



განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Final Report on Business and Technology University Authorization

Expert Panel Members

Chair: Sokratis Katsikas, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway

Members:

Giorgi Beroshvili, GT Group, Georgia

Tinatin Gabrichidze, International Black Sea University, Georgia

Giga Khositashvili, Ilia State University, Georgia

Ia Natsvlshvili, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia

Magda Tsintsadze, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia

Tbilisi
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Authorization Report Resume

General information on the educational institution

Business and Technology University (hereinafter "BTU") was founded in 2016 as a limited liability company incorporated under the Law of Georgia "on Entrepreneurs". It is incorporated in the legal form of a legal entity of private law. Business and Technology University is a higher education institution, which acts as an autonomous higher education institution under the Constitution of Georgia, the legislation in force and internal regulatory rules of BTU activities. BTU has only one faculty. BTU is currently housed in one building at N82 Chavchavadze Ave., Tbilisi, 0162, Georgia. BTU currently employs 335 members of staff. Of these, 30 are affiliated academic staff, 118 are academic staff, 15 are assistant scientific staff, and the rest are administrative staff. BTU offers 7 educational programmes (4 undergraduate, 2 postgraduate – Master, 1 doctoral), to 3651 active students; 1213 students are suspended. The current "marginal number of students" is 5.000. As part of the authorisation process, BTU requests to increase the "marginal number of students" to 5.750; the panel recommends that the request is approved. BTU's total budget was 9.077.488 GEL, and the budget allocated to research was 427.500 GEL. Additionally, 112.320 GEL were allocated to the development and operation of the library, and another 5.165 GEL were allocated to the use of scientific databases.

Brief overview of the authorization site visit

The site visit started on the morning of 26.07.2022 with the panel visiting BTU's site and continued with full day meetings for interviews of the panel with BTU leadership, management, staff, students and representatives of employers on 27.07.2022, and 28.07.2022. The last interviews and the site tour were conducted in the morning of 29.07.2022 and were followed by deliberation of the expert panel, during which the experts agreed on their assessment of the extent of compliance of BTU with the authorization standards and their components. The chair of the panel delivered a brief overview of the panel findings to BTU leadership and a wider audience. The expert panel was accompanied in the site visit by Nino Alavidze and Lasha Macharashvili of the NCEQE.

Overview of the HEI's compliance with standards

BTU has been found to be compliant with requirements as regards standards 1 and 5; and substantially compliant with requirements as regards all other standards (2,3,4 and 6).

Summary of Recommendations

- R.1.2.1. Elaborate more detailed action plans, with clearly defined human and financial resource allocations, to improve BTU's ability to both monitor effectively the implementation of the strategy and to make corrective changes swiftly when necessary, thus fully implementing the overarching PDCA principles.
- R.2.1.1. Implement more open, democratic, election processes for the appointment of the management body representatives.
- R.2.1.2. Recruit additional personnel, as needed, to ensure the sustainability of the processes and the effective work of the units, taking into consideration the already planned growth of the university.
- R.2.1.3. Ensure that the registry of academic personnel is accurate.
- R.2.3.1. Avoid defining an acceptable threshold of similarity in the "Rule of Plagiarism Detection and Prevention", as the similarity does not necessarily imply plagiarism and might cause misunderstandings among students and academic staff.
- R.2.3.2. Use the full functionality of Turnitin (ex. Feedback; grade with rubrics; peer review assignment) to ensure that individual, full, and timely feedback is provided, so that plagiarism prevention mechanisms work effectively.
- R.2.3.3. Academic staff must have full access to the plagiarism detection software to avoid submitting and downloading the student's file several times (currently student files are downloaded from ExamJet, uploaded to Turnitin, similarity reports are downloaded, reports are uploaded back to students' private emails).
- R.2.3.4. Define and apply a policy for ensuring that the 300 Turnitin accounts can be used by all active students.

- R.3.2.1. To avoid concerns on the sustainability of the programmes, heads of programmes should be appointed (affiliated) for a term at least within the duration of the programme accreditation.
- R.3.2.2. Existing conflicts of interest in academic management must be eliminated and new ones must be avoided by defining an appropriate regulation.
- R.4.1.1. Significantly increase the number of affiliated academic personnel (among them affiliated personnel with binding obligation to publish highly qualified research papers in a certain time period).
- R.4.1.2. The binding affiliation contract with mandatory research must cover a longer time period.
- R.4.1.3. Strengthen the incentives for academic staff, to make affiliation more attractive to them.
- R.4.2.1. Increase the share of academic staff holding a doctorate degree, in line with the specifics of the educational programmes.
- R.4.2.2. Regularly update the list of personnel and the information on the workload of staff in the QMS base.
- R.6.1.1. Develop and share with the academic staff a methodology and good practices for integrating research results into their teaching.
- R.6.2.1. Leverage existing MoUs to establish strategic, long-standing research relationships with foreign institutions and exploit these towards defining concrete joint research activities to strengthen the research output of the University.
- R.6.2.2. Develop and apply a strategy for attracting new staff and involving them into research activities to strengthen the institution's research capacity.
- R.7.1.1. Place the evacuation plan in all floors of the building.
- R.7.1.2. Fire safety tools must be monitored against the date of validity and changed accordingly.
- R.7.1.3. Re-arrange the emergency exit in a way to avoid passing through several buildings/classrooms, so as to ensure that in case of emergency people can easily leave the building.
- R.7.1.4. Add few facilities outside the building, so that students are able to enjoy breaks outdoors.
- R.7.2.1. Purchase printed textbooks in order to increase the number of the printed resources in the repository, to ensure that students have access to sufficient printed resources.
- R.7.2.2. Provide remote access to academic databases, so that students can access the full text of those resources from outside the campus.
- R.7.2.3. The library must provide all the required information regarding the rules related to the use of journals and databases on the webpage.
- R.7.3.1. Develop and implement Security Policy & Procedures.
- R.7.3.2. Implement Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and make staff aware of it.
- R.7.3.3. Develop and implement IRP (Incident Response Plan) as part of BCP.
- R.7.4.1. Implement monthly (quarterly) Cash Flow planning policy & procedure to ensure strong financial standing.

Summary of Suggestions

- S.1.2.1. Encourage and facilitate wider participation of the student body to the strategy development and implementation process.
- S.1.2.2. Provide for the participation of employers and other stakeholders to the strategy development process.
- S.2.1.1. The university should continue its efforts in internationalization activities, by facilitating more academic and administrative staff ERASMUS+ mobility and by developing a long-term strategy for attracting international students.
- S.2.2.1. The University should encourage the community to shift their mindset from ensuring the quality of the processes to the quality of the outcome.
- S.2.2.2. The University should define and apply a systematic process for using the students' academic performance results to improve the teaching process.
- S.2.3.1. The University should add a definition of self-plagiarism into the Rule of Plagiarism, to further enhance awareness on this among students.
- S.3.1.1. The University should ensure active and systematic participation of all main stakeholders in the process of programme planning, designing, and development.
- S.3.2.1. ICT is not under Engineering anymore and the qualification that the programme grants for IT as "Engineer" should be adjusted in accordance with the new Qualification Framework.
- S.3.3.1. Simplify the learning outcomes assessment method, underline only mandatory subjects mapping, and assess the achievement of outcomes only by those subjects that cover them at the highest level of competency.
- S.5.1.1. Develop a separate section on the webpage for the regulations that are of interest of students.
- S.6.2.1. Consider measures to attract affiliated staff with non-mandatory research duties to engage with research activity, including via allowing them to benefit from the services provided by the Research Center, the Entrepreneurship Center, and the related administrative services.

- S.6.3.1. Enhance the existing mechanism for evaluating research activities to qualitatively assess the research outcome and its impact.
- S.7.1.1. Equip the offices of administrative staff with air conditioning system to guarantee the safety and effective working of the employees. Same for the classrooms, to avoid health and safety problems related to high temperature.
- S.7.1.2. Exit signs should be added in each floor, at places that make them visible from everywhere.
- S.7.2.1. Library staff members should be actively involved in the international mobility projects for job shadowing reasons.
- S.7.2.2. Air conditioning should be installed in all reading halls of the library, to make those spaces more attractive for students.
- S.7.3.1. Develop & implement IT Development Strategy.
- S.7.3.2. Implement Vulnerability Management Practices.
- S.7.3.3. Implement Penetration Testing for Critical IT Apps & Services.
- S.7.3.4. Ensure that antivirus S/W is installed where appropriate.
- S.7.4.1. Consider following international best practices to improve the transparency and readability of financial statements



Summary of the Best Practices



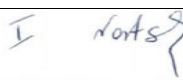

- BP.2.1.1. Intensive and effective internationalization approach.
- BP.2.2.1. Well implemented QA system and mechanisms that have led to a shared quality culture.
- BP.3.2.1. The establishment of a procedure for individualized behavior for students with special educational needs.

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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.1	Mission of HEI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	Strategic development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Organizational structure and management of HEI	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.1	Organizational structure and management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2	Internal quality assurance mechanisms	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3	Observing principles of ethics and integrity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Educational Programmes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1	Design and development of educational programmes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2	Structure and content of educational programmes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.3	Assessment of learning outcomes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Staff of the HEI	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1	Staff management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2	Academic/Scientific and invited Staff workload	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Students and their support services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.1	The Rule for obtaining and changing student status, the recognition of education, and student rights	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.2	Student support services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Research, development and/or other creative work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.1	Research activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.2	Research support and internationalization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.3	Evaluation of research activities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Material, information and financial resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.1	Material resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.2	Library resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.3	Information resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.4	Financial resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature of expert panel members

1. Sokratis Katsikas (Chair)	
2. Giorgi Beroshvili (Member)	

3. Tinatin Gabrichidze (Member)	
4. Giga Khositashvili (Member)	
5. Ia Natsvlshvili (Member)	
6. Magda Tsintsadze (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.

<p>1.1 Mission of HEI</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>BTU's mission statement is as follows: <i>“To offer the public a unique experience in the field of business and information technology, modern higher education meeting its expectations, to develop leadership and entrepreneurial skills of the person, to create an entrepreneurial ecosystem and by integrating high-tech business with technologies, we can motivate and enable competition not only in the local, but also in the international market. Demonstrate our potential in global markets by exchanging research findings, ideas, and innovations, focus on creating and disseminating modern knowledge, integrating into the international area, and on promoting the social-economic development of Georgia”.</i> This statement, which aims to answer the questions “who are we, what and for whom do we do” and to express BTU as an open social and educational system, defines BTU’s role in higher education locally and internationally, and reflects the aspiration of the institution to contribute to developing active members of the society, to disseminating knowledge and to creating new; to facilitating the personal development of its students and to ensuring their competitiveness in today’s labor market. BTU’s vision statement is as follows: <i>“By promoting innovation and entrepreneurship-based teaching, the Business and Technology University will have a significant impact on the community and the environment in which it operates.”</i> The mission statement together with the vision statement define the characteristics of the HEI based on its type and current profile and are both available on its webpage.</p> <p>The distinctive characteristic of BTU, clearly defined in its vision statement, is its focus on serving the educational needs of the digital transformation era its civic mission to identify needs of society and develop ways to contribute by providing innovative services, trainings, etc.</p> <p>Surveys conducted by the University among staff and students indicate that BTU's mission statement is not only known to them, but also shared by them to a very large extent. During the interviews with staff, management, students, and stakeholders, the expert panel were able to confirm these findings.</p> <p>Evidences/indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SER • BTU’s webpage • Mission statement • Vision statement • Interview results <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>Suggestions:</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements
<p>1.2 Strategic Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ HEI has a strategic development (7-year) and an action plans (3-year) in place. ○ HEI contributes to the development of the society, shares with the society the knowledge gathered in the institution, and facilitates lifelong learning

- HEI evaluates implementation of strategic and action plans, and duly acts on evaluation results.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

BTU in 2018 developed a strategic development plan for the period 2019-2025, described in the document entitled "BTU Development Strategy (2019-2025)". Key aspects of BTU's strategic plan are:

- Educational activities and expanding continuous and life-long learning
- Scientific-research and innovation activities
- Integrating in the international educational and scientific area, internationalization
- Student and graduate support policy
- Human resource management policy
- Infrastructure, material and technical base and unified information space
- BTU's public activities and image
- Quality management and assurance

The plan sets out a long list of relevant goals and objectives that are well defined, measurable, aligned with the University's mission and, if attained, may lead to the accomplishment of its vision statement. These are achievable provided that the necessary resources are allocated.

The strategic plan has been developed by following a clearly defined and appropriate methodology, starting from a SWOT analysis followed by the definition of mission, vision, and objectives and leading to the development of the strategy; the implementation of the strategy was then described into the development plan. The implementation of the plan is carried out in a step-by-step fashion: 2019-2021 (phase I), 2022-2024 (phase II), 2025 (Summary/end phase). Whereas the breakdown of the strategic actions into 3-year phases defines action plans for the respective periods, the elaboration of more detailed such plans, with clearly defined human and financial resource allocations, will improve the University's ability to both monitor effectively the implementation of the strategy and to make corrective changes swiftly when necessary, thus fully implementing the overarching PDCA principles.

The strategy development methodology envisages the participation of the University community to developing and implementing the strategy. According to the SER, members of the BTU community - founders, students, staff, partner institutions, management specialists - participated in the development and discussion of the strategy in various ways. The members of the main working group that was mandated with the task were: the Rector, the Head of Administration, the Heads of All Structural Units, Ambassadors-Students, Specialists in each program area (implementation of programs) and management specialists. Participation of employers and other stakeholders in the process has not been envisaged. During the interviews, the expert panel were able to confirm the participatory character of the process of developing the strategy; nevertheless, in light of the absence of a student self-governance structure at BTU, wider participation of the student body to the strategy development and implementation process should be both encouraged and facilitated.

BTU implements a variety of social, cultural, economic, environmental, and lifelong learning facilitating activities; thus, it contributes to the development of the society. BTU disseminates knowledge in its wider environment, as its staff offer expert and consultation services, and conduct research for different institutions.

The responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the strategic and action plans lies with the Quality Assurance Office. This is done by considering the completion of the planned activities within the set time and the achievement of the results. A number of criteria are being used to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan. The outcomes of the evaluation of the implementation of the plan are one of the components of the annual self-evaluation report of BTU. The implementation of the plan and the self-evaluation report are reviewed by the Academic Council, which is authorized to share/reject the report or develop its own recommendations; to consider the results achieved during the year to be satisfactory or unsatisfactory; and, if necessary, to make changes in the work plan for the next year, as well as in the long-term and medium-term plans. Plans are subject to review and, if necessary, changes are made, according to a defined mechanism.

Evidences/indicators

- BTU Development strategy (2019-2025)
- SER
- Interview results

Recommendations:

R.1.2.1. Elaborate more detailed action plans, with clearly defined human and financial resource allocations, to improve BTU's ability to both monitor effectively the implementation of the strategy and to make corrective changes swiftly when necessary, thus fully implementing the overarching PDCA principles.

<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>S.1.2.1. Encourage and facilitate wider participation of the student body to the strategy development and implementation process.</p> <p>S.1.2.2. Provide for the participation of employers and other stakeholders to the strategy development process.</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>

2. Organizational Structure and Management of HEI

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

<p>2.1 Organizational Structure and Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organizational structure of HEI ensures implementation of goals and activities described in its strategic plan ○ Procedures for election/appointment of the management bodies of HEI are transparent, equitable, and in line with legislation ○ HEI's Leadership/Management body ensures effective management of the activities of the institution ○ Considering the mission and goals of HEI, leadership of the HEI supports international cooperation of the institution and the process of internationalization.
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>BTU's organizational structure ensures implementation of the goals and activities described in the university's strategic plan. The organizational structure of BTU includes management bodies, who make strategic and governing decisions (rector, academic and faculty councils, head of the administration, faculty dean, QA office); and structural units, who make decisions on the operational level, within the frame of their scope of activities (Research Center, Entrepreneurship Center, Development Office, Learning Process Management Office, Chancellery, IT department, Library, Marketing Department, IR office, Legal office, Material Resource Management Office, Career Development Office, Financial Department, HR). The functions and responsibilities of the structural units are clearly defined, as well as their accountability system.</p> <p>From the results of the activities carried out by the departments and from the results of the interviews, it is concluded that the structural units are effective and work in a coordinated manner towards achieving the goals of the institution. At the time of the visit, several units lacked human resources - the QA office was staffed by one person only (the head of the office), while the head of the international relations department was also heading the development office, which in turn employed a consultant. The position for the academic development manager, responsible for the development of the educational programmes was vacant. As mentioned, there was no evidence indicating ineffectiveness of the work of the units; however, to ensure the sustainability of the processes and the effective work of the units, it is recommended to recruit new personnel soon (this, according to the interviews, is already planned).</p> <p>BTU's management bodies include two collegial bodies, namely the faculty council and the academic council. BTU's academic council comprises 6 members: the rector (head), a PhD student, the head of the research center, and 3 representatives of academic staff (each programme field must be represented by the academic staff at the council and the member must have a PhD degree). A PhD student was added as member of the council last year. During the site visit, additional information about the work of the council (the minutes of the last three council meetings) was requested and provided. Based on the minutes of these meetings, it is evident that the council meets systematically (as needed) and the structural units can initiate the changes within the scope of their work. The fact that the representative of the administrative staff sits in the council, raised questions about possible conflict of interest. According to the minutes, the council members who have conflicts of interest during discussions declare</p>

these and do not participate in the voting. Academic council members are appointed for one year, but the membership of the academic council is not limited to one year. Observing the composition of the academic council for the last three years, three members have been in the council for three years (apart from the rector, or the head), and one for two years. The faculty council is composed of the academic staff and students.

As a whole, the regulations for appointing the management bodies are in line with the legislation. However, there is room for improvement regarding the equitability and the transparency of the process. The rector is appointed by the founders, and the rector in turn appoints every governing body representative. Appointment can be carried out either by direct contracting or through an open call. The rector appoints academic and faculty council members as well (except for student members, who are elected). A private HEI, according to the legislation of Georgia, can choose the way of electing or appointing the management bodies of the institution. However, the demands of the authorization standard also examine the transparency and equitability of the process, these are less than expected in case of direct appointment of the management bodies by the rector. Even though BTU is a young university, with relatively small number of staff, it is recommended that the university considers implementing an election process for its management bodies. This will possibly lead to a more equitable and transparent process and will give a chance to a broader pool of the academic community to participate in governance and decision-making.

The effectiveness of the management of the institution is evaluated systematically. To evaluate the effectiveness of the management of the institution, several mechanisms are used since 2020, namely: risk assessment on the institutional level; institutional evaluation of the university based on the authorization standards; self-evaluation of the university. The effectiveness and performance of each structural unit is also assessed every three months. Based on the abovementioned, the evaluation of management effectiveness of the institution is at place and implemented.

BTU has also developed a business continuity plan, which is detailed and complex, with a significant portion of it dedicated to the security of information and IT. The business continuity of BTU also lays upon several milestones, some of which are non-material, like: corporate culture, CSR and business-ethics, quality culture and quality assurance, positive environment, etc. The business continuity plan and the systematic evaluation of risks supports the business continuity of all the major processes at the university. It is, however, noteworthy that the IT staff were not aware of the existence of the business continuity plan. This issue is further discussed in the standard component 7.3.

BTU has a regulation on document processing, which is in line with current legislation. The regulation is very detailed and clear and defines every aspect related to the document processing, including the scheme for accountability, different types of documents and the rules for their processing, rules and regulations for using the university seal, numeration of documents, archiving, etc. BTU uses the electronic document processing system E-DOC, which has been implemented since 2020. The University supported the effective implementation of this system, through trainings of staff. The system is used to register every incoming and outgoing correspondence, as well as every internal document, defining the timeframe for addressing the document and control. The BTU chancellery controls the system.

BTU maintains a registry of educational institutions; information required by the law is reflected in the electronic information system. During the visit, however, there was a misunderstanding regarding the staff's degree and the number of staff with different degrees. Namely, in the registry of staff, the same person who was granted higher qualification (e.g. from bachelor's degree to master's degree) was included twice – as a bachelor and as a master. The issue was discussed during the visit, and according to the representatives of the university, the problem was caused by the EMIS's registry, as it registered staff twice. However, as at the moment of the visit the registry of staff was not accurate, it is recommended to ensure that the registry of staff reflects the reality.

Internationalization for BTU, based on the SER, documents and interviews, is a way of developing the university and integrating good practice in every area of activity. BTU, at the time of the visit, had 63 partner institutions. The number of partners, as well as ERASMUS+ mobility programs and number of staff and students participating in the exchange programs has been increasing during the examined period. 93 students have benefited from the long or short term stays and studies abroad since 2018. 30 students have participated in the ERASMUS+ exchange programs (including 6 summer schools), and there were 30 ERASMUS +staff exchanges. However, the list includes CBHE project exchanges – 9 out of 30 outgoing mobilities were under Erasmus+ CBHE project, 8 were administrative staff mobility (staff mobility for training) and 13 – teaching mobility (staff mobility for teaching). As for the administrative staff mobility, out of 8 mobilities, 5 were of the representatives of the international relations department. The international office manages various international projects and 22 ERASMUS+ international credit mobility programs. BTU also has been coordinating two Jean Monnet projects. The University has made

significant progress in internationalization overall, and it is advisable to continue the efforts, especially to increase academic staff participation in exchange programs as well as to promote participation of administrative staff in the Erasmus+ exchange programs. This will facilitate one of the main aims of internationalization as named by the university, namely integrating good practice in curricula and teaching as well as administration. During the interviews with the university management, internationalization was frequently named as the way of sharing and implementing good practice.

Based on the evaluation of the results of the internationalization activities, as well as on the results of the interviews, it can be concluded that the internationalization activities, as well as the internationalization strategy are implemented coherently. The institution works towards implementing the good practices in teaching and learning, as well as in research and in management. Even though some areas of internationalization activities are more developed than others (the results of internationalization activities in the area of teaching and learning are better than those of the research activities), progress is evident.

Students can also study on the double-degree programs offered by BTU and spend up to one year at the partner university. The experts met one of the students who had studied in Portugal for a year, who reported a very positive experience.

As for the incoming student mobility, there was one student who visited BTU. This low number was justified by the situation in the region, as well as the period of the Covid-19 pandemic. The University does not offer English-language programs but, with the help of the faculty, can offer courses in English to the exchange students.

As the university expands and grows, it is also advisable to develop a clear and concise plan for attracting international students at BTU. Based on interviews, this is not a priority at the moment, but the university will work towards attracting international students in the future.

Evidences/indicators

- Structure of the university
- Functions of the structural units
- Provisions of governing bodies
- Procedures for election/appointment of staff at management bodies
- Minutes of academic council meetings
- The composition of the academic and the faculty councils
- SER
- Interview results
- QA manual
- Business continuity plan
- Internal document management procedure
- Risks assessment report
- Internationalization strategy
- Results of the internationalization activities, including the number of ERASMUS+ exchanges
- University web page

Recommendations:

- R.2.1.1. Implement more open, democratic, election processes for the appointment of the management body representatives.
- R.2.1.2. Recruit additional personnel, as needed, to ensure the sustainability of the processes and the effective work of the units, taking into consideration the already planned growth of the university.
- R.2.1.3. Ensure that the registry of academic personnel is accurate.

Suggestions:

- S.2.1.1. The university should continue its efforts in internationalization activities, by facilitating more academic and administrative staff ERASMUS+ mobility and by developing a long-term strategy for attracting international students.

Best Practices (if applicable):

- BP.2.1.1. Intensive and effective internationalization approach.

Evaluation

- Complies with requirements
- Substantially complies with requirements**
- Partially complies with requirements
- Does not comply with requirements

2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms

- 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.
- 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

The University has an internal quality assurance system and mechanisms at place that are implemented to ensure the quality of processes in the university. The QA mechanisms and procedures are publicly available at the web page of the university, they are detailed and clear and well known to the university community. QA mechanisms and processes are implemented according to the regulations, the results are reported and used in the management of the institution. They are adequate for evaluation of every activity and of the resources of the institution.

BTU defines its understanding of quality, which is a good practice, as it promotes a clear understanding of the quality at the institution. According to BTU's definition of quality, quality is compliance of the object to the standards, that is characterized by the compliance with standards and compliance with the demands of the customers (in case of higher education – students, potential employers and society at large). Based on the regulations, quality is the system, norms and standards in education, BTU's mission and strategic priorities, and it is composed of three interconnected components: quality of the result, quality of the process and quality of the conditions. The quality management system at BTU is based upon the ESG-2015, ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 21001:2018 standards, as well as on the principle of continuous development (PDCA). The PDCA cycle is defined for every process and followed.

Main documents and regulations regarding quality management at the university are the QA manual, the internal document management procedure and the methodology for study program planning and development. All the regulations are public and available to all interested parties.

The QA office is one of the management bodies of the university and the results of the implementation of the QA mechanisms are used in management decisions. The recommendations developed by the QA office are used by the management for improving the quality of different areas of activities, as supported by evidence, including yearly reports prepared by the QA office. The Head of the QA office, as mentioned in standard component 2.1, is appointed by the rector. The effectiveness of the QA system and the QA office is evaluated by the academic council. Specifically, the evaluation is based on the reporting. The academic council discusses the annual self-evaluation report by the QA office.

The QA office is represented on the central level as the university has one faculty. However, during the site visit, the QA office did not have any employee other than its head. It is highly advisable that the university increases the number of the QA office employees shortly, as mentioned in the 2.1 standard component. Even though the results of the work of the QA office do not show any signs of inefficiency and the processes are running according to the regulations, the office, due to its scope of work and strategic orientation needs more employees.

Another important pillar of the QA system of BTU is the quality culture. Based on evidence, including the interviews with members of the university community, it is evident that a quality culture has been achieved in the university. Different structural units and members of the academic staff of the university are well aware of the quality assurance system and mechanisms and they are involved in the implementation of the mechanisms, in accordance with the existing regulations.

The QA mechanisms are implemented by the relevant units, within the scope of their functions; this is evident from the results of the implementation of the QA mechanisms (evaluation reports), as well as from the interviews. For example, surveys of the students are launched by the learning process management office and the initial results of the student surveys are also analyzed by them. The surveys of the staff are launched and analyzed by the HR department. The evaluation of the structural units is carried out by the QA office, but in close collaboration with the head of the administration, who is responsible for monitoring the fulfillment of the recommendations. The monitoring of structural units is done with utilization of quantitative and qualitative data, interviews, and visits to the units. The units are informed of the time of the evaluation one month before the assessment.

The QA processes of BTU can be summarized in four groups, as follows:

- **Internal Monitoring**, or audit: the assessment of the work of the structural units, evaluation of the level of attainment of the action plans, evaluation of the educational programmes, risk assessment, evaluation of BTU's performance against the authorization standards, revision of the regulations and other documents

- **Self-evaluations:** BTU institutional self-evaluation and self-evaluation of structural units
- **Surveys of the stakeholders**
- **Ongoing assessments**

As mentioned, the QA processes and mechanisms are carried out collaboratively; this in turn leads to increasing the role and the responsibility of the university community members for the quality. There are several mechanisms that are implemented solely by QA office, namely, evaluation of the structural units, monitoring of the regulations and risks assessment. Most of the mechanisms have been used for several cycles already; only the self-evaluation of the university is a new mechanism (however, already implemented).

The “feedback loop” is closed – results become known to the interested parties. In the case of students, the results of the student surveys are communicated either via sending emails or through the meetings with students (monthly), as the team learned during the interviews.

The assessment of educational programmes, as well as of staff is also continuous. One of the main roles in ensuring the quality of the education programmes is that of the academic development manager, whose position was vacant at the time of the site visit. The programmes also have their “course leads” who also foster the quality of the educational programmes. The programmes are evaluated every semester and there is also a “complex” evaluation, carried out every two years. As for the evaluation of personnel, this is carried out by the HR department according to the defined evaluation system. A more detailed description of staff performance evaluation is presented in the 4.1 standard component.

As mentioned, the forms for surveys of interested parties are developed and the surveys are carried out systematically. Together with the surveys conducted for evaluating the satisfaction of different interested parties, BTU has the “electronic trust box” where everyone can express their opinions. Communication with employers and reception of their feedback is not limited to the surveys; employers are closely collaborating with the university in the process of developing educational programmes.

The students’ academic performance is monitored, and the examples of the results were presented to the expert panel. However, a systematic process for using the results to improve the teaching process has not been defined.

The self-evaluation process of the university for the purpose of the authorization evaluation was participatory, with the group working according to their roles and responsibilities, as evidenced by the composition of the group and the interview with the SER. The results of the QA evaluations were used regularly throughout the process.

In summary, the QA system and mechanisms of the university have been well implemented, the structural units are well aware of and actively contributing to their implementation, their results are utilized for management purposes, and the self-evaluation process has been effectively carried out.

Despite the above conclusion, even though the structural units are well aware of and involved in the QA processes, they mostly focus on the quality of the process rather than that of the outcome. However, ensuring the consistency of the process does not necessarily lead to high quality of the outcome. Therefore, as the quality processes at the university have been well established, and are in line with the regulations, shifting the community’s focus to the quality of the outcome will lead to further improvement.

The university has developed a mechanism for planning the student body. Several methods are used for planning the student body, including prognosing based on the statistical data, where numerical indicators are used: a mathematical model based on the prognosis of the possible number of students continuing their studies, and the possible number of graduates. For planning the total number of students, BTU uses different indicators, including areas for teaching, material resources, program staff, etc. The results of implementing the existing methodology were also presented to the experts.

Evidences/indicators

- SER
- Forms for evaluating programmes, processes, surveys of the interested parties
- Results/reports of the implementation of the QA mechanisms
- Presentations of QA processes and mechanisms
- Student body planning methodology and the results of using the methodology for planning and reporting
- Results of monitoring students’ academic performance
- Risks assessment report
- Interview results

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University web page
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>S.2.2.1. The University should encourage the community to shift their mindset from ensuring the quality of the processes to the quality of the outcome.</p> <p>S.2.2.2. The University should define and apply a systematic process for using the students' academic performance results to improve the teaching process.</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>BP.2.2.1. Well implemented QA system and mechanisms that have led to a shared quality culture.</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>
<p>2.3. Observing Principles of Ethics and Integrity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HEI has developed regulations and mechanisms that follow principles of ethics and integrity. Such regulations are publicly accessible. Institution has implemented mechanisms for detecting plagiarism and its prevention. HEI follows the principles of academic freedom.
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>The institution has developed the "Code of Ethics and Academic Ethics", that describes the mechanisms, forms of violation of the principles of ethics, and the sanctions. The document is shared among the students and the academic staff and it is publicly available on the institution's web-page. During the interviews the expert team asked the invited and academic staff as well as the students whether they were aware of the regulations regarding the Code of Ethics. It turned out that the majority of the interviewees are familiar with them. Students mentioned they remember it from the orientation weeks, while the academic staff referred to the agreements they sign before starting to work at the institution. The university also has developed the Plagiarism Preventing and Detecting Rule. This defines different forms of plagiarism and describes the detection and prevention mechanism, as well as the sanctions that might apply in case of detecting plagiarism. The expert panel noted that the rule does not define self-plagiarism as a one of the forms of academic misconduct, therefore it is suggested that the institution adds this into the rule, as very often students' awareness about self-plagiarism is very low. In addition to this, the rule defines 10-12 % of the similarity as a maximum accepted threshold. The expert panel investigated this during the interviews with administrative and academic staff and with students. As it turned out, according to the academic and administrative staff the 10-12% threshold has been defined considering the "international practice", while the students' perception toward this is that 10-12% is a plagiarism percentage which is allowed to occur into their papers. The expert team recommends that the institution avoids having a set percentage defined in the rule, as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A high similarity percentage does not necessarily imply that plagiarism exists. In many cases the similarity percentage can be as high as 17-20% because of quotations, bibliography, footnotes that can objectively be similar to another text In case of BA, MA and PhD theses, 10% of the similarity is significantly high, even if it is below the threshold, as it may indicate plagiarism The perception of what constitutes plagiarism among students and academic staff varies. Once given the 10-12% as an acceptable threshold, they believe that it is directly related to plagiarism and not to possibly benign text similarity, thus causing misunderstandings. <p>The institution has defined the procedures how the disciplinary committee is running: it is elected on a case-by-case basis, having the appointed members among the academic staff and non-elected members among the administrative staff. The decision is made and sent to the academic council for their approval. Students and academic staff mention that they attended an information meeting conducted by the library representative that was related to the usage of the similarity detection software. The university signed an agreement with Turnitin in 2020 and implemented the software. The software is being used to detect plagiarism not only in case of theses but for midterm and final papers as well. During the emergency distance teaching the university started to use the system and all the papers that students were submitting were uploaded to the system. The students are submitting their papers in ExamJet (a tool designed for online quizzes), later those papers are downloaded and submitted to Turnitin mostly by the Library staff, who check the similarity, download the reports and send them to the course instructors.</p>

Some of the teachers are also registered into Turnitin and access the reports by themselves. Currently the university is using only the similarity detection function of Turnitin, not the feedback functionality. Due to this, the expert team inquired on how the feedback was provided for both theses and midterm and final papers. The team learned that the teachers, after downloading (or getting from the library staff) the similarity reports, send it via email to the student. The expert team inquired on the same with students and alumni; they could not recall receiving a similarity report back from their teachers. Further, none of the similarity reports either for theses or midterms that were requested and received as additional documents was with comments. Moreover, the university has a Turnitin license for 300 users only, which is less than 10% of the student's university current enrollment, and a policy for ensuring that these 300 accounts are used for all 3651 active students has not been provided. Accordingly, the expert team recommends that the institution rearranges the usage of the software in a way to increase its effectiveness by allowing the teachers to run and manage the plagiarism check on their courses' deliverables by themselves directly and to provide the students with individual, full, and timely feedback, as these are the major mechanisms when it comes to plagiarism prevention.

The institution defines academic freedom as one of its values. During the interview with academic staff the panel learned that they believe that their academic freedom is ensured within the institution. In addition to this, students as well as alumni mentioned that the core values related to academic freedom were guaranteed.

Evidences/indicators

- Code of Ethics and Academic Ethics
- The rule of Plagiarism Prevention and Detection
- An agreement with the provider of similarity detection software
- Samples of similarity detection reports in case of Thesis and mid-term exams
- Self-evaluation report
- Interviews
- University web page

Recommendations:

- R.2.3.1. Avoid defining an acceptable threshold of similarity in the "Rule of Plagiarism Detection and Prevention", as the similarity does not necessarily imply plagiarism and might cause misunderstandings among students and academic staff.
- R.2.3.2. Use the full functionality of Turnitin (ex. Feedback; grade with rubrics; peer review assignment) to ensure that individual, full, and timely feedback is provided, so that plagiarism prevention mechanisms work effectively.
- R.2.3.3. Academic staff must have full access to the plagiarism detection software to avoid submitting and downloading the student's file several times (currently student files are downloaded from ExamJet, uploaded to Turnitin, similarity reports are downloaded, reports are uploaded back to students' private emails).
- R.2.3.4. Define and apply a policy for ensuring that the 300 Turnitin accounts can be used by all active students.

Suggestions:

- S.2.3.1. The University should add a definition of self-plagiarism into the Rule of Plagiarism, to further enhance awareness on this among students.

Best Practices (if applicable):

N/A

Evaluation

- 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

BTU has a methodology for planning, designing and developing educational programmes that is based on the document "Curriculum Planning, Formation and Development Methodology". The faculty ensures the formation, development, implementation, modification of programmes at BTU. The programme and amendments to it are developed by the programme Manager and BTU academic and visiting staff. Support to the administrative, organizational, informational, etc. process of programme development, evaluation and modification is provided by the Dean of the Faculty, the Programme Manager and the Academic Development Manager / Working Group Coordinator, etc., who periodically monitor/ lead these processes. The BTU Quality Assurance Service carries out the evaluation of programme compliance with the legal requirements, standards and regulations. Stakeholders, including, the executors of the relevant programme, students, and potential employers are involved in the process of programme development, evaluation and modification. Surveys and/or interviews and other communication mechanisms (email, meetings) are used for this purpose. However, the alumni do not actively and systematically participate in the process.

Undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programmes at BTU, changes in them, as well as cancellations of programmes are approved by the Academic Council. The HEI analyzes collected data received from the above-mentioned communication mechanism and works on the renewal and development of its programmes in relevance with the constantly changing environment. The institution has developed a systematic process for curriculum planning, implementation and delivery model:

1. Study and confirmation of the need for programme development - compliance of the program with the mission and priorities of BTU, existence of a "social need" for the programme
2. Programme profile, level, level of higher education, field, academic quality awarded, qualification, determining prerequisites for ECTS credits, resources and programme admission
3. Formulate the goals of the programme and describe the results
4. Formulation and description of the programme content and structure (including programme components, their content and volume in ECTS credits)
5. Programme structure, content, examining the relationship between goals, objectives and results
6. Identify technologies relevant to the planned outcomes (including teaching methodology, assessment system, timetable for achieving the planned outcomes)
7. Establish a system of programme evaluation, implementation and quality improvement.

The HEI follows the ISO 9001:2015 standard and the Continuous Improvement Cycle (PDCA) as a quality enhancement mechanism and the annual SWOT analysis is based on the results of year-round monitoring, evaluation and review of stakeholder attitudes (interviews/meetings/recommendations, etc.). A list of key questions for programme development, implementation, maintenance, and evaluation is established in the document "Curriculum Planning, Formation and Development Methodology".

Reasons for canceling a programme are: incompatibility with the BTU mission and/or educational priorities); the programme is financially unstable; a significant decrease in the student contingent for several years/lack of students. According to the interviews, the HEI has a mechanism in place to allow students to smoothly complete an educational programme that has been cancelled.

Evidences/indicators

- Methodology for planning, designing and development of educational programmes
- Analysis of labor market and employer demands
- Procedures for programme approval, amendment and annulment
- SER
- Interview results

Recommendations:

N/A

Suggestions:

S.3.1.1. The University should ensure active and systematic participation of all main stakeholders in the process of programme planning, designing, and development.

Best Practices (if applicable):

N/A

Evaluation

- Complies with requirements**
- Substantially complies with requirements
- Partially complies with requirements

<input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements
3.2 Structure and Content of Educational Programmes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Programme learning outcomes are clearly stated and are in line with higher education level and qualification to be granted ○ 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
<p>Programme learning outcomes are in line with higher education levels and the qualification to be granted. All programmes are formed according to the ECTS guidance:</p> <p>Undergraduate programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 240 credits, from which not less than 120 credits are a component of the main field of study. • The programme gives the student the opportunity to form an individual educational plan by electing free components of education programme. <p>Graduate programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 120 credits; it consists of a study component and a compulsory scientific-research component (master's thesis). <p>Doctoral programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no more than 60 credits - study component; it also consists of a teaching component and a compulsory scientific-research component (dissertation). <p>1 credit at BTU equals 25 hours, and it includes contact and independent hours. All programmes include compulsory and elective courses. Choice is guaranteed: the total number of credits in the offered elective courses exceeds the number of credits defined for the elective part of the programme.</p> <p>However, some of the learning outcomes contain multiple statements that make the process of mapping education objectives to the subjects that are supposed to achieve them quite complex and harden the process of their direct assessment. For example, in the BIT curriculum we have 6 learning outcomes and outcome number 4 states: , for instance: Outcome 4: "a) Graduates are able to provide detailed written reports on the problems, ideas, tasks, and ways of their solution in the field of Information Technologies; b) oral communication with specialists and non-specialists on issues related to the field; c) graduates know international terminology in the field of information technologies; and d) have the ability to creatively use modern information technologies." This is a combination of 3 different skills in just one outcome.</p> <p>As a programme can be modified by program heads and invited personnel who (in some cases) may not be appointed to the position in line with the term of program accreditation, some concerns on the sustainability of the programme are raised.</p> <p>As the programme head is accountable to the dean of the faculty, who is appointed by the rector, having the rector as a programme head constitutes a conflict of interest.</p>
Evidences/indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational programmes • Catalogue of educational programmes • SER • Individualized education programmes and methodology for their development • Student survey results • Interview results
Recommendations:
<p>R.3.2.1. To avoid concerns on the sustainability of the programmes, heads of programmes should be appointed (affiliated) for a term at least within the duration of the programme accreditation.</p> <p>R.3.2.2. Existing conflicts of interest in academic management must be eliminated and new ones must be avoided by defining an appropriate regulation.</p>
Suggestions:
<p>S.3.2.1. ICT is not under Engineering anymore and the qualification that the programme grants for IT as "Engineer" should be adjusted in accordance with the new Qualification Framework.</p>
Best Practices (if applicable):

BP.3.2.1. The establishment of a procedure for individualized behavior for students with special educational needs.
<p>Evaluation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>
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.
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>The HEI has a law-compliant system of learning outcomes assessment. Students are evaluated at BTU according to the rule for the calculation of credits for higher education programs with the 100-point system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning component (undergraduate, graduate, doctoral programs) - assessment includes interim and summary assessments. Both forms set a minimum competency threshold. It is not allowed to grant credit only in the form of one of these assessment types. The final grade of the programme component is the sum of the points obtained in interim and summary assessments. Georgia's 100-point system in compliance with Georgian law allows 5 positive (from A to E) and 2 negative assessments (Fx and F). BTU provides information to students about the grades they have received. Individual workloads and syllabi include the mechanism for improvement of achieved results, such as grades received for reviewing-analyzing, mistakes made, improving aspects and individual/additional work with students. If a student's paper is reviewed only by one assessor and/or the student does not agree with the rating received, he/she can submit a written complaint to the Dean. • The principles and rules of student assessment are set out in the regulations for undergraduate, graduate and doctoral courses. Information on the rules for appealing students' assessment is provided in the BTU regulation and faculty regulation and are publicly available at BTU website. Information on the evaluation system is given in the curricula of the programme and is specified in the programme components syllabus that are uploaded into the electronic learning process management system (BTUClassRoom) and are available to students. <p>In all syllabi (section "Information for students") there is information about the possibility of appealing the assessment received; immediately after the start of the learning process, the course facilitator explains to the students the specifics of the grading system, methods and criteria, and requirements.</p> <p>However, the system of program outcome assessment is complicated and not clear where/how the assessment of concrete outcomes is done. BTU uses 3 levels (beginner/medium/high) in the assessment of learning outcomes. Additionally, for example, according to the mapping provided for the BIT program, almost all subjects are covering all outcomes individually. For instance, data structures2 is covering 5 out of the total 6 outcomes. As already mentioned in standard 3.2, it is important to note that almost all outcomes are in fact combinations of multiple outcomes. Based on the provided samples it is unclear how all these statements are assessed to ensure that after graduation the student has fully achieved the specified learning outcomes.</p>
<p>Evidences/indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System for learning outcomes assessment • Educational programmes • Program learning outcomes assessment example • BIT Curriculum compliance map • Interview results
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>S.3.3.1. Simplify the learning outcomes assessment method, underline only mandatory subjects mapping, and assess the achievement of outcomes only by those subjects that cover them at the highest level of competency.</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>N/A</p>

Evaluation

- Complies with requirements**
- Substantially complies with requirements
- Partially complies with requirements
- 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

- HEI has staff management policy and procedures that ensure the implementation of educational process and other activities defined in its strategic plan.
- HEI ensures the employment of qualified academic/scientific/invited/administrative/ support staff.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

BTU has a staff management policy and other relevant regulations such as staff attraction, selection, hiring and professional development mechanisms in place. BTU views staff as a strategic resource that ensures competitive advantage of an institution. All these regulations are displayed on the webpage of the BTU (<https://btu.edu.ge/chven-shesakheb/maregulirebeli-dokument/>). There is a system of accountability and subordination, where the rules for issuing ordinances and the authorized persons (internal regulations) are defined.

The staff management policy consists of several components: principles of decision-making process at BTU; characteristics of the management system; staff policy; basic principles and priorities of the personnel management system; BTU governing bodies (entities); subordination system; BTU staff and other employees' qualification requirements, staff selection processes. The BTU staff management policy substantially supports the achievement of the goals (namely goals 1,2,3) stated in the strategic plan (2019-2025) of the institution.

The total number of staff (including academic, invited, and administrative and support staff) is 335. The total number of academic staff is 118 (among them professors-15 (4 affiliated), associate professors-75 (23 affiliated) and assistant professors 28 (3 affiliated)). The total number of affiliated academic personnel is 30. The total number of invited staff is 161. The total number of administrative and support staff is 56. BTU employs 17 international invited staff involved in teaching (6 persons) and in research (11 persons). Among the affiliated academic personnel, 15 persons have a binding affiliation agreement with mandatory research, and they are considered as the scientific staff at the BTU research center.

BTU has adopted benchmarks for academic staff; these are stated in the self-evaluation report. Benchmarks clearly define the actual benchmark, the target benchmark and the estimated date of reaching the target benchmark (2025). Benchmarks show different ratios of total number of staff, educational programmes and students; for example, the ratio of the number of academic, scientific and invited staff over the number of students is $279/3651=1/13,1$. The target benchmark by 2025 for this ratio is $1/10$. The ratio of the number of affiliated academic staff over the number of students is $30/3651=1/121,7$. The target benchmark by 2025 for this ratio is $1/115$. The staff retention rate is 97%.

The staff management policy defines the rules for affiliation of academic staff. Affiliation refers to a written agreement between a person in an academic position (Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor) and BTU, under which the person determines his/her affiliation with only one higher educational institution, in particular with BTU. Affiliation is voluntary and based on the affiliation agreement reached between BTU and the academic staff. Although academic positions are held for three years, the affiliation agreement at BTU is signed for one academic year and competition to become an affiliated person is held every year among the academic personnel. It should be noted that there are two types of affiliation of academic personnel at BTU: one is with no binding obligation to produce a certain number of research publications per year; and another with binding obligation to publish at least two research papers in Scopus and Web of Science indexed journals and conference proceedings. The fact of the affiliation is confirmed by the signing of the affiliation agreement. An individual workload

scheme for affiliated academic staff is an integral part of affiliation agreements. The affiliated person fulfills all the duties and enjoys all the rights defined by the employment contract.

It is worth noting that affiliated academic staff is only 25,4% of academic staff and only 10, 7% of the total number of academic, scientific and invited staff. The affiliation agreement is a voluntary agreement; it covers only one-year period and staff should renew it annually on a competitive basis. In order to fully ensure the implementation of the BTU strategic development plan and the fulfillment of BTU's mission, it is recommended to increase significantly the number of affiliated academic personnel (among them affiliated personnel with binding obligation to publish highly qualified research papers in a certain time period). Binding affiliation contract with mandatory research should cover a longer time period and the institution should strengthen the incentives for academic staff, by making affiliation more attractive to them.

From the additional documents submitted by the institution and from the interviews with administrative staff accreditation the expert panel learned that in the last call for hiring academic personnel, the institution announced 43 openings, received 37 applications and hired only 20 applicants. There is no separate call for hiring academic personnel on a professional basis; all applicants participate in a common competition. Competition for affiliation contracts is also announced annually, specifically it is announced only for a binding affiliation contract with mandatory research obligation (personnel who receive a monthly fixed salary). Last year around 7-8 applicants were refused to be offered a binding affiliation contract. For hiring foreign personnel, the institution does not announce open calls, but hires foreign staff from partner universities.

Staff selection, staffing, rights and responsibilities at BTU, are regulated through the main regulatory document of BTU - the internal regulations, according to which: BTU has academic, administrative and support staff. There may also be other positions designated by BTU. BTU can invite for the purpose of implementing the programmes/research/other activity (contract without a competition) or select based on competition persons having relevant competence - specialists/researchers/etc. (so called "invited persons").

BTU is also authorized to determine vacant positions and their number (job openings), qualification requirements (in case of academic staff - qualification requirements are determined under the Law of Georgia on Higher Education and the regulations on the receiving academic titles at BTU) etc. In the case of academic staff, an open competition is held at BTU to elect a person in an academic position. BTU is authorized to determine the competition areas, the number of vacancies, the mechanism for informing the interested persons (publishing information on mass-media/job webpages and on the BTU webpage), the qualification requirements/selection criteria, the list of documents to be submitted, the document submission rule (submitting in hard copy/sending via e-mail) and the deadlines, the composition of the competition and claim commissions, the terms and rule for submitting documents, conducting interviews, reporting results and appeals, employment agreement conditions, etc.

BTU is authorized to establish the possibility of holding professional positions by qualified professional staff. In this case, the qualification of the person can be confirmed by professional experience, special training and/or publications. For selecting based on a professional ground, - higher education is necessary, also: a) for a Professor – no less than 6 years of pedagogical experience at a HEI, at least 6 years professional experience in the relevant field; b) for Associate Professor - at least 3 years of pedagogical experience at a HEI,; at least 5 years of professional experience in the relevant field; c) For Assistant Professor - at least 3 years of professional experience in the field d) For assistants - at least 2 years of professional experience in the relevant field. The legislation of Georgia does not restrict the possibility of holding the academic positions of an Associate and/or an Assistant Professor with a bachelor's degree or equivalent, if this person has proven relevant qualification, which ensures that the student achieves the learning outcomes required by the programme/course. A citizen of Georgia or a foreign country may be elected to an academic position at BTU if he/she meets the conditions defined by the legislation of Georgia and the BTU. A person with appropriate qualifications is considered to be a person who has developed competence necessary for achieving relevant learning component outcomes.

The procedures related to the planning of the number of administrative, support and educational staff in BTU are regulated by the BTU methodological document in force, the "Staff Planning Methodology". To identify the number of staff according to this methodology, certain formulas are used. These formulas are applied for all types of staff. When applying the formulas, analysis and benchmarking is conducted. The analysis is conducted for every educational programme. However, these formulas do not identify how many academic/invited personal are needed for any specific direction within the framework of each educational programme. Such decisions, on the basis of the content of the educational programmes and the research projects, are made by faculty, the research center and the heads of the educational

programmes, who identify in which specific directions academic staff should be hired and what should be the qualification requirements for them.

BTU ensures that new employees are able to adapt quickly and efficiently to working conditions and be integrated in the team. Adaptation issues are governed by the BTU internal regulations. BTU offers several training programs for staff. It is mandatory for new staff to participate in training courses that are offered by BTU as part of the integration process for newcomers (onboarding process); for example, in work security, teaching methods etc. Continuous education opportunities for staff are ensured- all BTU staff have the opportunity to choose from any BTU training programme and study for free a course of their interest (as a free listener), as well as to participate in any project of their interest, including BTU exchange programmes.

Staff incentive mechanisms have been developed; the relevant document has been in force since 2021 and the process of its implementation has started. In May 2022 the rector of BTU issued the order determination of measures to stimulate academic personnel which establishes the mechanism of stimulation of staff: according to the personnel rating, their salaries can be increased by 10-15% during the next academic year. For the stimulation of academic personnel other measures are also used. For example, BTU announces an annual competition named "Scientific award in business and technology". This competition is held for academic personnel of the University to popularize scientific research and science in order to award the prize <https://btu.edu.ge/kvleva/sametsniero-premia/>. During the pandemic BTU offered its staff laptops and computers for temporary personal use. BTU organizes conferences and other academic events and offers organizational and financial support for its staff to participate in such events.

Affiliated personnel with binding affiliation contracts are considered as scientific personnel/researchers. Scientific personnel conducts research in the direction of research priorities defined by BTU. The research priorities defined at this time are: fundamental research in digitalization (digital economy, digital governance and artificial intelligence, digital marketing and cyber security) and popularization of science. Affiliated personnel with binding contracts of conducting research automatically become the members of the governing board of the research center.

Participation in the decision-making process of academic and scientific staff is ensured on educational, research and other important issues. Specifically, the Academic Council, the Faculty Council and the Dissertation Council are collegial bodies. In the Academic Council, all programme areas have equal number of representatives (at least 1 member per programme area). The Faculty Dissertation Board consists of BTU Professors and Associate Professors who have a Doctoral or equivalent Degree and proven research competence in the field(s) of the doctoral programme(s) of the faculty. Personnel also participate in the decision-making process with regards to educational programme development. Undergraduate, graduate, doctoral programmes in BTU, changes in them, and cancellation of programmes is approved by the Academic Council. Programmes are developed, implemented, evaluated and modified by the faculty. The programme and its amendments are developed by BTU academic and visiting staff - specialists in the relevant field. Support is provided by the Dean of the Faculty, the Head of the Programme and Academic Development Manager/Working Group Coordinator, who periodically monitors/ leads these processes.

According to the BTU's quality management system:

1. The quality assurance service inspects the activities of structural units within the framework of planned internal monitoring during the calendar year, identifies nonconformities, defines the deadlines for their implementation and checks the results, defines measures aimed at elimination, and develops recommendations for improvement.
2. Human resources of the programmes in terms of the existing and projected numbers of students are monitored (results of planned monitoring is carried out by the Quality Assurance Service).
3. Staff self-evaluation, and annual reports of the Quality Assurance Service are compiled.
4. Staff evaluations are carried out by the managers of personal/structural units.
5. Staff attitudes are studied through surveys at least once a year, as well as through monthly staff interviews (survey results).

Complex evaluation of personnel is used: personnel are evaluated along three directions: compliance with requirements, compliance with minimum and maximum, compliance with priorities. The quality assurance service conducts the audit twice a year, each structural unit creates reports every three months and these reports are monitored by the quality assurance service. The academic personnel write self-evaluation reports that are monitored by the faculty administration (academic part of the reports), by the research center (research part of the report) and by the human resource department (satisfaction surveys results). Staff satisfaction surveys are conducted twice a year. The results of the surveys are analyzed and used for further improvement by the human resource department. Based on the evaluation

results each structural unit develops a plan of improvement or integrates such measures in the annual plans.

Evidences/indicators

- Strategic development and action plans of BTU (2019-2025)
- Staff management policy and regulations
- Internal regulations
- Staff adaptation procedures
- Rules for conducting a competition for academic staff
- Affiliation and workload regulations for academic staff
- Personnel management, evaluation and development mechanisms
- Regulations for conducting attestation
- Functions of structural units
- Job Descriptions and qualification requirements
- Functions of academic and invited staff implementing programmes
- Individual workload, workload performance and evaluation forms
- Regulation for conducting a competition for a vacant position
- Code of ethics and academic ethics
- Staff certification regulation
- Staff planning methodology
- Methodology of planning, developing and improving educational programmes
- BTU webpage
- Regulatory document(s) for affiliation terms and conditions
- Benchmarks set by the HEI
- CVs of personnel
- Samples of job contracts
- Rector’s order on the determination of measures to stimulate academic personnel
- Regulation of the Faculty Council
- Regulation of the Doctorate ("Faculty Dissertation Council)
- Results of evaluation staff performance and their satisfaction survey and its use for staff management and development
- Survey results
- Interview results
- SER
- Additional documents requested by the expert panel during the visit (CV-s of invited and foreign staff; list of academic, invited and foreign staff; sample of last call for hiring academic personnel; filled sample of self-evaluation reports of academic personnel; filled sample of evaluation by manager of personnel; filled sample of evaluation of research activity of personal; filled sample of individual workload of personnel in a semester; filled sample of calculation of individual personal rating; sample of analyses of individual workload of personnel; information about the workload of personnel at other Institutions of Higher Education; sample of self-evaluation report of structural unit; report on the analysis of the benchmarks of academic staff; samples of monitoring reports; charter of competition/open call for academic positions; sample of binding affiliation contract; sample of non-binding affiliation contract; documents of rewards for personnel).

Recommendations:

- R.4.1.1. Significantly increase the number of affiliated academic personnel (among them affiliated personnel with binding obligation to publish highly qualified research papers in a certain time period).
- R.4.1.2. The binding affiliation contract with mandatory research must cover a longer time period.
- R.4.1.3. Strengthen the incentives for academic staff, to make affiliation more attractive to them.

Suggestions:

N/A

Best Practices (if applicable):

N/A

Evaluation

- 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 BTU Staff Planning Methodology defines the methodology for planning administrative, support, educational programmes provider staff (academic, scientific, and invited staff) at BTU. It also describes staff planning procedures.

In order to determine the optimal number of staff, the volume of work to be performed is calculated and the number of staff is determined. The ratios (threshold points) established by the same rule and the results of comparing the existing numbers of staff with them are considered.

BTU educational programs are implemented by BTU academic staff and invited specialists. BTU uses the following ratios as threshold points (same as the target):

- 1 executor of the educational programme (academic and invited staff) per 25 students.
- In case of implementation of 1-11 educational programmes at BTU, at least one professor/ associate professor per 50 students, in case of 12 - 24 programs one professor/ associate professor per 60 students, in case of 24 or more programs at least one professor/ associate professor up to 70 students, but not less than 25 professors, associate professors and/or assistant professors.
- The number of academic staff in the total number of academic + invited staff of programme executors should not be less than 50%.
- The number of academic staff affiliated with BTU in the total number of academic staff should not be less than 10%.
- The pedagogical workload of affiliated academic staff should not be more than 25% of the total workload.

The number of specialists invited to implement the programme component(s) is set for one semester. In the process of defining the workload of the academic and invited staff, BTU considers and tracks their workload in other institutions of Higher Education.

The workload scheme includes educational, research and other activities such as lectures, practical and laboratory work, midterm and final exams, course work, syllabus design, publishing original and/or translated handbook/textbook, preparing reader and/or methodological guidelines, organizing internship, supervising of Bachelor, Master and Doctoral theses, reviewing qualification theses, membership in different committees, preparing and submitting grant proposals, assisting the faculty council, publishing monographs, research papers, editing research papers, presenting at research conferences, etc.

The following approaches are taken into account to determine the number and workload of academic and visiting staff at BTU: working hours (including all type of workload) should not exceed 40 hours per week, and the individual workload scheme is updated for each semester; the time allotted for pedagogical activities includes both contact and consultation hours, as well as lectures, practical/laboratory trainings, in the work group and/or preparation, drafting written assignments, examination and review of results, preparation and examination of exam assignments, preparation/updating of lecture materials, etc.

In case of academic/affiliated academic staff: the workload is reflected in the individual workload scheme of the academic staff, which includes 4 areas of activities:

1. Educational-pedagogical activities
2. Scientific-research activities carried out for purposes on behalf of BTU
3. Participation in BTU projects and activities for the fulfillment of BTU's goals/Participation in BTU student support/advocacy activities
4. Contribution to the promotion of the quality of education and development of BTU as an institution and the activities to be carried out in these areas.

The total (sum) volume of the annual workload in the case of full-time work is max 1792 h/min 900 h. The workload for part-time staff is determined under the legal act issued by the rector and reflected in the individual workload scheme (in case of partial workload, the scheme is drafted in proportion to the workload of the person). In case of full time, the scientific-research activity on average is as follows: Professor - 8 hours, Associate Professor - 7 hours, Assistant-Professor - 5 hours per week.

Workload for supervising the students' papers: in the case of undergraduate/graduate thesis, the hourly workload of each student/supervisor, as well as other work to be performed will be taken into account; Based on the lecture, research and other workload of the doctoral student's supervisor, it is determined how many doctoral students can be supervised by one person. As a general rule, a person may provide scientific guidance to no more than 3 doctoral students. If the person is conducting scientific guidance

for the first time, they are allowed to guide no more than 1 doctoral student. A supervisor with significant accomplishments (e.g., high leadership effectiveness and quality) already in leadership positions under the decision of the Dissertation Board, may have more doctoral students. All cases are considered individually. The decision is made by the Dissertation Board, taking into account the opinion of the supervisor and based on their workload. The workload of the thesis involves working directly with the student as well as in-person counseling according to the student's needs (at least 1 hour per week).

Affiliated academic staff with binding affiliated agreement are BTU scientific staff (researchers) who may request adjustment of the annual individual workload scheme – reduction of one component and increase of volume of other component(s) and the so-called “Academic leave” for a period of one semester, for the purpose of conducting research.

The target indicators planned to be achieved for 2021 and 2025 are as follows:

criteria	2021		2025
	was planned	achieved	was planned
Provision of staff with appropriate qualifications for the programs	100%	100%	100%
Students: Programme executors	20 : 1	13 : 1	15 : 1
Academic staff (share in the total number of executors)	50%	73%	70%

As it was already mentioned above in standard component 4.1, the academic staff affiliation principles and procedures have been defined in BTU’s Rule of Affiliation and also in the agreement signed between the institution and personnel. According to the SER 25,4% of the academic staff is affiliated (30 out of 118).

The expert panel learned, through the SER and interviews with the administrative personnel, that the institution plans to improve its staff-related benchmarks. It is also planned to increase the number of academic staff because it is planned to increase the numbers of educational programmes and students. It should be noted that, according to the QMS base, the maximum workload of staff at other HEIs is 46 hours, and the minimum is 2 hours. The maximum workload of staff at BTU is 36 hours, and the minimum is 9 hours. These numbers and the list of personnel differ from the list of personnel and the information on the workload of staff that was presented by BTU upon request of the expert panel during the site visit. According to the information on the workload of staff that was presented by BTU, the maximum workload of staff at other HEIs is 90 hours (in a semester), and the minimum is 2 hours (in a semester).

According to the list of staff that was presented by BTU, out of 118 academic personnel 59 (50% of academic staff) do not have a doctoral degree (57 persons have a master’s degree and hold associate and assistant professor academic positions on a professional basis, and 2 persons hold a bachelor’s degree and hold associate professor academic positions on a professional basis).

To ensure programme sustainability and to implement the best international practice while planning the number of academic staff, the institution should increase the share of academic staff holding doctorate degrees that are in compliance with the specifics of the educational programmes.

The institution should update the list of personnel and the information on the workload of staff in the QMS base, on a regular basis.

Evidences/indicators

- Staff planning methodology
- Methodology for defining the number of academic, scientific and invited staff by programmes
- Affiliation and workload regulations for academic staff
- Webpage
- Internal regulations
- Benchmarks set by the HEI
- Individual workload, workload performance and evaluation forms
- Workload of staff in other institutions as provided by BTU
- Workload of staff in other institutions from the QMS base
- Number of students from the EMIS base
- Samples of individual workload, workload performance and evaluation forms
- Samples of job contracts
- Survey results
- Interview results
- SER

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional documents requested by expert panel during the visit (CV-s of invited and foreign staff; list of academic, invited and foreign staff; sample of last call for hiring academic personnel; filled sample of self-evaluation reports of academic personnel; filled sample of evaluation by manager of personnel; filled sample of evaluation of research activity of personal; filled sample of individual workload of personnel in a semester; filled sample of calculation of individual personal rating; sample of analyses of individual workload of personnel; information about the workload of personnel at other Institutions of Higher Education; sample of self-evaluation report of structural unit; report on the analysis of the benchmarks of academic staff; samples of monitoring reports; charter of competition/open call for academic positions; sample of binding affiliation contract; sample of non-binding affiliation contract; documents of rewards for personnel).
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>R.4.2.1. Increase the share of academic staff holding a doctorate degree, in line with the specifics of the educational programmes.</p> <p>R.4.2.2. Regularly update the list of personnel and the information on the workload of staff in the QMS base.</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>

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

- 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.
- HEI ensures the protection of student rights and lawful interests.

<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>BTU 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. The regulations are transparent and in line with the current legislation. The regulations for acquisition, suspension, termination of the student status, as well as mobility, recognition of education, qualification granting are developed and approved separately, according to the level of studies (undergraduate, master's and doctorate). The regulations for all levels of studies are very detailed and easily understandable by students/prospective students and/or other stakeholders.</p> <p>The regulations are public, uploaded on the webpage of the institution. Together with providing regulations publicly, BTU ensures communication of the content of the regulations to students in several ways, including: emails sent to the student's BTU email address, sending information through BTUClassRooms, as well as communication with students during orientation days - online or on campus (to be discussed in detail later in the report). Even though the students demonstrate knowledge of the regulations and procedures at the university, and the webpage of the university is informative, the university should consider making a separate section in the main menu of the webpage, dedicated to students, where all the regulations that are of interest of students would be uploaded in a short and informative way. This would ease communication with students in the future and would provide information in an easier and faster way to interested parties as well.</p> <p>The study programmes of BTU are also uploaded on the webpage and transparency is ensured. The programmes contain information on the rules for gaining the right to study on each study programme. As for the syllabus of the programme components, they are uploaded to BTUClassRooms before the</p>
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start of the semester. Students can communicate with the university to get information easily – they can write messages through their BTUClassRoom user, the message is registered through the chancellery and is answered within 5 days. Students have the opportunity to express their ideas and concerns anonymously or openly, through the “electronic trust box”.

The rights of students, in case of substantial change or cancellation of the programme they are attending, are protected by the existing regulations and the continuity of education is ensured:

1. Students will be informed in advance and be given the opportunity to continue their studies in the current programme before the end of the academic year
2. Students will be able to continue studies on the programme (in case of modification)
3. Students will be provided with the opportunity to study with the individual learning plan, or benefit from the internal mobility opportunity at BTU (same or similar educational programme – if any).

The duties and responsibilities of students and those of BTU are defined by the individual contract between a student and the university, which govern the relationship between BTU and the student. The contract is valid for the length of the studies of the student.

As mentioned, BTU students are provided with the necessary information during the orientation days, as part of the adaptation program. Freshmen students and students enrolled through the mobility from other higher education institutions benefit from the meetings with the university administration, where the necessary information about the university, their duties and responsibilities, rights, information regarding study process, etc. are provided to them.

BTU has developed a student appeal procedure. Students have the right to appeal if they are not content with the assessment of their work. Appeals should be argumentative, otherwise, the appeal will not be discussed. The results of the appeal process are known to the students 5 days after the appeal. The obligations of students, in regard to the discipline at BTU (on campus or online, at the exam) and academic integrity are also detailed and public, communicated to the students, thus fostering protection of their rights and lawful interests.

As for the student involvement in the university governance and in decision-making, BTU does not have a student self-governing body. Even though the law of Georgia on higher education defines the existence of a student self-governing body in the structure of the university, it is not obligatory for the private HEIs, and BTU, within the scope of its academic autonomy, decided that the student self-governance would not be effective. The decision of the university was discussed during interviews with students as well. The students that the expert panel met are satisfied with the current approach at the university as, even though BTU does not have a student self-governance, the participation of students in the decision-making process in the university is ensured.

Students have their representatives in the faculty council and one representative (PhD student) in the academic council. Students have also the right to be and are represented in other committees of the university - antidiscrimination, disciplinary and social assistance committees. During the site visit, interviews with students (BA,MA and PhD), student representatives of the faculty board, as well as the committees were held. These students were content with the present possibilities of participation in the university decision-making process and as a final note, their participation in the committees and boards is also evident.

According to the abovementioned, BTU ensures student representation in the decision-making process. During the site visit, the example of the minutes of the antidiscrimination committee and of the disciplinary committee were provided by the institution. The committees work by the defined scope, and the interests of students, in case of unlawful or discriminatory behavior, are protected.

Evidences/indicators

- Undergraduate regulations, available at the BTU webpage
- Master’s regulations, available at the BTU webpage
- Doctoral regulations, available at the BTU webpage
- The minutes of the antidiscrimination and disciplinary committees
- Samples of contracts between a student and the university
- Appeal procedure
- Interview results
- SER

Recommendations:

N/A

Suggestions:

S.5.1.1. Develop a separate section on the webpage for the regulations that are of interest of students.

Best Practices (if applicable):

N/A

Evaluation

- Complies with requirements**
- Substantially complies with requirements
- Partially complies with requirements
- Does not comply with requirements

5.2 Student Support Services

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

BTU has well-developed student services at place, which include academic and administrative counseling, career support service, extracurricular activities and mechanisms to financially support or incentivize students (low SES and students with high academic achievements/winners in the different competitions) and opportunities to participate in the international exchange programs. The results of the student support services are evident, both from the documentation and from the interviews with students, who are satisfied with the support provided by the university.

BTU has a student counseling service to support the academic performance of students. Students receive counseling and advice in order to plan the educational process and improve their academic performance. As described in the standard component 5.1. students, at the beginning of the semester, receive information about the regulations and the study process characteristics of BTU. Students continue to receive consultation throughout their studies, through different communication channels. Students also have an opportunity to receive information from academic curators, who provide them with information regarding their study programs, curriculum, study courses, credits, etc. Other than the academic curators, who are part of the Learning Process Management staff, students receive administrative and information support from other structural units. Apart from the administrative support, students are provided with academic support - by the dean of the faculty, the Quality Assurance Service, the programme manager and the executors, who advise students on the specifics of the programme and on programme components. Students also receive individual consultation from the lecturers and, in the case of the doctoral or master students, they receive consultation from their supervisors when working on the research component.

BTU supports students by providing the opportunity to study with an individual learning plan. Students can study with an individual learning plan if they had objective reasons for not being able to start their studies in the defined timeframe. The student, if they had objective reasons (e.g. illness, pregnancy, work obligations, etc.), was not able to be start their studies timely, and wishes to start the semester later, can address the dean and ask for an individual learning plan. The individual learning plan option is used when it is possible for a student to achieve the learning outcomes of the courses within the given period of time.

BTU has well developed career support services for students and the results of the activities and projects carried out is evident. The BTU career development center communicates with employees and supports university students to advance their career. The number of employers collaborating with BTU has increased substantially since the academic year 2017-2018. BTU students can share their portfolio from BTUClassRooms to a potential employer. Students' e-portfolios are managed by the BTU career development center. BTU also has been implementing the project "Employ Smart Student" since 2017-2018. The project "Digital Citizen", initially launched for BTU students, was later opened to everyone interested.

The Career Support Service sends vacancies to students, finds and assists students in finding internships and jobs, has created and maintains a database of CVs and employers, and informs graduates about

career development opportunities. Graduates are provided with the opportunity to study courses that they are interested in at BTU free of charge. Thus, BTU is supporting continuing education and skills development among its graduates. The career development center also has a close collaboration relationship with employers, who are actively involved with advising on programme development. The employers present at the interviews have named several learning courses that have been developed with their advice and involvement.

Together with the Career Development Center, several units at BTU contribute to the student career and extracurricular services, namely, the BTU Entrepreneurship Center, Development Service and Research Center. Several examples of different projects and activities can be named. For instance, the Entrepreneurship Center plans and implements different projects, seminars and workshops for students, that help them develop their entrepreneurial mindset; this is closely linked to the mission of the university and to the profile of the programs. Some projects to be named are: Startup Demo Day, Regional Workshop in Entrepreneurship, big idea challenge, etc.

As for the Development Center, it also implements projects, master classes and seminars, e.g. 5.0 Presentation of studies; Fintech Hackathon "entrepreneurship and FinTech – Integrator; Women in technology, etc. With the support of the Development Center, a cyber security training laboratory has been set up at BTU.

As for the support of the students' research activities and development of the student research skills, these are the responsibility of the Research Center. PhD students are provided with adequate support and advice to be assisted in their research activities. Other students, like MA program students are also supported in their research activities, and each interested student can apply to participate in the research projects. Information on the research project possibilities and funding is public and uploaded on the BTU webpage. BTU holds student scientific conferences – 3 conferences were held already, where students presented their papers.

As mentioned, BTU students have the opportunity to participate in the exchange programs and they are also provided with the opportunity to have international experience in the form of summer schools or international projects. The BTU International Relations Service is responsible for the international study opportunities available to students, including double-degree programs.

BTU has a regulation for providing social support for students (low SES). Students, based on their needs, can be provided with: one-time material support (can be monetary); the opportunity to pay the tuition fee in several installments; social stipend (students are eligible to get the social stipend within one semester); that is decided upon taking into consideration the individual needs of the students. The committee for social assistance discusses the support for the students and makes the decision. The social and material support can be provided by BTU to the following groups of students: the first group comprises invalids, those from a socially vulnerable family of 3 or more members, sole providers for children in a family, and other groups that are defined in the relevant regulation. The regulations are uploaded on the BTU webpage; thus, information is available and transparent.

During the site visit, additional information on the results of the student financial support was provided. During the academic year 2021/2022, a total of 1222 students were using the opportunity of paying tuition fee in several installments. Students also have financial benefits based on their academic merits. There have been 320 students that have received stipends based on their merits; the total sum was 192 000 GEL. Also, students receive different stipends, vouchers and different course/programme fundings for their studies, based on the competition in student start-ups days, hackathons and other events. Students have also received funding for internet connection during the pandemic.

Evidences/indicators

- BTU social assistance rule
- Regulation on individual learning plan
- Information on the financial support of students
- Functions of the structural units
- Results of the student support activities (including career support)
- Projects implemented by the university
- University webpage
- Interview results
- SER

Recommendations:

N/A

Suggestions:

N/A

Best Practices (if applicable):

N/A

Evaluation

- 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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The mission statement of BTU mentions “creating modern knowledge” and “exchanging research findings, ideas and innovations” as parts of the mission. The BTU Research Strategy is an integral part of the BTU Development Strategy. The main areas of research defined in the BTU research strategy for the next 7 years (2019-2025) are:

- Development Economics policy - both globally and in the context of Georgia
- Emerging Markets
- Knowledge Economy Policy - Planning and Implementation
- Digital Economy and Innovative Ecosystem

The medium-term perspectives of BTU research are:

- Digital Transformation - development and prospects
- The role of digital economy for Georgia - digital economy multiplier
- Virtual values boom and Georgia
- Big Data age and Georgia: perspectives on Use digital Economy and creative destruction

In accordance with the challenges facing Georgia in the field of business and technology, the University has identified two main priority research areas, namely Digital economics; and Digital governance and artificial intelligence.

A number of research activities currently underway are reported in the SER and on BTU’s webpage. Some of these do not clearly constitute research projects involving a number of researchers, possibly from different institutions, but rather small-scale research studies. No externally funded research project is currently underway, even though some proposals have been submitted to both national and international (EU) calls.

In conclusion, the University understands the need for conducting research activities relevant to its mission and for doing so in collaboration with international partners; it has laid the foundations and plans for doing so in the future; and is investing considerable effort in implementing such plans. However, the outcome of these efforts in terms of concrete research output of high quality and impact is still to become fully visible.

Even though the organization of student conferences is one way of integrating research into teaching activities, and some students have participated in small-scale research studies, a methodology and good practices for the systematic integration of research output into the teaching process is not in place.

At present, BTU offers only one doctoral level programme, completion of which leads to the award of the Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration degree. Three doctoral degrees have been awarded. The duties and responsibilities of the PhD student supervisors are clearly defined, as are the rights, duties, and responsibilities of the PhD students. The doctoral students that the expert panel met during the site visit reported a positive supervision and overall PhD study experience. The current number of

PhD students (3) along with the number and workload of staff supervising PhDs allow for effective supervision, a prerequisite for high quality research work and dissertations. The rules for assessing and defending PhD dissertations are also clearly stated, they are transparent and fair, and by following them the quality of dissertations can be ensured.

Evidences/indicators

- BTU mission statement
- BTU development strategy
- Current research activities
- Workload scheme of staff
- BTU Doctoral Regulations
- SER
- Interview results

Recommendations:

R.6.1.1. Develop and share with the academic staff a methodology and good practices for integrating research results into their teaching.

Suggestions:

N/A

Best Practices (if applicable):

N/A

Evaluation

- 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

Research in BTU is promoted and supported by the Research Center and the Entrepreneurship Center. The Research Center, among others:

- Promotes and supports the involvement of BTU staff and students in scientific research and projects
- Provides support for scientific research activities and training of young scientific staff
- Advises and assists BTU staff and students on
 - Finding sources of funding for scientific research activities, establishing contacts with Georgian and international organizations, public and private structures
 - Grant application and budget preparation and pre-screening, negotiations with donors / partner organizations and establishing business written communication, donors / partner organizations / etc.
 - Preparation of reports, preliminary audits and proper submission
- Studies existing needs and problems, identifies solutions and communicates with the BTU Rector
- Prepares conclusions / recommendations in scientific seminars / conferences organized by partner institutions or other legal entities / individuals, etc.

All members of the affiliated academic staff with mandated research duties are automatically members of the Research Center.

The Entrepreneurship Center was established in 2019 in collaboration with the Henley Entrepreneurship Center. One of the goals of the Center is to conduct research in the field of entrepreneurship, which describes the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Georgia, access to entrepreneurs' finances and identifies the issues that still remain challenging in the country during the ecosystem formation process. The general research objectives of the center include:

- To determine at different stages of startup development which different sources (investors, banks, micro and macro financial organizations, foundations, etc.) are used by entrepreneurs to obtain financial support and under what conditions, internationally
- To establish ways to obtain funding, including defining conditions for access to traditional and alternative financial sources
- To determine what challenges the entrepreneur on the territory of Georgia faces in the context of access to finance and what steps can be taken by private and state structures to support the entrepreneurial ecosystem

<p>The development office and the international relations office support the work of the Research Center and of the Entrepreneurship Center.</p> <p>BTU places emphasis in the role of internationalization for promoting research. It envisages research being carried out in the framework of partnerships with the local and international corporate sector, with a view to transforming, developing and introducing digital economics in Georgia. During the reporting period, BTU has signed agreements for scientific cooperation with several institutions abroad. In the SER, 28 such agreements are reported (some names are misspelled or cannot be mapped to institutions), with institutions in Portugal, Lithuania, Ukraine, France, Germany, Turkey, Ireland, Poland, Spain, Estonia, Italy, Serbia, Romania, Slovenia, Austria, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, the United Arab Emirates. However, most of these agreements are either within the context of Erasmus+ mobility programs or generic MoUs outlining the principles of the collaboration, but without defining specific resources of the contracting parties to be allocated to implementing the agreement. Notwithstanding the fact that such agreements may form the basis upon which firm, long-standing, strategic research relationships with highly esteemed international partners may be established, at this time few of these agreements have led to the definition and undertaking of joint research activities (i.e., joint research projects, joint publications, etc.) beyond the organization of conferences and seminars.</p> <p>Approximately 5-6% of the budget is allocated to research; this is below the expected allocation for a university of this size engaged in research. However, as the actual expenditure fell short of the budgeted amount in both 2019/20 and 2020/2021, the need to foster and promote the engagement of staff with research is apparent. The establishment of the "science prize" contributes to this end.</p> <p>Even though the University is continuously seeking and employing new staff, it does so to ensure its quantitative needs in teaching. A specific strategy for attracting new staff and involving them into research activities is not in place.</p>
<p>Evidences/indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BTU structure • BTU budget • MoUs and agreements with international institutions • Current research activities • SER • Interview results
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>R.6.2.1. Leverage existing MoUs to establish strategic, long-standing research relationships with foreign institutions and exploit these towards defining concrete joint research activities to strengthen the research output of the University.</p> <p>R.6.2.2. Develop and apply a strategy for attracting new staff and involving them into research activities to strengthen the institution's research capacity.</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>S.6.2.1. Consider measures to attract affiliated staff with non-mandatory research duties to engage with research activity, including via allowing them to benefit from the services provided by the Research Center, the Entrepreneurship Center, and the related administrative services.</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements
<p>6.3. Evaluation of Research Activities</p>
<p>HEI has a system for evaluating and analysing the quality of research/creative-arts activities, and the productivity of scientific-research units and academic/scientific staff.</p>
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>BTU evaluates its research activities by applying a methodology based on a number of indicators, such as the number of participants in a project; the number of papers/projects/events; the outcomes of papers/projects; the scope of activities; the adequacy of research funding; the volume of internal and external financing; the adequacy of administrative, information-organizational support. Both</p>

<p>administrative structural units and academic management are involved in the evaluation process, in various roles.</p> <p>The research productivity of the affiliated academic staff with mandatory research duties is also evaluated using a methodology based on minimum requirements and on assigning points to a variety of research activities.</p> <p>The list of implemented research activities is made publicly available on BTU's webpage. However, in light of the quantitative nature of the criteria used for evaluating research activities at BTU, a comprehensive, regular qualitative assessment of the research outcome and of its impact needs to be put in place; this will also allow the further development of research activities.</p>
<p>Evidences/indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodology for evaluating the effectiveness of scientific, research, practical and other activities • Implemented research activities • SER • Interview results
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>S.6.3.1. Enhance the existing mechanism for evaluating research activities to qualitatively assess the research outcome and its impact.</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> 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.

<p>7.1 Material Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The institution possesses or owns material resources (fixed and current assets) that are used for achieving goals stated in the mission statement, adequately responds to the requirements of educational programmes and research activities and corresponds to the existing number of students and planned enrolment. ○ HEI offers environment necessary for implementing educational activities: sanitary units, natural light possibilities, and central heating system. ○ Health and safety of students and staff is protected within the institution. ○ HEI has adapted environment for people with special needs
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>The university has a building on lease with an agreement since its foundation. According to the documentation in total 9881 square meters are under BTU, out of which 4228 is for study purposes. During the site visit, the expert panel checked all the facilities in place. Since 2016 the university made reconstructions several times, and year-by-year renovated classrooms were added. In total, currently, there are 16 classrooms for 47-50 students each; PC Labs – 14 for max. 27 students and 5 small classes for language teaching – max 25 students in each. All rooms are equipped with projector and computer (there was only one room on the 4th floor (406) without a computer and projector; as stated by the institution it has just been renovated and a computer will be available as from September). The PC labs are equipped with modern personal computers. By the calculations that the university presented, the physical space (classrooms) is enough for 5750 students.</p> <p>The university building itself is not a newly built one; for this reason, the institution had an expert study conducted, according to which the building does not have any major constructional problem and can be used for study purposes. The only recommendation is to consider the current regulations with regard to seismic resistance of the buildings when making internal reconstructions. In each floor of the building</p>

there are sanitary units both for males and females, including one for people with special needs. The sanitary unities have artificial and natural light and water.

The institution takes care of the safety issues by having staff hired for security reasons. Also, all floors of the building and surroundings are equipped with video cameras that monitor the whole perimetry and save the recordings for a maximum of one month. The evacuation plan is accessible on each floor of the building, except for the newly renovated second floor that is currently used by administrative staff. The expert team recommends that the evacuation plan is made accessible in this floor as well. All floors of the building are equipped with fire prevention tools, but the expert panel noted that in some cases these were outdated; more specifically, two of them were valid until the end of June, 2022. It is recommended that the institution monitors this equipment and acts accordingly. The building has an emergency exit, but the expert panel is concerned that using it might become problematic when needed. There are 5 floors that are connected with one stair (not very wide). In addition to this stair there is an emergency exist on the second floor, arranged in a way so that people from the 4th (and most probably from the 5th floor) as well as from the 2nd floor can use it, but first they need to take the stairs, come out on the second floor and open the emergency door, which itself leads to a classroom owned by the neighboring primary school. One needs to go through additional doors that lead to the second floor of the school, and to take stairs down to exit of the building. Although the university presented an agreement with the primary school that confirms that the school gives permission to the university to use this emergency exit, the expert panel recommends that the emergency exit is rearranged in a way that will ensure guarantee its effectiveness in case of emergency. As the corridors are longer than usual and in two cases there are doors within them, it is suggested that exit signs are added in each floor, in addition to the ones that are already on place.

The university has a central heating system, as well as electricity supply. The expert panel noted that there were only few rooms equipped with an air conditioning system (the absolute majority for the top management of the university). Neither the classrooms nor the administrative staff offices (Learning Management Unit; Chancellery; Students Information Center; Library reading hall on the second and fourth floor) are equipped with such systems. According to the standards, it is not mandatory for the institution to have air conditioning systems everywhere, but due to the high temperatures from late Spring to Early Autumn in Georgia, and in accordance with the local legislation related to the safety of the employees, it is recommended that the institution starts equipping the administrative staff offices with air conditioning systems and later moves on with the same for the classrooms.

On the first floor of the building there is a room for medical assistance. The university employs a person with medical education that assists in case of emergency and also provides first aid to both students and staff. There is hot and cold water in the room, as well as all required equipment, including medicines.

The building is adapted to the needs of people with special needs. The institution currently has 3 students with walking disabilities, and they are freely navigating within the floors, attending the classes face to face. There is a parking space for people with special needs.

The university currently has an agreement with Webster University Georgia, giving the right to use the 5th floor of the building (which is not counted in the BTU available study space above). According to this agreement, BTU takes the responsibility to only share the first aid assistance with Webster University Georgia.

As the students' assessment of the technical infrastructure indicates, also during the interviews with students' alumni it was mentioned that more spaces outside of the building would be nice to have, to sit and relax. Currently there is none such, except for the place near the stadium. The expert panel recommends that few chairs be added outside the building, so that students can have a chance to sit during the breaks.

In the interviews it was mentioned that the whole building is under the commitment of mortgage loan in TBC Bank currently. However, so far the loan has not been used.

Evidences/indicators

- Documentation from the public registry of Georgia
- Internal measurement drawings of the buildings
- Engineering report on the technical condition of the building
- Agreement with Webster University Georgia
- SER
- Outcomes of Students' Assessment of Infrastructure
- Interviews
- Site visit of the facilities
- BTU webpage

Recommendations:

- R.7.1.1. Place the evacuation plan in all floors of the building.
- R.7.1.2. Fire safety tools must be monitored against the date of validity and changed accordingly.
- R.7.1.3. Re-arrange the emergency exit in a way to avoid passing through several buildings/classrooms, so as to ensure that in case of emergency people can easily leave the building.
- R.7.1.4. Add few facilities outside the building, so that students are able to enjoy breaks outdoors.

Suggestions:

- S.7.1.1. Equip the offices of administrative staff with air conditioning system to guarantee the safety and effective working of the employees. Same for the classrooms, to avoid health and safety problems related to high temperature.
- S.7.1.2. Exit signs should be added in each floor, at places that make them visible from everywhere.

Best Practices (if applicable):

N/A

Evaluation

- 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 library is open 6 days a week, from 9 am to 8 p; this makes 66 hours in a week. There are three main spaces for library reading halls and four PC Labs that students use for accessing the computers. Two printers are also accessible for students in the library. In total the library reading hall can host 80-100 students at the same time. There is a book repository on the reading hall. The books are classified according to international library standards and are shelved accordingly. The institution has an electronic catalog, that is accessible to all stakeholders of the library, and the rules and regulations about the usage of printed resources and reading halls are also freely accessible. It is worth mentioning that the library head staff is a field specialist, having major studies in the field of Library and Information Science. The expert panel randomly checked several textbooks from the course syllabus that were specified as mandatory reading materials and it turned out that they were accessible in the library. In total the library currently owns 2510 printed items; according to the SER 80% are textbooks and the rest fiction and dictionaries. As the submitted documentation states, this also includes the MA theses that have been defended in the institution. The expert panel is concerned that the number of the printed resources is not sufficient for a university with 5000 students, especially when an increase of the student body is being planned. Currently there are 3610 active students, which means on average there is 0.55 textbooks for each one of them. Consequently, even if no concrete rule on the number of books relevant to the number of students exist, it is recommended that the library increases the number of the printed resources.

The library offers access to academic databases that more or less cover the study fields taught at the university. According to the SER the usage statistics of the databases is not that high, but still counts 10 000 entries in recent years, which is on average 2-3 entries per student. As mentioned on the institution's webpage, remote access to the academic databases is not possible. The expert panel tried to identify the reasons for this during the interviews and learned that there are two databases that students can have access to remotely (EBSCO, Scopus) but the rest is accessible only from campus. In addition to this, the library staff stated that the students have to send a request to them to get the full text of the article and they do so via emails. All these details are not given in the webpage of the institution, thus it is unclear how users can access the databases or how they can get the needed information resources. The expert panel recommends that additional information regarding the specifications of the usage of academic databases should be added on the webpage. Additionally, the institution should provide remote access to all academic databases that they are offering access to, considering that the majority of the students (89%) are working while studying and unlimited access to library resources should be ensured.

The expert panel asked both the library staff and students whether there are support services available. According to the library staff they are conducting trainings for both students and academic staff on different topics related to the library. On their side, the majority of the students stated that they are

<p>satisfied with the library services and very often they are approaching the library staff (mostly online) to get support.</p> <p>The library is a member of the International Association of University Libraries and states that it has collaboration with several universities, mostly from the EU and also from Ukraine. The expert panel was interested to learn what this collaboration brings, either to the library or to the university itself. As it was stated, when signing an agreement or a memorandum with the international partner, the Office of International Relations includes a clause on collaboration in sharing library resources, but to the expert panel's understanding this is rather a formality. So far, none of the library staff have benefited from the international mobilities; it is therefore suggested that the collaboration is enhanced in this regard.</p>
<p>Evidences/indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The inventory of journals of the Library • The agreements with the provider of the academic databases • The usage statistics of the academic databases • The agreements with the Partner Universities • BTU webpage • Interviews • Site visit
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>R.7.2.1. Purchase printed textbooks in order to increase the number of the printed resources in the repository, to ensure that students have access to sufficient printed resources.</p> <p>R.7.2.2. Provide remote access to academic databases, so that students can access the full text of those resources from outside the campus.</p> <p>R.7.2.3. The library must provide all the required information regarding the rules related to the use of journals and databases on the webpage.</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>S.7.2.1. Library staff members should be actively involved in the international mobility projects for job shadowing reasons.</p> <p>S.7.2.2. Air conditioning should be installed in all reading halls of the library, to make those spaces more attractive for students.</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>
<p>7.3 Information Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ HEI has created infrastructure for information technologies and its administration and accessibility are ensured ○ Electronic services and electronic management systems are implemented and mechanisms for their constant improvement are in place ○ HEI ensures business continuity ○ HEI has a functional webpage in Georgian and English languages.
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>The university does not use any learning management system as a mandatory tool. As it was stated during the interviews some of the academic staff are using Google Classroom but this is optional, the rest prefer to send the learning materials via BTU Classroom (study information system) and receive the assignments via email. The expert panel tried to identify if the IT department was involved in this process, and as it turned out these tasks are not under the IT team's responsibility; the Learning Management Unit is managing those issues. It is recommended that the university develops a support service for faculty members not in general usage of the LMS but more advanced one, so that it becomes implemented at the university system level.</p> <p>Electronic Services Development & Strategy: BTU was unable to present a formalized IT development Strategy. A BCP (Business Continuity Plan) is present, but the whole IT team is unaware of its existence and requirements. An IRP (Incident Response Plan) document is also missing as part of BCP. Formal Information Security Policy and Cyber Security Procedures are also missing.</p>

Infrastructure: Internal Network: Wired LAN complies to standard CAT6/CAT6A, which is quite acceptable for existing 1/10G Demands. Wireless Network is based on RUKUS WIFI Infrastructure and ZoneDirector WLAN Controller, which is compliant to virtually any security & availability requirement. Server room is equipped with 2 separate physical Servers – Production & Backup. PC landscape consists of 432 Student PCs (16 classrooms, 27 endpoints in each room). All of the Electronic Services accessible to students like BTU Class are hosted in AWS. On-prem Infrastructure only hosts Infrastructure & System Services.

Security & Stability of Electronic Services: All of the BTU Services hosted in Amazon AWS EC2 Cloud are protected by Cloudflare Cloud WAF Service & Fortinet FortiGate NGFW as a perimeter Firewall. User Endpoints use Windows Defender. Servers do not employ any type of Antivirus Software; Data Backup is done on a daily basis. Application and System Vulnerability Management policy & procedures and even informal practices are not implemented.

Internet Connectivity: BTU adopts broadband internet connection of 150Mbps (current speed), which can be upgraded up to 1 Gbs per request to ISP, which is a quite substantial bandwidth to serve 500-1000 internet subscribers/endpoints simultaneously.

Web Site: BTU is operating a website both in Georgian & English languages. Information is provided completely in both languages (both versions are as symmetrical as can be observed).

Evidences/indicators

- Interview results
- Site Visit results
- Internet Speed-Test Tools
- Web-Site Survey
- BTU Documentation, folder 08, Business Continuity Plan
- BTU Documentation, folder 54, IT Management Structure

Recommendations:

- R.7.3.1. Develop and implement Security Policy & Procedures.
- R.7.3.2. Implement Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and make staff aware of it.
- R.7.3.3. Develop and implement IRP (Incident Response Plan) as part of BCP.

Suggestions:

- S.7.3.1. Develop & implement IT Development Strategy.
- S.7.3.2. Implement Vulnerability Management Practices.
- S.7.3.3. Implement Penetration Testing for Critical IT Apps & Services.
- S.7.3.4. Ensure that antivirus S/W is installed where appropriate.

Best Practices (if applicable):

N/A

Evaluation

- Fully complies with requirements
- Substantially complies with requirements**
- Partially complies with requirements
- Does not comply with requirements

7.4 Financial Resources

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Economic Feasibility (achievability): BTU has demonstrated track record of systematically achieving its financial targets since the year 2017/2018. Allocation of financial (cash & asset) resources seems achievable, practical and within expectations.

Robust financial standing: The financial standing of BTU definitely ensures it is capable of providing acceptable financial performance of activities described in its plans. Still we see one factor as a major risk to financial stability – since the pandemic there is a considerable number of students (about 1000) who declined paying tuition fees to BTU. Thus, we evidence considerable cash drain through the financial

year 2020/21 (Cash was equal to 910,322 GEL at the start of the year and was drained to 506,151 GEL at the end of the year). Still, the assets had been almost doubled within the organization and this caused an overall improved balance for BTU within the very same year, resulting in quite strong financial standing. Nevertheless, as we say in business – “cash is the king of business”. Cash should be planned and monitored in a way more precise manner than today.

Allocation for Core Activities: We see proper financial allocation for Core BTU activities. There is a point when we see planned asymmetric growth of salaries, which favors more administrative staff (10% more growth) than academic staff members.

Budget allocation of Scientific and Library Activities: We definitely saw allocated financial resources for both activities starting from the year 2017/18.

Effective Accountability & Control: BTU has demonstrated quite a good degree of financial accounting & control. Full scale undisrupted financial statements have been provided since the first year of founding (2017-2022); these, according to BTU have been prepared following the IFRS for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Evidences/indicators

- SER
- Current budget
- 5-year budget
- Interviews results
- Letter by the Head of Financial Office

Recommendations:

R.7.4.1. Implement monthly (quarterly) Cash Flow planning policy & procedure to ensure strong financial standing.

Suggestions:

S.7.4.1. Consider following international best practices to improve the transparency and readability of financial statements.

Best Practices (if applicable):

N/A

Evaluation

- Complies with requirements
- Substantially complies with requirements**
- Partially complies with requirements
- Does not comply with requirements