განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Final Report on Georgian American University Authorization

Expert Panel Members

Chair:

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Tbilisi

June 14, 2021

Authorization Report Resume

General information on the educational institution

Georgian American University, LLC (GAU) is a private higher education institution operating in Georgia. It was established in 2005 and is developing since; currently it offers all three levels of higher education, altogether 18 programs in which approximately 1.500 students from Georgia as well as from abroad are studying. A proportion of foreign students is about 1/3 out of a total student number. The GAU is structured into five main units (the schools): Business School; Law, Social Science and Diplomacy School; Informatics and Engineering School; Humanities and Liberal Education School; and Medical School.

Brief overview of the authorization site visit

The whole process was realized on April 27-29, 2021 in a hybrid form, due to coronavirus limitations. Preparatory and other meetings of the expert panel as well as practically all the interviews were held on-line. But since some expert panel members were physically located in Tbilisi, they visited facilities of the GAU and some other relevant locations, too, in order to see whether and until what extend are these facilities suitable for the GAU´s operation. These site visits were transmitted on-line for the rest of the expert panel. Besides to the documentation provided to the panel before the very visit, the panel required some more documents just before and during the visit, too. They were provided by the GAU. This way, the panel received as much as information possible which helped to complete the whole picture about the GAU and its functioning. The panel would like to thank Mr. Davit Burjanadze, representative of the NCEQH, for all the support provided before, during and after the site visit – all this proved to be very helpful.

Overview of the HEI's compliance with standards

Mission and strategic development of HEI…………………………………. Complies

Organizational structure and management of HEI………………………….. Complies

Educational programs….…………………………………………………… Substantially complies

Personnel of HEI……………………………………………………….….. Complies

Students and their support services………………………………………….. Substantially complies

Research, development and/or other creative work…………………………. Substantially complies

Material, information and financial resources……………………………….. Complies

Summary of Recommendations

- The Medical School must have a clear policy that fosters the relationship between education and research. A scientific/research strategy specifically addressing the development plans of the Medical School is needed. More directly, plans should be set in strategy (e.g. planning to support/fund research esp. done by young clinicians and researchers; planning a fund for a chosen medical project; encourage clinical research; grants, funds (national, international) for

development of scientific / clinical infrastructure, allocation of own funds, which are based on the criteria of excellence, plans / emphasis on strengthening clinical and translational research which specifics (e.g. 'basic science' or 'clinical studies') they would focus on in the future, and in what priorities or focus areas (e.g. 'epidemiology' or 'social sciences', etc.) do they imagine the development.

- Schemes should be implemented for competitive research activities and the recognition of research excellence. In this sense, the use of qualitative descriptors together with quantitative parameters, scientometry indicators (e.g. first or last authorship in Q1 or Q2 periodicals, co-authorship with students in scientific papers, number of supervised PhD students, etc.) is needed.

- We recommend that a more effective mentoring mechanism must be developed in clinical subjects, such as regular meetings, discussions between students and clinical mentors in order to analyse the efficiency of the clinical teaching method.

- Rules for nomination, qualification for being a clinical mentor should be more clearly specified (minimum academic qualifications for the categories), and personal development plans are needed for the clinical staff members to achieve an agreed common basis.

- The teaching material listed in syllabi is up-to-date and largely ensures the achievement of intended LOs, nevertheless, the recommended printed volumes (besides electronic versions, if any) should be made available in the library in appropriate number of volumes.

- The preclinical simulation training follows good practice but the relative weight of clinical teaching should be increased and in clinical subjects direct access to real clinical cases should be provided and the time allotted for practical bedside teaching should be defined. Procedural skills (injections, sutures, bandages, BLS) should be assessed at standardized frequency: competence and the need for re-training should be re-assessed at appropriate time intervals.

- Medical ethics, including patient privacy and autonomy, is included in the theoretical part of the curriculum, but it should always be reinforced through role-modelling behaviour in practice, during clinical teaching. This is impossible without the proper use of the Georgian language, and therefore, more emphasis should be put on communication skills in Georgian language in clinical subjects – communication with different age group of patients and their relatives is needed, and also the consideration of cultural, ethnic, religious specificities is necessary. Participation in patient care should include relevant community experience (with family doctors) and teamwork with other health professions.

- Therefore, the HEI should define adequately the specific end-learning outcomes regarding communication knowledge, skills and appropriate attitudes and behaviours. The adoption of this framework will inform the students about what is expected of them - the definition of the set of communication skills that the students must master at pre-defined time points and by the end of the study programme is necessary.

- The evaluation of LOs should be continuous during the upcoming years and the HEI should construct a plan how the 'Medicine' programme's LO assessment results will be utilized for the improvement of the programme, which means, that if necessary, programme content and LOs or the assessment system will be modified.

- The current student/tutor ratios are acceptable, but an increase in the number of admissions should be followed by an increase in the number of clinical staff, those who are involved in clinical courses and bedside teaching and the required number of senior tutors (professors with relevant agreement). This increase should be performed with the consideration of maximum workload regulations, the planned number of students' contingent per years and the number of students per groups. The sizes of groups during the preclinical practicals are acceptable but in clinical subjects this should be limited, optimally lower than 10.

- Individual access to real clinical scenarios is recommended. A good student-tutor ratio should be kept up in all teaching modalities (small groups allow for more personalised teaching and the lack of contact with patients may demotivate students).

- Clinical training should be organised using a mix of clinical settings and rotations throughout all main subjects. Proof to be able to work in teams, management of conflicts should also be included into the clinical curriculum. In this case, again, the practice-based aspects should be defined and more directly, personal access to bedside clinical practice should be guaranteed.

- The definition of a set of clinical skills that students must master at the end of the study programme is necessary. Ideally the Medical School would develop a set of practical procedures that a student

must master by the end of a specific clinical discipline and at the end of study programme and assess them not only in simulated but in real clinical contexts, too. Simulation and the students' access to simulation technologies follow good practices but the number of contact hours in the Simulation Center should not be increased. The aim is not to rely completely on this method; more clinical practice with individual access to individual patients should be provided to students – as an early warning towards the courses of later semesters. Given that the first series of graduation is expected in the upcoming semesters, this is the correct timing for adoption of this framework.

- In clinical education the key teaching bases (clinical hospitals) should be evaluated regularly for their appropriateness and quality regarding the practical training program. In case of invited staff, their competence regarding the specific courses should be defined and controlled.
- It is recommended to fix the tuition fee for bachelor's program in Business, as it is in the contract for the one-cycle Medicine program;
- Increase the independence of ombudsman – it is recommended that the ombudsman does not hold any position at the university and is elected with the involvement of students, rather than appointed by the president.
- Increase support for PhD students at the university level.
- Foster the integration of international students in the university life and increase their support with additional services.
- Develop the financial support mechanisms for students with low SES.
- Improve mechanism for the prior evaluation of project potential focusing on the development of new knowledge, vision, approaches and perspectives;
- Collect statistical data on research outcome in accordance with indicators and benchmarks mentioned in the regulatory documents;
- Collect data on the scientific potential of academic staff paying special attention to the quality of publications with indications of h-indexes, i10-indexes etc..
- Accelerate the engagement of international foreign scholars into the supervision of PhD students focusing on the internationalization of research output.
- Collect statistical data on the staff research activities and the quality of materials published.
- Publish outcomes of research centres and intitute.
- It is recommended to update the existing paper-based resources (books) of the HEI based on developments in the field, especially for English language programs which will ensure the achievement of the learning outcomes of the educational program.
- The teaching material listed in syllabi is up-to-date and largely ensures the achievement of intended LOs, nevertheless, the recommended printed volumes (besides electronic versions, if any) should be made available in the library in appropriate number of volumes.

Summary of Suggestions

- More internationalization is needed in medical sciences with active support of mobility.
- A strategy for cooperation, networking with other HEIs and research groups (that in turn may translate into R&D and education improvement) is suggested to increase the synergies between Georgian universities with medical schools (e.g. invitation of colleagues for thesis supervisions, joint projects, etc.). The number of cooperative efforts (grants, funds, projects, papers, theses) will be a good performance indicator in the future.
- The website is user-friendly and facilitates the information sharing on many important details of the study programmes - it is suggested that this good practice should be followed in case of 'Medicine' too.
- The HEI provides courses to develop students' scientific skills, such as research methodology, however it will be beneficial to strengthen the curriculum-based practical research work of medical students (e.g. elective courses for undergradatues, establishment of student scientific circles, journal clubs, etc.).
- The organizational structure of the Medical School should be presented better on the website to visualize the operation of each educational/clinical unit (teaching bases, hospitals) and the possible interfaces between them, according to the subjects, tasks arising from the professional activities. Possibilities for clinical research should be provided for hospital employees.

- The basis of the Skills Center should be used as starting points to increase the quality and weight of practical training, and therefore short and long-term development strategies are suggested. The current environment is adequately meets the demand of preclinical courses and the integration of technical/procedural knowledge obtained during simulation skills training into the existing clinical curriculum seems to be possible, but the technical background can be developed further in clinical subjects with diagnostic and technical/interventional possibilities. Emphasis should be put on low-tech simulation, the directions of skills development are always depending on local interests and traditions, but typically include internal medicine (with subspecialties), surgery (with subspecialties), anaesthesiology and intensive care, diagnostic imaging, emergency medicine, general practice/family medicine, obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatrics, etc.); here are only 2 proposals, examples for the development avenues of these areas, as follows:

  - Technical fundamentals of general surgery, providing individual suturing pads and instrument sets for students (computerized training programs - e.g. Suture Tutor / Minor Surgical Skills - are also available / minimally invasive surgery: workstations and simulation box trainers (e.g. Minimal Access Trainers) may be used to teach and assess both cognitive and technical skills during graduate, postgraduate and CPD activities. In this sense, the Skills Center could provide medical education and enhancement of personal skills throughout the career of a GAU student).

  - Medical imaging simulation and the acquisition of pre-clinical skills using diagnostic ultrasound with specified anatomical protocols.

- Long-term, strategic planning and investments in more complex simulations (i.e. scenarios with simulated patients and computerized patient simulators such as trauma and ICU mannequins, birth simulators, etc.) is also suggested – the high fidelity simulation protocols may be incorporated later on into a postgraduate curriculum as well.

- Create and use modern technologies, such as HR software. which will be more convenient for record keeping and will make activities of the HRM Department better and aid them in time management.

- Determine the staff turnover ratio, analyse the data obtained and consider the reasons, which will help to prevent and / or eliminate possible shortcomings and problems in the implementation of human resource management processes and procedures at the university.

- Use different performance appraisal methods for different positions (for instance, 720 and 360 degree, MBO, appraisal according to competences).

- An important component of the programme could be student mentoring – e.g. higher semester students help younger students in a uniform way.

- Consider a possibility to have an adaptation plan for newly employed staff.

- Foster further involvement of students in the decision-making process at the university.

- Develop greater cooperation with scientific foundations and business sector with regards to the development of research activities aiming at economic, industrial and other innovative development.

- Link research and teaching activities by integration of research output into teaching agenda at MA and PhD levels.

- Focus on securing external funding opportunities for the implementation of research projects.

- Assist university staff with grant writing and project proposals and help with searching of external funding opportunities.

- Balance teaching and research activities at PhD level focusing on the engagement of students into the implementation of research projects.

- It is desirable to increase costs for conferences, articles and publications, which will further enhance the University's scientific potential.

Summary of the Best Practices

- The HEI runs well-established and controlled individual, personalized educational programs (example for good practice: personal computers were gifted to students during the pandemic).

Summary Table

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

Signature of expert panel members

1. Milan Pol (Chair)
2. Mihaly Boros (Co-chair)
3. Irina Lobjanidze (Member)
4. Davit Sikharulidze (Member)
5. Salome Voronovi (Member)
6. Lili Bibilashvili (Member)

7. Tinatin Gabrichidze (Member)

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

The mission of the Georgian American University (GAU) reflects three main pillars on which each higher education institution is supposed to be built these days: teaching, research, and social role (public reach) of the university. In concrete, it is formulated as follows: Providing education, research production and innovative activities based on advanced scientific-research and teaching-practical models." (SER, p. 16). Also, the mission statement emphasizes equal opportunities "by strengthening knowledge, skills and universal values and recognizing social responsibility, promoting the development of society and the global integration of the country, through the creation, accumulation and sharing of knowledge" (SER, p. 16)

The mission statement of the GAU positively correlates with its vision in which „the responsibility of creating a tolerant, collaborative and innovative environment where students and faculty can help (a) contribute to the intellectual, cultural and socio-economic development of our society; (b) creating, storing and transferring knowledge using the main advantages of the university in the educational space; (c) Transformation of acquired knowledge into practice and application of skills developed in accordance with the qualifications at all necessary levels; (d) development of professionals with high social and moral responsibility; (e) strengthening universal and national values through and within the framework of expert and research activities, thus encouraging civic cooperation and accountability; (f) ensuring the principles of academic freedom and lifelong learning" (webpage of the GAU).

The values of fairness and equality, academic freedom, involvement, diversity and respect, responsibility and accountability, transformability are emphasized in connection to the GAU´s mission and vision. Also, the GAU clearly declares its devotion to Bologna principles, ECTS, and more.

This can be said, the mission statement of the GAU is in correspondence with the goals of higher education in Georgia and Europe, it defines the role of the GAU and its place within the higher education area and the society as a whole, both locally and internationally.

During the interviews, this was proven that key GAU actors were aware of the institutional mission and its main pillars. Both mission and vision statements are available at the English version of the GAU´s webpage.

Evidences/indicators
- Self-evaluation report
- Webpage of the GAU

• Interviews

Recommendations:
None

Suggestions:
None

Best Practices (if applicable):
None

Evaluation

    ☒ Complies with requirements

    ☐ Substantially complies with requirements

    ☐ Partially complies with requirements

    ☐ Does not comply with requirements

1.2 Strategic Development

- o HEI has a strategic development (7-year) and an action plans (3-year) in place.
- o HEI contributes to the development of the society, shares with the society the knowledge gathered in the institution, and facilitates lifelong learning
- o 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 GAU has a new Strategic Development Plan 2021-2027 as well as the 2021-2023 Action Plan are in place. The strategic development plan is focused on several priorities: quality and development-oriented educational activities; research activities; support of student life and career services; and organizational development. They are elaborated to the level of strategic goals, tasks and indicators which enables the plan to be dealt with more concretely. The priorities, strategic goals, tasks as well as indicators are clearly formulated and they can serve as a useful guide during the implementation process.

Three-year action plan elaborates more concretely specific actions to be taken to meet some tasks of the strategic plan. This also informs about financial aspects of the plans and on responsibilities of concrete units for meeting the plans.

Also, the GAU has elaborated the system of monitoring of how the plans are implemented. Monitoring is elaborated concretely on both horizontal, and vertical levels of the institution, and the system for possible improvements are in place.

This can be said the strategic documents are in a positive correlation with the mission and vision statements of the GAU, especially as concerns teaching and research development activities of the GAU. The so-called third role of the university is not explicitly present among the priorities and needs to be read "in between the lines" in some extend. This needs to be mentioned, though, that relevant issue on the level of strategic goals can be found, such as "introduction of corporate social responsibility" (Strategic Development Plan, p. 50), for instance.

During the interviews, it appeared key actors of the GAU are aware of its planning documents. Both strategic plan, and action plan are displayed at the webpage of the GAU.

Evidences/indicators

- • Strategic Development Plan 2021-2027
- • Action Plan 2021-2023

• Self-evaluation report • Interviews

Recommendations:
•

Suggestions:
• *Non-binding suggestions for further development*

Best Practices (if applicable):
Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions

Evaluation
Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard ☒ Complies with requirements ☐ Substantially complies with requirements ☐ Partially complies with requirements ☐ Does not comply with requirements

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

2.1 Organizational Structure and Management
o Organizational structure of HEI ensures implementation of goals and activities described in its strategic plan o Procedures for election/appointment of the management bodies of HEI are transparent, equitable, and in line with legislation o HEI's Leadership/Management body ensures effective management of the activities of the institution o Considering the mission and goals of HEI, leadership of the HEI supports international cooperation of the institution and the process of internationalization.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements
Considering the SER of the GAU, the University envisages the idea of modern management in its organizational structure. The University has been working for years to refine its management principles as reflected in its modern structure. The structure of the university, the functions of its units ensure the implementation of the goals set out in the strategic development plan of the university.
The governing bodies of the University are defined by the University regulation and are: a meeting of partners; President; Senior Vice President; Vice-President in the field of education, science and quality assurance; Academic Council; Scientific Council; Quality Assurance Office.
After reviewing the submitted documentation and especially the interviews, it became clear that the changes seen in the governance dynamics of the University are aimed at developing, supporting the implementation of the mission and strategy of the institution.
During the site visit, it was confirmed that the structure and management style of the institution are in line with the requirements for effective management and the ability of the institution to ensure the strategic priorities and goals of the University.

The above is confirmed by the organizational changes - declaring the research as a priority and allocating more support, which was reflected in the creation of the Scientific Council as the new structural unit. A thoughtful and consistent, result-oriented approach is evident from the fact that the University considered it appropriate not only to establish a Scientific Council with its independent powers, but also to define the joint competencies of the Academic Council and the Scientific Council, respectively joint meetings and their joint decisions.

GAU has all the main and supporting structures that ensure effective management of the university as well as the quality and continuity of academic processes.

The University is governed by the President, who is appointed by the Partners Meeting. One important factor must be highlighted, that ensures fast and efficient operation of the University, which, in turn, significantly contributes to sustainability and further development opportunities. This factor is the employment of a significant part of the founders in the management of the university. This ensures the effective performance of decision making process.

It was interesting to find out that GAU positions itself as an employer, it encourages students to be employed in administrative, support and other relevant positions.

The University has a business continuity plan. The plan contains risks and measures to avoid them. The University Process Continuity Plan is considered as an essential part of strategic management, which is also formalized and described in detail in the relevant document.

The University has developed an internationalization policy. There is a specialized International Relations Service, which operates on the basis of the relevant regulations. The institution has signed memoranda and agreements with foreign universities. During the visit, it was revealed that the University has good connections with European and a number of American universities and benefits from this partnership in terms of student and staff mobility in various directions.

Evidences/indicators

University structure;

University Charter;

Strategic development plan of the University;

The statute of the schools;

Academic and Scientific Council Regulations;

University management monitoring mechanisms;

Provisions of each administrative and auxiliary structural unit;

Business continuity plan;

Partnership Memoranda and Agreements with Universities and Other Institutions;

Internationalization policy.

Recommendations:
Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standard component

Suggestions:
Non-binding suggestions for further development

Best Practices (if applicable):
Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions

Evaluation
Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard
☒ Complies with requirements ☐ Substantially complies with requirements ☐ Partially complies with requirements o ☐ Does not comply with requirements

2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms
o 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. o HEI has a mechanism for planning student body, which will give each student an opportunity to get a high quality education.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

As a result of the SER, analysis of the university documentation and the site visit, was revealed that the quality service at the university operates on the basis of the quality policy developed by the university, the main purpose of which is to develop a quality culture, which will be carried out in compliance with the principles of autonomy of the main educational units and academic freedom.

During the visit it was important to confirm that in accordance with the policy announced by the University, the internal quality system belongs to the basic part of the management system of the institution. It seems that this approach provides maximum support to the University for the implementation of internal quality mechanisms.

Internal quality assurance is based on the PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) approach and the relevant steps are described in the program development plan. The decision to develop the program is based on labor market survey, as evidenced by an on-site visit when a team of experts reviewed labor market research reports.

During the visit, was revealed that the Quality Assurance Office systematically conducts student and staff satisfaction surveys and uses the results to develop academic programs and other services at the University

During the visit, it was also explored and revealed that the University has an orderly and formalized system for using quality results.

It turns out that the Quality Service, as a result of the educational process monitoring analysis, plans appropriate and necessary trainings and activities for various administrative, support, academic / invited staff to improve the educational process and support the relevant persons.

During the visit, such an important component as the involvement of students in the quality assurance process was identified. To this end, the Quality Assurance Service provides: Involvement of students in the learning process and assessment of learning outcomes; Surveying of students' opinion through the system of both representation and direct polls; Use of alternative student surveys; Various platforms and opportunities where they are provided to express their thoughts and views; Monitor student academic progress, use statistics on program completion, status suspension, or termination to improve the learning process.

During the visit were addressed the challenges of quality assurance and development as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic, and the same issue was assessed in relation to the 2.1 standard. Both the overall management of the university and the quality service responded to the challenge in a timely manner. The university has developed a Covid-19 strategy, which has been used effectively to streamline the learning process as well as to protect the safety of the university community. As a result of the visit, it was confirmed

that the quality service well realized and organized the need for more detailed and developmental work in the context of online or hybrid learning mode in order to maintain and develop quality.

Implementing a student engagement policy is used to inform, improve and expand academic / research processes.

The University Quality Assurance Service exercises its powers by coordinating the activities of the School Quality Assurance Managers. The University Quality Assurance Service is accountable for its activities to the Academic Council and the Vice President of the University in the field of education, science and quality assurance.

The University has developed a methodology for planning the student contingent, When determining the number of students at the University, these indicators are evaluated in relation to the target benchmarks.

Evidences/indicators

University Quality Assurance Policy;

Regulations of schools of basic educational units;

Student Contingent Planning Methodology;

University Management Monitoring Mechanism.

Recommendations:
Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standard component

Suggestions:
Non-binding suggestions for further development

Best Practices (if applicable):
Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions

Evaluation
Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

2.3. Observing Principles of Ethics and Integrity

o HEI has developed regulations and mechanisms that follow principles of ethics and integrity. Such regulations are publicly accessible.
o Institution has implemented mechanisms for detecting plagiarism and its prevention.
o HEI follows the principles of academic freedom.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The University has developed and operated a Code of Ethics which is an important part of the University Life and Communication Plan. It is public and accessible to all members of the university community. The Code of Ethics is posted on the University website.

The University Code of Ethics is based on three universal principles: fairness and equity; Equality of human rights; Personal and professional responsibility.

During the visit was revealed that the staff of the University and students are well aware of their responsibilities towards their own work and the University in general. They are aware in advance of any liability that may result from the violation of these rules.

The University has developed an "Academic Integrity Policy and Mechanisms" - a document on the basis of which the University ensures academic integrity and the introduction of appropriate mechanisms. It identifies acts of academic dishonesty at the University, as well as the types and forms of plagiarism, and identifies responsibilities for exposing academic dishonesty and plagiarism. For plagiarism prevention following types of support measures are recorded: existence of relevant electronic manuals; Regular consultations for interested and relevant persons; Organizing trainings and seminars; instant response to the violation by the administration.

Evidences/indicators:

Code of Ethics;

Academic Integrity Policy and Mechanisms;

Plagiarism detection software mechanisms;

University Regulation;

Staff management policy;

Job description of academic / scientific / invited staff and their assessment rules.

Recommendations:
Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standard component

Suggestions:
Non-binding suggestions for further development

Best Practices (if applicable):
Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions

Evaluation
Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

    ☒ Complies with requirements

    ☐ Substantially complies with requirements

    ☐ Partially complies with requirements

    ☐ Does not comply with requirements

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

3.1 Design and Development of Educational Programmes

HEI has a policy for planning, designing, implementing and developing educational programmes.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Overall, this can be concluded the GAU has a policy for planning, designing, implementing and developing educational programs. It currently offers 18 programs across the levels of tertiary education. The Program Development Committee is the platform which plays a crucial role in the planning and development of educational programs. These processes seem to be collaborative, involving a number of key actors – this was proven during the interviews. This way, internal (institutional) perspectives as well as external needs can be voiced out during the process.

Apart from the above mentioned Committee, School Board, QA Office and Academic Council play an important role during the process of development, evaluation and approval of educational programs.

The evaluation of study programs is carried out periodically (on an annual basis and once in three years).

The expert panel paid a specific attention to the medical program. The program was approved in 2017, it is based on ECTS system and is student-oriented. During the interviews was revealed that the human organ systems are selected as an integrating factor in the teaching of basic subjects and around them basic disciplines unite- e. g. anatomy, physiology, etc.

MD curriculum is partially integrated, which corresponds to the 7th level of integration according to the Harden's ladder, which includes elements of both horizontal and vertical and spiral integration.

The program is built on a modular principle, within the module there is a clear horizontal integration between the subjects, an approach based on the basic systems of the body.

Also interesting is the spiral integration component, which makes it possible to get an in-depth overview of important issues; (E.g. course in Medical Genetics and Clinical Pharmacology within the Internal Medicine module);

The program is followed by a clinical skills component (from the first semester) that is integrated at the basic level with the organ systems module and within the relevant clinical modules in the clinical phase. From the second year, students join a problem-based learning (PBL) course, which is also longitudinal.

Due to the ethnic diversity of the students, the challenges of the health care system in their countries are taken into account and elective courses are offered, with appropriate emphasis. Interdisciplinary teaching within the university is also provided.

The Quality Assurance Office reviews the progress of the program at the end of each semester to see where development is needed to improve the strengths and reduce weaknesses in line with the program outcomes. A range of relevant performance indicators are considered, including evaluation of academic staff. There is constant communication with employers, e.g. At the request of the employer, in 2020 communication skills and Georgian language teaching was strengthened in the program.

There is a methodology for developing an individual curriculum, according to which the program head determines the individual curriculum according to the needs of the student.

An important component in the evaluation of the program was found to be the midterm and final exams of all clinical subjects using the OSCE (Objective Structured Clinical Examination) methodology, which involves a simulated patient in the examination with mannequins.

The program is tailored and takes into account the interests of the foreign language students, specifically to facilitate communication in the clinic. For this purpose, the program provides a Georgian language course as a mandatory component. Georgian language is taught for 6 semesters (4 basic and 2 clinical communications).

The HEI has defined the curriculum models and the instructional methods employed. The goal of the new 'Medicine' program is clearly described as well: to provide practice-based knowledge with all the skills

which are necessary to take part in the health care in public and private sectors. The objective is realistic and achievable and the program takes the labour market demands into consideration. The Medical School teaches the principles of scientific method and evidence-based medicine, including analytical and critical thinking, throughout the curriculum. Besides, the Medical School identified and incorporated in the curriculum the contributions of the behavioral sciences, social sciences and medical ethics that enable effective communication, clinical decision making and ethical practices. This process should provide the students skills to assume appropriate clinical responsibility upon graduation – and to continue their personal development, the ability to participate in the scientific development of medicine as professionals and future colleagues. The proper integration between basic medical sciences and clinical sciences seems to be guaranteed, but certain operational linkage must be assured between the graduate educational program and the subsequent stage of training or practice that the student will enter after graduation. Here it should be noted that if the goal is correctly described, then the one-cycle educational program of the Medical School should be focused not only on basic medical and clinical knowledge, but also on the development of competencies needed for postgraduate practice, medical sciences and professional life-long, self-directed learning. Given that the language of instruction is English, and according to the plans the vast majority of students will be foreign citizens, special emphasis should be put on further training courses in Georgian language for medical communication and related fields as well (such as principles of ethics, history taking or communication in family medicine). The number of students who will start the residency program or will become PhD students will be good indicators for this purpose.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report
- Interview results
- Site visit

Recommendations:

- The Medical School must have a clear policy that fosters the relationship between education and research. A scientific/research strategy specifically addressing the development plans of the Medical School is needed. More directly, plans should be set in strategy (e.g. planning to support/fund research esp. done by young clinicians and researchers; planning a fund for a chosen medical project; encourage clinical research; grants, funds (national, international) for development of scientific / clinical infrastructure, allocation of own funds, which are based on the criteria of excellence, plans / emphasis on strengthening clinical and translational research which specifics (e.g. 'basic science' or 'clinical studies') they would focus on in the future, and in what priorities or focus areas (e.g. 'epidemiology' or 'social sciences', etc.) do they imagine the development.
- Schemes should be implemented for competitive research activities and the recognition of research excellence. In this sense, the use of qualitative descriptors together with quantitative parameters, scientometry indicators (e.g. first or last authorship in Q1 or Q2 periodicals, co-authorship with students in scientific papers, number of supervised PhD students, etc.) is needed.

Suggestions:

- More internationalization is needed in medical sciences with active support of mobility.
- A strategy for cooperation, networking with other HEIs and research groups (that in turn may translate into R&D and education improvement) is suggested to increase the synergies between Georgian universities with medical schools (e.g. invitation of colleagues for thesis supervisions, joint projects, etc.). The number of cooperative efforts (grants, funds, projects, papers, theses) will be a good performance indicator in the future.
- The website is user-friendly and facilitates the information sharing on many important details of the study programmes - it is suggested that this good practice should be followed in case of 'Medicine' too.
- The HEI provides courses to develop students' scientific skills, such as research methodology, however it will be beneficial to strengthen the curriculum-based practical research work of medical students (e.g. elective courses for undergradatues, establishment of student scientific circles, journal clubs, etc.).

Best Practices (if applicable):

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Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

3.2 Structure and Content of Educational Programmes

- o Programme learning outcomes are clearly stated and are in line with higher education level and qualification to be granted
- o 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.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The HEI described the content, extent and sequencing of courses and other curricular elements, including the balance between the core and optional content. The components of programs are in harmony with the mission statement of the Institution and follow a logical sequence.

Programs as a whole is aligned with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and corresponds with Georgian and international standards: it is not only knowledge but competence-based. There are no major discrepancies between the number of allocated ECTS and the actual students' workload.

The medical curriculum is organized into horizontal and longitudinal directions and in addition, it has spiral features, too. The structure is clear, makes the analysis easy, in general terms the learning outcomes (LOs) are clearly and logically distributed and comply with the goal of the program and the requirements, well-defined and largely correspond to the LOs of comparable HEIs.

The syllabi of compulsory and elective courses give clear information on the programs and the number of ECTS/credit hours allocated per course.

The program LOs clearly describe the minimum competences required for graduation, these are achievable, measurable and realistic and based on the sector benchmarks.

The Institution utilizes several standard methods for measuring LOs. The curriculum mapping provided ample information regarding the links of study courses with the outcomes and benchmarks of these outcomes within particular courses were demonstrated to the Expert Panel.

The way and intensity of communication between supervisors and students seems to be appropriate, the professional content and structure of the training, the teaching and learning support methods used are up-to-date, meet the professional requirements and are suitable for achieving the LOs. However, it is important to note that the medicine program is new and there are no comparative performance data, indicators or feedbacks from alumni/graduates.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report
- Interview results

Recommendations:

- We recommend that a more effective mentoring mechanism must be developed in clinical subjects, such as regular meetings, discussions between students and clinical mentors in order to analyse the efficiency of the clinical teaching method.
- Rules for nomination, qualification for being a clinical mentor should be more clearly specified (minimum academic qualifications for the categories), and personal development plans are needed for the clinical staff members to achieve an agreed common basis.

Suggestions:
- The organizational structure of the Medical School should be presented better on the website to visualize the operation of each educational/clinical unit (teaching bases, hospitals) and the possible interfaces between them, according to the subjects, tasks arising from the professional activities.
- Possibilities for clinical research should be provided for hospital employees.
- An important component of the programme could be student mentoring – e.g. higher semester students help younger students in a uniform way.

Best Practices:
- The HEI runs well-established and controlled individual, personalized educational programs (example for good practice: personal computers were gifted to students during the pandemic).

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

o ☐ Does not comply 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

In general, the learning outcomes (LOs) are law-compliant, transparent and fair system of their assessment they are assessed consistently and transparently on a regular basis and the assessment system takes the peculiarities of the field into consideration. The HEI utilizes relevant evaluation forms, both direct and indirect methods of assessment are employed. Evaluation methods and criteria within the courses are known in advance to the students by means of the use of an electronic system.

During the online site-visit and interviews the Expert Panel ascertained that the academic and invited staff members are all familiar with LO assessment methods. The program introduces the development of clinical skills from early stage of the teaching, which intensifies in later years. Students will acquire clinical/practical skills in the university-based Simulation Center. There is evidence that the evaluation here is based on measurable criteria and components. Specifically, the program uses Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs), and these methods of evaluation are in compliance with the teaching methods and ensure not only the measurement of knowledge and competencies, but can also provide a feedback to the lecturer and the student as well.

The Institution has established contracts with several hospitals with a sufficient number of beds, which in theory could provide the necessary personal and technical background for small group practicals. The efficiency of clinical course providers and how efficiently students will undergo clinical training with patients is still unclear, due to the fact that the 'Medicine' program is new and does not have postgraduate stage students.

The presented technical background and the course materials (i.e. current possibilities) will serve as perfect bases for future curricular developments. These bases should be used as starting points to increase the quality and weight of practical training. However, in spite of this compliance, more emphasis should be put

on Georgian language studies and communication skills in Georgian language. Communication with different age group of patients and their relatives is needed, and in the clinical subjects also the consideration of cultural, ethnic, religious specificities is necessary. As of today, the LOs of medical communication skills - the specific end-learning outcomes regarding communication knowledge, skills and attitudes or behaviour of the Medical School's study program cannot be evaluated adequately.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report
- Interview results

Recommendations:

- The preclinical simulation training follows good practice but the relative weight of clinical teaching should be increased and in clinical subjects direct access to real clinical cases should be provided and the time allotted for practical bedside teaching should be defined. Procedural skills (injections, sutures, bandages, BLS) should be assessed at standardized frequency: competence and the need for re-training should be re-assessed at appropriate time intervals.

- Medical ethics, including patient privacy and autonomy, is included in the theoretical part of the curriculum, but it should always be reinforced through role-modelling behaviour in practice, during clinical teaching. This is impossible without the proper use of the Georgian language, and therefore, more emphasis should be put on communication skills in Georgian language in clinical subjects - communication with different age group of patients and their relatives is needed, and also the consideration of cultural, ethnic, religious specificities is necessary. Participation in patient care should include relevant community experience (with family doctors) and teamwork with other health professions.

- Therefore, the HEI should define adequately the specific end-learning outcomes regarding communication knowledge, skills and appropriate attitudes and behaviours. The adoption of this framework will inform the students about what is expected of them - the definition of the set of communication skills that the students must master at pre-defined time points and by the end of the study programme is necessary.

- The evaluation of LOs should be continuous during the upcoming years and the HEI should construct a plan how the 'Medicine' programme's LO assessment results will be utilized for the improvement of the programme, which means, that if necessary, programme content and LOs or the assessment system will be modified.

- The current student/tutor ratios are acceptable, but an increase in the number of admissions should be followed by an increase in the number of clinical staff, those who are involved in clinical courses and bedside teaching and the required number of senior tutors (professors with relevant agreement). This increase should be performed with the consideration of maximum workload regulations, the planned number of students' contingent per years and the number of students per groups. The sizes of groups during the preclinical practicals are acceptable but in clinical subjects this should be limited, optimally lower than 10.

- Individual access to real clinical scenarios is recommended. A good student-tutor ratio should be kept up in all teaching modalities (small groups allow for more personalised teaching and the lack of contact with patients may demotivate students).

- Clinical training should be organised using a mix of clinical settings and rotations throughout all main subjects. Proof to be able to work in teams, management of conflicts should also be included into the clinical curriculum. In this case, again, the practice-based aspects should be defined and more directly, personal access to bedside clinical practice should be guaranteed.

- The definition of a set of clinical skills that students must master at the end of the study programme is necessary. Ideally the Medical School would develop a set of practical procedures that a student must master by the end of a specific clinical discipline and at the end of study programme and assess them not only in simulated but in real clinical contexts, too. Simulation and the students' access to simulation technologies follow good practices but the number of contact hours in the Simulation Center should not be increased. The aim is not to rely completely on this method; more clinical practice with individual access to individual patients should be provided to students – as an early warning towards the courses of later semesters. Given that the first series of graduation is expected in the upcoming semesters, this is the correct timing for adoption of this framework.

- In clinical education the key teaching bases (clinical hospitals) should be evaluated regularly for their appropriateness and quality regarding the practical training program. In case of invited staff, their competence regarding the specific courses should be defined and controlled.

Suggestions:

- The basis of the Skills Center should be used as starting points to increase the quality and weight of practical training, and therefore short and long-term development strategies are suggested. The current environment is adequately meets the demand of preclinical courses and the integration of technical/procedural knowledge obtained during simulation skills training into the existing clinical curriculum seems to be possible, but the technical background can be developed further in clinical subjects with diagnostic and technical/interventional possibilities. Emphasis should be put on low-tech simulation, the directions of skills development are always depending on local interests and traditions, but typically include internal medicine (with subspecialties), surgery (with subspecialties), anaesthesiology and intensive care, diagnostic imaging, emergency medicine, general practice/family medicine, obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatrics, etc.); here are only 2 proposals, examples for the development avenues of these areas, as follows:

- Technical fundamentals of general surgery, providing individual suturing pads and instrument sets for students (computerized training programs - e.g. Suture Tutor / Minor Surgical Skills - are also available / minimally invasive surgery: workstations and simulation box trainers (e.g. Minimal Access Trainers) may be used to teach and assess both cognitive and technical skills during graduate, postgraduate and CPD activities. In this sense, the Skills Center could provide medical education and enhancement of personal skills throughout the career of a GAU student).

- Medical imaging simulation and the acquisition of pre-clinical skills using diagnostic ultrasound with specified anatomical protocols.

- Long-term, strategic planning and investments in more complex simulations (i.e. scenarios with simulated patients and computerized patient simulators such as trauma and ICU mannequins, birth simulators, etc.) is also suggested – the high fidelity simulation protocols may be incorporated later on into a postgraduate curriculum as well.

Best Practices (if applicable):

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Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

o   ☐ Does not comply 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.

4.1. Staff Management

o   HEI has staff management policy and procedures that ensure the implementation of educational process and other activities defined in its strategic plan.

o   HEI ensures the employment of qualified academic/scientific/invited/administrative/ support staff.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Personnel Management Policy corresponds to the University's strategic plan, mission and vision.

Rules of recruitment at HEI are differentiated. Particularly, there are submitted rules for recruiting academic and support personnel, teachers and researchers. Basically, the personnel are selected based on an open procedure. When recruiting a teacher, his/her professional experience and/or experience in the academic sphere has great importance.

In the university there are rules of competition for academic positions and conditions of recruiting on academic positions at GAU, where there is information about initiation of competition announcement, the corresponding competition conditions and processes, conditions of recruiting to academic positions, types of employment agreements, work-load of the academic personnel, employment conditions.

The University has submitted the document - employee adaptation plan, which helps new employees in the process of finding their place in the new working environment, it also aids them in getting the information on the organization as well as acquainting with his / her obligations.

However, it would have been better if the university, along with the employee adaptation plan, had an adaptation program that would define the duties and responsibilities that would have to be performed during the probationary period, as well as criteria for evaluating those duties and responsibilities. this would have helped both employer and employee to clearly identify the strength and weaknesses of the employee that became clear during the probationary period. therefore based on this document it will be possible to make the most out of the new employee's knowledge, skills, and capabilities, and to identify gaps in performance (if there is any naturally) and address them accordingly and as quickly as possible. the document mentioned above will also help identify employees loyalty to the organization as well as, respect towards the organizational culture and positive attitude and assisting in revealing and making use of employee skills.

The document mentioned above (an adaptation program) will help the employee to develop loyalty and positive attitude towards the organization. in addition it will assist in revealing and making use of employee skills.

Exit interview questionary which the university is using is rather comprehensive, and without doubt is a very important document that provides the opportunity to obtain frank and honest feedback from the employee who is leaving. This in itself is very useful in recognition of strategic development needs of the university. it also helps in identifying the needs of the employees and opportunities in management development and succession planning.

The rule of GAU academic and research personnel Performance Appraisal stipulates the basis for relevant implementation of the appraisal of the given group, which is ensured by the appraisal method and criteria.

University's motivation system is well balanced. to motivate their employees they use both forms of material and non-material incentives.

It should be mentioned that HR Department has provided the key indicators for the activities in several directions, which, certainly, is a positive fact.

The University has a personal data protection policy and regulatory documents related to labour safety.

In whole, it can be said that the personnel policy implemented at the University are satisfactory and it attracts qualified staff, which, in the given case, meets the requirements. It should be underlined that perfections of the personnel processes and procedures and aspiration to improvement is evident. The HR development

strategic plan makes the basis for the above, thus, it is being directed to higher level development and improvement.

Evidences/indicators

- Personnel Management Policy
- Human Resources Management Office Regulation
- Performance appraisal of the personnel at Georgian-American University
- Results of staff performance evaluation and satisfaction survey and its analysis
- Satisfaction research
- Academic Process Management Office Regulations
- Continuous Education and Certificate Center Regulations
- Provisions of schools and subdivisions
- Staff adaptation plan
- Code of Ethics
- Job descriptions, Qualification requirements (Job specifications)
- Announced competitions
- Personal records of the personnel
- Research reports
- Sample of labor agreements
- Structural units' provisions. Statistical indicators about personnel
- Personal data protection policy
- Interview with research and development office representatives
- Interview with employers
- Interview with the head of department, deans and programs' leaders
- Interview with students.
- Interview with the heads of research institutes

Recommendations:

Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standard component

Suggestions:

- Create and use modern technologies, such as HR software. which will be more convenient for record keeping and will make activities of the HRM Department better and aid them in time management.
- Determine the staff turnover ratio, analyse the data obtained and consider the reasons, which will help to prevent and / or eliminate possible shortcomings and problems in the implementation of human resource management processes and procedures at the university.
- Use different performance appraisal methods for different positions. (for instance, 720 and 360 degree, MBO, appraisal according to competences)
- Consider a possibility to have an adaptation plan for newly employed staff.

Best Practices (if applicable):

Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

    ☒ Complies with requirements

    ☐ Substantially complies with requirements

    ☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

4.2. Academic/Scientific and Invited Staff Workload

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The number and work load of academic/ scientific and invited personnel is adequate to the educational programs, scientific-research/ creative/ executive activities implemented and other functions imposed on them.

To implement educational programs, scientific-research/ creative/ executive activities and other functions imposed on them, at the given stage, the adequacy of the number GAU academic/ scientific and invited personnel and their work load shall be confirmed by the scheme of the academic and invited personnel work load.

In whole, as a result of researching the satisfaction of the University product and service obtaining sub-groups, it can be said that the parties interested in the work carried out by the academic/ scientific and invited personnel are satisfied, which shows the relevance of the number of the academic/ scientific and invited personnel and their workload policy.

The methodology for determination of the students' body proposed by the University considers optimization of the existing number of the students and the number of those to be admitted, considering the specificity of the programs and target markings in connection with the number of academic and invited personnel.

Important – involvement of international professionals in academic and research processes is confirmed based on the international projects and indicates high level of involvement of highly qualified international specialists and, correspondingly, progressive, development oriented basic activity of the University

Evidences/indicators

- Sample of labor agreements
- Student Contingent Planning Methodology at Georgian American University, LLC.
- Affiliation rule
- Rules for assessing the activities of academic, invited personnel and researchers at University
- Semester Scheme for LL. academic and invited personnel
- Methodology of Planning of Students' Contingent
- Number of academic, scientific and invited personnel with respect to the number of programs and students
- Ratio of affiliated academic staff with the number of students
- Student and academic / invited personnel research results
- Interview with research and development office representatives
- Interview with employers
- Interview with the head of department, deans and programs' leaders
- Interview with students
- Interview with the heads of research institutes

Recommendations:
Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standard component

Suggestions:
Non-binding suggestions for further development.

Best Practices (if applicable):
Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions.

Evaluation
Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard
☒ Complies with requirements
☐ Substantially complies with requirements
☐ Partially complies with requirements
☐ Does not comply with requirements

5. Students and Their Support Services

HEI ensures the development of student-centred 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
o For each of the educational levels, HEI has developed regulations for assignment, suspension and termination of student status, mobility, qualification granting, issuing educational documents as well as recognition of education received during the learning period.
o HEI ensures the protection of student rights and lawful interests.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Regulations for assignment, suspension and termination of student status, mobility, qualification granting, issuing educational documents as well as recognition of education received during the learning period are transparent and fair, and are in line with current legislation. Assigning student status on undergraduate educational programs and one-cycle educational programs is possible through the unified national exams, mobility and without the unified national exams, in accordance with the legislation of Georgia. Master's degree candidates are enrolled based on the results of the unified masters exam and exam(s)/interviews defined by the university. Assigning student status without passing the unified Master exams is allowed in accordance with the rules established by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. The regulation of academic process management includes each regulation and is public in Georgian and English languages on the web-page of the institution:

https://www.gau.edu.ge/storage/app/media/Different%20Documents/academic-process-management-instruction-eng.pdf

https://www.gau.edu.ge/storage/app/media/Different%20Documents/academic-process-management-instruction-geo.pdf

GAU provided two samples of the student contracts –for the One-cycle program (Medicine) and Business bachelor program, both samples of contracts are for international students. The contracts between the university and a student protects students' rights and lawful interests, but there is the difference in the terms of payment of students on bachelor program (Business) and One-cycle program (Medicine). In the contract for Business program (unlike the contract for the one-cycle program) we read that the tuition fee might increase due to the inflation in the country, after signing the contract (article 3.3), even though students pay the tuition fee in US Dollars equivalent. To ensure the protection of the students' rights, it is recommended for the university to remove this article from the contract.

The contract is executed with two identical copies each having equal force. According to the interviews with students, the students are made aware of the conditions of the agreement.

For protecting students' rights and interests, there is students' ombudsman office and there is the policy and practice in place for student appeals. During the site-visit, experts required additional documentation – including the statistics for appealing and information regarding the activities of the ombudsman office.

According to the annual report of GAU ombudsman, there were a total of 6 cases addressed by the ombudsman office – 5 from which were issues regarding communication and 1 was the financial issue. According to the Ombudsman case registry, there were 9 cases addressed in the year 2018 and 2 in 2019. There were only 3 cases of appeals from students regarding the exam process during 2020.

The information about the student ombudsman is accessible on the web-page, as well as in the library of the university and different informational boards, to ensure the awareness of students. According to the regulation of the ombudsman, the ombudsman must not hold an academic position. This is explained by the possible conflict of interest. However, the ombudsman is holding an administrative position (Head of Research Development and Support Office) at the university. Ombudsman, at the same time, is appointed on the position by the president of the university.

The above mentioned factors and the fact that the ombudsman is the person students may reach out regarding administrative issues, as well as academic, leads the experts believe that the independence of the ombudsman should be increased. To avoid the conflict of interest, the ombudsman should not be holding an administrative position and the rule for appointment should be revised. The ombudsman at the same time is also responsible for the protection of the employees' rights.

Students at GAU can form and be part of different student unions, there is no student self-governance at the university. Students are represented in the school boards (with quota ¼) and the initiatives from the students can be discussed at the school boards, with the help of student representatives. Even though the example of such practice was discussed during the interviews, it still appears that further strengthening of the involvement of students in the decision-making process at the university is needed.

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Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report;
- Instruction for Academic Process Management at Georgian American University;
- University web-page;
- Interview results;
- GAU ombudsman annual report – 2020;
- Regulation of student union;
- Statistics for appeals.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended that the student contract of English language Business program ensures the tuition fee remains unchanged during the standard study period, as it is in the contract for the one-cycle Medicine program;
- Increase the independence of ombudsman – it is recommended that the ombudsman does not hold any position at the university and is elected with the involvement of students, rather than appointed by the president.

Suggestions:

- Foster further involvement of students in the decision-making process at the university.
- Foster further involvement of students in the decision-making process at the university, invite them into dialogue and motivate them to participate in the governance.

Best Practices (if applicable):

Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions

Evaluation
Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☐ Complies with requirements
       ☒ Substantially complies with requirements
       ☐ Partially complies with requirements
       ☐ Does not comply with requirements

5.2 Student Support Services

- o HEI has student consulting services in order to plan educational process and improve academic performance
- o HEI has career support service, which provides students with appropriate counselling and support regarding employment and career development
- o HEI ensures students awareness and involvement in various university-level, local and international projects and events, and supports student initiatives
- o HEI has mechanisms, including financial mechanisms to support low SES students

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Georgian-American University has different student consulting services and different structural units/different people are involved in student counselling. University has developed a practice of the curator academic manager and the "Dean's Hour", where the students may meet the dean of the school and provide information/feedback to the dean. Students have the possibility of individual consultations with the lecturers.

According to the self-evaluation report, one of the benchmarks for the institution is to increase the graduation rate on the PhD cycle. To achieve this, GAU should further develop academic support for PhD students and offer them support mechanisms on the university level, like publication in international journals, research ethics, etc. According to the interviews, consulting PhD students on these issues is the responsibility of the supervisor, but more comprehensive approach might be needed.

GAU has a career support service, which provides students with appropriate counselling and support regarding employment and career development. Career Services Center is the part of the Marketing and Communication Office. The Career Services Center provides different consultation services for students, as well as informs them about job openings, plans trainings, communicates with employees, etc. The university conducts research on graduate's further development. Employers are satisfied with the skills and knowledge of graduates.

GAU fosters extracurricular activities and supports student initiatives. Students have different unions, like "Quants Club", "Debate Club", "English Club", etc. The clubs do not have their own material or financial resources. The activities can be planned together with the marketing and communication office. For international students, celebrations and events are organized. Even though the international students are quite happy with the events, it is noteworthy to say that the international students were not part of the student unions represented at the interviews (except of the medical school union) and it seems that more is needed for the integration of international students in the university life. International students can turn to academic manager for different academic issues, but for the issues other than academic (for instance, psychological well-being), the students do not have mentor/responsible person.

GAU offers international exchange programs to students and has options for international students as well. However, the rate of participation in international exchange programs needs to be further increased.

According to the self-evaluation report, the university cares for the individual needs of students and develops individual learning plans for students with different educational needs. The practice of developing individual learning plans was proven with the additional documents, which was aimed at ensuring attainment of learning outcomes by the students enrolled via mobility.

University has developed different merit-based financial aids schemes for students. There are different grants available to students, based on their academic performance. The needs-based grants for the socially vulnerable students needs to be further developed. The university representatives state that socially vulnerable students are able to have financial assistance, but there are no evidence for the support scheme and the list of financial aids available to students did not include the support for students with low SES in the SER and documentation provided by the university. The support of the university to students during the

pandemic should be mentioned – 22 students with low SES were gifted laptops, in the frames of the joint project with the TBC bank.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report;
- Marketing and Communications Office regulation;
- University web-page;
- Interview results;
- Individual learning plans developed by the university;
- Activities of the Career Support Center.

Recommendations:

- Increase support for PhD students at the university level;
- Foster the integration of international students in the university life and increase their support with additional services;
- Develop the financial support mechanisms for students with low SES.

Suggestions:

Non-binding suggestions for further development.

Best Practices (if applicable):

Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply 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

- o HEI, based on its type and specifics of its fields, carries out research/creative activities.
- o Ensuring the effectiveness of doctoral research supervision
- o 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

In accordance with the documentation GAU supports the integration of teaching, research and economics and the strategic plan of the university is focused on the "the synergy between teaching and research can be regarded as the mutual strengthening of both quality and efficiency: teaching should be associated with the additional values of research; and research, in its turn, should be associated with the additional value of teaching". For this purpose, GAU runs three research centers (Center for Study of Constitutionalism and Democracy, Jewish Studies Center, Business Research Center) and one research institute (Research Institute Language and Culture) and cooperates with agents; there are 57 memoranda of cooperation with different companies generally with regards to employment, participation in training courses and studies in general and 10 memoranda with different research institutes with regards to the student employment and their integration into research activities, but these research activities are considered in a broad sense and does not significantly affect economic, industrial and other kind of development.

At the same time the majority of the research projects are proceeding under the financial support of GAU and their quantity is equal to approximately 15 including 11 ongoing projects. The majority of these projects has been launched in 2020-2021 and their results are not yet integrated in teaching activities of GAU at the appropriate level, but according to the interview results, the university staff aims to integrate these results into the future research and teaching activities.

The GAU presents research activities as an important factor for its future development and considers them as the contribution to scientific and social development on different levels and for this purpose the University allocates financial support to the majority of ongoing projects, while the projects financed by international organizations are focused on the development of infrastructure, e.g., European Integration and Labor Relations in Georgia (EIGER) project financed by TEMPUS aims to support of the modernization of Georgia's higher education system and to improve the quality of labor relations specialists, while the Protection of Students' Rights through the position of Ombudsman (AESOP) project financed by European Commission within Erasmus+ refers to the practice of hiring of ombudsmen. Generally, the institutional vision of the research activities is based on the analysis of grant distribution of the Rustaveli National Science Foundation and the GAU approach to the funding of research activities of their staff. At this moment GAU does not implement complex research or other kind of scientific activities, but has some small-scale ongoing projects and plans to provide research commercialization and improve attitudes of private economic agents toward research in future. For this purpose, GAU declared the future implementation of research activities indicating the appropriate benchmarks including implementation of joint programs (at this moment, the GAU implements only one joint program on European Integration and Employment Relations in cooperation with local universities i.e. the Caucasus University and the Iv. Javakhishvili State University) and, a new system for assessing academic staff research potential and productivity starting from 2020-2021. Also, the University updates its institutional strategy in the field of science and research. All these activities aim at the mobilization of internal and external resources for the future contribution to economic, social, cultural and other development activities.

There are three doctorate programs: in law, in business and in international relations. The procedures of PhD defense are given only for business and law; the PhD program of international relations is under the regulations of the school of law, social sciences and diplomacy. GAU provides engagement of doctoral students into the implementation of research projects; there is special information on four PhD students already engaged.

In accordance with the Job description of personal-academic scientific invited staff and the rules of their evaluation, the main responsibilities of academic staff including students' papers / assignments (test, case, task, midterm evaluation, final evaluation, presentation, essay, master's thesis, dissertation, etc.). The supervision could be carried out not only by academic staff, but by invited staff as well, so-called researcher/scientific staff member. At this moment, the supervision is carried out by the staff affiliated with GAU; the international staff and staff affiliated with other HEI-s are not engaged in the supervision process.

The PhD defense procedures supposes checking on plagiarism by means of Strikeplagiarism.com. The Academic Integrity Policies and Mechanisms provides checking on plagiarism in case of materials submitted for publication on behalf of the University (articles, monographs, textbooks, materials to be published in the scientific journals and collections of the University, etc.); materials to be presented at the international / local conferences on behalf of the University; doctoral student seminar papers; master theses; bachelor theses. The procedures developed by GAU for the evaluation and defense of dissertation is transparent and presupposes the involvement of highly qualified academic and scientific staff. The defense procedure allows for submissions in Georgian and English. The permission to write in English is granted by the dissertation council, but the dissertation on the English language program is written in English. There are available reports for learning outcomes at BA level (4 reports), MA level (3 reports) and PhD level (1 report of the faculty of Law). The PhD report revealed that teaching and research components in accordance with students' opinion were not balanced. At this moment, there are 41 doctoral students with active status, 56 – with suspended and 11 – with obtained doctoral degree. According to the

interviews with academic staff, the suspension of student's status is caused by different reasons including workload, time management etc.

Evidences/indicators
- Mission statement of the institution;
- GAU strategic development plan;
- GAU internationalization policy;
- Scientific/creative activities of academic and scientific staff of college and teaching university;
- Memorandum of cooperation with economic agents;
- Implemented, current and/or planned activities for scientific-research/ creative projects;
- Workload and functions of academic and scientific staff;
- Job description of personal-academic scientific invited staff and the rules of their evaluation;
- Supervisor-PhD student ratio;
- Satisfaction Research – 2020;
- Regulations for the assessment and defence of PhD dissertations and public, transparent and fair procedures of their defence;
- Plagiarism checking web-page;
- Academic Integrity Policies and Mechanisms;
- Dissertation defense indicator;
- Interview results.

Recommendations:
- Develop greater cooperation with scientific foundations and business sector with regards to the development of research activities aiming at economic, industrial and other innovative development;
- Link research and teaching activities by integration of research output into teaching agenda at MA and PhD levels;
- Focus on securing external funding opportunities for the implementation of research projects;
- Assist university staff with grant writing and project proposals and help with searching for external funding opportunities;
- Balance teaching and research activities at PhD level focusing on the engagement of students into the implementation of research projects.

Suggestions:
Non-binding suggestions for further development

Best Practices (if applicable):
Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions

Evaluation
Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

  ☐ Complies with requirements

  ☒ Substantially complies with requirements

  ☐ Partially complies with requirements

  ☐ Does not comply with requirements

6.2. Research Support and Internationalization
- HEI has an effective system in place for supporting research, development and creative activities
- Attracting new staff and their involvement in research/arts-creative activities.
- University works on internationalization of research, development and creative activities.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The research activities at GAU are directed by the joint competencies of the Scientific and Academic Councils, Faculties with research institutes, Research Development and Support Services. In accordance with the Management Effectiveness Monitoring Mechanisms and Evaluation System, the University Quality Assurance Service in close co-operation with Research Development and Support Services assesses the quality of research activities. The results of such evaluation are presented to the Vice President of the University of Educational-Scientific and Quality Assurance fields. The University provided the Rule of Evaluation and Funding of Scientific-Research Activities, which includes different indicators (biometric, self-assessment, expert appraisal, socio-economic impact and profit, staff appraisal and financial evaluation) for the assessing of scientific activities. The deans of the schools have the right to apply for financing of their projects after the revision of the contract with the relevant staff etc., but in accordance with the Rule of Evaluation and Funding of Scientific Research Activities, the issues of financial and material support for scientific research activities are finally decided by the Senior Vice President of the university.

In accordance with the results of such evaluation (2019-2020), the academic staff of GAU asked for the financing of 23 research projects, but only 10 of them were financed by GAU from its own budget; 12 projects including 7 ERASMUS+ CBHE and Jean Monnet projects – were not financed. Twice the university staff tried to participate in the call declared by the Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency, but the competition was suspended. The evaluation report generally includes information on the projects ongoing or finished at GAU, but does not provide statistical analysis of the project results and staff research activities in accordance with indicators and benchmarks mentioned in the regulatory documents. So, the recent activities of GAU can be considered as a challenge to develop effective research activities.

In accordance with the Personnel management policy, the University encourages and promotes staff to participate in various educational and scientific activities. Under the Regulation for the competition to hold academic positions, one of the points to acquire an academic position is to participate in conferences/congresses etc. and to have publications in the relevant field in scientific journals, but the list of journals is not attached. There is mentioned only that these journals are to be included into Scopus, EBSCO and other international databases. In accordance with the quality assurance report, the research activities of the academic staff meet the standards set for the research activities. The academic staff complied with the requirements of the employment contract for research activities, but at the same time the evaluation report does not include statistical data on quantity and quality of publications with indications of h-indexes, i10-indexes etc.

The GAU also tries to involve postdoctoral students into research activities. At this moment four postdoctoral students participated in the research projects. At the educational level, the university offers students different kind of lectures like academic writing, teaching methods, research methods etc., which can be considered as a base for their future engagement into scientific activities and prepares them for the exchange opportunities. The students mentioned that the educational level and the quality of their studies allowed them to be successful and to participate in the exchange programs as well; also, the University supported the initiatives of MA and BA level students as well e.g. GAU supported publication of dictionary etc.

The GAU tries to strengthen cooperation at the international level, but the quantity of international staff engaged in the implementation of research activities is not very high. There are only few foreign professionals involved in teaching and research activities at the university and, only one of them is engaged in the implementation of PhD program. In spite of that the activities of research centres serve as a base for the strengthening of internationalization, e.g. the Research Center for Constitutionalism and Democracy operates under the umbrella of the European Research Infrastructure Platform (ERIC) and provides the international comparative social research, the Jewish Studies Center operates with the support of international partners. Also, the GAU has signed some memoranda with foreign institutes.

In accordance with self-assessment plan the university runs only one joint program in accordance with

legislation of Georgia. This program is a program on European Integration and Employment Relations implemented by local universities, especially, the Caucasus University, Iv. Javakhishvili State University and GAU. There is no information on joint international research programs aiming at joint or double degrees. The majority of the programs and/or projects implemented at the university are carried out under the financial support of GAU and by their local staff.

Evidences/indicators

- GAU implemented and ongoing projects;
- Rule of Evaluation and Funding of Scientific-Research Activities;
- Support mechanisms for research and creative activities;
- GAU strategic development plan;
- Personnel management policy;
- Regulations for the competition to hold academic positions;
- Strategy for attracting and involving young staff in scientific research/arts-creative activities of the university;
- Initiatives of young researchers (MA, PhD, post-doctoral students, etc.) supported by the university;
- Memoranda of cooperation with local agents and international institutes;
- Joint MA program;
- Interview results.

Recommendations:

- Improve mechanism for the prior evaluation of project potential focusing on the development of new knowledge, vision, approaches and perspectives;
- Collect statistical data on research outcome in accordance with indicators and benchmarks mentioned in the regulatory documents;
- Collect data on the scientific potential of academic staff paying special attention to the quality of publications with indications of h-indexes, i10-indexes etc.;
- Accelerate the engagement of international foreign scholars into the supervision of PhD students focusing on the internationalization of research output.

Suggestions:
Non-binding suggestions for further development

Best Practices (if applicable):
Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions

Evaluation
Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

6.3. Evaluation of Research Activities

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.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

In accordance with appendices of the Job description of personal-academic scientific invited staff and the rules of their evaluation, the staff should spend approximately 45% of the working load on research and scientific activities and the mechanism for evaluation of such activities includes different benchmarks including scores for articles, monographs etc. Also, the duties and working load on research and scientific activities of the staff differ depending on the affiliation and engagement in teaching and other processes.

In accordance with the Management Effectiveness Monitoring Mechanisms and Evaluation System of the university the quality of research activities is assessed by the University Quality Assurance Office in active cooperation with the Research Development and Promotion Office and the Quality Assurance Office presents the results of the evaluation of the research activities to the Vice President of the University of Educational-Scientific and Quality Assurance fields.

The results of such evaluation are available only for 2019-2020 years, but there is not statistical data on the staff research activities, the quality of materials published. Also, there are no data on research centres output. Taking into account the current state of research activities, the University announced the launch of a new system of assessment and established the evaluation process and methodology of assessment.

Evidences/indicators
- Management Effectiveness Monitoring Mechanisms and Evaluation System;
- Job description of personal-academic scientific invited staff and the rules of their evaluation;
- Reports on learning outcomes;
- Quality assurance report 2019-2020;
- Student satisfaction report;
- Inverview results.

Recommendations:
- Collect statistical data on the staff research activities and the quality of materials published;
- Publish outcomes of research centres and institutes

Suggestions:
Non-binding suggestions for further development

Best Practices (if applicable):
Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions

Evaluation
Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply 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

o educational programmes and research activities, and corresponds to the existing number of students and planned enrolment.
o HEI offers environment necessary for implementing educational activities: sanitary units, natural light possibilities, and central heating system.
o Health and safety of students and staff is protected within the institution.
o HEI has adapted environment for people with special needs

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

As a result of the site-visit, a group of experts inspected all the necessary facilities. The educational spaces are equipped with the necessary capacities and facilities for all programs.

The medical program uses the common capacities and facilities of the library and laboratories equally with other programs, at the same time it uses its special capacities and facilities.

The School of Medicine has a Clinical Skills Training Center used to achieve the goals set by the institution mission. The center is located in a space equipped with appropriate facilities for the continuity of the learning process, has sanitary facilities, natural light, central heating system, uninterrupted water supply; The center is renovated.

Center is equipped with all the necessary equipment for conducting practical workshops: mannequins are purchased from world-renowned manufacturers. For example: Intravenous injections are taught on the simulator, where the skin texture is close to the human skin and also the location of the blood vessels corresponds to the anatomical projections. The center has mannequins with audio functions used to listen to heart tones and lung sounds, where the student has the opportunity to hear real sounds and improve their skills.

During the visit, it was confirmed that the Center is equipped with real tools and consumables (syringes, gloves, tubes, sewing materials, etc.) to create the most realistic environment where the student gets used to clinical activities outside the clinic with multiple practice options.

In order to facilitate the learning process, the mannequins are properly maintained, which is done according to the manufacturer recommendations, as well as the worn out and unusable parts are replaced systematically, additional parts are subscribed by the schools as required.

The legal form of the Georgian-American University is a limited liability company. At the time of the visit to the HEI, the situation was as follows: 6918 sq.m building is lawful possession of the institution. The address of the HEI is st. Merab Aleksidze Street # 10 in Tbilisi. The spaces of the university's building serves the implementation of the educational goals of the institution and meets the requirements of educational programs, research activities and more than 1500 students.

Based on the Internal measurement drawings of building proposed by the HEI and the site visit, it was revealed that the teaching and auxiliary spaces in the building are separated.

The University building has separate teaching classrooms for theoretical and practical teaching, teaching and research laboratories, spaces for group work, warehouses, conference halls, rooms for archived materials, administrative and support staff office space, lobby and Administrative storerooms. The University has recreational spaces; A library equipped with proper inventory. There are sanitary units with cold and hot water and adapted for people with disabilities.

The HEI implements medical programs, which has their own specifics, and considering this specificity, the institution has teaching spaces equipped with appropriate inventory, including laboratories for practical components, necessary inventory, information-technological equipment and contracts with relevant institutions.

In the building, the teaching classrooms are adapted for teaching. Most of them are equipped with projectors. Teaching classroom and laboratories are adequate and have sufficient inventory and equipment.

The HEI has its own power supply system that ensures sufficient electricity supply to the entire building in the case of a municipal power outage.

The material resources owned by the University serve the educational purposes, are in line with the mission of the University and meet the number of existing students.

The HEI carries out video control of both inside and outside premises. Institution have security video recording and storing facilities installed both inside and outside of the buildings, throughout the premises;

The university has developed a first aid system. There is a medical staff in place on the first floor of the building, which is equipped with first aid tools. The medical room has a both natural and artificial lights, natural ventilation, and a constant supply of cold and hot water;

The HEI has an adapted environment for people with special needs. Elevators and other equipment support the free movement of persons with disabilities. Special sanitary units are allocated for people with disabilities.

Evidences/indicators

- Documents certifying the possession of fixed assets, extract from the Public Registry;
- Internal measurement drawings of buildings;
- Documents certifying possession of liquid assets;

- Document certifying ownership of a diesel generator;
- Contract - on fire safety;
- Orders identifying responsible persons for safety (including fire safety);
- Heating system supervision contract, air conditioning repair and rehabilitation contract;
- Evacuation map and plans;
- Medical cabinet inventory documentation;
- Cleaning disinfection instructions; Disinfection contract; Journal of Equipment, Workspace, Vehicle and Outerwear Disinfection Accounting;
- safety of labor documentation;
- Firefighting equipment documentation;
- State Fire and Civil Safety Supervision Agreement;
- Diesel generator usage agreement;

Recommendations:

Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standard component

Suggestions:

Non-binding suggestions for further development

Best Practices (if applicable):

Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

      ☒ Complies with requirements

      ☐ Substantially complies with requirements

      ☐ Partially complies with requirements

      ☐ Does not comply with requirements

7.2. Library Resources

Library environment, resources and service support effective implementation of educational and research activities, and HEI constantly works for its improvement.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The literature used in the teaching process is up-to-date and modern, presented in printed form in the library. Some requested books are purchased and will arrive soon. There is also an electronic version with 24/7 access for all students.

Georgian American University Library (163 square meters) includes a book archive, reading hall, library staff office space, meeting and group workspace, IT equipment space; reading room and a bookcase. The working space of the staff in the library is located in the reading hall, computer equipment is located in the same space. There is space for group work and meetings.

HEI have regulations for using library, which is posted on the university's website and posted in a prominent place in the reading room. The reading room is equipped with appropriate equipment, at the time of the visit the reading room was equipped with computers, a printer, a copier and a scanner.

There is a hardcopy book fund in the library, students will have the opportunity to use the electronic library of the University. The books in the library are processed according to the library rules.

Students and staff of the University have access to international library databases.

The structure of the university provides for three staff members in the library. In particular, senior specialist and specialist positions. Library staff have experience in library activities. The institution periodically provides their professional development as needed. During the visit, the Library staff informed us about the possibilities of registering in the library and using the library resources.

The University Library has 12,882 books, 432 electronic resources, 170 periodicals, 190 e-books and up to 100 reading materials.

Although the university has a sufficient book fund, and the university has allocated 35,569 GEL for the purchase of books, the analysis of the English language programs, for example MBA and BBA programs, shows that we have identified obsolete literatures, especially in English language programs.

The University has access to and uses the electronic databases of the Library Consortium. The University also has an EBSCO package. They can be used both inside and outside the university.

The rules for using the library define working days and hours. The library is open daily from 10:00 to 20:30, on Saturdays from 10:00 to 16:00 except Sundays. Total Sunday load - 60 hours.

The facility has an electronic catalog.

Evidences/indicators:
- Documentation certifying the possession of library resources;
- Georgian-American University Library Catalog: gau.library.ac.ge
- GSS Code
- Electronic databases;
- Statistics on the use of electronic library databases;
- Mechanisms for developing and updating library resources and services;
- Regulations and instructions for using library;
- University budget;
- Interview results;

Recommendations:

- It is recommended to update the existing paper-based resources (books) of the HEI based on developments in the field, especially for English language programs which will ensure the achievement of the learning outcomes of the educational program.
- The teaching material listed in syllabi is up-to-date and largely ensures the achievement of intended LOs, nevertheless, the recommended printed volumes (besides electronic versions, if any) should be made available in the library in appropriate number of volumes.

Suggestions:
Non-binding suggestions for further development

Best Practices (if applicable):
Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions

Evaluation
Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

7.3 Information Resources

o HEI has created infrastructure for information technologies and its administration and accessibility are ensured
o Electronic services and electronic management systems are implemented and mechanisms for their constant improvement are in place
o HEI ensures business continuity
o HEI has a functional web-page in Georgian and English languages.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The HEI has an information technology infrastructure. There is a special information technology service, which is responsible for solving issues and problems related to the website and the Internet (wireless Internet), as well as computer programs and databases (servers).

The official website of the institution is www.gau.edu.ge which performs a communication and information function, it contains the necessary information in Georgian and English languages. The official website of the institution contains the mission, activity plan, structure, catalog of educational programs and criteria for selection of students for this program, expected learning outcomes and qualifications, teaching-learning and assessment procedures, information about academic and research staff, electronic catalog of the library. Regulatory documents, strategic development plans, ongoing surveys, general statistics, available services, employment opportunities.

The university has accounts on Facebook.com and youtube.com. HEI has a contract for web hosting services. It is clear from the interview that the information on the website is constantly updated and the institution's marketing and communication service is the responsible for updates. The teaching classrooms are equipped with personal computers and projectors. The university has introduced an information technology security system called Domain Controller. The university has wired and wireless internet networks. The HEI has up to 270 computers, up to 40 laptops.

The institution has an electronic system for learning processes, which serves the effective functioning of the current academic processes in the institution.

In the conditions of the pandemic, the institution adapted to the educational processes. A flexible plan for learning processes has been developed. The Google Classroom product was added by HEI in response to the challenges posed by the pandemic. Written and video instructions have been developed for the use of Google Classroom.

Evidences/indicators

- IT management policy and procedures, IT infrastructure;
- Regulation for administration, responsibility and accountability;
- Contracts with InexPhone
- Preservice contracts;
- Contract for internet service;
- Electronic management systems;
- Interview results
- Domain, hosting, certification;
- Web-page: www.gau.edu.ge

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☒ Fully complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

Recommendations:

Recommendation/or proposal, which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards

Suggestions:

Non-binding suggestions for further development

Best Practices (if applicable):

Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions

7.4 Financial Resources

o Allocation of financial resources described in the budget of HEI is economically achievable
o Financial standing of HEI ensures performance of activities described in strategic and mid-term action plans
o HEI financial resources are focused on effective implementation of core activities of the institution
o HEI budget provides funding for scientific research and library functioning and development
o HEI has an effective system of accountability, financial management and control

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The HEI presented the budget for 2019-2020. According to this budget, revenues are generated from the following sources: tuition fees - 8 728 524 GEL, revenues from continuing education - 339 892 GEL, revenues from the grant project - 13 920 GEL. Other income - 60 011 GEL. The total income of the institution is 9142 347 GEL.

Expenditures according to the budget are divided into the following items: salary of academic staff is 8% of total expenses, salary of invited staff - 19.22%, salary of administrative and support staff - 32.17%, Utility expenses - 2.02% - I, stationery costs - 0.31%, building rental / or storage costs / laboratories - 0.37%, material resource replenishment - 0.54%, equipment costs / electronic systems development costs - 1.7%, Library book cost - 0.53%, International library resource cost - 0.37%, Research funding - 4.42%, Conferences / publications / articles - 0.1%, Research development promotion - 1, 71%, funding for student projects - 0.5%, international business trip costs - 0.25%, authorization / accreditation costs - 0.32%, marketing / advertising - 0.67%, foreign attraction costs - 6.64%, funding for social projects / students - 8.43%, expenditures related to continuing education - 4.14%, consulting, Legal and audit expenses - 0.75%, household goods expenses - 0.22%, pension contributions - 0.78%, insurance expenses - 0.18%, interest expenses - 2.51%, tax expenses - 0.55% . Budget analysis shows that costs are optimally allocated for different operations. Net profit is 2 403 872 GEL. Which is 26.59% of the total income. In addition, the agency submitted audit findings. A

study of the financial statements of the audit findings shows that net profit increases from year to year which indicates the financial sustainability of the University.

The cost analysis shows that GEL 6,639 is allocated for conferences, publications, and articles, which is 0.1% of the total costs. We think that the increase in costs in this direction will further enhance the scientific potential of the University.

HEI has allocated 6,639 GEL for conferences / publications / articles. 33 279 GEL has been allocated for financing student projects. 16 661 GEL has been allocated for international business trips.

The institution has allocated 296,832 GEL for scientific research and 114,449 GEL for research development. The institution allocated 35,569 GEL for the smooth operation of the library.

The accounting policy is introduced in the university. Accounting of the institution in accordance with the accounting policy is carried out in accordance with international financial accounting standards.

The university has developed a financial policy, which is a budgeting mechanism. The budget is related to the activities of the action plan.

The financial service of the institution monitors the fulfillment of financial obligations by the main educational and additional structural units. The heads of the main educational units and auxiliary structural units are responsible for reporting on projects, agreements, activities and other activities.

The institution has presented audit reports for 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019. Audit reports are publicly available.

Analysis of the financial statements given in the audit reports shows that the net profit of the University is increasing from year to year.

Evidences/indicators
- University budget
- Financial audit reports;
- University financial and accounting policy
- Financial Service Regulations;
- Business Process Continuity Policy

Recommendations:
Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standard component

Suggestions:
- It is desirable to increase costs for conferences, articles and publications, which will further enhance the University's scientific potential.

Best Practices (if applicable):
Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions

Evaluation
Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

      ☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements