



განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Accreditation Expert Group Report on Higher Education Programme

Higher Education Programme Name

Doctoral Program in Mass Communications

HEI's Name

The University of Georgia

Date(s) of Evaluation

14 November 2019

Report Submission Date

Tbilisi

November 2019

HEI's Information Profile

Name of Institution Indicating its Organizational Legal Form	The University of Georgia LTD
HEI's Identification Code	205037137
Type of Institution	University

Higher Education Programme Information Profile

Name of the Programme	Doctoral Program in Mass Communications
Level of Education	Eight (Third level of Higher Education)- Doctoral Program
Qualification Granted Indicating Qualification Code	Doctor in Mass Communications 0703
Language of Instruction	Georgian
Number of Credits	180
Programme Status (Authorized/ Accredited/New)	Accredited

Expert Panel Members

Chair (Name, Surname, University/organization/Country)	Prof. dr. Peter Neijens University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands
Member (Name, Surname, University/organization/Country)	Prof. dr. Khatuna Kacharava Griogl Robakidze University, Georgia Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia
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Accreditation Report Executive Summary

▪ General information on the education programme

The Doctoral Program in Mass Communications is offered by the School of Social Sciences of the University of Georgia. The *objectives* of the programme are twofold: to train highly qualified mass communication researchers who are (1) able to independently create new theoretical and practical knowledge based on theories and empirical analyses, and (2) able to lecture. In line with the mission statement of the University of Georgia, the programme aims to promote liberal-humanist values and principles of democratic society, for the benefit of the Georgian nation and humanity. The *learning outcomes* of the programme fit the programme objectives and describe the knowledge, skills, abilities and competences that graduates should have after completing the programme. Potential employers, academic staff, and students were involved in the process of designing the learning outcomes. Results of the programme learning outcomes assessment are utilized for the improvement of the programme.

The *programme* of 180 ECTS consists of two parts: (1) courses (60 ECTS) and (2) research (120 ECTS), according to Georgian and European standards. 45 ECTS of the coursework include the mandatory courses Mass communications, Quantitative research, Qualitative research, Academic writing for scientific publications, and Modern teaching/evaluation strategies in higher education, and 15 ECTS should be filled with courses taken from a list of electives: Professor's assistance, Research project management, Text abstracting and translation, Philosophy of science, E-learning management systems. The research part of two years is further detailed by the student and his / her Scientific Advisory Board which consists of three professors, one being the supervisor of the student, and the other two experts in the particular field of study of the doctoral student. The requirements for the research part are transparent: (at least) two scientific papers, one conference participation, one dissertation, a pre-defence, and a public defence. Each component involved in the Mass Communications programme curriculum has a relevant syllabus that outlines the prerequisites for admission to the component (if any), the component's objectives, content, methods, study material (literature) and assessment form and criteria. The requirements and assessment criteria for the research module "Doctoral thesis" are set out in the Doctoral Studies provision and the Rules of the Scientific Advisory Board. A map of learning outcomes has been developed to ensure the consistency of the programme content with the programme learning outcomes.

The *entry requirements* for PhD education are transparent, public, and accessible. Applicants with a master's degree or equivalent academic qualification and a solid knowledge of English are accepted to the Doctoral Program Mass Communications. A proof of intermediate (B2) level English skills is mandatory. The School Board also evaluates the research topic of the student according to the following criteria: significance, references and scientific and practical value.

The programme ensures that the student gain four types of *skills*: the ability to independently plan and conduct quantitative and/or qualitative research, the ability to analyse, synthesise and evaluate existing knowledge, the ability to engage in written communication with the professional community, and the ability to plan and implement lecturing independently. These skills are acquired through course work, conducting studies, conference participation, and publications of papers and the dissertation. Students also engage in a pre-defence and a public defence of their dissertation. The University offers the students the option to practice as a teaching assistant to the professor.

Course methods include instructions by the lecturers, independent work, and individualized consultations, study of the relevant literature, critical analysis, discussion/debate, and research.

Student evaluation is conducted according to an established procedure that complies with the Order N3 "Approval of the Rules for Calculating Credits for Higher Education Programmes" by the Ministry of Education and Science on 5 January 2007. Evaluations are based on four basic principles: reliability, validity, objectivity, and transparency. Their transparency (the evaluation forms, criteria, and schedules are defined for each syllabus) and compliance with the specifics of the field keeps a postgraduate student completely informed about the results achieved. Students' knowledge is evaluated according to established forms and procedures. Specifically, the learning component evaluation system is based on pre-defined learning goals, and precise and clear criteria for assignments.

Students receive appropriate *consultations and support* regarding the planning of their learning process, improvement of academic achievement, employment and professional development. Support is provided via relevant departments and staff. It is worth noting that a student may direct any questions to the university's administrative and academic staff either by email or via "My UG". One of the valuable instruments for student support is the Academic Advisory Board, consisting of the supervisor of the doctoral student and two other experts in the particular field of the student's subject. Main goal of the Board is to assist the doctoral student in the successful implementation of his/her studies. Within the framework of the programme, students have an opportunity to participate in local and international conferences and research fellowships; they can also participate in international exchange programs. Doctoral students may receive individual consultation from the programme staff both on academic, as well as on organizational issues of the programme. Special service areas for students are located in the University. Doctoral students have an opportunity to be involved in different projects that are advertised through "My UG" system or the university website.

Every student has a *qualified supervisor* and *two qualified co-supervisors* who have scientific-research experience relevant to the topic of the thesis. Together they form the Scientific Advisory Board who guides the student from the beginning to end. Supervisors have consultations with their students on a regular basis. Doctoral students develop an individualized curriculum in agreement with his / her scientific supervisor(s) and the head/heads of the relevant PhD program. Matching

supervisors to thesis topics is not problematic. Supervisors are available to support and offer feedback. Students are informed how to find their way to the administration, as communication lines are very flexible and effective.

13 academic/scientific/affiliated professors are assigned to the programme, including nine professors and four associate professors. Each academic staff member has a relevant degree and work experience. There is no invited staff.

For *professional development* of the academic and scientific staff, as well as their scientific and research work, the University has implemented the Academic Personnel Development and Scientific Project Management Service, and the Editorial Board of the Scientific Journal “Caucasus Journal of Social Sciences”. The Research Institute coordinates the scientific and research activities of the University, providing suitable conditions for the implementation of up-to-date knowledge and quality-oriented research at the university, facilitates its integration into the study process, and assists in the planning and management of scientific policy at the university.

Academic staff are obliged to take care of professional development along with training activities and should prepare at least one scientific publication each year. To encourage the integration of academic staff into the international scientific space and to promote scientific activity, the university has a mechanism for financing scientific activities (participation in international scientific conferences, publications in peer-reviewed journals). Training and workshops are held to enhance staff qualifications.

The university's auditoriums and cabinets are *well-equipped* with projectors, WiFi and other modern equipment. The university has computer classes, a TV studio and special free spaces for doctoral students, also connected to WiFi internet. The University Library has the latest textbooks and other scientific publications both in print and digital. The library is equipped with computers connected to the Internet. Students have the possibility the Saakashvili Presidential Library as well. The university is equipped with relevant software (SPSS, Statistical Program R) and electronic databases.

The proposed *financial plan* of the programme reflects all needs and financial support mechanisms and provides the programme with the necessary material and technical resources. The budget also provides for funding of the library, access to international electronic resources; staff compensation and travel expenses, facilities for research activities and the publication of academic articles and papers. Each student is allocated 3000 GEL for his/her research activities.

The *Quality Assurance* Department supports the staff in the monitoring, evaluation and further development of the programme. The Department employs a broad spectrum of activities including examination of the relationships between the learning outcome of the courses and the learning outcomes of the programme, analyses of the performance of the doctoral students, collecting

students' and staff's evaluations of the courses, and checking the compliance of (changes in) the programme with the documents of higher education and the Statute of the University of Georgia. External quality assessment of the programmes of the University of Georgia includes surveys of (potential) employers, surveys of graduates, and evaluations by external experts.

- **Brief overview of the accreditation site-visit**

The accreditation visit took place on Thursday 14 November 2019. Before the visit, the Expert Panel received a Self-Evaluation Report (SER), accompanied by detailed syllabi of all programme components and CVs of the academic staff. During the visit, the panel had the chance to meet and interview representatives of the University Administration (including the vice-rector, the dean of the School of Social Sciences, the Head of the Journalism and Mass Communications Program, the Head of the Academic Personnel Development and Project Management, and representatives of the Quality Assurance Department), the Self Evaluation Team, the Head of the Study Program, the Staff, Employers, and students. All participants were very cooperative and willing to participate in the discussions in an open and frankly way. Requests from the panel regarding the provision of additional information were handled professionally and efficiently during the visit.

- **Summary of education programme's compliance with the standards**

The Expert Panel concludes that the Doctoral Program in Mass Communications fully complies with the standard requirements for all criteria that apply for reaccreditation.

- **Summary of Recommendations**

- **Summary of Suggestions**

The number of students in the programme is extremely small (currently only three, no graduates in the past five years). Although the Expert Panel appreciates the 'quality is more important than quantity' strategy of the programme as the guiding principle for the intake of students, the Panel is of the opinion that **a higher number of students is warranted** given today's crucial importance of the communication field, the need of qualified researchers, the resources available at the University, and the quality of the programme, staff and students.

The programme management is also advised to consider **broadening the scope of the research agenda and the study programme** that is now mainly focussed on 'traditional' mass communication. Topics such as computational communication science, big data, automated content analysis, algorithms, virtual assistants, chatbots and privacy issues are increasingly dominating the international communication science research agenda (e.g., conferences, journals, and grant opportunities).

The Expert Panel also advises to explore options **to raise the level of the methods courses** which is currently sufficient, but not excelling. The Panel understands that the level of the previous education of the students (BA and MA) determines and limits the level of the doctoral programme, but it might be worthwhile to aim for excellence and to keep up with the top of international doctoral

programmes given the international ambitions of the programme, and to add methods such as automated content analysis and (advanced) multivariate analysis to the curriculum.

Management, staff and students have the ambition to further develop the programme into a **prominent international player** in the region. The Expert Panel appreciates this and advises to draft a multi-year plan that details the necessary further steps (some are already on the agenda of the management) to achieve this: implementation of an English-language programme, more international students, further development of international exchange programmes for staff and students, participation in international research programs and international grant applications, implementation of joint degrees, and accreditation by prestigious institutes such as the Accreditation Council on Education in Journalism and Communication (ACEJC).

As one of the main priorities of the programme is the contribution to the communication field in Georgia, **cooperation with social partners could be strengthened and formalized**. The Expert Panel was happily surprised to see how involved the practitioners and potential employers were with the programme. The Experts advise the University to install an (external) Advisory Board (including potential employers, alumni, and international colleagues) that advises the programme on a regularly basis that could contribute in setting strategic goals and directions for the programme. This may also give incentives for further collaborations, e.g., development of research areas of common interest.

During the site visit representatives of the programme mentioned the **interdisciplinary character** of (many) mass communication studies. The Expert Panel advises to give further attention to this aspect and consider how the programme can further contribute to truly interdisciplinarity research.

The Expert Panel advises **to monitor the need for more electives** in the curriculum to accommodate a possible increase in the heterogeneity in the profile of admitted doctoral students, in terms of backgrounds and experiences.

▪ **Summary of best practices (If Applicable)**

The implementation of a **Scientific Advisory Board** which consist of three professors, one being the supervisor of the student, and the other two experts in the particular field of study of the doctoral student which guides the student in his doctoral studies from beginning to end.

The involvement of students in **scientific activities of premium quality**: they participate in staff colloquia and (inter)national conferences, have high publication commitments (at least two papers publications and a dissertation), practice in a pre-defence supervised by the Scientific Advisory Board and have the opportunity to work as a teaching assistant to the professor.

Commitment of the staff who give high priority to **extensive individualized coaching** of the doctoral student.

The **high quality and prominent role of quality assurance** in monitoring and developing the programme.

The **very active cooperation of the programme with (potential) employers and relevant scientific and research centres** (i.e., NATO Information Centre in Georgia).

- **In case of accredited programme, summary of significant accomplishments and/or progress (If Applicable)**

The programme was last accredited in 2014. Recommendations of stakeholders (including potential employers), students and the academic staff were considered for further development of the programme. Specifically, **the goal of being able to lecture** has been added to the objectives of the programme and the learning outcomes, and the curriculum has changed accordingly.

Furthermore, **the programme has now more focus on** quantitative and qualitative research methods, the course 'Academic writing for scientific publication' has been identified as a key study course, and elective courses were added to the curriculum, an improvement that responds to the different backgrounds and different study subjects of the students.

A **Scientific Advisory Board** for each individual student has been implemented.

Compliance of the Programme with Accreditation Standards

1. Educational programme objectives, learning outcomes and their compliance with the programme

A programme has clearly established objectives and learning outcomes, which are logically connected to each other. Programme objectives are consistent with the mission, objectives and strategic plan of the institution. Programme learning outcomes are assessed on a regular basis in order to improve the programme.

1.1 Programme Objectives

Programme objectives define the set of knowledge, skills and competences the programme aims to develop in graduate students. They also illustrate the contribution to the development of the field and the society.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

The objectives of the Doctoral Program in Mass Communications are twofold: to train highly qualified mass communication researchers who are (1) able to independently create new theoretical and practical knowledge based on theories and empirical analyses, and (2) able to lecture. The programme aims to promote liberal-humanist values and principles of democratic society, for the benefit of the Georgian nation and humanity. These goals are (also) central in the mission statement of the University of Georgia which is: "We are engaged in knowledge production and person's education. Here we imply cultivation of liberal-humane values among people and providing them with all necessary knowledge and skills for success by means of a honest work".

The Expert Panel is of the opinion that these objectives and goals are formulated clearly and extensively and illustrate the contributions of the programme to the development of the field and society. Not only is mass communication an interesting and timely field of study, there is also an academic and societal need for highly qualified communication researchers. The objectives of the programme fully comply with international and national standards for academic doctoral studies.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Mission statement of the University of Georgia
- Interview with University Administration
- Interview with the SER team
- Interview with the programme head
- Interviews with academic staff

Recommendations:**Suggestions for programme development:**

Management, staff and students have the ambition to further develop the programme into a prominent international player in the region. The Expert Panel advises to draft a multi-year plan that details the necessary further steps (some are already on the agenda of the management) to achieve this: implementation of an English-language programme, more international students, further development of international exchange programmes for staff and students, participation in international research programs and international grant applications, implementation of joint degrees, and accreditation by prestigious institutes such as the Accreditation Council on Education in Journalism and Communication (ACEJC).

During the site visit, representatives of the programme mentioned the interdisciplinary character of (many) mass communication studies. The Expert Panel advises to give further attention to this aspect and consider how the programme can further contribute to truly interdisciplinarity research.

Best Practices (if applicable):**In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress**

The objective 'ability to lecture' has been added to the programme objectives in the past period.

Evaluation

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

1.2. Programme Learning Outcomes

- Programme learning outcomes describe knowledge, skills, and/or the sense of responsibility and autonomy, students gain upon completion of the programme;
- Programme learning outcomes assessment cycle consists of defining, collecting and analysing data;
- Programme learning outcomes assessment results are utilized for the improvement of the programme.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

The learning outcomes of the Doctoral Program in Mass Communications show the knowledge, skills and competences that graduates should have after completing the programme. Knowledge learning outcomes include theories, methods, academic writing and lecturing. Skills include quantitative and qualitative research abilities, the ability to effectively communicate with the

scientific and professional community, and the ability to plan and lecture independently. Responsibility and autonomy are among the competences learning outcomes.

Potential employers, academic staff, and students were involved in the process of designing the learning outcomes. The learning outcomes are consistent with the needs of the labour market and potential employers. The Expert Panel is of the opinion that the learning outcomes are achievable, realistic, and measurable, and fit the programme objectives and national and international standards. The programme learning outcomes assessment cycle consists of defining, collecting and analysing data. Results of the programme learning outcomes assessment are utilized for the improvement of the programme.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Map of learning outcomes
- Interview with University Administration
- Interview with the SER team
- Interview with the programme head
- Interviews with academic staff

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

Best Practices (if applicable):

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

In the past period, the learning outcomes have been extended with learning outcomes necessary for the added programme objective 'lecturing'.

Evaluation

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

Programme's Compliance with Standard

Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
Educational programme objectives, learning outcomes and their compliance with the programme	X			

2. Teaching methodology and organization, adequate evaluation of programme mastering

Programme admission preconditions, programme structure, content, teaching and learning methods, and student assessment ensure the achievement of programme objectives and intended learning outcomes.

2.1. Programme Admission Preconditions
Higher education institution has relevant, transparent, fair, public and accessible programme admission preconditions.
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements</p> <p>The entry requirements for PhD education are transparent, public, and accessible. They are based on the needs for a successful study. Particularly, the applicants with a master's degree or equivalent academic qualification and a solid knowledge of English are accepted to the Doctoral Program Mass Communications. A proof of intermediate (B2) level English skills is mandatory. The School Board also evaluates the research topic of the student according to the following criteria: significance, references and scientific and practical value.</p> <p>The Expert Panel is of the opinion that these entry requirements comply with the requirements and (inter)national standards.</p>
<p>Evidences/indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Evaluation Report • Information on the University website (www.ug.edu.ge)
Recommendations:

Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards
<p>Suggestions for programme development:</p> <p>The number of students in the programme is extremely small (currently only three, no graduates in the past five years). Although the Expert Panel appreciates the ‘quality is more important than quantity’ strategy of the programme as the guiding principle for the intake of students, the Panel is of the opinion that a higher number of students is warranted given today’s crucial importance of the communication field, the need of qualified researchers, the resources available at the University, and the quality of the programme, staff and students.</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education programmes
<p>In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)
<p>Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements

2.2 Educational Programme Structure and Content

Programme is designed according to HEI’s methodology for planning, designing and developing of educational programmes. Programme content takes programme admission preconditions and programme learning outcomes into account. Programme structure is consistent and logical. Programme content and structure ensure the achievement of programme learning outcomes. Qualification to be granted is consistent with programme content and learning outcomes.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

The programme was developed by applying the University of Georgia’s methodology for planning, developing and improving educational programmes. The programme of 180 ECTS comprises two parts: (1) courses (60 ECTS) and (2) research (120 ECTS), according to Georgian and European standards. 45 ECTS of the coursework include mandatory courses: Mass communications, Quantitative research, Qualitative research, Academic writing for scientific publications, and Modern teaching/evaluation strategies in higher education. 15 ECTS should be filled with courses taken from a list of electives, including Professor’s assistance, Research project management, Text

abstracting and translation, Philosophy of science, and E-learning management systems.

The research part of two years is further detailed by the student and his/her Scientific Advisory Board which consists of three professors, one being the supervisor of the student, and the other two experts in the particular field of study of the doctoral student. The requirements for the research part are transparent: at least two scientific papers, one conference participation, one dissertation, a pre-defence, and a public defence (which is recorded). The School Board appoints five members for the assessment of the dissertation and the public defence.

The Expert Panel is positive about the structure of the programme. The programme is designed according to the HEI's methodology for planning, designing and developing of educational programmes and takes programme admission preconditions and programme learning outcomes into account.

Each component involved in the Mass Communications program curriculum has a relevant syllabus, that outlines the prerequisites for admission to the component (if any), the component's objectives, content, methods, study material (literature) and assessment form and criteria. The requirements and assessment criteria for the research module "Doctoral thesis" are set out in the Doctoral Studies provision and the Rules of the Scientific Advisory Board. A map of learning outcomes has been developed to ensure the consistency of the programme content with the programme learning outcomes.

The Expert Panel is positive about the structure of the doctoral programme which assures the smooth progression of a student and his/her achievement of the learning outcomes. The map that shows the relationship between on the one hand learning outcomes of the courses and the research parts, and on the other the learning outcomes of the programme confirms the consistency between the two and show how the courses contribute to the achievements of programme learning outcomes.

The syllabi contain all relevant information. The inclusion of electives in the course programme in the past period is an improvement. The Expert Panel also very much likes the installation of the Scientific Advisory Board which guides a student from the beginning to the end of his or her studies. This Board approves the design of the doctoral research, advises the student on the selection of courses, the studies to be conducted, the journals to be considered for publications, conferences, and monitors the progress made by the student.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- The Rules of working of the Scientific Advisory Board
- Map of learning outcomes of the programme vs learning outcomes of the courses

- Interview with University Administration
- Interview with the SER team
- Interview with the programme head

Interviews with academic staff

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

The Expert Panel advises to monitor the need for more electives in the curriculum to accommodate a possible increase in the heterogeneity in the profile of admitted doctoral students, in terms of backgrounds and experiences.

Best Practices (if applicable):

The implementation of Scientific Advisory Board which consists of three professors, one being the supervisor of the student, and the other two experts in the particular field of study of the doctoral student guides the student in his doctoral studies from beginning to end.

The involvement of students in scientific activities of premium quality: they participate in staff colloquia and (inter)national conferences, have high publication commitments (at least two papers publications and a dissertation), practice in a pre-defence supervised by the Scientific Advisory Board and have the opportunity to work as a teaching assistant to the professor.

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

In the past period, several courses have been adapted or were added to the programme, e.g., Academic writing, (quantitative and qualitative) Research methods, and Mass communications. In addition to the mandatory courses, electives were added to the curriculum. The Scientific Advisory Board was implemented.

Evaluation

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

2.3 Course

- Student learning outcomes of each compulsory course are in line with programme learning outcomes; Moreover, each course content and number of credits correspond to course learning outcomes;
- Teaching materials listed in syllabi are based on the core achievements in the field and

ensure the achievement of intended programme learning outcomes.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

Learning outcomes of each compulsory course of the doctoral programme in Mass Communications are relevant to the general learning outcomes of the programme. The content and the number of credits awarded for all compulsory (Mass Communication, Qualitative Research Methods, Quantitative Research Methods, Academic Writing for Scientific Publications, Modern Teaching /Evaluation Strategies in Higher Education) and elective courses match the learning outcomes of the courses, as is guaranteed by the joint work of programme manager, curators of separate study components, and the quality assurance service taking into account the degree to which the teaching materials listed in syllabi are based on the core achievements in the field.

Scientific literature (monographs, scientific articles), recommended by the module components of syllabi is relevant to the topic of the components and based on significant achievements in the field. This is guaranteed by course curator's analysis of questionnaires about the complete compliance of the course topics and recommended literature, and the relevance to modern achievements in the field. Based on this, the literature is updated, or the syllabus topics are adjusted. The materials stored in the library are available to all students, professors, and teachers of the University of Georgia. Also, students have access to additional information through the electronic content on JSTOR. Resources listed in the syllabi of compulsory courses are available in the university library.

The specialisation module in Mass Communications is identified as the most important training component for the postgraduate student, which provides knowledge of scientific approaches and paradigms in mass communication, critical analysis, and innovative skills. Academic Writing for Scientific Publications focuses on constructing scientific papers in various formats and knowledge of the peculiarities of the preparation process for publication. Based on the latest achievements in the field, Qualitative Research Methods provides knowledge in methods of collecting qualitative data, research design, and research methodology. Quantitative Research Methods develops the ability to process statistical data obtained from research.

The Expert Panel is of the opinion that the learning outcomes of each compulsory course are in line with programme learning outcomes, and that each course content and number of credits correspond to course learning outcomes. The Panel also believes that the teaching materials listed in syllabi are based on the core achievements in the field and ensure the achievement of intended programme learning outcomes. While mass communications is a constantly changing field, it requires new scientific approaches and insights and therefore, periodic update of the literature is recommended for the courses. In particular the Panel believes that it might be worthwhile to consider broadening the scope of the courses and add topics that increasingly dominate the international communication science research agenda, such as computational communication

science, big data, automated content analysis, algorithms, virtual assistants, chatbots and privacy issues.

Evidences/indicators

- Syllabi of the components of the study module
- Doctoral Program in Mass Communications
- Map of Learning Outcomes

Recommendations:

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

Suggestions for programme development:

The programme management is advised to consider broadening the scope of the study programme that is now mainly focussed on ‘traditional’ mass communication. Topics such as computational communication science, big data, automated content analysis, algorithms, virtual assistants, chatbots and privacy issues are increasingly dominating the international communication science research agenda (e.g., conferences, journals, and grant opportunities).

The Expert Panel also advises to explore options to raise the level of the methods courses which is currently sufficient, but not excelling. The Panel understands that the level of the previous education of the students (BA and MA) determines and limits the level of the doctoral programme, but it might be worthwhile to aim for excellence and to keep up with the top of international doctoral programmes given the international ambitions of the programme, and to add methods such as automated content analysis and (advanced) multivariate analysis to the curriculum.

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

- Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)

Evaluation

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

2.4 The Development of practical, scientific/research/creative/performance and transferable skills

Programme ensures the development of students’ practical,

scientific/research/creative/performance and transferable skills and/or their involvement in research projects, in accordance with the programme learning outcomes.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

The programme ensures that the student gain four types of skills. First, the ability to independently plan and conduct quantitative and/or qualitative research on mass communications, media and strategic communications in order to create new knowledge. Second, the ability to analyse, synthesise and evaluate existing knowledge, including mass communications theories, approaches, audiences, models, and identify new research problems. Third, the ability to engage in written communication with the professional community. Fourth, the ability to plan and implement lecturing independently.

These skills are acquired through course work, conducting studies, conference participation, and publications of papers and the dissertation. Students also engage in a pre-defence and a public defence of their dissertation. The University offers the students the option to practice as a teaching assistant to the professor.

The Expert Panel is positive about the development of students' practical, scientific/research/creative/performance and transferable skills and their involvement in research projects, in accordance with the programme learning outcomes.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Interview with University Administration
- Interview with the SER team
- Interview with the programme head
- Interviews with academic staff
- Interview with the students

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

Best Practices (if applicable):

- Colloquium participation
- Conference participation
- The requirement of two paper publication
- Opportunity to work as a teaching assistant
- Pre-defence

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

Evaluation

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

2.5 Teaching and learning methods

Program is implemented using student centered teaching and learning (SCL) methods. Teaching and learning methods correspond to the level of education, course content, student learning outcomes and ensure their achievement.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

The teaching methods used in the programme are indicated in the syllabi. Course methods include instructions by the lecturer, independent work, and individual consultations, study of the relevant literature, critical analysis, discussion/debate, and research. The Expert Panel is impressed by the willingness of the lecturers to consult with individual students ‘all the time’ to give them oral or mediated (email) feedback to their inquiries. In the meetings with the Expert Panel, both lectures and students expressed their satisfaction with this practice.

The Expert Panel is really positive about this didactical approach which is in line with the level of studies of the programme under consideration (doctoral studies) in which individual development of the doctoral student is central.

The individual supervision of the doctoral student in the research phase of his or her studies by the Scientific Advisory Board of the student is evaluated as a best practice by the Expert Panel. The Scientific Advisory Board includes the supervisor and two members which could be from (a) different disciplines (in case of interdisciplinary research). This Board guides the doctoral student during her/his studies and advises about the research steps, the publication process, papers and dissertation and the defence.

Evidences/indicators

- Course syllabi
- Rules of the Scientific Advisory Board
- Interview with the programme head
- Interview with the academic staff
- Interview with students

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

Best Practices (if applicable):

Commitment of the staff who give high priority to extensive individualized coaching of the doctoral student.

The implementation of the Scientific Advisory Board.

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

See Best Practices

Evaluation

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

2.6. Student Evaluation

Student evaluation is conducted in accordance with established procedures. It is transparent and complies with existing legislation.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

Students' knowledge is evaluated according to established forms and procedures. Specifically, the learning component evaluation system is based on pre-defined learning goals, and precise and clear criteria for assignments.

Student evaluation is conducted according to an established procedure that complies with the Order N3 "Approval of the Rules for Calculating Credits for Higher Education Programmes" by the Ministry of Education and Science on 5 January 2007.

Evaluations are based on four basic principles: reliability, validity, objectivity, and transparency. Their transparency (the evaluation forms, criteria, and schedules are defined for each syllabus) and compliance with the specifics of the field keep a doctoral student completely informed about the results achieved.

The learning components' evaluation system includes multiple forms of evaluation (e.g. intermediate and final, or intermediate, final and presentation) that allow the monitoring of the process of knowledge and skills gained by a postgraduate student and thus, it assists to achieve the goals set in the learning component. The Scientific Advisory Board regularly monitors the progress of students' study and skills. During the course, a postgraduate student can discuss her/his achievements with academic staff members and consider ways to improve them. Also, a postgraduate student can appeal the evaluation according to the established procedure of student evaluation, credit scoring, and applying for additional/repeated courses/components.

To ensure compliance with the established standards of postgraduate education, writing a doctoral

thesis is a gradual and consistent process, which is monitored periodically. Developmental evaluation is ongoing, which means that feedback on thesis colloquia and preliminary defence is provided on a continuous basis by the Scientific Advisory Board. Procedures for the defence and evaluation of the doctoral thesis and the evaluation criteria are provided in the Postgraduate Education Regulation and the System of Rules of the Scientific Advisory Board.

The Expert Panel is of the opinion that the student evaluation procedures and their application confirm with the requirements and are of high quality.

Evidences/indicators

- Doctoral Program in Mass Communications
- The Doctorate Provision
- The Rule of Work of the Scientific Advisory Board

Recommendations:

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

Suggestions for programme development:

Non-binding suggestions for programme development

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

- Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)

Evaluation

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

Programme's Compliance with Standard

Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
Teaching methodology and organization, adequate evaluation of programme mastering	X			

3. Student achievements and individual work with them

HEI creates student-centered environment by providing students with relevant services; programme staff ensures students' familiarity with the named services, organizes various events and fosters students' involvement in local and/or international projects.

3.1. Student support services

Students receive appropriate consultations and support regarding the planning of learning process, improvement of academic achievement, employment and professional development.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

The Expert Panel on the basis information collected through the Self-Evaluation Report, other relevant documents and the Site Visit conclude that all necessary students support services are in place. Students receive appropriate consultations and support regarding the planning of their learning process, improvement of academic achievement, employment and professional development. Support is provided via relevant departments and staff including the Dean and Program Head. It is worth noting that a student may direct any questions to the university's administrative and academic staff either by email or via "My UG". One of the valuable instruments for student support is the Academic Advisory Board, consisting of the supervisor of the doctoral student and two other experts in the field of the student's subject. Main goal of the Board is to assist the Doctoral student in the successful implementation of the scientific / research process.

Within the framework of the Program, students have an opportunity to participate in local and international conferences and research fellowships; they can also participate in international exchange programs. Doctoral students may receive individualized consultation from the programme staff both on academic, as well as on organizational issues of the program. Special

service areas for students are located in the University. Doctoral students have an opportunity to be involved in different projects that are advertised through "My UG" system or the university website.

The Expert Panel believes that the students at the University of Georgia receive appropriate consultations and support regarding the planning of learning process, improvement of academic achievement, employment and professional development.

Evidences/indicators

- Site visit
- Self-Evaluation report (SER)
- Academic program
- Student system "My UG"
- University website
- The Rule of work of the Scientific-consulting Board
- Descriptions of the relevant department's duty

Recommendations:

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

Suggestions for programme development:

Non-binding suggestions for programme development

Best Practices (if applicable):

The Doctoral Scientific Advisory Board is a strong and most effective instrument in delivering doctoral students all necessary support in order to carry out their research process in a successful manner.

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

- Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)

Evaluation

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

3.2. Master's and Doctoral Student supervision

Master's and Doctoral students have qualified thesis supervisors.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

The Expert Panel has concluded on the basis of the information in Self-Evaluation Report, other relevant documents and the site visit, that the programme have qualified thesis supervisors and meets the accreditation standards in this regard. Every student has a qualified supervisor and two qualified co-supervisors who have scientific-research experience relevant to the topic of the thesis. Together they form the Scientific Advisory Board who guides the student from the beginning to end. Supervisors have consultations with their students on a regular basis. Associate Professor Leli Bibilashvili, who leads the Doctoral Program in Mass Communications, delivers all necessary support to the students in this process. Doctoral students develop an individualized curriculum in agreement with his / her scientific supervisor(s) and the head/heads of the relevant PhD program. Staff and students indicate that matching supervisors to thesis topics is not difficult. Supervisors are available to support and offer feedback. Students are informed how to find their way to the administration, as communication lines are very flexible and effective.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation report (SER)
- Opinions of the scientific supervisors of PhD students
- Interviews with student
- Interviews during the Site-Visit
- CVs of academic staff involved in the program
- Personal files of academic staff engaged in the program

Recommendations:

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

Suggestions for programme development:

Non-binding suggestions for programme development

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

- Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)

Evaluation

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

Programme's Compliance with Standard

Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
Student achievements and individual work with them	X			

4. Providing teaching resources

Programme human, material, information and financial resources ensure programme sustainability, its effective and efficient functioning, and achievement of intended objectives.

4.1 Human Resources

- Programme staff consists of qualified people who have necessary competences in order to help students achieve programme learning outcomes;
- The number and workload of programme academic/scientific and invited staff ensures the sustainable running of the educational process and also, proper execution of their research/creative/performance activities and other assigned duties. Balance between academic and invited staff ensures programme sustainability;
- The Head of the Programme possesses necessary knowledge and experience required for programme elaboration. He/she is personally involved in programme implementation;
- Programme students are provided with an adequate number of administrative and support staff of appropriate competence.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

13 academic/scientific/affiliated professors are assigned to the programme, including nine professors and four associate professors. Each academic staff member has a relevant degree and work experience to accomplish the programme. There is no invited staff.

The head of the programme is an associate professor who has professional qualifications and work experience required for programme elaboration. The programme is promoted by qualified and experienced staff members of the Educational Management Service, University Library, the School,

and Quality Assurance Service.

The Expert Panel is of the opinion that the staff consists of qualified people (academic and administrative personnel) who have the necessary competences in order to help students achieve programme learning outcomes. The number and workload of programme academic/scientific and invited staff ensure the sustainable running of the educational process and also, proper execution of their research/creative/performance activities and other assigned duties. All staff are non-invited staff which contributes greatly to programme sustainability.

Evidences/indicators

- Relevant job descriptions
- Personal files of academic staff
- Educational and Scientific Personnel Provision

Recommendations:

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

Suggestions for programme development:

Non-binding suggestions for programme development

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

- Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)

Evaluation

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

4.2 Professional development of academic, scientific and invited staff

- HEI conducts the evaluation of programme academic, scientific and invited staff and analysis evaluation results on a regular basis;
- HEI fosters professional development of the academic, scientific and invited staff. Moreover, it fosters their scientific and research work.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

The academic/scientific staff is regularly evaluated by both administration and doctoral students (see also Section 5.1). The Quality Assurance Department conducts the necessary studies. Results and recommendations of these studies are reviewed and approved by the Academic Board, and -if necessary- modification are made in certain modules of the programme in joint consultation of the Head of the School, Head of the Programme and academic staff implementing the program.

The University of Georgia fosters the professional development of the academic and scientific staff, as well as their scientific and research work. For this policy, the University has implemented the Academic Personnel Development and Scientific Project Management Service, and the Editorial Board of the Scientific Journal “Caucasus Journal of Social Sciences”. The Research Institute coordinates the scientific and research activities of the University, providing suitable conditions for the implementation of up-to-date knowledge and quality-oriented research at the university, facilitates its integration into the study process, and assists in the planning and management of scientific policy at the university.

Academic staff are obliged to take care of professional development along with training activities and should prepare at least one scientific publication each year. To encourage the integration of academic staff into the international scientific space and to promote scientific activity, the university has a mechanism for financing scientific activities (participation in international scientific conferences, publications in peer-reviewed journals). Training and workshops are held to enhance staff qualifications, for instance researchers work on research projects such as “The influence of Russian media on the Russian-speaking population and the political process in Germany and Georgia” (together with the German colleagues), an online platform “History of the development of the Georgian press since its establishment”, a global research project “Women in Public Relations” together with the University of Leeds (UK).

Several scientific activities are scheduled: a student scientific conference “Contemporary Findings in the Social Sciences: The Role of Strategic Communications and Political Freedoms in the Formation of Society”, A multi-stage seminar on “Research at the University”, after its completion, beginner researchers will be introduced to the basic methods and techniques underlying modern academic research, the joint research project “Analysis of Georgia's Foreign Course” together with the Georgian Strategic Analysis Center (GSAC), a seminar by a German researcher “Data Processing in the R Project for Statistical Computing”, and the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication actively works on fact-checking, counterpropaganda and verification issues, organises and participates in local and international seminars and trainings.

Students and professors of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication participated in the Trans-European antipropaganda and Fact-checking project (eufactcheck.eu). The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication became a member of the European Public Relations

Education and Research Association (EUPRERA), and the European Journalism Training Association (EJTA). Academic staff of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication participated in the conference organised by Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona (Spain). Academic staff of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication participated with a research presentation in the Sinergie-SIMA 2019 Conference organised by Sapienza University of Rome (Italy). Academic staff of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication participated in the World Journalism Education Congress (WJEC PARIS) in Paris (France).

Foreign visiting professors regularly present lectures at the university: British scientist Evan Lawson (Senior Research Fellow for Military Influence at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), Christian Kauffeld, Rasto Kuzel, Yannis Buffoltz and others. Georgian specialists offer training courses to the students and professors of the university. For example, “Effective presentation techniques”, “Research as a key tool in marketing and PR”, etc.

The Expert Panel is impressed by the scope and quality of the programme for the evaluation of academic and scientific staff that the University of Georgia has installed. The Panel also believes that the University of Georgia adequately fosters professional development of the academic, scientific and invited staff, and their scientific and research work.

Evidences/indicators

- Personal files of academic staff engaged in the program
- Appendix to the Provisions of the Scientific-research Institute on the Rule of Awarding Bonuses
- List of activities implemented within the program

Recommendations:

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

Suggestions for programme development:

Non-binding suggestions for programme development

Best Practices (if applicable):

The very active cooperation of the programme with (potential) employers and relevant scientific and research centres (i.e., NATO Information Centre in Georgia).

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

- Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)

Evaluation

X Complies with requirements

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

4.3. Material Resources

Programme is provided by necessary infrastructure and technical equipment required for achieving programme learning outcomes.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

It has become clear to the Expert Panel that the doctoral programme has sufficient material and technical resources necessary for implementing the curriculum. The university's auditoriums and cabinets are well equipped with projectors, WiFi and other modern equipment. The university has computer classes, a TV studio and special free spaces for doctoral students, also connected to WiFi internet. The University Library has the latest textbooks and other scientific publications both in print and digital, which enable the doctoral student to receive the necessary literature and work in the direction of professional development. The library is equipped with computers connected to the Internet. Students have the possibility the Saakashvili Presidential Library as well. The university is equipped with relevant software (SPSS, Statistical Program R) and electronic databases such as ELSEVIER - Scopus; Science Direct; Social Funding (Funding Institutional), Cambridge Journals Online, e-Duke Journals Scholarly Collection, Edward Elgar Publishing Journals and Development Studies e-books, SAGE Premier, IMechE Journals.

PhD students are informed about the availability and terms of use of the mentioned resources. The faculty administration is ready to purchase scientific and educational literature and to fill the library fund in case of existed request from academic staff or students. The university also delivers dining services through the "Cafeteria 145", with excellent quality of dishes and friendly environment.

The Expert Panel concludes that the Doctoral Program in Mass Communications Programme is fully provided with the necessary infrastructure and technical equipment required for achieving programme learning outcomes.

Evidences/indicators

- Site Visit at the University Premises (Auditoriums, computer classes, TV Studio, University Library and the Saakashvili Presidential Library)
- Access to international electronic databases
- Selective examination of compulsory and additional course materials
- Self-Evaluation Report (English/Georgian versions, pdf)
- Interview with PhD students

Recommendations:

Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards
<p>Suggestions for programme development:</p> <p>Non-binding suggestions for programme development</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education programmes
<p>In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)
<p>Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements

4.4.Programme/faculty/school budget and programme financial sustainability
The allocation of financial resources stipulated in programme/faculty/school budget is economically feasible and corresponds to programme needs.
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements</p> <p>During the Site Visit, interviews with relevant staff the Expert Panel identified that the faculty budget provided to run the program, is sufficient to make it economically feasible and corresponding to doctoral programme needs. The proposed financial plan of the programme reflects all needs and financial support mechanisms and provides the programme with the necessary material and technical resources.</p> <p>The budget also provides funding of the library, access to international electronic resources; staff compensation and travel expenses, facilities for research activities and the publication of academic articles and papers. From the visit it became clear that for each student 3000 GEL is allocated for their research activities. Beside this, the programme has the possibility to receive extra funds to promote research activities from the international projects in which the Doctoral Program in Mass Communications participates.</p>
<p>Evidences/indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctoral Program in Mass Communications financial plan

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctoral program • Self-Evaluation Report • Programme budgeting rule, programme budget • Interviews with Faculty/program administration during the site visit
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards</p>
<p>Suggestions for programme development:</p> <p>Non-binding suggestions for programme development</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education programmes
<p>In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)
<p>Evaluation</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>

Programme's Compliance with Standard

Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
Providing teaching resources	X			

5. Teaching quality enhancement opportunities

In order to enhance teaching quality, programme utilizes internal and external quality assurance services and also periodically conducts programme monitoring and programme review. Relevant data is collected, analysed and utilized for informed decision making and programme development on a regular basis.

5.1 Internal quality

Programme staff collaborates with internal quality assurance service(s) available at the higher education institution when planning the process of programme quality assurance, creating assessment instruments, and analysing assessment results. Programme staff utilizes quality assurance results for programme improvement.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

The Quality Assurance Department supports the staff in the monitoring, evaluation and further development of the programme. First, the Department draws the course map that relates the learning outcome of the courses to the learning outcomes of the programme. Second, the Department analyses the performance of the doctoral students and identifies facilitating and / or hindering factors in the development of the competences envisaged in the curriculum and individual courses. Third, the Department collects information (using -mandatory- questionnaires and face-to-face meetings) about the students' evaluations of all courses of the curriculum. Fourth, the Quality Assurance Department collect information (using questionnaires) on the satisfaction of academic staff with the programme and the courses and research components, the teaching methods and literature. Fifth, the Quality Assurance Department examines the compliance of proposed changed in the programme with the documents of higher education and the Statute of the University of Georgia. Six, the Department checks syllabi and collects best practices.

The Expert Panel is impressed by the scope of the internal quality assurance programme, and the high quality of the Quality Assurance Department and its activities. Quality Assurance Services and the staff have very good working relationships.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Map of Learning Outcomes
- Results of Doctoral Student surveys
- Results of Staff surveys
- Interview with University Administration, including quality assurance representatives
- Interview with the SER team
- Interview with the programme head
- Interviews with academic staff

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

Best Practices (if applicable):

The high quality and prominent role of quality assurance in monitoring and developing the programme.

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

The programme was last accredited in 2014. Recommendations of stakeholders (including potential employers), students and the academic staff were considered for further development of the programme. Specifically, the goal of being able to lecture has been added to the learning outcomes and the programme has changed accordingly. Furthermore, the programme has now more focus on quantitative and qualitative research methods, the course 'Academic writing for scientific publication' has been identified as a key study course, and elective courses are added to the curriculum, an improvement that responds to the different backgrounds and different study subjects of the students. A scientific advisory board for each individual student has been implemented (see above). The Expert Panel welcomes the willingness of the programme to respond to these recommendations and considers the changes to be significant improvements.

Evaluation

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

5.2 External quality

Programme utilizes the results of external quality assurance on a regular basis.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

External quality assessment of the programmes of the University of Georgia includes in general surveys of (potential) employers, surveys of graduates, and evaluations by external experts. The Expert Panel is of the opinion that these instruments are adequate and is positive about the external quality programme of the University as is also applied for this programme. Visiting international scholars visited and advised the programme. The Expert Panel was impressed by the involvement of the (potential) employers and other external stakeholders of the programme. The Expert Panel advises the University to install an (external) Advisory Board (including potential employers, alumni, and international colleagues) that advises the programme on a regularly basis.

Evidences/indicators

- Various protocols of amendment review and approval
- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Interview with University Administration
- Interview with the SER team
- Interview with the programme head
- Interviews with academic staff

Recommendations:**Suggestions for programme development:**

The Expert Panel advises the University to install an (external) Advisory Board (including potential employers, alumni, and international colleagues) that advises the programme on a regularly basis.

Best Practices (if applicable):**In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress**

The programme was last accredited in 2014. Recommendations of stakeholders (including potential employers), students and the academic staff were considered for further development of the programme. Specifically, the goal of being able to lecture has been added to the learning outcomes and the programme has changed accordingly. Furthermore, the programme has now more focus on quantitative and qualitative research methods, the course 'Academic writing for scientific publication' has been identified as a key study course, and elective courses are added to the curriculum, an improvement that responds to the different backgrounds and different study subjects of the students. A scientific advisory board for each individual student has been implemented (see above). The Expert Panel welcomes the willingness of the programme to respond to these recommendations and consider the changes to be significant improvements.

Evaluation

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

5.3. Programme monitoring and periodic review

Programme monitoring and periodic review is conducted with the involvement of academic, scientific, invited, administrative staff, students, graduates, employers and other stakeholders through systematically collecting and analysing information. Assessment results are utilized for programme improvement.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

The Quality Assurance Department has developed the procedures and means for monitoring all relevant aspects of the programme, the proposed changes in the programme, and compliance with its accrediting standards. Programme monitoring and periodic review is conducted on a regularly basis through systematically collecting and analysing information. All stakeholders (academic, scientific and administrative staff, students, employers) are involved. Findings of these evaluations are shared with the relevant actors (e.g., management, staff, students) and necessary actions are taken. Recent changes in the programme include changes in the curriculum (new courses, introduction of electives) and the implementation of a Scientific Advisory Board.

The Expert Panel is impressed by the scope of the quality assurance programme, and the high quality of the Quality Assurance Department and its activities. The Expert Panel welcomes the willingness of the programme to respond to the recommendations of the evaluations and considers the resulting changes to be significant improvements. Quality Assurance Services and the staff have very good working relationships.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Interview with University Administration, including quality assurance representatives
- Interview with the SER team
- Interview with the programme head
- Interviews with academic staff
- Interview with students
- Interview with stakeholders
- Map of Learning Outcomes
- Results of Doctoral Student surveys
- Results of Staff surveys

Recommendations:**Suggestions for programme development:**

As one of the main priorities of the programme is the contribution to the communication field in Georgia, cooperation with social partners could be strengthened and formalized. The Expert Panel was happily surprised to see how involved the practitioners and potential employers were with the programme. The Experts advises the University to install an (external) Advisory Board (including potential employers, alumni, and international colleagues) that advises the programme on a regularly basis that could contribute in setting strategic goals and directions for the programme. This may also give incentives for further collaborations, e.g., development of research areas of common interest.

Best Practices (if applicable):

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

The programme was last accredited in 2014. Recommendations of stakeholders (including potential employers), students and the academic staff were considered for further development of the programme. Specifically, the goal of being able to lecture has been added to the learning outcomes and the programme has changed accordingly. Furthermore, the programme has now more focus on quantitative and qualitative research methods, the course 'Academic writing for scientific publication' has been identified as a key study course, and elective courses are added to the curriculum, an improvement that responds to the different backgrounds and different study subjects of the students. A scientific advisory board for each individual student has been implemented. The Expert Panel welcomes the willingness of the programme to respond to these recommendations and consider the changes to be significant improvements.

Evaluation

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

Programme's Compliance with Standard

Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
Teaching quality enhancement opportunities	X			

Enclosed Documentation (If Applicable)

HEI's Name: The University of Georgia

Higher Education Programme Name: Doctoral Program in Mass Communications

Number of Pages of the Report: 37

Programme's Compliance with the Standard

Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
1. Programme objectives are clearly defined and achievable; they are consistent with the mission of the HEI and take into consideration labour market demands	X			
2. Teaching methodology and organization, adequate evaluation of programme mastering	X			
3. Student achievements and individual work with them	X			
4. Providing teaching resources	X			
5. Teaching quality enhancement opportunities	X			

Expert Panel Chair



Prof. dr. Peter Neijens

Expert Panel Members



Prof. dr. Khatuna Kacharava



Ms. Nana Pirtskhelani