer reviewed, and the fact that such journals represent much of the university's publication output is a matter of some concern.

SABAUNI provides international grants and scholarships for professors. Every year, they send between 2-4 professors and admin staff abroad (Catholic university partnership).

The university has a manual to make sure that there is no overlapping structure and no overlapping competencies. However, *de facto*, such overlaps do occur. For example, the panel noted overlaps between the functions of Academic Research Analysis and Evaluation Manager and Academic Research Planning and Development Manager: both of conduct semester surveys to facilitate the academic activities of academic staff, evaluate the results obtained; Information; Make statistics on research activities, projects and publications conducted within the University, analyze information about them.

The university's structure is very much based upon strategy implementation, which is something that the university sees as one of its strengths.

The HEI has a strategic development (7-year) and an action plan (3-year) in place. SABAUNI contributes to the development of the society, shares with the society the knowledge gathered in the institution. The university also modified its 7 year plan, in light of the SER.

Beyond improvements in documentation, the university has improved processes in various areas, such as process management, IT, strategy optimisation – also by virtue of hiring of external consultants. They helped a lot with optimisation of concrete processes, and showed us how to implement a KPI system.

The university's structure was changed in accordance with the strategic goals that the university had, after consultations with the consulting firm. A good example was research and development monitoring and evaluation processes. Also, the reporting structure changed. Previously, the PR and marketing department reported to the chancellor, now it reports to the rector.

The strategic plan is generally adequate for the purposes of achieving the HEI's goals, though there are problems, particularly with regard to fostering research at a high enough level.

During interviews, certain groups, particularly students, though also some staff, displayed only patchy knowledge of the strategy. This reflects the lack of a clear command structure and strategic plan to involve and inform all stakeholders.

The HEI's goals are clearly based on its mission and the priorities of its activities. However, given the small amount of money allocated to internationalization and research, they are not likely to be achievable in the time allocated.

The methodology crafted for drafting strategic development and action plans was mixed in nature, relying on a variety of sources and stakeholders, including a frequent use of questionnaires.

The HEI has a 3-year action plan in place, to clearly describe future activities, sets timeframes for their implementation together with performance criteria and recourses needed for implementation. In order to achieve the goals defined by the strategic plan, HEI has defined a list of realistic and achievable tasks to be implemented during the following 7 years. Some of these are incorporated into the action plan.

A specific chapter was elaborated for the university strategy, which describes the mechanisms about how the monitoring of the fulfillment of strategic and action plans will be implemented. The procedure is written in detail, quarterly evaluation is implemented which provides exact information on the implementation stages and respective response. In particular, specific responsible persons are determined for the monitoring of the strategic and action

plans, also the terms for submission of reports are established and the procedure on implementation of the evaluation is described. Based on the evaluation of the strategy, it is possibly to make changes to it.
<b>Evidences/indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SER</li> <li>• Strategic development plan</li> <li>• Action plan</li> <li>• Reports on research activities</li> <li>• Publication lists of scientific staff</li> <li>• Interviews during the Site visit</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The university should discontinue its ambition to begin PhD programmes. While it is a good teaching university, it is seriously premature to take this step (key recommendation).</li> <li>• Action should be taken to make students and staff more aware of the strategy</li> </ul>
<b>Suggestions:</b>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p>

## 2. Organizational Structure and Management of HEI

Organizational structure and management of the HEI is based on best practices of the educational sector, meaning effective use of management and quality assurance mechanisms in the management process. This approach ensures implementation of strategic plan, integration of quality assurance function into management process, and promotes principles of integrity and ethics

<b>2.1 Organizational Structure and Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Organizational structure of HEI ensures implementation of goals and activities described in its strategic plan</li> <li>○ Procedures for election/appointment of the management bodies of HEI are transparent, equitable, and in line with legislation</li> <li>○ HEI's Leadership/Management body ensures effective management of the activities of the institution</li> <li>○ Considering the mission and goals of HEI, leadership of the HEI supports international cooperation of the institution and the process of internationalization.</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b> <p>According to the SER, in order to ensure implementation of the university' strategic plan, the university made several significant and efficient steps: The university analyzed the strategy, and human resources, updated statutes of the structural units, created non-bureaucratic, simple organizational structure adjusted to the ongoing requirements of the university. Furthermore, University hired a consulting firm, which analyzed the ongoing processes at the university.</p> <p>The governing bodies of the university are: the board of partners and academic council. It should be noted that the board of partners consists of one person. The experts' panel interviewed the only member of the board. During interview partner said that he is not involved in the management process. He receives information about the University once in a year. According to the Statute of the university the composition of Academic Council is as</p>

follows: One professor from each faculty, Rector, Dean, Vice-Rector, Chancellor, QA Manager, One student from each faculty.

Structure of the university consists of the following positions and units: Rector, Vice-Rector, Chancellor, Dissertation council, Advisor to rector on strategic development issues, Quality Assurance office, Students Affairs office, 3 faculties, Study process management office, Library, Foreign Language center, Material Resources Management office, Financial Office, Security Office, IT management Office, International Relation manager, MA and PHD Programs Coordinator, Lawyer, International Students Relations Manager, Academic Research and development Manager, Registry Manager, HR manager, PR and Marketing Manager, project Manager, Labor safety specialist, Nurse, Professional development Centre, Research Institutes .

During interviews, the chancellor was asked about the principles they followed in the elaboration process of new structure. It should be mentioned that in some cases there are structural units and in many cases, just job positions. The Chancellor responded that they were guided by international expertise and it is not efficient to have only one person in a structural unit and to name him/her as the head.

During interviews Top management said that their structure was very effective and they did not have overlaps in functions, structure directly responds to the activities allocated in the action plan. However, as noted in the previous section, the panel noted overlaps in the roles and responsibilities of certain administrative staff members.

According to the action Plan, the PR and Marketing manager and faculties are responsible for disseminating information on the university and its programmes to high school senior students; organising training for graduates and other interested persons/ Providing relevant professional orientation meetings/training/masterclasses for school pupils/ Organizing and conducting social events. According to the Job Description of Project manager, she is responsible for planning projects for pupils. During interview she said that she is planning online masterclasses for pupils. Project Manager is not mentioned in the action plan, she is not indicated as responsible person for any activities.

According to the Action plan, the Students Affairs Office is responsible for implementation of general educational projects. According to the Job Description of Project manager, she is responsible for developing and managing educational projects.

According to the action plan, the Academic Research and Development Manager is responsible for Evaluation and monitoring of the academic staff scientific -research activities. According to the Job description of the Academic Research analysis and evaluation manager she is responsible for evaluation process.

The organizational structure of the institution does not ensure effective implementation of activities defined in its strategic plan, and achievement of its goals.

The panel noted overlaps in functions of the staff: Overlap between the functions of Academic Research Analysis and Evaluation Manager and Academic Research Planning and Development Manager: both of them conduct semester surveys to facilitate the academic activities of academic staff, evaluate the results obtained; Information; Make statistics on research activities, projects and publications conducted within the University, analyze information about them.

The HR office is responsible for managing the human resource information system, the document processing office manages QMS registry. Human Resources Manager was asked about this and she said that before creating HR Office Document processing Office was responsible for above mentioned function so afterwards this function was left to the document processing Office.

The rector has an adviser on strategic development issues. According to strategy document, the QA office is responsible for monitoring the strategic plan. It should be noted that according to the statute and Job Description of the head of Quality assurance Office nothing is indicated about monitoring.

The MA/PHD programs coordinator and Learning process office have substantially the same functions. Both of them are responsible: for preparing diploma supplement, administer mobility process, organize exams etc.

Coordinator is under supervision of Vice-Rector and is not under the umbrella of the office. Besides MA/Phd

coordinator is responsible for: Clarifying the content of the tests / exams, correct with the course supervisor and check the compliance with the syllabus. During interview it was mentioned that coordinator is not responsible for this.

According to the Doctoral study Regulation The University Dissertation Council is a body that awards a PhD in Academic Quality consisting of a staff member of the University with a PhD or an equivalent academic degree. Selection criteria of members are not given. There are faculty dissertation councils (their role is not very clear), also Dissertation Board (Collegium). According to the statute of faculty, faculty council: defines BA, MA, Scientific and other projects supervisors, experts. The dissertation is evaluated by the members of the Dissertation Board. During interviews staff said that university is going to establish one doctoral School which will be responsible for implementing all PHD programs. But According to provided documents we have different picture.

According to The Rule for Planning, Evaluating and Supporting the Scientific-Research Activity The Coordinating Council is the mediating body between the academic staff / research unit / student and the administration, its decisions bear a nature of recommendations and are addressed to the Rector of the University, if necessary, as well as to the Chancellor. Council is not mentioned in structure.

Functions and responsibilities of structural units of the institution are not clearly defined and divided. Experts' panel was not able to figure out criteria for selecting academic staff as for the member of academic council. During interviews no one was able to indicate the written criteria. University does not have predefined requirements for selecting rector. It was approved by the founder.

HEI has Mechanisms for monitoring management effectiveness and evaluation system. A report in this respect was provided to the panel

According to the SER, the university's academic process management system <http://www.saba.ini.ge/> includes electronic document management. The system enables students and staff to write and send their statements, while addressees can place respective resolution The system automatically grants a number to the statement. This document management system maximally simplifies the academic process, the students and staff can easily and quickly access or issue necessary information. Besides electronic document processing system is not perfect, because Orders, outgoing correspondence etc can not be created in electronic system. They are still prepared on paper.

The institution maintains registry of educational institutions, as described in current legislation. Institution has business continuity plan, but unfortunately IT manager was not familiar to this document.

HEI institution has elaborated internalization policy and supports international mobility of students and staff. Has rule on selecting exchange students. Within the internationalization, the university cooperates with many universities. The university is actively involved in the grant project funded by the European Commission (Erasmus+ KA107 ICM (18 projects in total since 2015, implemented and ongoing), Erasmus+ KA2, Jean Monnet). However, the resources allotted to this end are not sufficient for the achievement of the university's ambitions in this regard.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- SER;
- Statute;
- Statute of Faculty;
- Job Descriptions;
- Action Plan;
- Internationalization Policy;
- Mechanisms for monitoring management effectiveness and evaluation system and Report (2020);
- Business continuity plan;
- Interviews;
- Rule On Doctoral Study

#### **Recommendations:**

- If the university is to achieve its goals in terms of internationalization, additional resources are required
- The organizational structure requires reform to better achieve goals. This includes action to prevent overlap between staff roles.

<b>Suggestions:</b>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b>  X Substantially complies with requirements
<b>2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Institution effectively implements internal quality assurance mechanisms. Leadership of the institution constantly works to strengthen quality assurance function and promotes establishment of quality culture in the institution.</li> <li>○ HEI has a mechanism for planning student body, which will give each student an opportunity to get a high quality education.</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b>  <p>The QA Office Statute states that the Office is the main managerial unit responsible to ensure high quality of educational processes. The QA system detailed in the QA Mechanisms, Appraisal Results and Their Application document draws a due focus on educational processes. It is designed to appraise a) academic programs b) learning outcomes c) teaching and learning processes and d) teaching staff (both academic and invited). The system employs a range of mechanisms and tools that include online questionnaires for students, graduates, teaching staff and employers. Quantitative and qualitative data generated through these questionnaires can be disaggregated by a variety of indicators that measure fitness of academic programs and educational processes for their purpose. The developed tools are adjusted for the appraisal of teaching and learning processes (including academic programs) where student sample size is adequate to be representative. The appraisals of a), b), c) and d) above are carried out once or twice a year.</p> <p>The QA system includes mechanisms and instruments that are specifically designed to appraise teaching performance of the University's academic and invited teaching staff. This appraisal process employs student questionnaires and teaching staff self-assessment tools. The University first launched the appraisal processes in 2018-2019 and used the results as baseline performance data. The QA Office presented the results of individual appraisals to each teaching staff member and submitted cumulative reports by academic programs to relevant Faculties. During the interviews with the teaching staff and the HR Office stated that the University has a practice of employing teaching staff appraisal results for their professional development.</p> <p>The University also appraises services and educational environment. Relevant indicators are built into questionnaires for students and teaching staff. During the interviews the University's representatives demonstrated their awareness of and engagement in the QA appraisal processes. However, the University is advised to make sure that their feedback loops effectively encompass representatives of services, especially those focused on serving the needs of students and teaching staff. The University has developed mechanisms to involve different stakeholders in the QA processes (teaching staff, administration, students, alumni, employers). However, the interviews proved that the engagement of stakeholders outside the University (i.e. alumni, employers) needs to be more systematic and meaningful especially where academic program appraisal processes are concerned.</p> <p>The QA Mechanisms, Assessment Results and Their Application document describes the QA system based on the PDCA cycle. Specifically, PLAN - the QA Office plans its appraisal processes according to the University's strategic development plan and the priorities a), b), c) and d) listed above; DO - identifies appraisal procedures, develops questionnaires/indicators, establishes a monitoring team (if required); CHECK - carries out appraisals (e.g. academic programs, courses, educational processes, teaching staff, etc.); ACT - analyzes data and generates relevant reports. According to the SER, relevant data are forwarded to the Faculties that develop recommendations for the</p>

improvement of their programs, while the QA Office develops the final reports. The QA Mechanisms, Assessment Results and Their Application states that the QA Office is responsible to develop recommendations and their presentation based on the appraisal results (p.2). This discrepancy was clarified during the interviews with the QA Office, the Deans and the program heads. It was specified that the prerogative to make data-based recommendations concerning academic programs rests on the program heads and the Faculties while the QA Office is responsible to provide its recommendations on other aspects of teaching and learning, including services. To avoid vagueness, it is suggested that the document should accurately describe the input of the QA Office, Faculties, program heads and Deans when reporting to the Academic Council on a), b), c) and d). As stated in the document and indicated during the interviews, the Academic Council makes decisions on operational improvement plans concerning a) b) c) and d) based on the reports and recommendations submitted on behalf of the QA and the Faculties. The QA Mechanisms, Assessment Results and Their Application states that the QA Office monitors their implementation. This includes data analysis against baseline appraisal results, the appraisal results of the previous year and reporting the implementation of the operational improvement plans.

The appraisal of the University's research performance is outlined in the Planning, Appraisal of and Support for Research Performance document. The appraisal system is designed to assess research performance of both academic staff and research institutes. It utilizes weighted performance criteria designated by research and academic development components and allows the academic staff and research institutes to set their own balance between the two. The academic staff and research institutes submit their performance data twice a year. The QA office is involved in collecting and analyzing the data and comparing it to their individual research plans. The QA office reports its results to the Academic Council which utilizes it to set the University's annual research policy priorities and basic directions. The Planning, Appraisal of and Support for Research Performance document defines the roles of QA Office and Research Planning and Development Manager in research planning and appraisal processes. It describes information flow between the major stakeholders, including Coordination Council and Academic Council. However, the interviews with the QA Office, the Vice Rector and the Manager revealed the need to define the roles of the QA Office and the Manager more accurately in the document.

The SER proves specific examples to fine-tune the QA system. To further increase the effectiveness of the appraisal processes, it is suggested that data-collection tools and methods should be adjusted to the specifics of research intensive programs and those with a smaller student sample size.

The University collects and benchmarks student achievement data against ECTS assessment scale (i.e. A, B, C, D etc.,) to monitor students' performance. It also demonstrates an approach to describe student academic achievements based on normal distribution of student performance where letter grades and relevant benchmarks are assigned as following A- 10%, B-25% C -30% D - 25% and E- 10%. The achievement data is disaggregated by the assessment scale to describe individual student's performance as compared to the performance of other students. It also allows the University to identify an extent to which student cohorts achieve performance benchmarks. The achievement data by relevant academic programs are generated by the University's learning management electronic system every semester.

The University has developed its procedures to plan its student body where teaching space, academic teaching staff and (job) market analysis are identified as the main planning criteria. According to the procedure, the University calculates 2.5 m3 per student. It sets its affiliated academic teaching staff ratio at 1/50. It assigns at least 60% of courses in an academic curriculum to its affiliated academic teaching staff. Regarding (job) marker analysis, the University takes into considerations such indicators as alumni employment rates, graduate rates, announced places/number of submitted applications ratio. According to the planning procedures, program heads identify a specific number of places for their programs with an eye on the mentioned criteria and submit their request to the Faculty Council which is then forwarded to the Academic Council for approval.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- SER;
- QA Mechanisms, Appraisal Results and Their Application;
- QA Office Statute;
- Planning, Appraisal of and Support for Research Performance
- Academic and Invited Teaching Staff Planning Methodology for Academic Programs;
- Interviews.
- Statute;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job Descriptions;</li> <li>• Action Plan;</li> <li>• Internationalization Policy;</li> <li>• Mechanisms for monitoring management effectiveness and evaluation system and Report (2020);</li> <li>• Business continuity plan;</li> <li>• Interviews;</li> <li>• Rule On Doctoral Study</li> <li>• Rule of Planning, Evaluating and Promoting Scientific Research” (the rector’s order #09-20, 17.01.2020)</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The engagement of stakeholder outside the University (i.e. alumni, employers) needs to be more systematic and meaningful especially where academic program appraisal process is concerned;</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>Suggestions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QA Mechanisms, Appraisal Results and Their Application document should accurately describe the input of the QA Office, Faculties, program heads and Deans when reporting to the Academic Council on a), b), c) and d);</li> <li>• The roles of the QA Office and the Manager should be more accurately described in Planning, Appraisal of and Support for Research Performance</li> <li>• To further increase the effectiveness of the University’s appraisal processes, it is suggested that data-collection tools and methods should be adjusted to the specifics of research intensive programs and those with a smaller student sample size.</li> </ul>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b>  X Substantially complies with requirements
<b>2.3. Observing Principles of Ethics and Integrity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEI has developed regulations and mechanisms that follow principles of ethics and integrity. Such regulations are publicly accessible.</li> <li>○ Institution has implemented mechanisms for detecting plagiarism and its prevention.</li> <li>○ HEI follows the principles of academic freedom.</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b>  <p>The University has developed a regulatory framework that shapes its ethical standards and integrity policy for students and (teaching) staff. The Code of Conduct for Students defines ethical principles for students, procedures when these principals are infringed and possible sanctions for misconduct. The University’s disciplinary committee including the Vice-rector, a Dean (from a respective Faculty), the Chancellor, a student representative, a university’s lawyer, the Head of QA and the head of a relevant academic program (optional) reviews the case and submits its decision to the Rector for its implementation. The Code clearly states student’s rights and freedoms throughout the process and highlights its confidentiality.</p> <p>The University’s Code of Ethics for (teaching) staff is built into the University Internal Regulation. Similar to the Code of Conduct above, it defines principles of ethical conduct, describes procedures when they are infringed and lists possible sanctions for misconduct. The University’s disciplinary committee including the Chancellor/Vice-rector, HR manager, University’s lawyer, and a supervisor reviews the case and submits its decision to the Rector for approval. The Statute clearly states (teaching) staff’s rights and freedoms throughout the process.</p> <p>Both the Code of Conduct for Students and the University Internal Regulation are published on the University’s website for easy access. In addition, students are informed about the standards of ethical conduct during their</p>



registration process. Since Fall 2019 students confirm their awareness of these standards by a formal signature. The University Statutory constitutes an integral part of a contract with its (teaching) staff. The staff proves their awareness of the ethical standards by their signature.

Though highlighting important aspects of academic conduct, the Code of Conduct for Students and the University Internal Regulations are somewhat silent concerning research ethics and relevant mechanisms that contribute to high quality of research. Interviews with the University's Dissertation Council proved there is a need to further develop such mechanisms.

The University declares academic integrity as one of its priorities. It names cheating and plagiarism as instances of academic misbehavior. Relevant statements are declared in both the Code of Conduct for Students and the University Internal Regulation. To further the principles of academic integrity the University has developed the Rules to Prevent, Detect and Respond to Plagiarism (published on the University's website). These Rules apply both to students and teaching staff and include clear procedures to detect plagiarism as well as measures in cases it is detected. The University's Doctoral Statute and Master Research Planning, Delivery and Assessment document defines rules for source citation and referencing. They also require students/doctoral students to make originality statements about their submitted work, this follows good international practice.

The University employs both URKUND and StrikePlagiarism.com as tools that contribute to the effective implementation of the principles of academic integrity. It is worth noting that the University is aware of the importance of preventive approach to plagiarism and provides orientations and training sessions as part of its integrity campaign. However, the implementation of these technologies is fairly recent, and no evidence was shown on how these technologies are calibrated and what percentage is required for a 'strike'. The Rule of Prevention, Detection and Response to the Plagiarism, the order #40-20 30/03/ 2020, Article 5(5.5.) provides some insights in this regard, stating that the volume of the direct citation approved by the respective rule shall not exceed 10% of the entire paper. Further, the existence of unconfirmed text in the paper is inadmissible (0%). Finally, the volume of the legal acts and texts of the court decisions used in the paper with respective approval shall not exceed 20% of the entire paper. However, this does not treat the 'sensitivity' parameters for the respective software programmes themselves, which can be adjusted. There is no evidence that these are correctly calibrated to ensure a fair outcome in line with international standards.

As preventive measures, the University has integrated relevant courses (e.g. "Academic Writing", "Academic Writing and Research Methods", etc.) specifically targeting the principles of academic integrity into its curriculum. It also draws due focus on academic writing skills in courses offered from the beginning of academic studies, an approach that follows good practice.

The interview with students, teaching and academic staff, as well as the representatives of the Dissertation Council has demonstrated their awareness of the detection tools and their actual application. The actual cases of detected cases of plagiarism have resulted in the disqualification of assignments/papers submitted by students, though students in such situations were allowed to resubmit work.

The values of personal dignity and freedom are embedded in the University's mission and declared among its core values. The University Statute names academic freedom as an important guiding principle and further states that academic freedom is exercised through teaching, learning and research and constitutes uncontested rights of its students and teaching staff. During the interviews the University's top managers, students and teaching staff clearly singled out academic freedom as one of the main principles that distinguished the University's academic culture.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- SER
- Code of Conduct for Students;
- University Internal Regulation
- University Statutory;
- Rules to Prevent, Detect and Respond to Plagiarism;
- Doctoral Statute;
- Master Research Planning, Delivery and Assessment
- The Rule of Prevention, Detection and Response to the Plagiarism, the order #40-20 30/03/ 2020

<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A procedure should be put in place to ensure that the anti-plagiarism software and the way in which it is used by SABAUNI meets international standards, including the threshold (percentage), how it is calculated, and the publications against which it is tested, as well as data protection issues, once it is actually up and running.</li> <li>• While the ethical code provided by the university is sufficient, staff should be made to sign it – as should students – on the day of their arrival, as part of their contractual obligations.</li> <li>• Foreign students need to be included in the student self-government body</li> </ul>
<b>Suggestions:</b>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p>

### 3. Educational Programmes

HEI has procedures for planning, designing, approving, developing and annulling educational programmes. Programme learning outcomes are clearly defined and are in line with the National Qualifications Framework. A programme ensures achievement of its objectives and intended learning outcomes

<b>3.1 Design and Development of Educational Programmes</b>
HEI defined policy for planning, designing, implementing and developing educational programmes.
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b> <p>SabaUni applies for authorization as a university, planning to add a third cycle of higher education to its academic and research activities. However, the development of these programs is premature. The university has not considered the core fact of a PhD, namely that it needs to contribute to the development of the scientific state of the art in the subject area in question. Without a strong established internationalized research base, this is impossible.</p> <p>In developing programmes, HEI tries to take into consideration all the segments, all the directions that exist on the labour market, and talks to employers. Educational programme building showed knowledge of core methodologies such as Bloom's Taxonomy. The SER mentions comparisons for law with two US universities (Harvard and Notre Dame). This comparison was justified by the usage of a classical benchmarking programme. HEI looked also at Heidelberg and Hamburg, as well as Lyon and Lublin as further comparators.</p> <p>During the last couple of years, 6 Sabauni programs have undergone reaccreditation. Also, thanks to the pandemic, HEI introduced a new subject called tourism sustainability, and also introduced some Russian language courses. HEI also implemented a focus on ecological tourism.</p> <p>Constant contact with graduates is maintained. There is an ongoing effort to involve them. Tourism is the oldest course. There are lots of graduates, but despite this, the university regularly actively collaborates with them.</p> <p>There does not seem to be any involvement of students in research in the context of the programmes; this entails that students are not automatically incorporated into broader research fora or required to publish work in international journals as a component of their studies. This does not bode well for a university that wishes to add PhD studies to its arsenal.</p> <p>There seems to be a very strong reliance on data gathered from questionnaires. Partner universities are also monitored.</p>

so that their successes may be replicated. For example, elements of the law courses from Harvard and Notre Dame have been incorporated into SABAUNI's law offering.

The University has developed its Rules for Planning, Designing and Development of an Academic Program and Procedures for its Approval. The document outlines principles to develop an academic program that is fit for its purpose and aligned with the University's mission. The SER describes program development as a participatory process that builds upon contribution from teaching staff, students (including their academic achievements), alumni, University's administration (e.g. QA Office), employers/partner organizations. Where available, the University employs feedback from international partners/colleagues and analyzes relevant international programs to inform its decisions in the program development process. During the interviews, program heads, teaching staff, students, alumni and employers proved their involvement in the process.

Amendments to academic curriculum can be introduced to improve its quality. These amendments can be based on the results of the internal appraisal processes mentioned in standard 2.2. They can also stem from the results of external review processes, student/ graduate surveys or feedback from employers. As stated in the Rules for Planning, Designing and Development of an Academic Program and Procedures for its Approval, amendments can be introduced twice a year, at least one week prior to the start of a semester.

In Bachelor programs, some individual courses provide that the sum of minimal competency requirements equals 31 points in total. This raises questions concerning what the university says to a student who has satisfactory results but doesn't get the ECTS credits; it is not clear whether they can have a chance to do a separate exam. This is certainly less than ideal.

The Rules for Planning, Designing and Development of an Academic Program and Procedures for its Approval provide guidelines in case the University decides to expand or adapt its academic program. Such a decision can be made based on the results of program appraisal processes, a lack or termination of partnership with external organizations/stakeholders, a lack of students' demand, etc. According to the Rules, a Faculty Council considers to phase out an academic program based on the request from a program head and relevant report from the QA Office. The Council forwards its decision to the Academic Council for a final approval. Currently, the University has no case of phasing out its academic programs.

The University informs its students prior to introducing amendments to an academic curriculum or phasing out an academic program. It consults them on individual study plans that maximize compatibility of their accumulated credits and ensure students' seamless progress through their programs. In case a program is phase out the The university allows its students to transfer to programs in adjacent fields. If the University does not deliver such a program it signs an agreement/contract with a partner University to which students can be transferred through mobility process and their credits recognized as compatible with a new study program.

The English language tests submitted by HEI and used as substitutes for internationally recognized certificates are taken from open source and freely available materials online, many of them stating B1 level instead of B2. This is totally unacceptable. Such tests need to be customized to take account of the scientific language requirements of individual disciplines. Moreover, B1 level is very easy to attain, and does not reflect a sufficient level of competence in the English language that is required to study in English. Programmes would benefit considerably from an alteration, because they could be pitched at a higher level, and could involve more complexity.

Exemptions from foreign language competencies for some courses are granted on the basis of 'partial' completion of a course in a foreign language. However 'partial' is left undefined.

The doctoral studies are well structured. However, the university does not have sufficient expertise and research resources to deliver them to the required standard.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SER</li> <li>• Rules for Planning, Designing and Development of an Academic Program and Procedures of its Approval</li> <li>• Interviews.</li> <li>• Supplied documents, <i>inter alia</i>, on Doctor of Theology, and Doctor of Law (in 3.2 'Education Programmes')</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The English language tests used should be substantially improved</li> <li>• Alternative options should be provided for students who have satisfactory results but don't get the ECTS credits in the Bachelor's programs</li> <li>• Alternative data gathering mechanisms should be used, as well as questionnaires</li> <li>• Requirements concerning 'partial' completion of courses in foreign languages and resulting exemptions, should be clarified</li> </ul>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p>
<p><b>3.2 Structure and Content of Educational Programmes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Programme learning outcomes are clearly stated and are in line with higher education level and qualification to be granted</li> <li>○ With the help of individualized education programmes, HEI takes into consideration various requirements, needs and academic readiness of students, and ensures their unhindered involvement into the educational process.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>The University delivers 9 bachelor and 4 master level programs designed in alignment with the current legislation. The academic programs are designed to award relevant qualifications for at least 240 ECTS and 120 ECTS in bachelor and master level programs respectively. Academic programs, including catalogues are published online on the University's website for easy public access.</p> <p>All bachelor and master level programs have clearly stated learning outcomes appropriately defined for the level of instruction (bachelor or master) and awarded qualification. Field-specific and transferable competences listed in the program learning outcomes are aligned with the NQF, field benchmark statements, where appropriate and encompass areas of 1) knowledge and awareness, 2) skills 3) responsibility and autonomy appropriate for a given qualification.</p> <p>The content of each program is translated into a logical structure with an appropriate sequence of compulsory and non-compulsory courses/components. Where appropriate, course prerequisites are identified which makes sure that students demonstrating average academic achievement can seamlessly progress through their studies and complete their degrees in due time. The number of ECTS assigned to each course/component is adequate for its content, learning outcomes and reflects specifics of the field. There seems to be some provision for minor tracks to be followed. For example, in 2013, cultural tourism was added as a minor to the Bachelor program in Theology.</p> <p>Teaching and learning methods employed for the delivery of academic programs are appropriately selected. They reflect specifics of instruction in any given field and contribute to the achievement of defined program learning outcomes. In 2016-2019 the University was involved in the Erasmus+ project "Sustainable Learner Centered Teaching-Advance Resources for Georgia and China" STAR which helped to enhance its repertoire of student-centered teaching methods. This reflects the efforts of the University to become focused on student-centered teaching.</p>

The University develops individual study plans/instruction based on students' needs, including their academic readiness, special educational needs, etc. This has included catering for blind students, including via the usage of braille. The university's environment is adapted for students with special educational needs. During the interviews, students confirmed their positive experience when in need of individual study plans/instruction. During the interviews with the teaching staff, an excellent practice of tailoring instruction to students with special educational needs was demonstrated.

Academic study plan for 2020/21 provided by HEI is different from the one published online.

The document Methodology for planning, elaborating, and developing educational programs and procedure for its approval does not provide any details concerning doctoral studies.

The PhD Program in Law consists of teaching and scientific-research components with total of 180 ECTS credits. The volume of the scientific-research component is 120 ECTS and the volume of the study component is 60 ECTS credits, which include compulsory and elective courses. The total amount of credits for compulsory training courses is 50 ECTS, and for elective courses - 10 ECTS. Training courses are divided into 3 semesters. The research component involves a dissertation (120 ECTS). However, given the university's research profile, the professors are not qualified to engage in this sort of supervision, and these dissertations are unlikely to advance the science in the field of law.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- Academic programs;
- SER;
- Interviews;
- Web-site;
- Rules for Planning, Designing and Development of an Academic Program and Procedures of its Approval.
- <https://sabauni.edu.ge/ka/content/33/228/242>;
- Documents supplied by EQE

#### **Recommendations:**

- The academic study plan should correspond to that online.
- Doctoral studies should be elaborated in better detail if they are to be pursued (though they should not be pursued)

#### **Suggestions:**

#### **Best Practices (if applicable):**

#### **Evaluation**

X Substantially complies with requirements

### **3.3 Assessment of Learning Outcomes**

HEI has law-compliant, transparent and fair system of learning outcomes assessment, which promotes the

improvement of students' academic performance.

### **Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements**

The assessment system employed in academic programs includes assessment methods, components and criteria and is designed to effectively assess the achievement of learning outcomes. The system is clearly outlined in each syllabi and is tailored to the specifics of a relevant course and subject area.

The assessment system is in line with the current regulations. Namely, students' achievements are assessed on a 100-point scale with points appropriately distributed by letter-grades (A through F) and relevant ranges. The assessment system includes both mid-term and final exams with set thresholds.

The assessment criteria are clearly and properly defined in each course syllabi and published in the electronic management system. The criteria help communicate instructor's expectations on student performance and ensure objectivity and fairness of assessments. Assessment results are reflected in the electronic management system and provide students with feedback on their current achievements and remaining performance gaps. During interviews, students demonstrated that they receive feedback from their instructors on their performance on a regular basis.

Students need to apply for individual study plans, but it is not clear how they are supported during the application stage.

Written exams are administered by the University's Educational Processes Management Department.

The University outlines its exam procedure and rule in the Statute of Educational Processes. The Statute is published on the web-sites and the Department is responsible to inform students on relevant exam-taking procedures and rules.

The University outlines procedures for students' appeals in the Statute of Educational Processes. According to the procedure a student can submit her/his appeal to the Dean within two days after publication of exam results. The Dean reviews the appeal with an instructor (i.e. an academic staff member or an invited teacher). If required, she/he can involve other members of the teaching staff in the appeals process. In case the student's appeal is upheld, the Dean and involved members of the teaching staff provide their signed decision. The Educational Processes Management Department updates the student's exam results in the electronic management system.

The concrete usage of the ECTS system does not seem to filter down to the level of academic staff. They are not aware of it, and do not use it.

The names of the students are written on the exam papers, so teachers know who they are evaluating. This helps them because sometimes there are issues between the level of their presentations or class participation and their exam outcomes. This helps them to identify cheating. However, perhaps it is not an appropriate means of doing so. Exams should be anonymised. Further issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic were identified during interviews, insofar as online exams render anonymisation still more difficult.

Staff had very limited knowledge of the relevant labour regulations and of internal procedures relevant to their work. This is a matter of serious concern in terms of their potential compliance with both statutory and internal standards.

According to submitted documentation having a methodology part is not mandatory for the masters thesis; it is not clear why this is so and how it affects the very measurement of learning outcomes.

### **Evidences/indicators**

- Statute of Educational Processes
- SER;
- Programs/syllabi;
- Interviews
- Documents supplied by EQE
- Statute of the Academic Process of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani Teaching University

<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exams should be anonymized</li> <li>• Methodology should be compulsory for masters theses.</li> </ul>
<b>Suggestions:</b>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b>  X Substantially complies with requirements

#### 4. Staff of the HEI

HEI ensures that the staff employed in the institution (academic, scientific, invited, administrative, support) are highly qualified, so that they are able to effectively manage educational, scientific and administrative processes and achieve the goals defined by the strategic plan of the institution. On its hand, the institution constantly provides its staff with professional development opportunities and improved work conditions.

<b>4.1. Staff Management</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEI has staff management policy and procedures that ensure the implementation of educational process and other activities defined in its strategic plan.</li> <li>○ HEI ensures the employment of qualified academic/scientific/invited/administrative/ support staff.</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b>  <p>SABAUNI has developed the Human Resources Management Policy, which is approved by the Rector of University, and the document includes all criteria required by Standard of Authorization, such as the principles of Human Resource Management, priorities and objectives of its development, resources for development, responsibilities, monitoring, and rules of employment, training, internships, motivation and encouragement. The University also developed the adaptation procedure which is for new staff. During the interview it was noticeable that the procedure is not well introduced among the personal, as it seems that it was developed due to authorization standard's requirement. It was unclear from the interview with Human Resources Management Policy and adaptation procedure developers that these documents were sent for comments to the interested parties/staff, to whom they are addressed. Simultaneously new employee described his employment process and it was confirmed that staff adaptation process went as it is described in the procedure.</p> <p>The governing body of the University is focused on maintaining and developing of the existing staff as well as on attracting of new staff, which is essential for ensuring sustainability.</p> <p>University academic and scientific staff performs the scientific work, issues the publication, but they are published only in the local journals and no any publication is done in the international journals, which is very important issue.</p> <p>University has employed the academic personnel in accordance with the rules established by the University and applicable to Georgian legislation. The University has established the qualification requirements for all positions in job descriptions and working agreements. Qualification of the academic personnel seems to be consistent with the qualification requirements set by the University, but most CVs are not updated.</p> <p>In order to establish the weakness and strengths of the university which consists of two components, individual goals and competences. Employees are evaluated in the fulfillment of individual goals and competences necessary for their fulfillment. Besides this method staff is evaluated by filled in questionnaires. On the bases of the collected information, the report named "The results of the evaluation of administrative and support staff" is issued, but the</p>

<p>evidence that the plan for improvement was elaborated was not found.</p> <p>Funding for professional development of staff is quite limited.</p> <p>SABAUNI also collects the feedback estimating pedagogical staff from students and the positive results which are reflected in the documents were confirmed by national and international students who express their fillings so frankly that no doubt they are true.</p>
<p><b>Evidences/indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SER</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• The results of the evaluation of administrative and support staff</li> <li>• Personnel CV</li> <li>• Staff performance evaluation and satisfaction survey</li> <li>• HR management policy</li> <li>• Rules of affiliation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff performance evaluation requires improvement</li> <li>• Overlaps in staff competences and roles should be eliminated</li> <li>• Provide a plan outlining requirements and providing incentives for staff to publish in high-ranking international journals, rather than local in-house journals</li> <li>• Ensure an updated database of staff CVs</li> <li>• Elaborate a clear mechanism for using assessment results in future development activities</li> <li>• Increase funding for professional development of staff</li> </ul>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p>X Substantially complies with requirements</p>
<p><b>4.2. Academic/Scientific and Invited Staff Workload</b></p>
<p>Number and workload of academic/scientific and invited staff is adequate to HEI's educational programmes and scientific-research activities, and also other functions assigned to them</p>
<p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>SABAUNI has 107 academic staff members (out of which 33 are affiliated) and 122 invited personnel. Academic personnel are hired through open competition. In order to plan affectively the number and workload of the personnel university analysed the strategy, human resources, structure of the work, functions-obligations and qualification requirements and the workload.</p>



<p>The amount and workload of teaching personnel varies, but extensive questioning during interviews did not reveal an overburdened workforce. Rather, it would seem that the workload of teaching personnel is adequate and appropriate to implement SABAUNI's academic programs. However, there was no evidence that this happened because of some particular methodology or safeguard mechanism.</p> <p>The main factor determining the number of academic staff is the number of existing and future students, academic year, programs and budgets. With the purpose of accommodating the hiring personnel and workload conditions, the university has the personnel management policy, also developed the staff planning methodology, rules of academic personnel affiliation, also agreements and job descriptions.</p> <p>The university collects the data on the future BA and PHD students and is sure that they are ready and consistent for welcoming 15 PHD students on 2 faculties. But all requirements for conducting PHD programs are not satisfied, ex. Publications in international journals.</p> <p>Affiliated academic personnel determine their affiliation only with the SABAUNI. This provision is confirmed by signed agreements with all 33 affiliated personnel.</p>
<p><b>Evidences/indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SER</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Human resources management policy</li> <li>• SER</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• The results of the evaluation of administrative and support staff</li> <li>• Personnel CV</li> <li>• Staff performance evaluation and satisfaction survey</li> <li>• Rules of affiliation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a need to convene upon clear methodology of determining the number of academic, scientific, and invited staff in relation with academic programmes considering best practices, academic personnel affiliation, and ensuring that it is implemented in all educational programmes, since at present, while the teaching loads are more or less okay, this seems to be by accident rather than by design.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p>

## 5. Students and Their Support Services

HEI ensures the development of student-centered environment, offers appropriate services, including career support mechanisms; it also ensures maximum awareness of students, implements diverse activities and promotes student involvement in these activities. HEI utilizes student survey results to improve student support services

### 5.1. The Rule for Obtaining and Changing Student Status, the Recognition of Education, and Student Rights

- For each of the educational levels, HEI has developed regulations for assignment, suspension and

<p>termination of student status, mobility, qualification granting, issuing educational documents as well as recognition of education received during the learning period.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEI ensures the protection of student rights and lawful interests.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>According to SER University has developed regulation to obtain, suspend and terminate student's status and to make internal or external mobility. These issues are covered in "Regulation of learning Process".</p> <p>In second chapter "Obtaining and managing student status" we can find regulations and procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How entrants can enroll on different levels of educational programs at SabaUni both for Georgian and international citizens (For English programs there is clear requirements of English language level and certificates enrolls are required to present)</li> <li>• How to make administrative and academic registrations</li> <li>• how to sign legal document- contract.</li> </ul> <p>In Chapter three "The Learning Process" we read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about duration of study process;</li> <li>• Assessment of educational program, lecturers and administration - All students are getting electronic assessment forms on email and LMS each semester;</li> <li>• Change or cancel educational program – University provide students opportunity to change their educational program if there is request from the student. University also obliged to recognize credits they have already received if programs are merged, to give opportunity to make internal or external mobility, to give advice if program is cancelled.</li> </ul> <p>University Has Tools and procedures for education recognition and policies to protect students rights. These documents are published on the web site in Georgian and English languages and all information is public.</p> <p>During interview students have expressed that they were informed about existence of these documents and regulations during first meeting at the University. Representatives of administration presented main points of regulatory documents. This information was confirmed by, both, bachelor and master level students. Beside these master level students were informed about plagiarism and rules of writing master thesis. They were aware with procedure of checking their works. According to SER University has two tools to check thesis. They are: „StrikePlagiarism.com“ and „URKUND“. Both software is capable to find and indicate copied parts in a work.</p> <p>Students said that they have opportunity to assess educational program, lecturer and administration by questionnaires. Also they are able to appeal their grades at administration if they are not satisfied with them and in case of necessity faculty is obliged to create council which will discuss the issue again.</p> <p>Students are able to apply university administration anytime they any issue to discuss but also to protect student rights there is student self-government which is conducting meetings with students to discuss their problems and ideas. Self-government is link of students and administration to help both parties with communication with each other. There is also students board and student advisor in faculty board and that student has right to give students voice about educational program, subjects and etc.</p> <p>Experts also checked contract for all level students. They are adopted for supporting student rights and interest. For example: student has right to pay tuition fee flexible, university is obliged not to change tuition fee during their study period and etc.</p> <p><b>Evidences/indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.sabauni.edu.ge/ka">https://www.sabauni.edu.ge/ka</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://sabauni.edu.ge/ka/content/31/216/214/326/0/0?page=1">https://sabauni.edu.ge/ka/content/31/216/214/326/0/0?page=1</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://sabauni.edu.ge/en/content/31/216/214/326/0/0?page=1">https://sabauni.edu.ge/en/content/31/216/214/326/0/0?page=1</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://sabauni.edu.ge/img/dxp/saswavlo-procesis-debuleba-5f257f03ee163.pdf">https://sabauni.edu.ge/img/dxp/saswavlo-procesis-debuleba-5f257f03ee163.pdf</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://sabauni.edu.ge/img/dxp/saswavlo-procesis-debuleba-5f4f755c6cfd5.pdf">https://sabauni.edu.ge/img/dxp/saswavlo-procesis-debuleba-5f4f755c6cfd5.pdf</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://sabauni.edu.ge/img/dxp/plagiatis-prevenciis,-aRmoCenisa-da-plagiatze-reagirebis-wesi--5ef4791c7ea84.pdf">https://sabauni.edu.ge/img/dxp/plagiatis-prevenciis,-aRmoCenisa-da-plagiatze-reagirebis-wesi--5ef4791c7ea84.pdf</a></li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contract</li> <li>• Interview Results</li> <li>• Career support services document</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>Suggestions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements
<b>5.2 Student Support Services</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEI has student consulting services in order to plan educational process and improve academic performance</li> <li>○ HEI has career support service, which provides students with appropriate counselling and support regarding employment and career development</li> <li>○ HEI ensures students awareness and involvement in various university-level, local and international projects and events, and supports student initiatives</li> <li>○ HEI has mechanisms, including financial mechanisms to support low SES students</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b>  <p>There are relevant staff at department of student registration, mobility and assessment who are responsible to provide consulting services in order to plan educational process and improve academic performance. They support freshman students to use internal learning management system to make registration on lectures. Students mentioned that they had fixed schedule during first semester but during following semesters they are able to elect some subjects and lecturers. There is consulting manager separately for international students. On interview they expressed that she was like second mother to them, because she does her best for international students. There is consulting meetings with lecturers too. As students and lecturers mentioned on interview it can be conducted orally in the classroom, by phone call or by email. Students can to plan individually their schedule if there is need. University supports students who are working and it's possible to plan lectures at the evening or to provide individual learning plan and students are making registration on less subjects than it's planned.</p> <p>Students can check their performance online via Learning Management System (LMS). This system helps students to make administrative and academic registration, check their own schedule, status, grades, get learning materials and information about their lectures. All personal information is protected and students are able to see only their assessments. All students confirmed this information on interview and our group checked this learning management system at site visit. LMS is available on Georgian and English languages.</p> <p>There is students affair service at Sabauni, this unit provide meetings with employers and students and to make communication process easier between two sides. As employers mentioned on interview this service simplifies procedure to find employee, because they provide their vacancies and internships to career support manager and service is responsible to send information to students. They use emails and Facebook pages to spread information. Students affair service created database of employers, students and graduates and based on these information they make analysis how many students are employed, how many percent of employed graduates are working by their profession and etc. Service also organizes HR forums where partner companies are meeting with students and they are presenting them requirements for jobs. University itself gives opportunity to make short internal internship at internal department or service.</p> <p>Based on SER Sabauni has international relations manager who is responsible to provide exchange programs, conferences and other international activities to students. There are several exchange programs at Sabauni: Exrasmus</p>

+, Visegrad foundation scholarship, exchange programs from partner European Universities. These programs are not only for students but for administration and academic staff too. On interview students mentioned they were aware to procedure how to apply for exchange program. As they said applicant has to apply at international relations manager, fill documents (Manager assists this process) and on final stage evaluation committee is responsible to make decision. Host university is involved in this process too. University organizes 3-4 international conferences as it was mentioned from administration. Students have opportunity to participate in these conferences for free. They are supported to publish an article in local and international journals.

Students self-government is able to write different kind of projects: excursions, different sport activities. Except this financial resource self-government departments has fixed budget for 1000 laries for their needs.

Sabauni has different mechanisms to support students, low SES students. As it was mentioned above students are able to pay tuition fee part by part, they have opportunity to get scholarship by university or partner company, they can apply for the grant program, during pandemic students were supported by computers and internet package and etc.

We need to especially mention university's attitude to special need students. On interviews lecturers and administration staff mentioned they had hearing impaired student and specially for him university purchased software which converted text to audio file and he was able to listen to learning materials and special assessment system was provided personally for him. Also there are special texts on doors written in braille.

#### Evidences/indicators

- <http://saba1.ini.ge/#/login/login>
- <https://sabauni.edu.ge/ka/content/33/228/246>
- <https://sabauni.edu.ge/ka/content/33/228/249>
- <https://sabauni.edu.ge/ka/content/33/285>
- <https://sabauni.edu.ge/ka/content/33/229>
- <https://sabauni.edu.ge/ka/content/33/286>
- Learning Management System
- Job Descriptions
- Interview Results
- Career support services document

#### Recommendations:

- 

#### Suggestions:

#### Best Practices (if applicable):

#### Evaluation

X Complies with requirements

## 6. Research, development and/or other creative work

Higher Education Institution, considering its type and specifics of field(s), works on the strengthening of its research function, ensures proper conditions to support research activities and improve the quality of research activities

### 6.1 Research Activities

- HEI, based on its type and specifics of its fields, carries out research/creative activities.
- Ensuring the effectiveness of doctoral research supervision
- HEI has public, transparent and fair procedures for the assessment and defense of dissertations which are relevant to the specifics of the field

## **Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements**

Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani University carries out research activities in humanities and social sciences as indicated in the reports of scientific activities for 2018-2019/2019 and 2020 academic years, 2019-2020 research activity evaluation report and discussed during the interviews with academic staff and heads of research institutes. The university strategy, corresponding action plans and the special rule for planning, evaluation and supporting the scientific-research activity (Annex #1 Approved by the Rector's order N86-20 amended on June 15, 2020) regulate research/scientific activities, defines the instruments for planning, implementation and encouragement of affiliated academic staff's scientific-research activities within the university. Development and promotion of scientific/research activities both locally and internationally and ensuring high research reputation represent the 4th objective of the University Strategy, encompassing enhancing scientific productivity and reputation of academic staff, institutionalization/commercialization of scientific/research activities and internationalization of such activities. The given institution has established university publishing house since 2018 in order to encourage research activities of their academic staff and assist in preparation/printing of various publications. Sabuni has a number of national periodicals, namely: 1. An academic interdisciplinary Journal "Orbeliani" since 2019 covering articles in law, theology, international relations, business, tourism and economics (Currently available online, but envisioned to have it indexed in ELSEVIER academic databases); 2. An academic journal of theological and religious studies since 2004 which was restored in 2018 (publishing gap between 2008-2018); 3. Journal of Law, a joint periodic with Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University since 2017, covering scientific, educational articles and translations in legal theory, philosophy and legal methods; 4. an interdisciplinary Journal of Post-Soviet Studies in English since 2019, encompassing articles from the social sciences, humanities, law and economics. Sabuni has published 14 local books in 2018-2019 and 10 books in 2020 focused on law, theology, international relations, business, etc. Academic staff has emphasized during the interviews that they integrate university publications into their teaching as well. Sabauni has hosted 4 national conferences (The 1st world war, Religion and Human Rights, Difficult cases in court practice II, "Historical, canonical, political and state aspects of the autocephaly of local churches", 1 forum of HE quality enhancement and 7 international conferences (Post-Soviet experience of political, religious and public culture in corporation with the German Academic Exchange Service (KAAD), American Prose, Free market guide with the support of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and the Austrian School of Economics Research, Post-Soviet Studies II, John-Paul II and Georgia in corporation with the Nunciature of the Holy Temple in Georgia and the Embassy of Poland in Georgia, Catholic legacy in Georgia III in collaboration with the Commission on Culture and Inter-Church Relations with the Roman Catholic Church in Georgia, Law and Global Security II throughout 2018-2019, as for 2019-2020, the given institution has hosted 11 national and 3 international conferences.

The number of affiliated academic staff has increased in the middle of 2018-2019, represented by

33 in total (8 professors, 8 associate professors, 3 assistant professors and 14 assistants). For increasing the research productivity and institutionalizing research, 6 scientific research units were established: Center for Social Teaching and Church, Theology and Philosophy Institute, Center for Crime and Criminal Justice, Prince David Institute of Law, Institute of Development Studies, and the Michel Muskhely Institute (There is a mismatch between names of the centers indicated in the self-evaluation report and statutes included in the authorization package folder 2). Yet, publications produced by affiliated academics staff/research institutes are highly concentrated in the Georgian sources, namely, Sabauni institutional periodics. There are few international publications, mainly conference materials (i.e., SGH Warsaw School of Economics). Report does not include all necessary details of publications (i.e., Study-generalization of international best practices for the development, implementation and evaluation standards of doctoral programs (16.04.19-15.05.19) Analytical research document; Tax Law, Book I, Tbilisi, 2018 (book) Associate Professor Lana Tsanova- publishers/locations not indicated). Publications in international magazines (i.e., Religious-Educational Magazine "Wise Heart": <https://tricycle.org/magazine/wise-heart/>) cannot be traced in academic reputable data bases (for instance, Scopus).

The university has introduced procedures of scientific-research planning and evaluation with the involvement of faculty, academic staff, students and the academic council. Interviews with the faculty representatives (dean, the academic research and development manager, academic staff) and relevant bodies (Academic Council and Academic Research and Development Board) revealed some inconsistencies in regards to procedures, namely, how research priorities are set, from which source the budget for research is allocated and what measures are undertaken as a result of evaluations of academic staff/research institutes' performance in regards to research activities). Neither was the policy document verifying the relevance and rationality of faculties' research priorities, produced by the Academic Research and Development Board, mentioned in the self-evaluation report, provided by the institution. More training/info sessions should be organized to increase the understanding of relevant actors in regards to continuous chain of research planning, evaluation processes and support mechanisms.

The information presented above demonstrates that Sabuni has taken preliminary measures to increase scientific productivity and reputation of their academic staff by prioritizing scientific-research activities in their strategy

document/action plans and providing increased budget for research (from 4,500 Gel (2016-2017) to 123, 398 Gel (2018-2019) for publications, staff mobility, conference attendance) and offering professional development activities tailored for research capacities. Introducing research outputs summarized in institutional publications into the curricula (own and other HEIs) and publishing textbooks/translations of academic resources, placing sources free of charge on internet constitute some indications of institutionalization and commercialization of research activities. In order to increase the research reputation of affiliated academic staff, adequate measures should be taken to encourage publications in international high impact rated journals. Colleagues from international partner institutions can be invited to write joint empirical publications. More efforts should be directed towards supporting research activities that contribute to innovative development of social sciences and humanities. Moreover, Sabauni's research, development and creatives activities should exceed the local context and also concentrate on scientific development on national and international levels.

Sabauni currently does not offer study programmes on doctoral level, the effectiveness of doctoral research supervision therefore cannot be measured based on existing practices or doctoral candidates' feedback on its quality. Doctoral study regulations (Article 13: Scientific Supervisor of Doctoral Students) and doctoral thesis documents discuss the role/obligations of supervisor, the evaluation and defense procedures of dissertation, aspects of supervision, specifying the obligatory 10 one-hour consultation sessions with supervisor and evaluation of supervision throughout semester with quality assessment mechanisms (what aspects of supervision will be assessed are not indicated, neither a template of assessment questionnaire is included). Workload of academic staff includes supervision of PhD candidates. Since the ratio of affiliated staff to non-affiliated academic staff is still limited (33/107), especially affiliated full professors (8/33), it's highly recommended to increase their number per research direction in order to ensure high quality supervision. Since heads of doctoral programmes mentioned recruiting not only few, but 10-20 PhD candidates per academic year, increasing the number of affiliated staff is highly desirable for ensuring adequate supervision support.

According to Sulkhan-Saba-Orbeliani University internal acts and doctoral study regulations, the institution intends to ensure public, transparent and fair evaluation and defense of a dissertation. The process will include the review of dissertation by two field-specific specialists with a doctorate or equivalent scientific degree, utilization of two antiplagiarism programmes and a mandatory public defense of the thesis. The interview with university Dissertation Council revealed some inconsistencies in regards to the roles of different councils (The Dissertation Council of the Faculty and University) and their involvement/functions in the process.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- Component evidences/indicators including the relevant documents, interview results, etc.
- The University Mission - Approved by the academic board dated 24 September 2019, # 08-19 by the protocol decision. Date of update: Resolution #04-20, protocol decision of the academic council, April 16, 2020.
- The University strategy - Approved by the academic board dated 24 September 2019, # 08-19 by the protocol decision. Date of update: Resolution #04-20, protocol decision of the academic council, April 16, 2020.
- Rules for planning, evaluating and promoting the scientific-research activity - Primary edition approved by the
- University rector dated 23 March 2020, Ordinance #38-20; Updated edition approved by the University rector dated 15 June 2020, Ordinance #86 -20
- Doctoral Programs in Theology and Law
- Provision of the doctoral studies - Primary edition approved by the University rector dated 26 September 2019, Ordinance #123-19; Updated edition approved by the University rector dated 18 April 2020, Ordinance #60-20
- The rule of prevention, detection of plagiarism and responding to it - Primary edition approved by the University rector dated 13 September 2019, Ordinance #110-19; Updated edition approved by the University rector dated 30 March 2020, Ordinance #40-20
- Quality assurance mechanisms, evaluation results, and rules for their use - Primary edition approved by the University rector dated 25 June 2018, Ordinance #62-18; Updated edition approved by the University rector dated 23 March 2020, Ordinance #39-20
- Interview results



<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize more training/info sessions to increase the understanding of relevant actors in regards to continuous chain of research planning, evaluation processes and available institutional support mechanisms.</li> <li>• Increase the number of affiliated staff and their rate of international publications for ensuring the high reputation of scientific productivity;</li> <li>• Establish review/editorial boards for university publications/periodics, ensuring the blind review of the process by integrating external (local and international academic colleagues/experts) for the quality check of all institutional publications;</li> <li>• Strengthen cooperation with economic agents</li> <li>• Develop mechanisms to ensure that research also focuses on regional and international dimensions</li> <li>• Support students and encourage to participate in a local as well as international scientific conferences;</li> <li>• Create more international projects / seminars/ conference possibilities</li> <li>• Develop mechanisms to increase the number of publications in high citation index and impact factor journals</li> <li>• Develop and implement more effective mechanisms for involving students in scientific activities</li> <li>• Strengthen cooperation with European universities, including in the area of joint research</li> <li>• Strengthen cooperation with international educational/research foundations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p>
<p><b>6.2. Research Support and Internationalization</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEI has an effective system in place for supporting research, development and creative activities</li> <li>○ Attracting new staff and their involvement in research/arts-creative activities.</li> </ul> <p>University works on internationalisation of research, development and creative activities.</p>
<p>The university has established an Academic Research and Development Coordination Council, the rector's deliberative body, to support scientific research, including Vice-Rector, Academic Research and Development Manager, HR Manager, Student Affairs Officer, Student Self-Government Student and one academic staff member per faculty. The body reviews applications related to scientific activities and makes decisions independently on the mediation to the Rector. Their recommendations secure funding for research activities. The self-evaluation report also indicates the availability of small research grant competitions, but no registry of funded projects was provided upon request nor with the authorization package. Evaluation criteria for research</p>

proposal submitted for university funded should be clarified.

University offers the following support mechanisms for research development: cost of editing/printing the publications and the administrative fees for publishing in other academic sources, opportunities for joint projects with academic staff and student/alumni involvement; regular update on local/international scientific grants, training on grant project management, locating scientific resources and access to academic online platforms/international scientific databases/libraries. The registry of such joint projects (student/alumni involvement, co-authorship of conference papers/scientific articles) or professional development activities over the past years was not provided with the authorization package.

Over the past years, the university has increased the number of new affiliated academic staff, but more concise recruitment policy should be established to attract high quality researchers.

Despite the fact that the internationalization of university research activities is regulated by the Internationalization Policy and Mechanism document, more efforts should be directed at securing international research funds, increasing international publications of affiliated academic staff in reputable scientific journals, initiating joint study programme and integrating co-supervision schemes into academic programmes. However, it is worth mentioning that the university supports academic staff's attendance at international conferences and mobility (the Nanovic Institute the Mendoza Business School, Lublin and Ukrainian Catholic Universities)/research fellowship (The university of Notre Dame) with partner institutions through bilateral and multilateral exchange projects.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- Component evidences/indicators including the relevant documents, interview results, etc.
- The University strategy - Approved by the academic board dated 24 September 2019, # 08-19 by the protocol decision. Date of update: Resolution #04-20, protocol decision of the academic council, April 16, 2020
- Internationalization policy and mechanisms - Approved by the University rector dated 02 April 2020, Ordinance #42-20
- Statistical data
- Institutional cooperation with international research units
- Rules for planning, evaluating and promoting the scientific-research activity - Primary edition approved by the
- University rector dated 23 March 2020, Ordinance #38-20; Updated edition approved by the University rector dated 15 June 2020, Ordinance #86-20 University website
- Interview results.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Clarify evaluation criteria for research proposal submitted for university funding;
- Strengthen support mechanisms for securing external funding for research/scientific activities;
- Develop more concise recruitment policy for attracting high quality researchers and increasing their involvement in scientific activities;
- Encourage affiliated academic staff's involvement in international joint projects, obtaining international research funds, increasing the number of international publication in reputable scientific journals; inviting international partners for joint scientific publications.
- Initiate joint masters study programmes with co-supervision schemes in order to enhance the quality of supervision and research outputs;

#### **Suggestions:**

#### **Best Practices (if applicable):**



<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/>Partially complies with requirements</p>
<p><b>6.3. Evaluation of Research Activities</b></p>
<p>HEI has a system for evaluating and analysing the quality of research/creative-arts activities, and the productivity of scientific-research units and academic/scientific staff.</p>
<p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani University evaluates scientific-research activities in accordance with Plan-Implement-Evaluate principle. The rules and mechanisms of planning the scientific-research activities and evaluation of implemented actions apply both to individual affiliated staff and scientific-research units. Both parties are obliged to conduct a minimum annual research load, including direct research activities and events related to scientific-development, estimated by points (participation in local/international discussion panel, local/international seminar, local/international conference, local/international public lecture, local/international working meeting. The staff are awarded points for the administration of the program (particularly the head of the program). This includes, but is not limited to, accreditation.</p> <p>Academic Research Planning and Development Manager is responsible for assessing research activities and offering guidance in regards to research planning and preparation. The Academic Research Analyses and Evaluation Manager of the QA office evaluates the results of academic staff and research units, obliging both parties to provide interim and annual reports on accomplished research activities. Conclusions of achievements are communicated to academic staff and deans of respective faculties. An individual research plan is devised in case someone fails to fulfil the minimum scientific workload. Consolidated information of interim and annual evaluations is integrated into the Academic Research Analyses and Evaluation Manager's annual report and submitted to the Academic Council. Practices of Georgian HEIs and partner international institutions were examined in order to define quantitative indicators for minimum scientific workload. In case of underperformance or failure to satisfy the minimum scientific research workload, remedy measures (deadline to improve research activities, revisions in labour agreement for affiliated academic staff which are also practitioners) were defined for academic staff and research units. Also the termination of affiliated staff's contracts and abolishment of research unities were defined.</p>
<p><b>Evidences/indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rules for planning, evaluating and promoting the scientific-research activity - Primary edition approved by the University rector dated 23 March 2020, Ordinance #38-20; Updated edition approved by the University rector dated 15 June 2020, Ordinance #86-20</li> <li>• Annual Report on scientific-research activities for the 2019-2020 academic year</li> <li>• Evaluation report of scientific-research activities for the 2019-2020 academic year</li> <li>• Interviews during the Site visit</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance scientific-research units and affiliated academic staff's awareness in regards to evaluation procedures along with its value/impact and consequences.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document measures (remedy in case of poor performance or acknowledgement of efficient scientific/research productivity) undertaken as a result of evaluations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p>

## Evaluation

- ☒ Substantially complies with requirements

## 7. Material, Information and Financial Resources

Material, information and financial resources of HEI ensure sustainable, stable, effective and efficient functioning of the institution, and the achievement of goals defined through strategic development plan.

### 7.1 Material Resources

- The institution possesses or owns material resources (fixed and current assets) that are used for achieving goals stated in the mission statement, adequately responds to the requirements of educational programmes and research activities, and corresponds to the existing number of students and planned enrolment.
- HEI offers environment necessary for implementing educational activities: sanitary units, natural light possibilities, and central heating system.
- Health and safety of students and staff is protected within the institution.
- HEI has adapted environment for people with special needs

### Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The institution owns material resources (fixed and liquid assets) that are used for achieving goals set in the action plan, adequately responds to the requirements of educational programmes and research activities, and corresponds to the existing number of students. HEI building has the following compulsory sections: foyer, recreation spaces, 16 classrooms for theoretical teaching, 1 computer class, administrative offices, space for group work, sanitary/hygienic units, library, archive (there is not enough space for archive and this needs to be enlarged; it was also being used for general storage purposes), conference hall, professor offices (where professors provide counselling to students). Distribution of various units supports effective implementation of educational and administrative process. Classrooms are equipped with necessary facilities, have natural as well as artificial light possibilities. Building has central heating system, divided sanitary units, which have continuous water supply, and are be cleaned and organized as appropriate. Sanitary units observe sanitary-hygienic conditions. They have uninterruptible artificial lights and ventilation.

The institution has developed fire prevention and safety, first aid, and order mechanisms, and has appropriate inventory in place. Fire equipment is located on each floor of the building, in a visible area, with detailed instruction of use, and evacuation plans approved by competent agencies. Building has additional emergency exits (where doors do not open inside out, and are made of iron). institution has medical cabinet (during site visit experts' panel was not able to meet with nurse) equipped with first aid tools, both natural and artificial lights, natural ventilation, and constant supply of cold and hot water. Institution has security video recording and storing facilities installed both inside and outside of the buildings, throughout the premises.

According to the SER University applied to the Emergency Management Agency with a request to inspect the fire-technical mechanisms of the building. Some recommendations were provided and deadlines were given to perform activities. Because of this conclusion on Fire safety was not provided. HEI provided conclusion on safety of the building.

People with special needs are able to freely navigate and move around the building (including, ramps, elevator). Students with special educational needs have access to learning resources; to administration of faculty and the HEI. Specially adapted sanitary unit is in place for students with special needs. Parking lot for people with disabilities is arranged outside the building.

There is a lack of dormitories, though these are presently being built.

### Evidences/indicators

- Documentation confirming possession of the real estate, extract from the Public Registry;
- Internal measurement drawings of buildings;
- Documentation certifying possession of liquid assets; Contracts, accounting documents, inventory act
- On-site visit;
- Receipts certifying payment of electricity, water and natural gas utilities;
- Document certifying compliance with sanitary norms;
- Conclusion on Building safety;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SER.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emergency exit door must not be made of iron, HEI needs to change it; it should also open from inside outwards;</li> <li>Space for the archive is not sufficient, HEI needs to enlarge it, and the space needs to be used solely for the purposes of the archive, not as a general store room;</li> <li>Conclusion on fire Safety must be provided and recommendations by authorized agency must be performed.</li> </ul>
<b>Suggestions:</b>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b>  X Partially complies with requirements
<b>7.2. Library Resources</b>
Library environment, resources and service support effective implementation of educational and research activities, and HEI constantly works for its improvement.
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b>  Library environment, resources and service support effective implementation of educational and research activities, and HEI constantly works for its improvement. Library includes the following spaces: Book archive, reading hall, library staff office space, meeting and group workspace, IT equipment space. Institution has regulations for using library, informative instructions and reading hall equipped with appropriate inventory, including: Computers connected to internet, and possibilities for using printer, copy machines, and scanners. Library has Wi-Fi. Library resources ensure achievement of educational program learning outcomes and implementation of research/scientific work. During site visit several books were checked in the library and all of them were available. Books of the library are processed in accordance to the library regulations. Students and staff have access to international library databases (such as Hein online; EBSCO etc). According to the SER The library ensures services to students, academic and administrative staff through a flexible work schedule. The working hours of the library are: Monday - Friday: 09:00-21:00, Saturday: 09:00 – 18:00. The library has an electronic catalog OPEN BIBLIO, which is posted on the University website, and students, academic, and administrative staff have the opportunity to search for the literature they need. In the e-catalog, librarians have their own worksheet where circulation takes place. The mentioned process implies: Adding a member, issuing the desired literature to the member, returning, cataloging. (This information was checked during site visit). The University has developed resources and services development strategies and a renovation mechanism. This mechanism includes issues such as the efficient implementation of the University's teaching and research activities with library resources, existing resources, and services development mechanisms and services focused on the University awareness and community development. According to the CV of Librarian Experts' panel was not able to figure out her working experience (according to the Job Description librarian should have 1 year working experience in library). Library staff provides information to students and staff on the resources and services offered by the library (e.g., orientation sessions/ meetings, counselling, etc.), help with finding appropriate literature and other resources. HEI continuously renews and upgrades resources and services based on the requirements of students and staff.
<b>Evidences/indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation certifying the possession of library resources</li> <li>Electronic catalog posted on the website;</li> <li>Statistics for use of electronic library databases;</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mechanisms for the development and update of library resources and services;</li> <li>• Regulation for the use of the library;</li> <li>• Personal File of the Staff;</li> <li>• Statistics of use of international electronic library databases;</li> <li>• Site Visit.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire a librarian with relevant work experience</li> </ul>
<b>Suggestions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The library should be supplied with some more updated literature, especially in foreign languages.</li> </ul>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</li> </ul>
<b>7.3 Information Resources</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEI has created infrastructure for information technologies and its administration and accessibility are ensured</li> <li>○ Electronic services and electronic management systems are implemented and mechanisms for their constant improvement are in place</li> <li>○ HEI ensures business continuity</li> <li>○ HEI has a functional web-page in Georgian and English languages.</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b> <p>Sabauni has infrastructure which follows IT service requirements. There is Information Technologies manager who is responsible and able to deal with related issues and problems as for web site and internet (WI-FI) as well as computer software and hardware. IT manger mentioned they use Windows system for computers and Linux and windows server for servers.</p> <p>University has contracts with outsource companies for LMS and servers service and they are responsible to their operation. Sabauni has 6 servers at their building. Two of them are backups for 4 servers. University use amazon cloud backup system for LMS.</p> <p>Whole perimeter of buildings is covered with Wi-Fi internet and there are several network (for administration, students, guests). Contract for internet is with Silknet. Sabauni has Learning Managements System where are making students registration, they can see schedule of lectures (time lecturer's name and room number), see their assessment and progress, evaluate academic staff and administration and get study materials. During visit experts could check software. University has electronic document flow software integrated with LMS. Web-site is fully functional in Georgian and English languages and there is updated information which is needed for students, academy staff and stakeholders (like employers, school graduates etc.) Web-page is installed on hosting which is purchased from silknet.</p> <p>Academy has business continuity plan, where are indicated possible risks and correction action if needed, but it is not well known with every employee of university. For example IT manager mentioned that he knows that document exists at the university but he has not familiar with it.</p> <p>In terms of IT resources, there are links with Georgian courts, Lexis Nexis, HeinOnline, Westlaw. This is actually very impressive, and one of top database owners in south Caucasian region.</p>

<b>Evidences/indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://sabauni.edu.ge/ka">https://sabauni.edu.ge/ka</a>;</li> <li>• Site visit;</li> <li>• Interview results</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations:</b> Involve all interested parties in development and review process of business continuity plan
<b>Suggestions:</b>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements
<b>7.4 Financial Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Allocation of financial resources described in the budget of HEI is economically achievable</li> <li>○ Financial standing of HEI ensures performance of activities described in strategic and mid-term action plans</li> <li>○ HEI financial resources are focused on effective implementation of core activities of the institution</li> <li>○ HEI budget provides funding for scientific research and library functioning and development</li> <li>○ HEI has an effective system of accountability, financial management and control</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b>  <p>The expert panel found SABUNI's budget to be sufficient for the purposes pursued in the mission and strategy statement. The main source of income for the budget is tuition fees, but there is also a certain amount of input from international foundation grants, USAID and other sources.</p> <p>The funding for internationalization and research, however, was found by the panel to be insufficient to make significant progress in these areas. This is problematic, because the university aspires towards a more international focus, and wishes to establish PhD programmes. Action is required here.</p> <p>The panel, during interviews, found that certain activities had been shifted from one budget line to another between years, to make it seem as though more money was being spent on internationalization (these activities had previously been classed as 'administration'). This is intransparent, and a problem.</p> <p>There is no specific plan to rationalize less successful programmes and thereby to increase the sustainability of the university and study process itself.</p> <p>A high rate of suspended students was identified, which could represent a threat to active students as well in the long term from a financial sustainability perspective.</p> <p>Staff and administrators consistently blamed this on the overall economic situation in Georgia, for the high rates of suspended students.</p> <p>The institution's systems of accountability, financial management and control are all adequate.</p>
<b>Evidences/indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEI budget</li> <li>• Strategic Plan</li> <li>• Interview</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The institution should increase the research budget.</li> <li>• More transparency with budget planning would be desirable i.e. the overlap between internationalisation and administration</li> </ul>

<b>Suggestions:</b>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b>  X Partially complies with requirements