



განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

## Higher Education Institution Authorisation Experts' Final Report

**N(N)LE - Saint Tbel Abuserisdze  
Teaching University of Georgian Patriarchate**

### Expert Panel Members

**Chair:** Pandelis Ipsilantis, Emeritus Professor, TEI of Thessaly, Greece

**Members:**

Diana Mtchedlishvili, Ass. Professor, Director of QA, Caucasus University, Georgia

Ia Natsvlishvili, Associate Professor, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University,

Nino Amiranashvili, Senior Specialist QA Ilia State University, Georgia

Giga Khositashvili, Deputy Library Director, Ilia State University, Georgia

Salome Dzagnidze, Senior specialist QA, Student representative, Akaki Tsereteli State University

Tbilisi

2019

## **Authorisation Report Resume**

### **General information on the educational institution**

N(N)LE Saint Tbel Abuserisdze Teaching University of Georgian Patriarchate (from now on -"Tbel Teaching University") was founded in 2008 by the Catholicos-Patriarch of all Georgia, Ilia II. Skhalta Arch-bishop Spiridon has been the Rector of the University since its establishment. The University is located in the mountainous South Adjara region of Georgia, Shuakhevi municipality, village Khichauri, and is the only University operating in the mountainous area of Adjara. Its geographic location forms the characteristics and attractiveness of the university. Because of historical and political reasons, the demographics of the population have changed over time, and along with the remoteness of the region did not permit it to follow an economic and social development path, matching other areas of the country. The establishment of the University facilitates the population of the area in having access to qualified higher education. To achieve this goal, Tbel Teaching University provides all students with free (non-fee) education and a free three-meal plan. The university also is oriented on the promotion of Georgian Diasporas outside Georgia to obtain higher education in Georgia and along with the above benefits provides free accommodation and a monthly stipend for personal expenses to foreign students.

Tbel Teaching University currently comprises of 4 faculties: Humanitarian science and education, Agrarian sciences and Business Administration, Law and Public Administration, Social sciences and Health care, offering 10 Bachelor's and 11 Master's programs. In addition, the University offers a short teachers' training 60-credit program and 5 (five) authorized vocational modular programs. Most of the academic programs were accredited in 2012 with the old accreditation standards, while 4 of them that were introduced and received authorization in 2016, have not been accredited yet.

The student population in University level programs amounts to a total of 939 students the majority of whom are at Master's level (569), while 351 students study at Bachelor's level. 19 of those students are foreigner citizens of Georgian descent speaking, ethic Georgian population. The educational process is delivered by 69 academic lectures at different levels, among them: 23 scientists and 33 invited lecturers and supported by an administrative staff of 48 persons.

Research activity of the University's academic and scientific staff is mainly focused in the direction of Kartvelology. To enhance and extend its research profile, the University recently established the Girogi Mtatsmindeli Institute of Kartvelological Studies as part of its structure.

### **Brief overview of the evaluation process for authorization: SER and Site visit**

The Team of Experts visited the University three consecutive days from Wednesday, June 26<sup>th</sup> to Friday, June 28<sup>th</sup>. Before the visit, the experts' panel received a Self-Evaluation Report (SER), and supporting documents for all standards. Although, several minor discrepancies were noted in the SER, the panel would comment the University for providing in their report a critical view of the University's operations, identifying strengths and weaknesses in each area. Unfortunately, the University's WEB site was marginal useful in that it lacked significant information (i.e. detailed program descriptions), regulations or other information of interest to the academic community, etc.

During the visit, the panel had the chance to meet and interview the administration team (Academic council and Deans of Faculty), the QA team, representatives of the Faculty Councils, representatives of Program Heads, Affiliated and Invited Academic Staff, Scientific staff, Students (Georgians and "Foreigners"), Alumni and as social partners. All participants were very cooperative and willing to participate in discussion in an open and frankly way. Requests from the panel regarding the provision

of additional information were handled professionally and efficiently during the visit. The following documents were provided on-site in addition to those submitted initially.

1. *Contract on Delivery of Scientific-Technical Product N2019/15*
2. *The Memorandum of Cooperation with Caucasus International University*
3. *The Memorandum of Cooperation with Georgian Technical University*
4. *Report of Monitoring Group*
5. *Contract Template (Professor, Invited Lecturer, Assistant, Associate Professor, affiliated)*
6. *Student Questionnaire*
7. *Alumni/Graduate Questionnaire*
8. *Project Proposal Template for Research Projects*
9. *Timetable for Individual Consultation with Students*
10. *Examination and Appealing Rule*
11. *Statute of Kartvelian Research Institute*
12. *Order of Academic Council Formation*
13. *Report of Law Division (2018)*
14. *Enrollment Order of Mobility Students*
15. *Master Thesis Rule*
16. *Templates of Diplomas*
17. *Rule for Affiliation*
18. *Participation in the Open Calls*
19. *Enrollment Order For Bachelor Studies*
20. *Rector's Order for Diploma Delivery*
21. *Order on the Enrollment of Students*
22. *Students' Evaluation Template*
23. *Decision of Faculty Council on Qualification Granting*
24. *Registration Journal of the Contest to Hold Academic Position*
25. *Rector's Order on the Outcome of the Open Call*
26. *Order on the Creation of the Commission for Open Call*
27. *Order of the Contest*
28. *Minor Program (Faculty of Humanitarian Sciences and Education)*
29. *ECTS Comparison and Recognition*
30. *Programme Evaluation Form (Mathematics)*
31. *Treaty about the Electronic Management System*
32. *Treaty with the Library Integrative Information System*
33. *Workload of the Academic Staff, taking into account their workload at other HEIs*
34. *Master and Bachelor theses*

The experts' panel would like to express sincere thanks for the cooperation of all participants and their participation in fruitful discussions during the visit and especially the Head of the administrative services for ensuring the smooth operation and provision of all additional information that was requested during the visit.

The panel noticed, that many changes, in terms of regulations, organizational structure, infrastructure and It systems have been launched in time just before the authorization review. Indeed, authorization and accreditation events do give a boost to introducing changes and improvement, and that is absolutely acceptable and within the scope of those process. It is more important however that the momentum gained, because of the authorization event to be sustained and lead to building a quality enhancement culture at the University.

## **Overview of the HEI's compliance with standards**

The University fulfills its mission to establish itself as a powerful educational-research center acting as an agent of reforms in the mountainous region of South Adjara. It offers all of its programs on a free tuition basis and provides full subsidy of daily meals to all students enabling students who otherwise would not get university education. Stakeholders share the mission of the University and respect its values. Actions like the establishment of a University Advisory Board and Alumni Association can enhance the involvement of stakeholders in the future development of the University. For the first time, the University developed a comprehensive 7-year (2019-2016) strategic plan with involvement of internal and external stakeholders and a 3-year (2019-2021) Action Plan that specifies actions in various areas. It seems that the University intends to follow the plan but it is still too early to have a clear idea as to its effective implementation. Nonetheless, consideration should be given to strategy and actions related to promotion and marketing as well as contingency planning to address risks of expected decline in student admissions.

Tbel Teaching University comprises 4 faculties, a Research Institute of Kartvelian studies and Administrative units, which are recently established or modified. The Rector who has full managerial authority of the University appoints university management bodies (academic and administrative). Although no major operational deficiencies were observed, setting specific requirements along with clear selection processes for managerial positions will enhance transparency, trust and create a feeling of ownership among the academic community. Establishment of a Human Resources unit, which currently does not exist, will be instrumental in introducing systematic staff performance evaluation linked to individual staff development plans. Internationalization is currently limited since current conditions (e.g. low foreign languages skills, absence of courses in foreign language) are an obstacle to increasing internationalization. Recent cooperation agreements with a Romanian and a Russian University are at such an early stage that no concrete results have been achieved yet. QA mechanisms are in place, currently at an early stage of implementation but a development process is in place especially regarding study program development, and ensuring quality of the study process and services. More work is expected regarding the area of staff evaluation and development where evaluation systems are vague and lack of procedures for staff getting a direct feedback regarding their performance is noted. The University has developed codes of ethics and conduct for students and staff, and has defined procedures for responding to the violation of these regulations.

Regulations for planning, designing, implementation, evaluation and development of Bachelor's and Master's programs have been recently upgraded. The program development process provides engagement of social partners and justification of the program vis-à-vis the development of the field and market needs. In the process of periodical reviews, since the last accreditation (2012 for most of the programs), improvements to programs took place as a result of feedback from students, alumni and social partners. All programs are based on the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the principle of Learning Outcomes. An overhauling process to ensure that Program learning outcomes (LOs) are stated clearly and in alignment with market needs, program titles, structure and content is needed, as all programs are due for reaccreditation. For this process to be effective, Academic staff training on the methodology of LOs is necessary. Certain discrepancies of credit allocation for the same course in different programs should also be eliminated. The assessment system ensures equal and fair approaches, but a concern is raised about its focus in assessing students' achievement of course learning outcomes, as the results show that majority of students get maximum grades. A clear appellation process is in place. The process of retaking the Master's thesis should be adopted to comply with state regulations.

The academic programs are fully supported by affiliated academic staff (69 persons), scientific staff (23) and invited academics (33) with adequate (some of them very strong) academic and professional experience in their fields of expertise. The ratio of affiliated to invited staff is adequate to ensure continuity and permit influx of outside academic and professional experiences in the teaching/learning process. The reported "lecture to student ratio" seems excellent (0.11), but since workload of lecturers varies, it should be calculated on full-time equivalent staff. Most of the staff has research publications, although most of the published work is in Georgian as foreign language skills among most of the staff are low. Staff management policies are in place for staff development, affiliation terms and conditions, hiring of qualified staff. Rules for staff evaluation should be made more transparent, benchmarks should be defined and evaluation should be linked to individual development plans and incentives / rewards. The institution supports staff development, within budget constraints (currently 1.5% of total budget) and in many instances academic staff pursue development activities on their own funding. The University should pay more attention to academic staff development, and actions in that area should be intensified. One of the high priority areas for staff development is to strengthen skills in scientific writing in English and provide incentives for staff to publish in English and to work on

attracting research funds. Generally, in most cases, staff is appointed in decision-making bodies by the Rector. It is desirable to ensure electivity of staff in management boards of different types.

Regulations for student admission, suspension and termination of student status, mobility, qualification granting, and recognition of education are unified under the document "Study Process Regulatory Rules", which was just made public made public on the web page during the visit. Student support is provided through induction meetings to newly admitted students, by faculty administrators and the newly established Student Support and Career Development Office. Those two offices that are currently under formation must be staffed by selected administrators with appropriate skills so that they run independently of the academic process and be effective. It is also suggested that the role of the students' "Ombudsman" for protecting student rights and lawful interests to be allotted to either Student Support and Career Development Center or the university Legal Office. A clear process is in place for student appeals regarding results of their evaluation. Strong financial support is provided to all students in the form of free tuition, free meals, free dormitories for foreign students, and scholarships based on high academic achievement. Extra curricula activities include study trips and conferences. Outgoing mobility is limited to cooperation with Rostov University (Russia), for 15 students to attend Russian language courses at Rostov University.

The main research projects at the university are in the field of Kartvelian studies and Regional (cross-boundary) history where there is a strong research interest, justified by the vision and the mission of the University. Research projects, so far are funded by the University since no cooperation or support from other agents have obtained. Other research output includes individual research papers produced by scientific staff, presented or published in conference proceeding and Georgian publication, including the University publishing house in many cases without going through a formal peer review process. For the University to upgrade the quality of its research, it should consider setting certain requirements regarding the quality of the publications (i.e. indexed in Scopus, Thomson, Web of Science, Index Copernicus, Google Scholar and other prominent international scientific bases etc.) along with a research evaluation system based on quality of publications, citations, etc. and provide incentives for the staff who meets those requirements (i.e. increased support for their research in terms of work time, financial support, recognition, etc.). In order for the newly established Research Institute of Kartvelian Studies, to meet its goal the University should consider establishment of appropriate administrative support mechanism focused in internationalizing its research activities, while faculties should cooperate in developing interdisciplinary research projects. Master's Thesis work at the University is comparable to international standards, some of them are of publishable quality, and the panel wished to see some of that work to have been presented in conferences or even published, however at this point the University does not have the capacity to offer Ph.D. programs.

Facilities at the university owned buildings are equipped to serve to serve the teaching process for maximum of 3000 students. . Classrooms are in acceptable condition but still a big part of them needs to be equipped with computers and projectors. Some of the buildings are under renovation to bring them up to the standards (e.g. water system, central heating, safety improvements, adaptation to people with special needs, etc.). Dormitories need a common area and internet connection. Open areas should be taken care off to make the campus more attractive to students. Library facilities are adequate but use of electronic means as scientific database is very low and library staff needs more training to become efficient and guide students on how to use them, while remote electronic access must be provided. IT infrastructure is almost non-existing. An agreement has been signed with a provider and installation of university information system, study information system and learning management system is expected to take place by the end of the year. Wi-fi coverage is limited to library and main buildings. PC labs are connected to internet but computers in the classrooms are not. Web site is not fully functional neither into Georgian nor in English languages and there is not updated information. A new web page was launched just at the same time as site-visit, but the majority of the content is not

accessible so far. The main financial plan of the university is consolidated budget, of income (mainly from the Patriarchate of Georgia) and expenditure. Allocation of the financial resources is clear and is more or less based on the priorities outlined in the strategic development plan but without clear mapping of specific annual actions to budgetary requirements.

## **Summary of Recommendations**

- Strategic Planning should address the issue of potential decline in the rate of student enrollments, as shown in the target benchmark ratios at faculty level. Relative promotion strategies and actions, aiming in making the University and the programs more attractive to potential students, must be considered.
- All elements of the Action Plan should be measured by measurable quantifiable performance indicators and linked to specific budget amounts and human resources requirement in order to ensure the achievability of related actions.
- Action plan should be amended to include actions related to University's engagement in Long Life Learning
- The University should ensure that election/appointment to the management bodies of the institution take place in accordance to predefined requirements, and if needed, based on the discussion of candidates' vision and plans. Managerial performance must be evaluated as part of the QA processes.
- The University should establish unit responsible for HR management.
- The University should adopt use of modern technologies in management, including an electronic document processing system.
- Significant attention and financial resources should be devoted to development of internationalization, including the development of a clear internationalization strategy across all areas of the Institution. This needs to include more exchange possibilities, more formal and planned international partner links.
- In case of appointing one person to several different positions, the Institution should ensure effectiveness of his/her performance and avoid conflict of interest.
- The University should further develop the performance evaluation system for academic, scientific, invited, administrative, support staff according to PDCA cycle.
- The University should allocate sufficient human and information resources for the effective implementation of internal quality assurance mechanisms.
- The University needs to develop awareness about the need for a quality Culture across the Institution (especially for the newly established units)
- Summary results of course evaluations should be given as feedback directly to corresponding lectures. Comparative performance (percentile standing) should be included in feedback communicated to the personnel.
- The University should adopt a variety of alternative mechanisms for increasing students' awareness of the institution's policy on plagiarism and its consequences.
- The University's plagiarism procedures should be closely monitored to ensure that they constitute an active and effective means of detecting and preventing plagiarism. Implementation of plagiarism-detection software on site is a must.

- Remove any discrepancies in the way Program Planning regulations are applied through different programs. Rules regarding structure and content of programs should be clear.
- Ensure that program-learning outcomes are expressed clearly and concisely, that they fully correspond to title, content, structure and level of the program. Academic staff should be trained properly in order to be actively involved in this process. Share good practices.
- Ensure that teaching and learning methods used within the educational program reflect specifics of components of the programs and achievement of learning outcomes.
- Publish the Catalogue of educational programs on the university webpage.
- Clarify enrollment criteria in educational programs and set transparent criteria for internal entrance exams for Master's programs.
- Clarify in the "the Rule for planning, designing, implementation, evaluation and development of Bachelor's and Master's educational programs " all possible cases of developing individual study plan.
- Academic staff should be trained on the methodology of LOs.
- Ensure the retaking process of the Master's thesis is in compliance with Ministry Order #3 of January 5, 2007 on "Approval of the Rules for Calculation of Higher Educational Program Credits";
- Diversify and clarify assessment criteria and rubrics of the components of educational programs.
  
- Define detailed rules/indicators for staff performance evaluation of existing 0-5 point rating scheme. Develop benchmarks for staff performance requirements.
- Define detailed principals of encouragement / incentives taking into consideration staff-evaluation results.
- As a matter of transparency, and building culture of quality, teaching staff should receive summary reports of students' course evaluation, for each course they teach every semester.
- Ensure more representation and electivity of academic and scientific staff in management bodies and decision-making process.
- Increase funding for professional development (didactic and scientific) of staff.
- Set benchmarks of educational, research and other university activities for academic and scientific staff and work on improvement of them.
  
- The university should finalize and publish the "handbook for students".
- Students should be encouraged to form a student union. The University should support them and provide proper working space and section on the University web site.
- The university should ensure that information regarding consultation hours is easily available for the students.
- The university should enhance working on international cooperation to create international mobility opportunities for its students.
- University Web site should include all student related information in an easily accessed designated section. Related information should be continuously updated and communicated to students using official Facebook page, e-mails., etc.
- The university should ensure that Student Support and Career Development Office should take a lead to work with employers for further internship and practice opportunities.

- The University should strengthen its research profile in a more balanced way among its faculties, which must develop research agendas, identifying research that focuses on research areas relevant and important in social and economic development of the region according to the mission of the University.
- University Publishing House should establish peer review process with external reviewers to ensure the quality of published research and establish itself as a trustworthy publishing center for scientific work.
- A more unified approach regarding supervision and evaluation of scientific components of Master's Programs should be in place to ensure more uniformity in the quality of the Master's Thesis across faculties.
- Develop a solid plan for enhancing research internationalization
- The strategic plan of the Kartvelian Research Institute should be more coherent and focus on main research issues instead of details.
- Develop appropriate administrative structure for supporting research activities of the Kartvelian Research Institute.
- Engage more actively Master's level students in research activities and dissemination of research results.
- Consider requiring skills and international research experience when recruiting academic staff.
- Increase training of scientific staff with regard to skills for preparation of competitive research proposals.
- Develop a system for evaluation of research activity at staff, faculty and research institute levels, according to international standards based on transparent criteria including international classification standards of research publications.
  
- All the classrooms should be equipped with computers and projectors in order to guarantee the quality of teaching process (otherwise there is no need of having computers for lecturers).
- Buildings should be equipped with fire-fighting means: fire hydrants and fire-fighting equipment should be on place on each floor of each building.
- Emergency contact phones of relevant service should be displayed in the halls and in each classroom.
- The university buildings should be adapted for people with special needs (all the administrative offices; library; toilets).
- Central Heating system should be implemented.
- The water system in the toilets should have been worked (in the main building 3-4 floors).
- At least one shower room should be added to male dormitory (currently there is one for 12 students).
- Library staff should be familiar with usage of scientific databases and they have to provide trainings to students and faculty members. The usage statistics of the scientific databases should be monitored and promotion activities should be planned accordingly.
- The working hours of the library should be increased for at least 60 hours in a week, divided into 6 working days.
- Information technology infrastructure should be in accordance with the educational processes of the institution and ensure its successful implementation.
- IT risk management should be effective, data protection should be ensured, and the efficiency of information system should be evaluated.

- Study information or learning management system should be implemented in order to guarantee the quality of service university provides.
- University web page should gather all information about the programs, services, activities and should be updated on a regular basis both in Georgian and English.
- Update the Business Continuity Plan.
- The budget should be planned in accordance with developing research activities, prioritized to academic and administrative staff development programs.
- According to the requirements of the standard, financial audit should have been done occasionally and the reports should be published on the university web page.

## **Summary of Suggestions**

- Support alumni to form an Alumni Association which can organize activities within the University (e.g. involved in development planning, guiding and consultation to students) or externally (e.g. University promotion events)
- Consideration should be given to establishment of a University Advisory Board according to international practices.
- Enhance stakeholder involvement in further development of educational programs, more formally, and conduct reviews of the quality of programs more frequently.
- Improve the quality and frequency of surveys and market research by using more effective methods and problem-based analysis in order to increase reliability of survey results and ensure compliance of educational programs with modern requirements.
- Include Minor programs in the structure of programs where such opportunities exist.
- Revise the volume of components of the educational programs in order to avoid discrepancies in credit distribution and ensure that the allocated number of credits is based on workload and guarantee the full achievement of learning outcomes.
- Decentralize the assessment system to ensure flexibility of assessment system regarding the midterm and final grades distribution based on the requirements of each course and set minimal competency level for them.
- Enhance the monitoring process of students' academic performance and support objective approaches while assessing the students' knowledge, as the results show that most of the students' grades are close to maximum.
- Introduce requirement and incentives for academic and scientific staff to produce research publications that are indexed in Scopus, Thomson, Web of Science, Index Copernicus, Google Scholar and other prominent international scientific bases.
- Establish scheme of support and encouragement for personnel that prepares new study courses and develops study materials.
- The University should consider the establishment of an “Ombudsman” office.
- Student Support and Career Development office should organize induction meetings for freshmen students where the students as well as alumni participate.
- Encourage and support Master students to publish their work. Consider asking them to prepare a 4-5 page paper describing the research and output of their Master's dissertation

- Interdisciplinary approach in research should be a priority at inter or intra faculty level (e.g. agriculture and economics, mathematics and education, etc.)
- Faculties may produce a list of journals or conferences, which they consider as meeting scientific quality criteria for publication and may classify them in several categories from absolute minimum to top quality publications.
- It would be nice if university adds one common space in the dormitory with TV and kitchen, so that students can use both of them.
- Improve the overall environment of the campus.
- The librarians should update their professional skills regularly that can be done with collaboration of the local state university libraries (or university libraries with same profiles in capital).
- Consideration should be given in non-violating copyright law when distributing electronic versions of the books.

### **Summary of the Best Practices**

- Provision of free community services to local citizens like legal advice offered by the University's Law department.
- Policy and provisions for supporting incoming international students.
- Scholarships for students of high academic merit

## Summary Table of Compliance of HEI with Standards and Standard Components

	Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
<b>1.</b>	<b>Mission and strategic development of HEI</b>	<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"/>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Organisational structure and management of HEI</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.1	Organisational structure and management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2	Internal quality assurance mechanisms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3	Observing principles of ethics and integrity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Educational Programmes</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1	Design and development of educational programmes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2	Structure and content of educational programmes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.3	Assessment of learning outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b>	<b>Staff of the HEI</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1	Staff management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2	Academic/Scientific and invited Staff workload	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5</b>	<b>Students and their support services</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.2	Student support services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6</b>	<b>Research, development and/or other creative work</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.1	Research activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.2	Research support and internationalisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.3	Evaluation of research activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>7</b>	<b>Material, information and financial resources</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.1	Material resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.2	Library resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.3	Information resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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. Pandelis, Ipsilantis (Chair)



2. Diana Mtchedlishvili (Co-chair)

3. Ia Natsvlishvili (Member)

4. Nino Amiranashvili (Member)

5. Giga Khositashvili (Member)

6. Salome Dzagnidze (Member)

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

### 1. Mission and strategic development of HEI

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

#### 1.1 Mission of HEI

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

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

The University Mission Statement was formed through deliberation within the academic community and has been formalized by an official order of the Rector in January 2018. According to its mission, the University aims in promoting welfare, economic strength, the spirituality of the Georgian nation and integration into the world community; to create an environment relevant for modern educational and scientific activity, to offer high-quality educational programs, to ensure preparation of qualified, competitive specialists, to support formation of persons with high national and civil awareness and religious tolerance.

The mission of the University is realistic and fits its vision to establish itself as a powerful educational-research center and serve regional needs, thus becoming an agent of reforms, fostering development in the mountainous region of South Adjara and gradually, occupy an important place in the Georgian education area.

It is the panel's clear impression that the University fulfills its mission. In the course of the site visit, the panel became aware that the academic community of the University shares this mission, students

realize the value that the University provides to local citizens, and local social partners consider that its presence plays a crucial role in the development of the region.

In terms of its Academic activity, the University offers all its programs at both levels (Bachelor's and Master's) on a free tuition basis and provides full subsidy of daily meals (three per day) to all students. Interviewed students and graduates expressed their full contentment, some of them stating emphatically that they would not be able to get university education otherwise.

During the interviews, the panel was also made aware about the involvement and the support that the University provides to local communities and its contribution in the development of the region. Indicative actions include organization and participation in various community events, public talks, presentations, conferences, etc., working closely with local schools, offering public services like legal consultation, library access, etc. to the local population.

Locally employed University alumni has also a significant impact in reforming social life and help businesses through their upgraded skills. Local employers and other stakeholders praised the University for preparing qualified specialists who are employed in business in the area, and its role in upgrading qualifications of teachers working at local schools.

The University tries to maintain, successfully so, a "family-style" environment between management, working staff, students, alumni and stakeholders, which is based in direct communications – sometimes informal, an efficient way because of its small size. Ties with alumni are maintained through annual meetings that are held every October. The panel would like to see those relationships take more formal approach as the University develops further. During the interviews alumni was very positive in the idea of forming an alumni association. Consideration should also be given to forming a University Advisory Board, where stakeholder and alumni can be more actively involved in strategy planning (limited to advisory but not executive functions) as well as promotion of the University.

The University tries also to attract foreign students of Georgian descent, to study at the University providing on top of the benefits provided to Georgian students, free dormitories and a scholarship of 100 GEL per month for personal expenses.

The University is open and accepts students of other religions. Several Muslim students are currently studying at various programs.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- University Rector's, Order N 01-03/26, January 29, 2018
- Interviews with the Academic Council, Academic and Scientific Staff, Students, Alumni, and Social Partners

#### **Recommendations:**

#### **Suggestions:**

- Support alumni to form an Alumni Association which can organize activities within the University (e.g. involved in development planning, guiding and consultation to students) or externally (e.g. University promotion events)
- Consideration should be given to establishment of a University Advisory Board according to international practices.

<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of free community services to local citizens like legal advice offered by the University's Law department.</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation</b>
<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
<b>1.2 Strategic Development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEI has a strategic development (7-year) and an action plans (3-year) in place.</li> <li>○ HEI contributes to the development of the society, shares with the society the knowledge gathered in the institution, and facilitates lifelong learning</li> <li>○ HEI evaluates implementation of strategic and action plans, and duly acts on evaluation results.</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b>
<p>A process for developing a strategic plan took place for the first time at the University in 2018. Development of the plan followed a bottom – up approach involving faculties, academic staff, students, alumni and social partners. Following a SWOT analysis, a comprehensive 7-year (2019-2026) strategic plan document was approved by the Academic Council and the Rector. Overall, the strategic goals of the plan support the mission of the University. Indicatively, emphasis is given to goals for Strengthening the educational and research profile and creative a modern environment for education and research (e.g. <i>Improvement, perfection of current educational programs, relevant syllabi, Development and implementation of new educational programs</i>”, “<i>Arrangement of auditorium equipped with high technology computer technique with multimedia</i>”, “<i>Determination of scientific research priorities, preparation, and implementation of research projects</i>”, <i>Involve young staff, including young researchers and students in research. Increase students' interests towards scientific activities</i>”), Enhance student services (e.g. <i>Promote student self-governance Career support mechanisms, etc.</i>), Development of Human and Financial Resources, Internationalization. A 3-year (2019-2021) Action Plan postulates a schedule of specific development actions that support the achievement of strategic goals and sets responsibilities, timeframes, budget and performance indicators for each activity. The 3-year Action Plan definitely sets a road map towards the achievement of the strategic goals. Still, to make it more effective and ensure achievability, the <b>Action Plan should be linked to specific budget allocations, human resources requirements and measurable quantifiable performance indicators, otherwise would resemble a wish-list</b>. General references such as “<i>operational expenses</i>” do not imply any budgetary commitments. Performance indicators should measure target results (e.g. instead of “<i>list of equipment for auditorium</i>” specific quantities of each type of equipment should be set as targets). Expressions like “<i>Prior to the start of the training course, the teacher of the individual course presents relevant electronic learning resources to the educational program Head</i>” do not designate performance <u>measurement</u>. In addition to budget provisions, organizational improvements and skilled human resources are also required to be in place to ensure effective implementation of the action plan. Obviously, the University realizes this need, as development of Human Resources is stated as a key area in the Strategic Plan. Certain ad-hoc actions that have been taken recently to operate certain key areas (e.g. establishing public relations and international office, career office, student services) can only be considered as temporary and transitional to an integrated staff development plan that reflects the needs of specific skills required to implement the action plan with specific performance indicators. For example, activity 6.2 of Action</p>

Plan, “*Ensuring implementation of the Strategic Plan*”, is measured by the “*number of planned activities fulfilled*” and is not focused on ensuring that proper skills and persons for implementation of the strategic plan are in place, the fact that internationalization requires foreign language skills is not reflected anywhere in the action plan.

A “*permanent monitoring group*”, is established and assigned the responsibility of the implementation of strategic development and action plans. At the time of the visit, all activities that were supposed to be at implementation phase were on schedule. The implementation of the Action Plan is at a very early stage, and conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the monitoring mechanism cannot be made yet.

Although the University is engaged in Lifelong learning activities, (offering, in addition to postgraduate programs, a teacher’s training program and several vocational programs) no specific actions regarding this part of its operations is included in the 3-year plan. Given that the engagement of the university in providing Lifelong learning opportunities to local population was praised by the social partners, the panel suggest that those programs receive same attention by the University as the academic ones.

One of the panel’s main concerns is the absence of a contingency planning. According to SER’s existing benchmarks, regarding ratios of “academic staff to students” and “academic staff to number of programs” it seems that the number of students tends to decrease. This condition in the short term may result in reduction of academic staff but in the long term may set the sustainability of certain programs at risk. The panel discussed this issue with the faculty Deans who seem aware of it but no planning regarding relative actions (i.e. targeted promotion of programs, ways to attract more students, etc.) has been considered in the strategic planning and action plans yet.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- Tbel Teaching University’s Self Evaluation Report
- 7-Year University Strategic Plan (Rector’s order N 01-03/26 on approving Strategic Development Plan, 29/01/2018)
- 3-Year University Action Plan (Rector’s order N 01-03/22 on approving Action Plan, 27/12/2018)
- University’s Rector order №01–03/19, on forming "permanent monitoring group, responsible for implementation of strategic development and action plans, 04/02/2019,
- Interviews with the Deans of Faculties, Faculty Councils

#### **Recommendations:**

- Strategic Planning should address the issue of potential decline in the rate of student enrollments, as shown in the target benchmark ratios at faculty level. Relative promotion strategies and actions, aiming in making the University and the programs more attractive to potential students, must be considered.
- All elements of the Action Plan should be measured by measurable quantifiable performance indicators and linked to specific budget amounts and human resources requirement in order to ensure the achievability of related actions.
- Action plan should be amended to include actions related to University’s engagement in Long Life Learning

#### **Suggestions:**

<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements  <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements  <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>

## 2. Organisational Structure and Management of HEI

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

### 2.1 Organisational Structure and Management

- Organisational 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 internationalisation.

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

Tbel Teaching University is non-entrepreneurial (non-commercial) legal entity founded by the Patriarchate of Georgia. The University leadership includes the Rector, supported by the Vice-Rector, the Head of Administration, the Academic council and the Quality Assurance service. The Rector of the University is plenipotentiary representative of the founder and has the full representative and managerial authority of the University. All other management bodies of the University as well as the heads of structural units are appointed by the Rector. Interviews with University representatives revealed, that all major decisions are made by the rector. Such a consolidation of power and responsibility in a single individual might have an adverse impact on the effectiveness and objectivity of the institution's decision-making processes

There are no written, predefined requirements for appointing management bodies, except for the case of the academic council, which is the highest collegial unit of the university.

Because of the small size of the University, there is a common sharing of its values and mission across the academic community, which creates a friendly "family-style" working environment, and no major deficiencies were observed. Nonetheless, setting specific requirements for each managerial position, along with a clear selection process open to all members of the academic community with proper qualifications will enhance transparency, trust and a feeling of ownership among all members. In this sense, it is important that an evaluation system exists to measure managerial performance at each level based on input from subordinates and supervisors.

In order to ensure effective implementation of goals and activities described in its strategic plan, the structure of Tbel Teaching University comprises 4 major educational units (faculties), a Research Institute of Kartvelian studies and Administrative unites, which are recently founded or modified. However, despite the fact that according to the strategic and action plans, staff development is considered as one of the important goals of the University, there is no relevant unit responsible for

Human Resources (HR) management. Functions of a proper HR unit would go beyond the formalities of retaining employee records and management of contracts / relationships, to include setting proper evaluation schemes, developing and monitoring personnel development plans organization of internal and external trainings for personal development, organization of recruiting etc. thus supporting management to implement strategic goals in professional development of academic and administrative staff (see also Standard #4).

The Charter of the University and provisions of educational and administrative units define the structure of the institution and the powers and duties of its major educational and administrative personnel. The responsibilities that are set out in the Charter and in provisions are closely linked to the goals and actions that are specified by the Strategic Development Plan.

Although the regulations are clear in the way they distinguish and define the responsibilities of each management body and structural unit, there are cases where one person is appointed to several different managerial / administrative positions (e.g. Dean of the faculty at the same time is head of the Student support service; QA assistant holds the position of the head of the administration). The panel understands that because of the small size; nevertheless, such multiple assignments that create conditions of conflict of interest as well as difficulties in personal performance should be avoided. For example, it is understandable that authority to monitor a service is delegated to a Dean of Faculty but at the operational level, the job should be carried by a different person.

Consideration should be given to enhance Student self-governance, an area that is identified as a weakness area in the Strategic Planning document, but evidence from students and alumni showed no significance progress yet.

The institution has regulations for the processing of documents that correspond to the relevant legislation. In January 2019, the University has purchased one-year license for an electronic management system, which enables electronic document registration and circulation, though its implementation has not started yet. Discussions with administrative staff showed that the administrative staff is aware of this development, but the Panel was not convinced that an efficient transition plan exists. The University maintains a registry of educational institutions as described in current legislation.

According to the Mission and Strategic Development Plan of the Institution, the main focus of internationalization policy is to attract ethnically Georgian students living abroad. To support internationalization, the University offers international students free tuition, free accommodation at University dormitories, 3 meals per day plus a scholarship of 100 GEL for personal expenses.

Currently, 19 international students are enrolled in programs taught in Georgian language programs. All of them are fluent in the language. Consequently, they experience no linguistic barriers to their participation in the life of the University. The University aims in increasing its internationalization and exchanges of students and staff, but interviews with the University representatives (administrative and academic staff, students) revealed that important steps are not taken in that direction. Also, it is not visible from the university budget 2019, that financial resources are devoted to development of internationalization.

The University envisages attracting international students but the language of teaching is a barrier. The University is willing to assisting international students to learn Georgian language free, so that they can be involved in the learning process and social life but still no significant developments are expected in this area.

Given the current conditions, outgoing exchanges could be possible since some of the students talk

other languages (examples of interviewed students and alumni confirmed that), but accepting incoming students who do not speak Georgian would be difficult given that no programs or parts of them are taught in an international language and the capacity of the University to offer individualized programs to incoming students is limited because not too many of academic staff are fluent in other languages.

The University currently has two memoranda of cooperation with international partners: the Ovidius University of Constanta, Romania but no activity has happened yet and Don State Technical University, Rostov Russia, where 15 students went on an exchange visit. However, taking into consideration the higher education internationalization policy of the country as well as the profile and strategy of the University, the purpose and benefits of cooperation with the Don State Technical University remains unclear. No activities within the Erasmus+ framework were happened or planned so far.

**Evidences/indicators**

- The Charter of Tbel Teaching University.
- The Tbel Teaching University structure.
- Provisions of Structural Units.
- Mission and Strategic Development Plan.
- Memorandum of understanding with the Ovidius University of Constanta, Romania.
- Memorandum of cooperation with the Don State Technical University, Rostov Russia.
- The University Budget 2019.
- Contract with Hosti ge.
- Interview results.

**Recommendations:**

- The University should ensure that election/appointment to the management bodies of the institution take place in accordance to predefined requirements, and if needed, based on the discussion of candidates' vision and plans. Managerial performance must be evaluated as part of the QA processes.
- The University should establish unit responsible for HR management.
- The University should adopt use of modern technologies in management, including an electronic document processing system.
- Significant attention and financial resources should be devoted to development of internationalization, including the development of a clear internationalization strategy across all areas of the Institution. This needs to include more exchange possibilities, more formal and planned international partner links.
- In case of appointing one person to several different positions, the Institution should ensure effectiveness of his/her performance and avoid conflict of interest.

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

<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul> <p><b>2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Institution effectively implements internal quality assurance mechanisms. Leadership of the institution constantly works to strengthen quality assurance function and promotes establishment of quality culture in the institution.</li> <li>○ HEI has a mechanism for planning student body, which will give each student an opportunity to get a high quality education.</li> </ul> <p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>In order to ensure continuous assessment and development of its activities and resources, the University has implemented internal quality assurance mechanisms. However, most of these mechanisms are recently implemented by the Institution and therefore are on P (plan) and D (do) level. In the beginning of 2019, the University developed new Action (3 year) and Strategic Development (7 year) Plans, introduced new structural units and determined their functions. Since all these units are recently founded, their involvement in the implementation of internal quality assurance mechanisms was not obvious. The evaluation of the University's activities and its resources is the responsibility of the Quality Assurance Service of the University, which consists of the head of QA, who at the same time acts as the Head of the administration and his assistant (see previous section). The existing instruments of evaluation are paper based questionnaires and informal meetings with internal and external stakeholders. For the effective implementation of internal QA mechanisms and for the continuous assessment of the University's activities and resources, the Tbel Teaching University needs to allocate more human, information and material resources (e.g. to increase number of QA staff with appropriate educational background, to use relevant informational recourses) and increase awareness of quality culture among its staff.</p> <p>The University has mechanisms in place for the evaluation and improvement of educational programs. The evaluation is carried out by the Quality Assurance Service. Academic/invited staff, together with students and external stakeholders are actively involved in these processes by means of meetings and questionnaires. The diversity of the above-mentioned mechanisms and the involvement of relevant stakeholders ensure effective evaluation of the educational programs.</p> <p>The teaching and scientific staff-performance evaluation system is in the process of implementation. The evaluation of academic personnel was conducted for the first time, but the staff of the university were unaware of its results and consequences. The University does not have a robust performance evaluation system for its administrative and support staff. The establishment of a HR unit will be instrumental in the implantation of such a system (see previous section). On the other hand, QA unit is responsible for feeding the results of the students' evaluation of the courses they attend to corresponding members of teaching staff at the end of each semester. According to interviewed academic and invited staff, they are not informed directly of results of students' evaluation but only indirectly through discussions with the Faculty Dean. As a good practice, summary evaluation for each course could also include its relative performance standing (0-100 percentile) against all courses of the same program.</p> <p>In 2019, the Quality Assurance service developed monitoring mechanisms for students' academic performance and plans to use its results for the improvement of the teaching process.</p> <p>The QA service regularly conducts surveys to evaluate the quality of the resources and services of the</p>
---

Institution. Students who were interviewed by the panel were aware of these surveys and many said they regularly completed them. At the time of the site-visit, the relevant data was collected for the first time and was ready for processing. Most of the interviewed students were happy with quality of resources and services and the responsiveness of the University to their needs (e.g. at their request for a photocopier, the Institution provided it).

In January 2019, the University elaborated methodology for planning student body, which takes into consideration its resources, and relevant indicators and benchmarks. The University plans to use it for the future admissions. According to Faculty Deans, student admissions in existing programmes are expected to decline, Although this trend is reflected in benchmark indicators, there was no evidence of any strategy or action to address this risk (see Standard #1).

**Evidences/indicators**

- Provision of the Quality Assurance Service.
- The mechanisms of teaching quality improvement.
- The mechanism and methodology for planning students/ vocational students body, the rule of defining benchmarks.
- The rule of evaluation academic and invited staff activities.
- The rule of planning, designing, implementing, evaluating and developing the MA and BA programs.
- The Self Evaluation Report.
- Survey results.
- Interview results.

**Recommendations:**

- The University should further develop the performance evaluation system for academic, scientific, invited, administrative, support staff according to PDCA cycle.
- The University should allocate sufficient human and information resources for the effective implementation of internal quality assurance mechanisms.
- The University needs to develop awareness about the need for a quality Culture across the Institution (especially for the newly established units)
- Summary results of course evaluations should be given as feedback directly to corresponding lectures. Comparative performance (percentile standing) should be included in feedback communicated to the personnel.

**Suggestions:****Best Practices (if applicable):****Evaluation**

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

<b>2.3. Observing Principles of Ethics and Integrity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEI has developed regulations and mechanisms that follow principles of ethics and integrity. Such regulations are publicly accessible.</li> <li>○ Institution has implemented mechanisms for detecting plagiarism and its prevention.</li> <li>○ HEI follows the principles of academic freedom.</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b>
<p>The University has developed codes of ethics and conduct for students and staff, and has defined procedures for responding to the violation of these regulations.</p> <p>Despite the fact, that the abovementioned documents are not publicly accessible on the official web site, administration of the institution, professors, students and alumni are well aware of ethical code and conduct norms.</p> <p>At the end of 2018, the Institution has developed the Plagiarism Detection Prevention and Response Rule, which was not accessible on the website. Interviews with students and Alumni revealed that they have information about plagiarism mostly from their schoolteachers and academic personnel of the University. The experts' panel examined syllabi on a random selection basis and noticed that the information about cheating and its legal consequences was not incorporated in the syllabi of the academic programs.</p> <p>In addition, it was noted, that among the staff and students of the University, so far, there were not any cases of plagiarism identified and investigated under its current procedures.</p> <p>Computer-aided plagiarism checks are currently applied only to Master's thesis through an external service provided by the National library. According to the interview with the administration, the University plans to implement use of plagiarism-detection software on site. The panel definitely supports this development, however is not fully convinced since a definite implementation schedule does not exist, and no relevant action is included in the 3-year action plan.</p> <p>The University community shares the principles of academic freedom.</p>
<b>Evidences/indicators</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code of Ethics of N(N)LE Tbel Teaching University;</li> <li>• Internal regulations of N(N)LE Tbel Teaching University;</li> <li>• The plagiarism detection, prevention and response rule;</li> <li>• Interview results.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The University should adopt a variety of alternative mechanisms for increasing students' awareness of the institution's policy on plagiarism and its consequences.</li> <li>• The University's plagiarism procedures should be closely monitored to ensure that they constitute an active and effective means of detecting and preventing plagiarism. Implementation of plagiarism-detection software on site is a must.</li> </ul>
<b>Suggestions:</b>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>

**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

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

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

Tbel Teaching University has elaborated the Rule for planning, designing, implementation, evaluation and development of Bachelor's and Master's educational programs. The document describes the methodology of planning, designing and developing of educational programs, standards and criteria set for the first and second level higher education cycle programs, structure of curriculum and syllabus, methodology for developing individual study plan, the procedures of proving/amending/annulling of educational programs, requirements set for program coordinators. As stated in the SER and verified at the interviews with QA team, Faculty Deans and Academic council the new document is an upgrade of the previous one, providing clear and comprehensive program design procedures, as well as the mechanisms for engaging stakeholders in the process. The current document is approved by the Academic council and Rector's order on November 24, 2017

Interviews with Deans of Faculty, Academic council, Academic Staff and Employers showed that the procedures regarding program planning are followed. The process starts with formation of a working group, which presents a feasibility study, based on market research and input from stakeholders, to the Faculty in order to justify the need for the new program (e.g., the Bachelor and Master in Mathematics programs were justified on the need for upgrading math teacher skills and short supply of new Math teachers in the region. The program was discussed by the Faculty Council and submitted to the Academic council for approval. The programs are approved by the Academic council and Rector's order. During the interviews, it was made clear that before approval of a new program or changes to an existing one, the Council considers the report of QA office and in case of necessity may ask the faculty for revisions, but no such case occurred so far.

Currently, Tbel Teaching University runs 22 educational programs, out of them 17 are accredited Bachelor's and Master's programs and 1 teacher training program (60 ECTS) with three modules - Georgian language and literature, Fine and applied arts and History. Additionally, one program is prepared for submission to the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) for accreditation. This is General Education Teacher Training Integrated Bachelor-Master's Educational Program worth of 300 ECTS credits.

Educational programs developed by Tbel Teaching University intend to serve the realization of the university mission through providing students with the relevant theoretical knowledge and practical skills for their further professional development and employability, supporting formation of persons with high national and civil awareness and religious tolerance.

Program planning, designing and development is a participatory process and stakeholders are involved in it in order to develop market-oriented educational programs corresponding to the local demand. Graduates participate in the program evaluation. They are surveyed electronically by e-mail to provide information on compatibility of obtained skills within the program against employers' needs. However, the evidences of stakeholder involvement were mainly demonstrated as proposing new study courses to be added to the programs. For example, interviewed employers stated the need for courses in the areas of geology, real estate law, forestry that are directly related to regional issues and needs.

Based on the analysis of educational program assessment results, the university periodically re-news its programs in order to meet local market and stakeholder needs. Besides, students' academic performance monitoring results and feedback from students and employers are considered for further development of program structure and learning outcomes. During the interview with Heads of Programs, the panel was made aware of improvement that took place, as a result of input from stakeholders, in several programs which were accredited earlier in 2012.

Questionnaires for program evaluation targeted at different stakeholders (students, alumni, employers) are elaborated. Student questionnaire aim to collect and analyze data on learning outcomes in general, program resources and overall quality of the educational programs and are administered at the end of each semester, although it is not mandatory for students to fill them. The paper-based questioning process is anonymous, but as the process is conducted by the university administration representative, there is a risk for identifying interviewee. Perhaps that could be one of the reasons of low participation. However, the quality and frequency of surveys and market research studies needs improving and more effective methods must be employed to increase reliability of conducted research and assessment results. For example, besides improving the student survey process, the panel suggests that a practice of exit interviews is introduced to collect feedback regarding the entire program upon graduation, when student can really evaluate the program as a whole instead of piece-by-piece course evaluation. In addition, alumni feedback should be collected systematically to collect information about the development of the field and prospective of the program vis-à-vis the needs of the labor market. Information from employers and social partners is mainly collected informally. While the small size of the University, the local professional engagement of academic staff and the closed interaction with local community, facilitate informal sharing of information and feedback, a more formal approach with a scheduled frequency can multiply the benefits. The University could organize some events at the university, inviting employers, social partners at a round table discussion with academics, discussing and sharing views on issues according to specific agenda.

In cases of amending/annulling of programs, the university considers interests of the students and grants students an opportunity to complete a similar educational program based on recognizing already gained credits.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- Methodology for planning, designing and development of educational programs.
- Tbel Teaching University educational programs.
- Market research and employer demands.
- Stakeholder satisfaction survey results and analysis.
- Student academic performance monitoring results.
- Procedures for program approval, amendment and annulment.

<b>Recommendations:</b>
<b>Suggestions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance stakeholder involvement in further development of educational programs, more formally, and conduct reviews of the quality of programs more frequently.</li> <li>Improve the quality and frequency of surveys and market research by using more effective methods and problem-based analysis in order to increase reliability of survey results and ensure compliance of educational programs with modern requirements.</li> </ul>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b> <p> <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>
<b>3.2 Structure and Content of Educational Programmes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme learning outcomes are clearly stated and are in line with higher education level and qualification to be granted</li> <li>With the help of individualized education programmes, HEI takes into consideration various requirements, needs and academic readiness of students, and ensures their unhindered involvement into the educational process.</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b> <p>While designing a program, Tbel Teaching University follows current legislation and European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) guidelines. Bachelor's programs are comprised at least 240 ECTS credits, while Master's programs – at least 120 ECTS credits.</p> <p>According to internal regulation, in Bachelor's educational programs, out of the total volume of the program ECTS, 10 credits must be dedicated to the Bachelor's thesis or to Research component, but not all Bachelor's programs have this provision. During the interview with Program Heads, the panel confirmed the existing discrepancy between the formal regulations and the practices in some programs that do not include either bachelor thesis or research component (e.g. <i>BA in Mathematics</i>) while in some others Bachelor thesis can be replaced by taught courses (e.g. <i>BA in Journalism</i>). While, all above options are acceptable at bachelor's level, relevant internal regulations should be clear and complied by all programs.</p> <p>A student may select 60-credit minor program or elective study courses, but there was no any minor program included in the submitted packages of programs. The university provided the sample of minor program after the request.</p> <p>Variations have been observed in stating Program learning outcomes (LOs) among different programs. Certain programs, do have very clearly stated LOs and in line with the higher education level and qualification to be granted (e.g. <i>Master's in History and others</i>), while in others, LOs are fragmented and stated in an extensively narrative way, including details that describe the content of the courses rather than what graduates should know and be able to do at the completion of the</p>

program (e.g. *Master's in Business Administration* has a 3 page description of LOs, *Master's In Agriculture* follows a similar pattern).

Learning outcomes for regulated professions are based on field characteristics and are developed in line with the relevant sector benchmarks. (e.g. Bachelor's program of Law).

Mostly, program structure and content are constructed based on logical connection and consequence between the components. Certain exceptions should be carefully discussed. Considerations should be given to align LOs with market needs and in line with the program titles. For example, in *Master's in Business Administration*, the program LOs are more suitable to a program in Banking and Finance rather than Business Administration. The content of the program itself also fits such a profile. Actually, in the program description one can find "*Learning plan - Master's program "Business Administration – Finance"*". Such discrepancies cause confusion and disorientation to students and the public.

Attainment of learning outcomes is generally defined within the reasonable timeframe.

Since, the university runs several not accredited programs, and most of the other programs will be reaccredited, learning outcomes and program structure of programs must be reconsidered through an overhauling process. As a prerequisite, the panel strongly advises that Academic staff is trained on the methodology of LOs.

The programs provides students with opportunities to elect non-compulsory components of an educational program as they consider the elective courses and a student is allowed to combine major and minor/elective/free courses. Minor programs are a compressed version of Major, do not consider granting qualification and are focused on developing certain competencies among students.

In regulated professions, learning outcomes of the education program are based on sector benchmarks, developed in compliance with National Qualifications Framework with not less than 75% of total credits of the program, and are dedicated to mastering of necessary competencies.

In Master's programs not less than 25% of the total program volume - 30 credits- are allocated for the research component – Master's thesis.

The volume of the program component is defined by its content, learning outcomes and specifics of the field, but most study courses of the educational programs are worth 5 ECTS credits. Certain discrepancies of credit allocation for the same course in different programs were spotted. Same University-level courses like *Academic writing, Georgian History, Psychology, Philosophy*, are allocated different credit loads (3 in some programs, 5 in others) in different programs.

It has to be mentioned that the regardless the fact that teaching and learning methods applied within the educational program are targeted at to ensure achievement of learning outcomes, they are unique for most educational programs.

Applicants can be enrolled in the programs according to the Georgian legislation and internal regulations of the university. However, there is no clear description of enrollment criteria in educational programs, only general provisions are stated. Besides, there is no transparent criteria for internal entrance exams for Master's programs.

During the site-visit, the Catalogue of educational programs was not found on the university webpage as it was under the reconstruction.

Despite the fact that there is no student with special educational needs, "the Rule for planning, designing, implementation, evaluation and development of Bachelor's and Master's educational programs " envisages the development of an individual study plan, if necessary, in correspondence

with the set rule of acting legislation. Consequently, if necessary, the individual curriculum for students with special needs shall be developed and appropriate forms and conditions of evaluation shall be offered. Upon needs, capacity and skills of the students of special educational needs, an individual curriculum will provide the study course objectives, tasks and implementation procedures. During interviews, the university administration mentioned that they are developing individual study plans for mobility students and for student who after a period of suspension of their studies, restore the student status.

During the site-visit, it was stated that the time of individual consultations are provided in the syllabi, however, not all of them include this kind of information. The university should ensure that consultation hours are easily available for the students (see recommendation in 5.2).

**Evidences/indicators**

- Tbel Teaching University educational programs and syllabi.
- The Rule for planning, designing, implementation, evaluation and development of Bachelor's and Master's educational programs ".
- Academic calendar.
- Survey results of students, alumni, employers and analysis.
- Students' academic achievement monitoring results.
- Methodology for development of individualized study plan.
- Interview results.

**Recommendations:**

- Remove any discrepancies in the way Program Planning regulations are applied through different programs. Rules regarding structure and content of programs should be clear.
- Ensure that program-learning outcomes are expressed clearly and concisely, that they fully correspond to title, content, structure and level of the program. Academic staff should be trained properly in order to be actively involved in this process. Share good practices.
- Ensure that teaching and learning methods used within the educational program reflect specifics of components of the programs and achievement of learning outcomes.
- Publish the Catalogue of educational programs on the university webpage.
- Clarify enrollment criteria in educational programs and set transparent criteria for internal entrance exams for Master's programs.
- Clarify in the "the Rule for planning, designing, implementation, evaluation and development of Bachelor's and Master's educational programs " all possible cases of developing individual study plan.
- Academic staff should be trained on the methodology of LOs.

**Suggestions:**

- Include Minor programs in the structure of programs where such opportunities exist.
- Revise the volume of components of the educational programs in order to avoid discrepancies in credit distribution and ensure that the allocated number of credits is based on workload and guarantee the full achievement of learning outcomes.

<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b>
<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
<b>3.3 Assessment of Learning Outcomes</b>
HEI has law-compliant, transparent and fair system of learning outcomes assessment, which promotes the improvement of students' academic performance.
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b>
<p>Learning outcomes assessment system takes into consideration specifics of the field, and mostly includes adequate assessment formats, components and methods. However, the university has a centralized assessment system regarding the midterm and final grades distribution and minimal competency level set for them.</p> <p>The evaluation system of student knowledge and related regulations in Tbel Teaching University are clearly described and are in line with legal acts of Georgia. The attainment of student's learning outcomes considers the interim and final evaluations, for which relative proportions out of the total score (100 points) and a minimum competence level are allocated - midterm evaluation with maximum 60 points and final evaluation with maximum 40 points. According to the self-assessment report, the old evaluation rule considered that a student had to accumulate a minimum 11 points in mid-term evaluation to be admitted at the final examination. This requirement was too low and consequently the quality of learning and student's motivation were decreased. Besides, the final examination did not imply minimal threshold. Currently, the evaluation system threshold for the minimal competency of the midterm assessment is 21 points and the threshold for minimal competency for the final exam is 20 points. The University gives freedom to a lecturer in choosing midterm evaluation components, based on the specifics of the course. They have to be diverse.</p> <p>It has to be mentioned that retaking process of the Master's thesis does not comply with Ministry Order #3 of January 5, 2007 on "Approval of the Rules for Calculation of Higher Educational Program Credits". Namely, the university educational process regulation (sub-items 2 and 3 of item 26) states that in case student gets FX grade, he/she has a right to re-defend thesis in the same semester, and in case of getting F grade, he/she has a right to re-defend the thesis in the next semester.</p> <p>According to the university regulation, all evaluation components and set criteria shall be provided in syllabi in a detailed and transparent manner. However, assessment criteria are mostly unique and, in some cases, the given assessment rubrics are not clear.</p> <p>Based on self-evaluation report and interview sessions, written exams were not encoded in previous years and therefore did not provide data for an objective evaluation. The University plans to introduce Encoding of written examinations, which is considered as one of the necessary components of the evaluation. The university QA service will be monitoring these issues. Oral exams were not monitored during previous years either. Evaluations will be conducted starting from the new academic year, aiming in raising quality.</p> <p>Assessment system ensures equal and fair approaches, but the question is raised about how much objective approaches are in force while assessing the students' knowledge, as the results show that majority of students get maximum grades.</p>

Students are informed about the assessment system used within the course as well as related regulations.

The University has developed the Plagiarism Detection Prevention and Response Rule, which at the time of the visit was not accessible on the website and according to interviewed students relative information is provided by the lecturers. Computer-aided plagiarism checks are currently applied only to Master's thesis through an external service provided by the National library, while plans exist to introduce an on-site service.

The university has an assessment appellation system in place. According to appellation mechanisms, not later than 2 days of getting familiar with mid-term, final or additional examination results, a student has a right to apply to the administration by an appeal and requests revision of the results. The administration, within two working days will provide delivering of complaint and student's work to the relevant faculty, the faculty council forms an appellation commission within 5 working days upon delivery of a student's work. The appellation commission discusses the application for three days and provides a conclusion to the faculty council. The Faculty Council ensures the provision of the results to the administration and the administration must report the provided results in student's learning card and inform student. It worth mentioning that based on interview sessions, usually there are no complaints from students side about their assessment.

**Evidences/indicators**

- The University rule of regulating the learning process;
- Educational programs and syllabi;
- Student survey results;
- Interview results.

**Recommendations:**

- Ensure the retaking process of the Master's thesis is in compliance with Ministry Order #3 of January 5, 2007 on "Approval of the Rules for Calculation of Higher Educational Program Credits";
- Diversify and clarify assessment criteria and rubrics of the components of educational programs.

**Suggestions:**

- Decentralize the assessment system to ensure flexibility of assessment system regarding the midterm and final grades distribution based on the requirements of each course and set minimal competency level for them.
- Enhance the monitoring process of students' academic performance and support objective approaches while assessing the students' knowledge, as the results show that most of the students' grades are close to maximum.

**Best Practices (if applicable):**

**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**

Tbel Teaching University has approved staff management policy that focuses on staff development and has defined affiliation terms and conditions. Staff Management policy defines principles and rules of staff management, including transparent and objective procedures for hiring qualified staff. The recruitment of 15 new academic staff members recently took place within the framework of the current policy. The main focus of Tbel Teaching University staff management policy is to achieve objectives, set by the University mission and strategic development plan. Staff management policy envisions attracting qualified staff to handle the competitive environment and current challenges adequately and successfully.

HEI collects information and statistical data of various types regarding its employed staff. It conducts satisfaction surveys and it has introduced a set of criteria for the evaluation of staff. HEI has in place Rules for evaluation of academic and invited personnel activities. Academic and invited staff is evaluated according to 0-5 points rating scheme. Evaluation criteria consists of three components: pedagogical activities, scientific research activity, and other university activity. Head of educational programs, Deans and Quality Assurance Service provide an assessment of staff activities. Analysis of the assessment of the academic staff activities is reviewed on the faculty council by the Quality Assurance Service, where appropriate recommendations are developed. Although, the teaching performance of Academic staff is reviewed and discussed with the Faculty Dean at the end of the semesters, Academic staff does not receive summary reports of student's evaluation of their teaching subjects but they receive feedback only indirectly during meetings with the Dean.

Rules for evaluation of academic and invited personnel activities define list of activities that may be taken into consideration in evaluation process but they do not clearly define how 0-5 points are assigned, what is the minimum points that could be considered as positive results. Rules for evaluation of academic and invited personnel activities do not define benchmarks for staff and work completed. It is not stated whether remuneration and encouragement take into consideration employee's performance evaluation results. Interviewed academic and invited staff stated that performance results surely affect the renewal of their employment contracts, but there was no perception of association between performance and remuneration.

Tbel Teaching University utilizes staff evaluation and satisfaction survey results in the process of staff management. HEI ensures involvement of academic and scientific staff in educational, research and other activities and in decision-making processes. Generally, in most cases, staff is appointed in decision-making bodies (e.g. faculty council, academic council) by the Rector. It is desirable to ensure electivity of staff in management boards of different types.

HEI has in place approaches and strategy for the professional development of its staff. It also ensures the integration of new employees into work environment through consultations and advising them. The 3-year action plan (2019-2021) indicates the planned activities in the direction of professional development of its staff (activities such as training in teaching methodologies, training in teaching using informational technologies). Upon necessity, a schedule of planned activities in terms of staff development, employed within the scope of specific education program, is put together. It envisages different-type activities, responsible persons, deadlines and monitoring.

Overall, academic and invited staff seemed very conscious and interested in their jobs. They respect the profile and values of the University and share its mission. Students and alumni referred to teaching staff as being qualified, supportive, open and easily accessible. It is encouraging that academic staff realizes the need for their further professional development. During the interviews, the panel was made aware of specific instances concerning almost all interviewed persons, where academic staff participated in professional activities out of their own interest, even without financial support of the University. The University should seriously consider increasing the funding for professional staff development and organize professional development according to individual needs and priorities and not on an ad-hoc basis. An establishment of an HR department could certainly help in this direction (see Standard #2).

HEI has signed contracts of scientific, academic, invited staff. Staff Management policy covers guidelines for the attraction of staff, rules and conditions of competition and conditions for appointment in Academic Position. It also defines principles of appointment of administrative and support staff, determines the rights and duties of staff, functions and obligations of structural units, staff job descriptions and qualification requirements. Attraction of the university academic staff is based on open, transparent and available methods by announcing a competition that is available to all interested persons. Within the framework of the guidelines for attracting personnel to an academic position :

- The competition commission selects academic staff. Competitive rules and conditions are public in accordance with the conditions and requirements outlined in advance.
- The applicant willing to take an academic position agrees in advance terms of the competition and the requirements of the affiliation. In the case of consent, the applicant signs the contract.
- Academic staff selected for a given term in the case of expiration of contract has the right to take part in the competition for the same or higher academic position.

Administrative and support personnel of the university is appointed by competition, according to the decision of the rector. Selection of staff on appointed positions is made by internal competition. This competition aims to provide professional development of the university personnel and to ensure their career growth. The university, for the vacant position, primarily chooses candidates from internal resources, including students. The head of the administration prepares the proposal for selection of candidates based on the study of the personnel and students data and submits the proposal to the rector; the rector discusses candidates with the respective field leaders and in the case of a positive assessment of the interview, decides on the appointment of a candidate.

<p><b>Evidences/indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff Management Policy. Approved by the order N 01-03/09 of, 2019 of the Rector of Tbel Teaching University.</li> <li>• The rule of evaluation of University academic and invited staff. Rector order on "approving the rule of staff management, N 01-03/09, 28.01.2019.</li> <li>• Tbel Teaching University Rector order on "approving the rule of academic staff affiliation, ( 01-07/12, 25.12.2017).</li> <li>• The Tbel Teaching University Rector order on "approving monitoring mechanisms of management effectiveness and evaluation system, (N 01-03/07, 25.01.2019).</li> <li>• A plan/schedule of measures aimed at developing academic, scientific and invited staff of business administration education program (Order N 01-07-09/z.) 30.11.2017).</li> <li>• A plan/schedule of measures aimed at developing academic, scientific and invited staff of agrarian sciences administration education program" (Order N 01-07-09/t.) 01.12.2017).</li> <li>• Rights and Responsibilities, Functions and Election Procedures for the Management Bodies of Tbel Teaching University. Rector's order N 01-03/26 5/3/2019.</li> <li>• Results of assessment and satisfaction survey of staff activities and a report on the use of these results in the further development of personnel of Tbel Teaching University.</li> <li>• The rule of determining number of academic staff, Rector's Order N 01-07-09/v. 24.11.2017.</li> <li>• Structure of the University and Functions of the Structural Units.</li> <li>• The University Mission. Tbel Teaching University.</li> <li>• The Strategic Development Plan (2019-2025) of Tbel Teaching University.</li> <li>• 3-year Action Plan of Tbel Teaching University (2019-2021).</li> <li>• Provision of Quality Assurance Service of Tbel Teaching University. Approved by order of № 01-07-09/B of November 10, 2017 by the Rector</li> <li>• The procedure of quality assessment results and report for the use of results 2018.</li> <li>• Information on scientific work of academic and scientific staff of Tbel Teaching University.</li> <li>• Annual Reports of Tbel Teaching University. Component evidences/indicators including the relevant documents, interview results, etc.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Interviews with academic, scientific, invited, administrative and supporting staff</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define detailed rules/indicators for staff performance evaluation of existing 0-5 point rating scheme. Develop benchmarks for staff performance requirements.</li> <li>• Define detailed principals of encouragement / incentives taking into consideration staff-evaluation results.</li> <li>• As a matter of transparency, and building culture of quality, teaching staff should receive summary reports of students' course evaluation, for each course they teach every semester.</li> <li>• Ensure more representation and electivity of academic and scientific staff in management bodies and decision-making process.</li> <li>• Increase funding for professional development (didactic and scientific) of staff.</li> </ul>

<b>Suggestions:</b>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b> Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>
<b>4.2. Academic/Scientific and Invited Staff Workload</b> 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
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b> <p>The number of Academic staff employed at Tbel Teaching University is determined by the profile of the University and in consideration to its geographical location. Tbel Teaching University is situated 60 km away from Batumi. Majority of academic staff lives in Batumi and adjacent areas. Respectively, they have to define certain free days and adjust them to their other job (if applicable) in order to carry out responsibilities, assigned to them at Tbel Teaching University. Within those constraints, a minimum number of weekdays is set for carrying the workload at Tbel Teaching University. This minimum equals to two days a week, in compliance with labor Code: 40 hours per week. The workload of academic and invited staff of the University is defined based on the relevance of a person's qualification/academic degree with the education program and courses offered. Study of the personal files of teaching staff (CV, diplomas, qualification documents, publications and their teaching experience) indicates their qualification. The upper margin of the 40-hour labor workload a week is observed.</p> <p>As the interviews demonstrate, the evaluation rule of academic and scientific staff has been introduced recently at Tbel Teaching University to meet the requirements of authorization standards. It includes the periodical monitoring of teaching and evaluation of the scientific activities of academic staff. However, the rules do not set benchmarks for staff with respect to effectively carrying out educational, research and other university activities. HEI should work on improvement of such benchmarks.</p> <p>All academic staff have permanent employment contracts that comply with the Georgian legislation. The invited staff have different types of contracts with the indication of their teaching hours. Generally, staff was informed about their obligations and the workload regulations. Total number of the staff (including academic, scientific, invited, and administrative, support staff) in HEI is 173 personnel, among them: affiliated academic staff - 69, scientific staff- 23, invited staff involved in teaching-33, administrative and support staff-48. Current (2019) benchmark ratios of academic, scientific, invited staff number to students-0.1. Ratio of the academic, scientific, invited staff number to the number of the higher educational programs – 4.6. Ratio of the affiliated staff number to the number of students-0.7. According to the SER the benchmark ratio of academic scientific, invited staffto students is expected to stay in the same magnitude (0.11 for 2022), while the ratio with respect to academic programs is expected to deteriorate (3.9 in 2022). Discussions with the Faculty Deans of</p>

Faculty this is due to expected decrease in the number of students (see also Standard 1.2).

The number and workload of academic and scientific staff varies throughout of the educational programs (from 6-8 teaching hours to 16-20 teaching hours per week in different semesters) and ensures implementation of educational programs, fulfillment of research and other duties assigned to them. The academic staff defines their primary affiliation to the institution based on the affiliation agreement. Affiliation terms and conditions are defined in a formal agreement between academic staff and HEI. Personnel should report to HEI if their have workload at other institutions. In some cases, an academic person teaches total 10-14 different study courses but on average academic personnel teaches 2-3 subject per semester. It is desirable to establish scheme of support and encouragement (e.g. offer additional honoraria, grants for development of study courses/study materials) for personnel that prepares new study courses and develops study materials.

Contracts define teaching load for academic and invited staff. Affiliation rules define the research requirements for affiliated personnel. Scientific personnel at the same time holds academic position. All academic personnel is affiliated. According the affiliation rule, HEI must finance research of affiliate personnel and help them to publish outcomes of their research work. Affiliated personnel is required to have at least one research publication per year in internationally referred and peer-reviewed scientific-practical journals and participate in at least one scientific conference. To ensure high quality of research and proficiency of personnel HEI should require research publications in journals that are indexed in Scopus, Thomson, Web of Science, Index Copernicus, Google Scholar and other prominent international scientific bases (see also Standard 6).

#### Evidences/indicators

- Staff Management Policy. Approved by the order N 01-03/09 of, 2019 of the Rector of Tbel Teaching University.
- The rule of evaluation of University academic and invited staff. Rector order on "approving the rule of staff management, N 01-03/09, 28.01.2019.
- Tbel Teaching University Rector order on "approving the rule of academic staff affiliation, ( 01-07/12, 25.12.2017).
- The Tbel Teaching University Rector order on "approving monitoring mechanisms of management effectiveness and evaluation system, (N 01-03/07, 25.01.2019).
- A plan/schedule of measures aimed at developing academic, scientific and invited staff of business administration education program (Order N 01-07-09/z.) 30.11.2017).
- A plan/schedule of measures aimed at developing academic, scientific and invited staff of agrarian sciences administration education program" (Order N 01-07-09/t.) 01.12.2017).
- Rights and Responsibilities, Functions and Election Procedures for the Management Bodies of Tbel Teaching University. Rector's order N 01-03/26 5/3/2019.
- Results of assessment and satisfaction survey of staff activities and a report on the use of these results in the further development of personnel of Tbel Teaching University.
- The rule of determining number of academic staff, Rector's Order N 01-07-09/v. 24.11.2017.
- Structure of the University and Functions of the Structural Units.
- The University Mission. Tbel Teaching University.
- The Strategic Development Plan (2019-2025) of Tbel Teaching University.
- 3-year Action Plan of S Tbel Teaching University (2019-2021).

- Provision of Quality Assurance Service of Tbel Teaching University. Approved by order of № 01-07-09/δ of November 10, 2017 by the Rector
- The procedure of quality assessment results and report for the use of results 2018.
- Information on scientific work of academic and scientific staff of Tbel Teaching University.
- Annual Reports of Tbel Teaching University. Component evidences/indicators including the relevant documents, interview results, etc.
- Interviews with academic, scientific, invited, administrative and supporting staff

**Recommendations:**

- Set benchmarks of educational, research and other university activities for academic and scientific staff and work on improvement of them.

**Suggestions:**

- Introduce requirements and incentives for academic and scientific staff to produce research publications that are indexed in Scopus, Thomson, Web of Science, Index Copernicus, Google Scholar and other prominent international scientific bases.
- Establish scheme of support and encouragement for personnel that prepares new study courses and develops study materials.

**Best Practices (if applicable):**

**Evaluation**

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

## 5. Students and their Support Services

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

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

- 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.

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

Regulations for student admission, suspension and termination of student status, mobility, qualification granting, and recognition of education are unified under the document named “Study Process Regulatory Rules”. The university has a new web page, which was launched on the second day of the site-visit. This document was not available on the old web-page, but it became public during the site-visit.

In the self-evaluation report, Tbel Teaching University stated that they are creating a “*handbook for*

*students*", covering the topics that the students might be questioning. Expert panel has not seen the handbook as it was not finished during the site-visit.

The university carries out induction meetings for the freshman students every year, where the rector and the university administration members give welcome speeches and introduce students to be acquainted with the university environment.

According to SER, Student Support Center carries out faculty meetings, where the students get detailed information about the regulations that they need in their student life. This statement is not convincing as the office was created several months ago and it would be impossible for this office to carry this activity as a routine. However, the expert panel strongly encourages Student Support and Career Development Center to be the one who carry out induction weeks for freshmen students, where current students and alumni would participate (additional comments related to Student Support and Career Center see below 5.2).

The university submitted student contract samples, which form a legal basis between the students and HEI. The students are informed about contract terms and conditions before signing.

Upon the expert panel request, the university provided the document on appellation procedures related to student assessments. The students were aware of the procedures they have to go through in case they are not satisfied with the evaluation results.

As for the protection of student rights and lawful interests, and for the review of students' appeals related to the work of administrative bodies, the university is suggested to delegate this role to either Student Support and Career Development Center or the Legal Office. Eventually, as the University develops, it should consider the establishment of an "Ombudsman" office.

Student self-governance is mentioned as a weak area in the Strategic Planning document. However, no specific actions are mentioned in the 3-year Action Plan. It was not clarified during the visit, whether the Student Union has been formed and functioning or not. Relevant information is not contained in the SER, and student and alumni responses were not so clear in this direction. Students are represented in the Faculty Council, but students are not represented at the Academic Council level.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- Self-Evaluation Report of Tbel Teaching University.
- The documentations submitted by the university.
- Web page [www.tbeli.ge](http://www.tbeli.ge)
- Interviews during the Site-visit.

#### **Recommendations:**

- The university should finalize and publish the "handbook for students".
- Students should be encouraged to form a student union. The University should support them and provide proper working space and section on the University web site.

#### **Suggestions:**

- The University should consider the establishment of an "Ombudsman" office.

<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements
<b>5.2 Student Support Services</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEI has student consulting services in order to plan educational process and improve academic performance</li> <li>○ HEI has career support service, which provides students with appropriate counselling and support regarding employment and career development</li> <li>○ HEI ensures students awareness and involvement in various university-level, local and international projects and events, and supports student initiatives</li> <li>○ HEI has mechanisms, including financial mechanisms to support low SES students</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b>
<p>According to interviewed students, support regarding the educational process was provided mainly by faculty administrators who were very responsive to their inquiries. Recently the University formed a Student Support and Career Development Office that will provide student support and consultation on any enquiries regarding the study process. Currently, the head of Student Support and Career Development Office is the Dean of one of the faculties. Expert panel believes that the head of student support service should not be one of the Deans (although the incumbent is a person dedicated to serve the student needs) as there might be the conflict of interests and function overlapping, which would form the grounds for insufficient operation of the office.</p> <p>As for the academic consultations, the students are provided with individual consultation hours. During the site-visit, it was stated that the time of individual consultations are provided in the syllabi, however, not all of them include this kind of information. The university should ensure that consultation hours are easily available for the students.</p> <p>Tbel Teaching University has Student Support and Career Development Office. The office is recently established and is in the process of formation.</p> <p>The institution is focused on the local labor market and cooperates with employers for implementation of internship and practice. The university should ensure that the role of Student Support and Career Development Service is strengthened with this regard.</p> <p>The university has provided employer survey analysis for the purpose of developing educational programs. The students are informed about employment opportunities mostly through oral communications. The university should ensure that information mechanism is formal and permanent (using official Facebook page, e-mails, university web-page).</p> <p>The university has close relationship with its alumni. Every year, in October Tbel Teaching University alumni are invited to participate in the alumni day organized by the university.</p> <p>The university contacts with the alumni and conducts surveys regarding their professional and academic development once a year.</p> <p>The university cannot be considered to be ensuring opportunities for international mobility. Currently, outgoing mobility is limited to cooperation with Don State Technical University, Rostov (Russia), for 15 students to attend Russian language courses at Rostov University, while a recently</p>

signed cooperation agreement with Ovidius University in Romania has not produced any results yet. The university supports and provide the students with extra-curricular activities (study trips, conferences etc.). The university, upon the panel's request, provided the list of activities carried out. Tbel Teaching University has a dormitory which is free for international students. The students are ethnic Georgians living in the neighboring countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey). The university also provides them with monthly stipend (100 GEL) and free meals (which is also available for all the students). Studying at the university is free. The students with high academic merit have an opportunity to get awarded with monthly stipend. During the time of the visit, the web site of the University was under development. A fully developed web site should provide easy access to students in a designated section where all student related information (regulations, announcements, events, etc. will be available.)

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- Self-evaluation Report;
- Submitted Documentations;
- University web page: [www.tbeli.ge](http://www.tbeli.ge)
- University Facebook page.
- Interviews during Site visit.

#### **Recommendations:**

- The university should ensure that information regarding consultation hours is easily available for the students.
- The university should enhance working on international cooperation to create international mobility opportunities for its students.
- University Web site should include all student related information in an easily accessed designated section. Related information should be continuously updated and communicated to students using official Facebook page, e-mails., etc.
- The university should ensure that Student Support and Career Development Office should take a lead to work with employers for further internship and practice opportunities.

#### **Suggestions:**

- Student Support and Career Development office should organize induction meetings for freshmen students where the students as well as alumni participate.

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

- Policy and provisions for supporting incoming international students.
- Scholarships for students of high academic merit

#### **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**

As Tbel Teaching University does not offer Ph.D. programs, the research output is rather limited and funded exclusively by the University. The panel was not made aware of any cooperation with other agents to implement research and development activities that aim at economic, technological, industrial and other innovative development. However, there is a strong research interest in Kartvelian studies and History of the region, justified by the vision and the mission of the University. The documentation provided and discussions with representatives of the Scientific staff revealed that so far research is concentrated in those areas. The project "*Zeda Machakheli (Historic-ethnographic and dialectic examination)*" involved field ethnographic expeditions to study historic-ethnological and linguistic aspects at Zeda Machakhela region. A monograph is expected to be published later this year. Two other projects, "*Common Kartvelian verb roots in Laz language and paradigm of the Laz verb*" and "*Women Education in "Upper Adjara"*" are currently pursued. According to University administration and the Scientific staff, all of the above research projects were funded (field visits and publication costs) by the University and implemented by the faculty of Humanities and Education. Students of the University have been engaged in research activities within the scope of those projects mainly in the process of collecting and processing relevant data.

The rest of the research output includes individual research papers produced by scientific staff to be presented and/or published in conference proceedings and Georgian publication, including the University publishing house, without a peer review process that includes external reviewers. The diversity of academic fields within faculties certainly does not help in developing strong research agendas at faculty level. For example, very interesting research efforts are observed in the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Business Administration, in very diverse fields (Mathematics, Horticulture, Regional and sectoral economic development).

Very little current research activity is noted at the Faculty of Social and Health Science and the Faculty of Law and Public Administration.

To promote research within the academic community, the University organizes and/or hosts scientific conferences, where Scientific staff has opportunities to participate and present their research work. Several such conferences took place since its establishment and particularly in the last 5 years including those that are organized by the Georgian National Academy of Sciences and hosted by Tbel Teaching University. In addition, the University hosted several public lectures of Georgian Scientists and Academicians.

As the University under authorization, is a teaching university, dissertation supervision is carried out at Master's level only. A comprehensive Master's thesis regulation document provides proper guidance to students in pursuing their thesis. The study process regulation provides specific rules and guidelines for the Scientific Research Component (Master's Thesis) of the program. The supervisor

for the Master's thesis at the Master's program is approved by the relevant Faculty Council, which is also responsible for determining the rules for fulfilling and evaluation of the research component. During the visit, the panel reviewed a sample of Master thesis from various faculties. The quality of the Master Thesis varies among students but overall is within the norms and compatible with international standards, regarding the inclusion of clear research methodology, scope of the research, and bibliography. Some of Master's thesis work is of high quality and the panel wished to see some of that work to have been presented in conferences or even published. The University should be concerned about the deviations in quality of Master's Thesis, develop a more unified approach for supervision and evaluation of the research work and encourage students to use the international scientific databases that are available at the library. Current usage statistics are extremely low (reports says its - 0) perhaps because the service is not accessible remotely (see section 7.2).

Overall, the panel believes that the University should ask and encourage faculties to develop research agendas, identifying research fields that fit the mission of the University and respond to the local needs for social and economic development. Faculty research agendas based on collective research efforts instead of individual ones and involving more students in research will enhance the research capacity of the University, which, currently, is not at the level for successfully supporting Ph.D. programs.

Recent actions, like the establishment of the Institute of Kartvelology (details in the next section) are expected to help in this direction.

**Evidences/indicators**

- Tbel Teaching University's Self Evaluation Report.
- The rule for competition of selection of targeted scientific-research proposals Order N 01-03/12, 29.01.2019.
- Interviews with representatives of Scientific staff.
- Document on current planned research projects (6.15).
- Master's thesis Guide and Regulations.
- Review of Master's dissertations.

**Recommendations:**

- The University should strengthen its research profile in a more balanced way among its faculties, which must develop research agendas, identifying research that focuses on research areas relevant and important in social and economic development of the region according to the mission of the University.
- University Publishing House should establish peer review process with external reviewers to ensure the quality of published research and establish itself as a trustworthy publishing center for scientific work.
- A more unified approach regarding supervision and evaluation of scientific components of Master's Programs should be in place to ensure more uniformity in the quality of the Master's Thesis across faculties.

**Suggestions:**

- Encourage and support Master students to publish their work. Consider asking them to prepare a 4-5 page paper describing the research and output of their Master's dissertation.
- Interdisciplinary approach in research should be a priority at inter or intra faculty level (e.g. agriculture and economics, mathematics and education, etc.).

**Best Practices (if applicable):**

**Evaluation**

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

**6.2. Research Support and Internationalisation**

- 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 internationalisation of research, development and creative activities.

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

Tbel Teaching University since its foundation and in accord to its vision and mission has a strong in contributing to development of the southeast Georgia region. Subsequently, identifying and investigating relevant regional issues, while a matter of priority in its research agenda, research activities were so far not systemic and stable.

In an effort to organize research in a more systematic and efficient way, the University, in 2018, established the *Giorgi Mtatsmindeli Institute of Kartvelian Studies*. Obviously, the formation of the institute is a significant step in organizing and supporting research in a systematic way. The statute and regulations of the institution provide the means for achieving that. The strategic plan of the research institute (2019-2023) is comprehensive, but it could be more coherent and focus on main research issues instead of details. For example:

- Concentrating on output or detailed actions (e.g. *preparation of a printed issue (newspaper or magazine, Shooting a documentary film, Preparation of scientific articles on various issues, Implementation of field scientific expeditions, etc.)* instead of identifying key research areas
- Addressing methodological detail (e.g. *empirical field studies in certain municipalities, bibliography reviews, development of questionnaires, etc.*) instead of focusing on the goals of the research
- The institute's research strategy (2019-2023) mentions as key tasks "*issuance of scientific monographs and works*", which are the results of the research, not the strategy, "*conduction of public lectures*", which could be a part of dissemination of results, "*field and archive work*".

Since, the research strategic plan is much extended – perhaps too ambitious and not realistic given the current capacity of the university – the institute may consider in prioritizing the actions and provide a rough time plan on an annual scale.

In addition, such an ambitious plan can be implemented without proper administrative support, in the form a Research support unit. According to international practices at universities, Research support units provide administrative support for research activities, training to scientists on writing research proposals, disseminating research opportunities to faculty members, support interdisciplinary research, and generally, further stimulate research culture.

Currently, research activities of the Research Institute are funded by University funds, which are limited. The share of the budget allocated to the research/scientific activities is 26,610 GEL (about 1.5% of total budget). Hence, the sustainability of the Research Center, given its ambitious agenda, depends on its ability to attract outside funds. Scientific staff is aware of that and one project was already submitted to Shota Rustaveli Foundation with no successful output. Training of researchers in preparing research proposals as well as a support mechanism to identify possible sources of funding and disseminate information to scientific staff are vital for increasing the capacity of the Research Institute to attract outside funds.

One of the most serious obstacles in development of research is the very low level of internationalization. Most of the research output, no matter how important it is, is published only in Georgian language, in Georgian publications. There is very limited published work in English language and in journals outside Georgia. This is true even for the newly hired staff, some of whom have indeed an impressive research record. Limitation in English language skills prohibit staff to exploit opportunities to visit universities in other EU countries, establish contacts with colleagues, perform joint publications (a small number of published work is jointly published). Thus, research work is constrained within national boundaries. Without demoting the importance of current research output, internationalization of research would add additional advantages to research and researchers. The University should consider internationalization as a top priority issue. One approach could be to make Master's students and graduates interested in the current research projects and include them in not only assisting in research activities but also being involved in dissemination of results. For example, certain parts of monographs can be modified and prepared as scientific papers in English language to be presented in international conferences or published in international scientific journals.

The University international contacts regarding joint research opportunities are limited to Ovidius University of Constanta in Romania with which a memorandum of cooperation regarding exchange of students and academic staff as well as joint research projects has been signed but no activity has happened yet.

#### Evidences/indicators

- Tbel Teaching University's Self Evaluation Report.
- Provision of the Institute of Kartvelology Studies.Order №01-03-03, 07.06.2018.
- Research institute strategic research directions. Ordinance № 01-03/13, 29.01.2019.
- The rule for competition of selection of targeted scientific-research proposals. Order N 01-03/12, 29.01.2019.
- Provision of creating international relations unit. Order N 01-03/01), 09 01 2 -19.
- Internationalization policy. Order N 01-03/01, 09.01.2019.
- Interviews with representatives of Scientific staff.
- Interviews with Academic Council.

#### Recommendations:

- Develop a solid plan for enhancing research internationalization
- The strategic plan of the Kartvelian Research Institute should be more coherent and focus on main research issues instead of details.

- Develop appropriate administrative structure for supporting research activities of the Kartvelian Research Institute.
- Engage more actively Master's level students in research activities and dissemination of research results.
- Consider requiring skills and international research experience when recruiting academic staff.
- Increase training of scientific staff with regard to skills for preparation of competitive research proposals.

**Suggestions:**

**Best Practices (if applicable):**

**Evaluation**

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

**6.3. Evaluation of Research Activities**

HEI has a system for evaluating and analysing the quality of research/creative-arts activities, and the productivity of scientific-research units and academic/scientific staff.

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

The university has in place regulations that evaluate academic staff base on their performance on teaching, research, and other university activities. Evaluation of research is based on the following: participation in scientific conferences, producing scientific papers, participating in international grants competitions, involving students in mentioned scientific activities, organization of scientific events, etc.

Each person's performance is rated by the Head of the program and one or more persons, which for evaluation of research performance is usually the Dean or the Head of QA, depending on the specific criterion. However, there is no clear rubric scheme for the 1-5 rating scale, while each criterion is very generally defined. No distinction is made as to whether publications are in Georgian or international journals, whether the publications are in refereed journals that are indexed in prominent international scientific bases or not, whether the author is a first or single author, the scientific impact of the journal, etc. Similar situation exists regarding the conferences where the term "*participation*" may mean simple attendance or presentation, or conference proceeding refereed or not. On the other hand, factors like citations are not accounted for. The vagueness in the criteria is shown clearly in a comparison between the count of Articles, Conferences, etc. in the document "*6.1 Information on Scientific Academic Staff*" vis-à-vis what academic staff report on their individual CVs

For the University to upgrade the quality of its research, it should consider setting certain requirements regarding the quality of the publications (i.e. indexed journals, etc.) along with incentives for the staff who meets those requirements (i.e. increased support for their research in terms of work time, financial support, recognition, etc.)

**Evidences/indicators**

- Tbel Teaching University's Self Evaluation Report.

- Document 6.1 Information on scientific academic staff.
- Interviews with Academic Council.
- Interviews with representatives of Scientific staff.
- Interviews with Heads of Departments.
- Interviews with Faculty Deans.
- Interviews with Academic Staff

**Recommendations:**

- Develop a system for evaluation of research activity at staff, faculty and research institute levels, according to international standards based on transparent criteria including international classification standards of research publications.

**Suggestions:**

- Faculties may produce a list of journals or conferences, which they consider as meeting scientific quality criteria for publication and may classify them in several categories from absolute minimum to top quality publications.

**Best Practices (if applicable):**

**Evaluation**

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

## 7. Material, Information and Financial Resources

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

### 7.1 Material Resources

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

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

The university owns several buildings, which are equipped to serve the teaching process for maximum 3000 students; however, some of the building are being renovating currently. Half of the classrooms are equipped with the computers for teachers, but there were only two projectors. The student dormitories are separated for male and female in different buildings, male dormitory building is not renovated fully [and currently there is only one shower for 12 male students](#). There was not any common area or kitchen in the dormitory, neither was internet connection. There was a room for group meetings at the university, but not any common space beside the library. There is a hall for providing meals three times a day, but the building itself is currently being renovated.

All buildings are provided with natural and artificial lightening supply. The sanitary unities are renovated currently but the water system in the bowl toilets does not work. During the visit, there was not water in the building as the provider company had experienced a problem due to the meteorological problems. There is not central heating system at the university and all the classes are equipped with the electrical heaters.

Buildings are not equipped with fire-extinguish means: fire hydrants and fire-fighting equipment are not on place (only one in the first floor). The university signed the agreement with Emergency Management State Service to identify the current problems in terms of safety. According to this expertise (done in February 2019) the university campus isn't sufficiently equipped with the fire-fighting system, thus the Emergency Management State Service gave an action plan as a recommendation to the university, all the major activities should have been finished by December 2019. During the site-visit, evacuation plans were displayed on some visible places at all floors of the building but emergency contact phones of relevant service are not displayed neither in the halls nor in each classroom.

University-security service unit is responsible to protect the safety of students and people employed at the organization, prevent illegal acts and guaranty the protection of the material resources. For this reason there are several cameras installed both inside the building and outside it, as well as the people employed in the unit are monitoring the campus 24/7.

First medical aid service is provided locally at the campus, for this reason there is a small room and a person employed. All necessary equipment are on place.

The university has no adapted environment for people with special needs. There is not elevator and other facilities that guarantee the freely navigation of people with the special needs. Special sanitary facilities for people with limited abilities are not provided.

Interviewed students and alumni pointed out that the University should also take care of open areas between the buildings, in order to make the campus more pleasant to current students and attractive to potential students.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- Fire Fighting System detection Audit.
- University Self-evaluation report.
- Site-visit and infrastructure shadowing.
- Interviews with University personnel.
- Interviews with students and alumni

#### **Recommendations:**

- All the classrooms should be equipped with computers and projectors in order to guarantee the quality of teaching process (otherwise there is no need of having computers for lecturers).
- Buildings should be equipped with fire-fighting means: fire hydrants and fire-fighting equipment should be on place on each floor of each building.
- Emergency contact phones of relevant service should be displayed in the halls and in each classroom.
- The university buildings should be adapted for people with special needs (all the administrative offices; library; toilets).
- Central Heating system should be implemented.

- The water system in the toilets should have been worked (in the main building 3-4 floors).
- At least one shower room should be added to male dormitory (currently there is one for 12 students).

**Suggestions:**

- It would be nice if university adds one common space in the dormitory with TV and kitchen, so that students can use both of them.
- Improve the overall environment of the campus.

**Best Practices (if applicable):**

**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 an independent structural unit, which is running with its own regulations. The library space is divided into reading-hall, space for group work, repository and space for library staff. The reading hall is equipped with personal computers and free WIFI access is also available. The library is open 6 days a week in total 48 hours a week. Copy/printing machine and scanner are accessible in the reading hall. The library has implemented OPAC, and some of the resources are accessible within it.

The library offers the interlibrary loan service; however, there was not any case of this action.

The library is subscribed to international scientific databases, the agreement has been signed in the January 2019, but the library staff members are unable to use it due to not having a practice in usage. The usage statistics are extremely low (reports says its - 0) and there is not any service for students and faculty members in using scientific databases. There is not possibility of remote access to the databases. Students cannot remember any training delivered by the library staff.

The book order at the repository are in accordance with international standards in library and information science.

The library with communication to faculty members update the resources available at the reading halls, this include both the textbooks and scientific literature, however there is a practice that faculty members bring the e-books to the library and it's accessible there despite of the fact that this is against to copy right law, as the full copies of the books in majority cases is questionable if they are legitimate ones. According to student satisfaction survey, they get sufficient support from library staff.

**Evidences/indicators**

- Regulations and instructions for using library.
- University Web-page.
- The agreement for providing access to scientific databases.

- Student surveys.
- University self-evaluation.
- Infrastructure shadowing during site-visit.
- Interviews with University personnel during the visit.

**Recommendations:**

- Library staff should be familiar with usage of scientific databases and they have to provide trainings to students and faculty members. The usage statistics of the scientific databases should be monitored and promotion activities should be planned accordingly.
- The working hours of the library should be increased for at least 60 hours in a week, divided into 6 working days.

**Suggestions:**

- The librarians should update their professional skills regularly that can be done with collaboration of the local state university libraries (or university libraries with same profiles in capital).
- Consideration should be given in non-violating copyright law when distributing electronic versions of the books.

**Best Practices (if applicable):**

**Evaluation**

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

**7.3 Information Resources**

- 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 web-page in Georgian and English languages.

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

There is a unit of information technology, which is responsible to deal with related issues and problems as for web site and internet (WI-FI) as well as computer software and data bases (servers).

Currently there is not any information system developed at the university, neither study information system nor learning management one. In January 2019, the university signed agreement with the local provider to implement the system at the university, during the site visit, it was not finished yet (it was not on place), staff indicated during the interviews that it should be finished by the end of the year. Currently students are being enrolled in the courses manually and the grades are saved in printed books.

Computer-aided plagiarism checks are currently applied only to Master's thesis through an external service provided by the National library. Information systems should include on-site plagiarism check software.

IT risk management practice is not clear and feasible, the data concerning administrative process is not stored online as there is not any software infrastructure yet, thus the data is not backed up on a regular basis and personal data protection mechanisms are not known.

Not all the buildings are covered with Wi-Fi internet, only the library and main building. During the site visit, Wi-Fi was accessible at the library (where the interviews were done) but it was unable to connect Wi-Fi in the main building. There were internet connection PC labs to all computers, but not in the classrooms at the computers for lecturers. In total, there were more than 100 computers used in learning process - some of them are accessible at the library.

Web site is not fully functional neither into Georgian nor in English languages and there is not updated all information which is needed for students, academy staff and stakeholders (like employers, school graduates etc.) The new web page was launched just at the same time as site-visit, but the majority of the content is not accessible so far (date of access 04.07.2019).

**The University has a business continuity plan, which takes into account most of possible risks, mechanisms for their prevention and in case the prevention is not possible - a strategy for risk mitigation, which should be updated to include risks related to expected decline in student admissions (see Standard #1).**

**Evidences/indicators**

- University web-page
- Interviews
- University Self-evaluation
- Agreement with the Internet Provider
- Agreement with the Study Information System Provider

**Recommendations:**

- Information technology infrastructure should be in accordance with the educational processes of the institution and ensure its successful implementation.
- IT risk management should be effective, data protection should be ensured, and the efficiency of information system should be evaluated.
- Study information or learning management system should be implemented in order to guarantee the quality of service university provides.
- University web page should gather all information about the programs, services, activities and should be updated on a regular basis both in Georgian and English.
- Update the Business Continuity Plan.

**Suggestions:**

**Best Practices (if applicable):**

<b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fully complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>
<b>7.4 Financial Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Allocation of financial resources described in the budget of HEI is economically achievable</li> <li>○ Financial standing of HEI ensures performance of activities described in strategic and mid-term action plans</li> <li>○ HEI financial resources are focused on effective implementation of core activities of the institution</li> <li>○ HEI budget provides funding for scientific research and library functioning and development</li> <li>○ HEI has an effective system of accountability, financial management and control</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b> <p>The main financial plan of the university is consolidated budget, which is composed of the two parts – income and expenditure. Budget formation includes preparatory, formation and its approval stages. Allocation of the financial resources is clear and is more or less based on the priorities outlined in the strategic development plan. The main income in the budget is the amount that is transferred from the Patriarchate of Georgia to the university, as the university is founded under the Patriarchate. The majority of the expenditures are spent on salary and food (as free meals are provided for students three times a day), while only few is dedicated to renew library resources.</p> <p>Budget funds of the university are directed towards providing educational functions. However, as it was revealed during the interview, the main part of the budget is used for salaries; infrastructure development and food. Funding of academic activities, internationalization and research are not budgeted or the amount dedicated to this activates are still low compare to others.</p> <p>The financial audit has not been conducted so far, thus the panel was unable to get any document regarding this issue.</p> <p>There is no tuition fee at the university and students get education free of charge.</p>
<b>Evidences/indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University budget</li> <li>• University Budget 5 years</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• University self-evaluation form</li> <li>• Information about the Incomes</li> <li>• The rule of Financial Management and Control</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The budget should be planned in accordance with developing research activities, prioritized to academic and administrative staff development programs.</li> <li>• According to the requirements of the standard, financial audit should have been done occasionally and the reports should be published on the university web page.</li> </ul>
<b>Suggestions:</b>

**Best Practices (if applicable):**

**Evaluation**

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