



**NATIONAL CENTER FOR  
EDUCATIONAL QUALITY  
ENHANCEMENT**

**Accreditation Expert Group Report on Higher Education Programme**

**Doctoral Educational Program, Theology-History of the Georgian Church**

**LEPL - Georgian Technical University**

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### Information about a Higher Education Institution

Name of Institution Indicating its Organizational Legal Form	Georgian Technical University, LEPL
Identification Code of Institution	211349192
Type of the Institution	University

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## I. Information on the education programme

Name of Higher Education Programme (in Georgian)	თეოლოგია - საქართველოს ეკლესიის ისტორია
Name of Higher Education Programme (in English)	Theology-History of Georgian Church
Level of Higher Education	Doctoral Program
Qualification to be Awarded	PhD
Name and Code of the Detailed Field	Religion and Theology 0221
Indication of the right to provide the teaching of subject/subjects/group of subjects of the relevant cycle of the general education	-
Language of Instruction	Georgian
Number of ECTS credits	Study component: 50 ECTS
Programme Status (Accredited/ Non-accredited/ Conditionally accredited/new/International accreditation) Indicating Relevant Decision (number, date)	Accredited № 57; 19.07.2016
Additional requirements for the programme admission (in the case of an art-creative and/or sports educational programme, passing a creative tour/internal competition, or in the case of another programme, specific requirements for admission to the programme/implementation of the programme)	-

## II. Accreditation Report Executive Summary

### ▪ General Information on Education Programme

Since 2016, the doctoral educational program "Theology" has been implemented at Georgian Technical University, at the Faculty of Business-Engineering, which was granted accreditation by the decision of the Accreditation Council of Educational Programs №. 57 of July 19, 2016. The current doctoral educational program "Theology-Georgian Church History" is functioning at the Faculty of Engineering Economics, Media Technologies and Social Sciences.

The program "Theology-History of the Georgian Church" was developed in accordance with the scientific trends of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and provides an understanding of the main issues of the cycle of humanitarian sciences, which are presented in the form of a triad - "Religion, thought, science" (SER, 4).

The head of the program confirmed that there are currently 9 students enrolled in this program. According to the Program Description, the teaching component of the program is 50 ECTS: the first semester consists of 15 ECTS methodological components, and 15 ECTS for thematic seminars; the second semester consists of an assistantship to a professor (10 ECTS) and two elective courses (out of four) (10 ECTS). The remaining time (the total duration of the program is no less than three years) is spent on doctoral research and writing a dissertation.

According to the website of the Center of Theology and SER, 19, the core theological staff of the program consists of two full professors and two invited associate professors; they are supplemented with three academic staff members from other departments. These data have been confirmed and elucidated during the site visit.

### ▪ Overview of the Accreditation Site Visit

The site visit took place on October 26, 2022, from 10.00 until 19.00. All the interview sessions went as planned and according to the time schedule (for an overview of the site visit and the interviewees, see On-Site Visit Agenda). In this respect, the competent preparation of the site visit by the staff member of the Educational Quality Assurance Department of the NCEQE, Ms. Nino Alavidze, was essential. The only part of the site visit that took more time than scheduled was the tour of the University campus (visiting the offices, lecture and seminar rooms, and library facilities). The program provided the Expert Panel with a copy of four dissertations, including a summary in English. In most cases, the Expert Panel interviewed the persons mentioned in the agenda of the visit; a few times, a person who was scheduled to be interviewed, turned out to be unavailable and was replaced by someone else. The interviews took place in a pleasant and constructive atmosphere, although the fact that all of them were held in Georgian and had to be translated meant that they were rather static. It goes without saying that the assistance offered by the translator, Ms. Mariam Khazhomia, who did a very competent job, was crucial for the chair to get an inside view of the program. Partly due to the language gap and the static nature of the interviews, the Expert Panel did not always get precise answers to its specific questions about certain aspects of the program. Finally, Ms. Alavidze contacted the university, c.q. the program, asking it to provide (the English translation of) quite a number of documents ahead of the site visit. These documents were important since the SER referred regularly to them to substantiate its claims about having complied with certain standards. Unfortunately, the Expert Panel received only some of these documents, and only on the very day of the site visit, which implied that it was too late to read them beforehand.

- **Brief Overview of Education Programme Compliance with the Standards**

For a fair evaluation of the compliance of the program with the standards it is essential to keep in mind that the Georgian Church, theology as an academic discipline and, hence, the PhD-program in Theology – History of the Georgian Church are still in a build-up phase after more than 70 years of communist rule (see the interview with the head of the program). Since its establishment in 2016, the program has implemented numerous improvements, the most important ones being: Narrowing down the focus of the program to “History of the Georgian Church”; Focusing the educational component of the program on methodological questions; Changes in the syllabi and the system of evaluating students; Adding courses on “Teaching Methods”, “Techniques of Scientific Communication”, and “Assisting a Professor” to the educational component; Updating of textbooks and additional literature; Adjusting the prerequisites for admission to the program (See SER, 4f).

The Expert Panel welcomes these improvements but deems nevertheless that the program does not yet fully comply with the standards (for a detailed overview and argumentation, see the Expert Panel’s evaluation of the individual standards, and a summary of the recommendations and suggestions below). The most urgent recommendations are that the program should be clearer and more rigorous about the admission criteria for those students who do not have an academic background in theology. When this recommendation is fulfilled, the program can upgrade its educational component to a PhD-level proper and add some specialized courses that are vital for the study of the Georgian Church (e.g. Old Georgian). Furthermore, the program needs much more national and international benchmarking and a strategy to establish or strengthen its cooperation with other HEIs in theology and Church history. Such a strategy will benefit the program as such since it makes external peer reviews of the program possible; it also enables lecturers to get assistance from external colleagues in the supervision and reviewing of dissertations and facilitates them in setting up joint (national and international) research projects and conferences; this strategy will also benefit the PhD-students because they will get the chance to present their research on the national and international academic scene and exchange their insights and experiences with others from outside the university. Finally, as to the system of quality assurance, the Expert Panel wants to express its appreciation for the competent work of the Quality Assurance Service. However, the Panel noticed that the leadership of the program and its lecturers do not always seem to collaborate effectively with this Service since the SER is insufficiently self-critical and fails to apply the numerous regulations and instructions of this Service and the GTU as such to the objectives and learning outcomes of the program itself. The Expert Panel deems that the program can benefit a lot from the competencies of this Service. In particular, the program should conduct comprehensive self-evaluations and analyze them on a deeper level. All this will contribute to the further improvement of the quality of this program. the program should develop specific questionnaires for students’ evaluations of the educational and research components of the program.

- **Recommendations**

Standard 1.1

- The program should resolve the inconsistency between the general description of its goals and the far more precise Description of the Doctoral Program. The latter should be leading for the general description of the goals of the program to enhance its academic quality and upgrade it to a proper doctoral level.
- See recommendations for Standards 1.4 and 2.1.

#### Standard 1.2

- The program should devise a preliminary program, which introduces the students who lack an academic education in theology into this field of study. Elements of the existing courses of the PhD-program can be used to realize this (see also the first recommendation to standard 2.1).

#### Standard 1.3

None

#### Standard 1.4

- The Expert Panel recommends the program to resolve the inconsistency regarding the research proposal.
- The program should introduce specialized courses on research methodology and auxiliary disciplines that are vital to the study of Georgian Church history (see Description of the Doctoral Program, 2) to provide the PhD-students with an in-depth knowledge of this field of study. The best option seems to be to work with tutorials related to the dissertation's specific topic.

#### Standard 1.5

- The program should distinguish clearly between introductory courses, meant for students without a sufficient academic background in theology, and educational courses on a doctoral level. The former should be part of a preliminary program, the second should be part of the PhD-program and can be adjusted to the specific needs of the PhD-students.
- The program should take a critical look at the skills and competencies that are essential for a PhD in the History of the Georgian Church and adapt the content of the individual courses accordingly.

#### Standard 2.1

- The Expert Panel recommends that the program develops more precise and rigorous admission requirements for students without a MA in theology. In particular, the program should specify how many ECTS in theological and methodological courses are required to be admitted to the program.
- The updated doctorate regulation must be uploaded on the HEI's webpage;
- It is recommended to develop detailed criteria for evaluating the research project for admission.
- The main topics and evaluation criteria must be elaborated and documented for the applicant's interview with a faculty provisional committee.
- All the necessary information for admission to the program must be placed on the webpage in a consistent way (no difference between the info in Georgian and English).

#### Standard 2.2

- The HEI shall consider that taking part in at least one international conference, forum, congress, or symposium should be mandatory for doctoral students.
- The university must increase its structural cooperation with theological institutions inside the country and abroad.
- Students should be more involved in scientific/research/creative projects (both locally and internationally) in line with the program learning outcomes.

### Standard 2.3

None

### Standard 2.4

- The analysis of the student's evaluation results must be improved;
- It is recommended to involve specialists in the field from outside of the HEI in the assessment of the dissertation thesis (see also recommendation to standard 4.2).

### Standard 3.1

None

### Standard 3.2

- The Expert Panel recommends the program to check the fulfillment of the rules defined by the regulations of the PhD program, in particular regarding the transfer of the abstract and dissertation to the university library and their placement on the website of the faculty.

### Standard 4.1

None

### Standard 4.2

- Taking into account the small number of (associate) professors with a doctoral degree in theology or history employed in this program, the Expert Panel recommends hiring more affiliate supervisors for the students of this program.

### Standard 4.3

None

### Standard 4.4

None

### Standard 4.5

None

### Standard 5.1

- Academic personnel and the Quality Assurance Service staff need to collaborate more effectively in order to conduct comprehensive self-evaluations and elaborate a precise and detailed self-evaluation report, which identifies strengths and areas for improvement of the program and is rather self-critical than descriptive.
- The methodology for implementing the learning process electronically/remotely needs to be developed. The institution must ensure the adaptation of internal quality assurance mechanisms and their proper implementation for monitoring and evaluating the electronic/distance learning process.

### Standard 5.2

- External developmental peer reviews from local and foreign colleagues need to be conducted periodically.



### Standard 5.3

- The program should conduct a special survey of doctoral students in order to ensure the anonymous evaluation of the implementation of the scientific-research component and scientific supervision.
- Benchmarking must be conducted, and the doctoral program must be periodically compared with similar programs of foreign universities.

### ▪ **Suggestions for Programme Development**

#### Standard 1.1

- The Georgian Church plays an important role in Georgian Society and is protected by the constitution. For the future of theology and the Georgian Church in general the Expert Panel suggests that the Georgian HEIs in theology, including the seminaries, create a joint research school, in which introductory and general methodological courses and the training of PhD-students in theology can be pooled.
- The student-intake of this program is rather low (according to the information provided during the interview, there are currently 9 students enrolled in the program), and the program employs only five (associated) professors in the field of the history of the Georgian Church. Establishing a research school enables the PhD-students to communicate with each other, to get acquainted with other fields of theology and other approaches to the field, and to present part of their research. Furthermore, such a school also enables the academic staff of all these HEIs to exchange ideas and experiences in their field of research, and creates the opportunity for developing joint research projects, projects, external assistance in the supervision and assessment of dissertations, etc. (see also recommendation 4.2).

#### Standard 1.2

- To enhance the international outlook of the program, the Expert Panel suggests that at least one course should be taught in English.
- For the same reason, the students should be stimulated to write at least one research paper in English.

#### Standard 1.3

None

#### Standard 1.4

- The program should develop an internationalization strategy, not only by strengthening its ecclesiastical contacts but also those with other universities

#### Standard 1.5

None

#### Standard 2.1

- The program can realize the recommendation to make the admission requirements more rigorous by devising a preliminary program with introductory courses in theology and methodology, to compensate for students' deficiencies in these matters. Elements of the existing courses of the PhD-program can be used to realize this.

- The HEI shall review the documents accurately before submission since the content of some documents in Georgian is not identical to the English version.
- The Expert Panel suggests including knowledge of old Georgian in the educational part of the program. It should be assessed in a fair and transparent way.

#### Standard 2.2

- It is suggested to contribute to the development of the PhD-students' language skills and competencies.

#### Standard 2.3

None

#### Standard 2.4

None

#### Standard 3.1

- The Expert Panel suggests the program to take more initiatives to involve students in international conferences or exchange programs.

#### Standard 3.2

- The Expert Panel suggests developing a research school in theology in Georgia, in which all the PhD-students of all HEIs in Georgia in the same field (theology) can participate, to discuss the progress and results of their research formally and informally.

#### Standard 4.1

- . The program should pay more attention to proficiency in English when hiring academic staff in the future.
- The program should stimulate and facilitate the academic staff in giving papers at international conferences.

#### Standard 4.2

- The Expert Panel suggests that the program invests extra (financial) means to enhance the international experience of the academic staff, as this is a means to stimulate the internationalization of the program, including its students.

#### Standard 4.3

#### Standard 4.4

- Examination of the possibilities of closer cooperation between theological HEIs in the field of library facilities.

#### Standard 4.5

- The Expert Panel suggests that the Program gives more detailed information about its receipts and expenditure.

#### Standard 5.1

None

## Standard 5.2

None

## Standard 5.3

- The teaching of the academic and invited staff should be evaluated by using a pre-determined classroom observation template.

### ▪ **Brief Overview of the Best Practices (if applicable)<sup>1</sup>**

### ▪ **Information on Sharing or Not Sharing the Argumentative Position of the HEI**

The Expert Panel has received the Argumentative Position of the HEI regarding the submitted evaluation report and wishes to react to it in detail.

## **Standard I**

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding the Recommendation to Standard 1.1

The Expert Panel agrees with the University that simply repeating the detailed description of the various components of the doctoral program in the program's general objectives is not necessary but this was not the point the Expert Team wanted to make. This recommendation should rather be read in close relation to what the Expert Panel wrote in the summary and analysis of the program's compliance with standard 1.1. The Panel has serious concerns about whether the program can really help its students to achieve a doctoral level in the study of the history of the Georgian Church if the admission requirements stipulate just a MA degree in *any* field of studies. Therefore, to inform the prospective students adequately and fairly about the level of specialized expertise they are expected to have achieved after completing this program the Expert Panel recommended making the program objectives more precise (cf. the Description of the Doctoral Program), so that the prospective students can determine whether their initial level of expertise in this field of studies is a sufficient basis to achieve the program's objectives after three years of study (the exit level). The Expert Panel acknowledges that the discrepancy between the (presumed) entrance level of students without a prior academic qualification in this field of studies and the intended exit level of the program can also be solved in a different way, e.g. by defining the entry requirements objectively and unambiguously. In sum, the main concern of the panel is that the prospective students should be informed as realistically as possible about what is expected from them. Hence, this recommendation goes far beyond a simple matter of brevity in phrasing the program objectives. Therefore, the Expert Panel does not share the argumentative position of the University concerning this standard.

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<sup>1</sup> A practice that is exceptionally effective and that can serve as a benchmark or example for other educational programme/programmes.

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding the Recommendation to Standard 1.2 and Recommendation 2 to Standard 1.4

The Expert Panel agrees with the description that the University gives of the purpose of the educational and research components because it corresponds with what similar programs at universities abroad aim at. In its Report (pp. 6, 17f), the Expert Panel expressed its appreciation for the general set-up of the program. The concerns of the Panel are different ones. 1) The PhD-regulations of the University require applicants to have obtained a master's or equal academic degree corresponding to the qualification of the selected doctoral educational program, whereas the Description of the Doctoral Program (p. 2) does not mention this last requirement explicitly. Moreover, several of the interviewees confirmed that previous academic training in one of the fields of study that are part of or closely related to the focus of the program was not a formal requirement. The reason they gave was that this was not feasible in light of the recent history of the Georgian Church and the tradition of academic theology in Georgia (Report, p. 18). To address this (understandable) deficiency, which was also recognized by the students and the alumni during the interview, the Expert Panel recommended devising a preliminary program and specialized courses on research methodology etc. 2) The Expert Panel deems that solution worked out by the Program, namely, to require applicants to submit a research project during the admission competition, is insufficient because it lacks the required transparency of assessment (Report, p. 22). Therefore, the Expert Panel does not share the argumentative position of the University concerning this standard.

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 1 to Standard 1.4

The Expert Panel does not share the position of the University that this recommendation is vague since the Summary and Analysis of the Program explicitly refers to the relevant documents to underpin this aspect of its evaluation (see Report, p. 22). The document entitled “Educational and Research Components of Doctoral Programs and the Procedure for Their Evaluation” (Appendix 2) stipulates that the research proposal for the dissertation should be drafted during the second semester of the first year of study (see Research Components, Section 3.4). However, the Description of the Doctoral Program, p. 2 states that this research project should be drafted before entering the program and serves as an admission requirement. Hence, there is an obvious inconsistency between these two documents, and this should be resolved.

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 2 to Standard 1.4 (the argumentative position of the University mentions Recommendation 1, but it should be 2)

In addition to the Reaction of the Expert Panel to the position of the University on this matter (see above) the Expert Panel notes that the educational part of the Program comprises too many courses that are rather on a BA or MA than on a doctoral level (see Report, pp. 22, 24 for detailed examples). The intention of this recommendation was to raise the educational part of the program to a proper doctoral level.

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 3 to Standard 1.4

The Expert Panel agrees with the position of the University about this recommendation and has downgraded it to a suggestion. Yet, the Expert Panel wishes to note that the SER did not refer to the new edition of the “Status of the Head of the Educational Program”, so that the Panel could not take it into account.

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 1 to Standard 1.5

The Expert Panel understands the University's position, arguing that this program's focus is very specific and has only been developed for 20 years, which explains why most of the compulsory literature is in Georgian. Therefore, the Expert Panel has dropped this recommendation.

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 2 to Standard 1.5

As argued above in the Expert Panel's reactions to the University's position regarding the Recommendation on Standard 1.1, the Recommendation on Standard 1.2, Recommendation 2 on Standard 1.4 (two reactions), the Expert Panel deems that the requirements for applicants to this program to submit a research project and undergo an interview with the Faculty Temporary Committee are insufficient to guarantee the doctoral level of the students. Moreover, these requirements are not transparent enough from the prospective student's perspective. Therefore, the Expert Panel does not share the argumentative position of the University.

Conclusion: the Expert Panel sees no reason to share the position of the University to upgrade the overall evaluation of Standard 1 to "complies with the requirements". Moreover, the Panel deems the University's qualification of this evaluation as "irrelevant" as an unjustified and improper disqualification of the seriousness and accuracy with which the Panel has executed its task.

## **Standard II**

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 1 to Standard 2.1

The Expert Panel does not dispute that academic research is often interdisciplinary and that the focus of the PhD-program comprises different (sub)disciplines. Therefore, the Panel understands that making the admission criteria to the program too rigorous would be counterproductive. However, there is quite a difference between too rigorous admission criteria and no indication at all about the discipline in which the prospective student should have obtained a MA-degree before entering the program (see also the reactions of the Panel to the Recommendation to Standard 1.1 and 1.2). The lack of such a precise indication leaves prospective students, especially those with a different MA-degree than the ones mentioned in the University's position, in doubt about whether their entry qualifications are adequate to complete the program successfully. Moreover, the educational component of the program shows that some parts of this component are actually catching up on knowledge and topics that should have been acquired during the BA or MA study of the prospective student (see also the reaction of the Panel to Recommendation 2 to Standard 1.5). The Panel also understands that practical experience in the field can be an asset for the students, but this rather applies to the field of practical theology than to a theoretical discipline like the history of the Georgian Church, and, moreover, practical experience cannot compensate the lack of theoretical knowledge. The Expert Panel dropped part of the recommendation because the Georgian text of the Doctoral Regulations of the University differs from the English version, which is, by the way, problematic in itself. All in all, the Panel does not share the position of the University on this standard.

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 2 to Standard 2.1.

The Expert Panel appreciates that the University has taken action on this recommendation since the site visit took place.

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 3 to Standard 2.1.

The Expert Panel appreciates that the University has taken action on this recommendation since the site visit took place but wishes to note that the document that the Panel requested before the site visit (and which was only submitted during the site visit) is not identical in all aspects to the document that has been uploaded on the website of the Faculty (see the Appendix to the Argumentative Position of the University). In particular, the uploaded document does not mention the main topics for the interview with the applicant, nor gives it a detailed overview of the evaluation criteria.

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 4 to Standard 2.1.

The Expert Panel appreciates that the University has taken action on this recommendation but wishes to note that the document that the Panel requested before the site visit (and which was only submitted during the site visit) is not identical in all aspects to the document that has been uploaded on the website of the Faculty (see the Appendix to the Argumentative Position of the University). In particular, the uploaded document does not mention the main topics for the interview with the applicant, nor gives it a detailed overview of the evaluation criteria.

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 5 to Standard 2.1.

The Expert Panel appreciates that the University has taken action on this recommendation since the site visit took place but notes that this recommendation does not only concern information about the pre-test for admission and the program, but also main topics and evaluation criteria.

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 1 to Standard 2.2.

In its argumentative position, the University simply repeats what is written in article 8 of the Regulations for Preparation and Verification of the Dissertation but does not explain how these regulations are implemented by the program (the SER, p. 14 does not give any further information about this either). More importantly, the Expert Panel has not seen any evidence of this participation (e.g. texts of presentations in English or the titles of the scientific articles published by the PhD-students). Finally, the University does not specify what it means by “materials [...] verified by the head of the relevant academic department” in the case of this program. Therefore, the Panel does not share the position of the University regarding this recommendation.

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 2 to Standard 2.2.

The Expert Panel appreciates that the Program accepts this recommendation.

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 3 to Standard 2.2.

The Expert Panel appreciates that the Program accepts this recommendation.

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 1 to Standard 2.4.

The Expert Panel does not doubt that the internal mechanisms and methodology for evaluating the student’s results are sound, tested, and implemented but this does not become apparent in the SER, since it lacks a critical reflection on these evaluations and their implications for the further development of the program. Typically, the evaluations of the student’s results are included in a loop of quality improvement of the program, but the SER and the interviews have not yielded evidence of the presence of such a loop. Therefore, the Panel does not share the position of the University.

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 2 to Standard 2.4.

In its position, the University quotes Article 9.5 of the Regulations for the Doctoral Program (see also Report, p. 30). Yet the Expert Panel does not see how this regulation can be implemented given the small number of academic staff of the program (see also the Reaction to the position of the University on standard 4.2). Moreover, one of the criteria of accreditation standard 2.4 stipulates that the “assessment of the dissertation involves external evaluator(s)”. Therefore, the Expert Panel does not share the position of the University on this standard.

### **Standard III**

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 1 to Standard 3.2

The Expert Panel does not doubt that all dissertations are submitted to the central library of STU, and checked that the abstracts of the dissertations are indeed posted on the website of the Faculty, although the abstracts were only uploaded after the site visit. However, Article 11.1.8) of the Regulations for the Doctoral Program requires the “placing [of] the electronic versions of the thesis and autoabstract on the university's website”, which contradicts the position of the University (“USD has no obligation to post theses on the website”). Therefore, the Expert Panel cannot share the position of the University on this standard.

### **Standard IV**

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 1 to Standard 4.2

As the summary and analysis of this substandard argued, this recommendation does not regard the number and academic qualifications of the supervisors in comparison with the number of doctoral students. Rather the Expert Panel doubts whether the program employs enough (associate) professors to comply with the Regulations of the University for Doctoral Educational Programs, article 9.3-6 (Report, p. 37). Since the argumentative position of the University does not give information as to how this compliance can be realized the Expert Panel cannot share the position of the University.

### **Standard V**

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 1 to Standard 5.1

The Expert Panel does not have any doubts about the efforts of the University to prepare and implement training sessions for the teaching staff of the program and to strengthen the culture of quality. The SER and the various regulations and instructions of the University have given ample evidence to substantiate these efforts. Yet, the Expert Panel was struck by the very descriptive character of the SER and the lack of analysis, precise self-evaluation, and concrete plans and timelines for the improvement of the program (Report, p. 41). This observation inevitably leads to the conclusion that, despite all the initiatives of the University and its head of the quality assurance service, this has apparently not resulted in developing an effective analytic, self-evaluative and self-critical attitude among the persons who were responsible for drafting the SER. Therefore, the Expert Panel does not share the position of the University regarding this recommendation.

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 2 to Standard 5.1

The Expert Panel welcomes and appreciates the initiatives of the University to develop electronic and remote learning since this will facilitate the learning and research of the PhD-students, many of whom are working off campus.

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 1 to Standard 5.2

The Expert Panel is happy that the University accepts this recommendation.

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 1 to Standard 5.3

The Expert Panel checked Appendix 14, which serves as the argumentative basis for the University's position on this recommendation. However, Appendix 14 only contains the CVs of the lecturers and no documents regarding the evaluation procedures of the educational and research component of the PhD-program. Therefore, the Expert Panel cannot share the position of the University.

- Reaction to the position of the University regarding Recommendation 2 to Standard 5.3

The Expert Panel appreciates that the University takes this recommendation to heart.

- **In case of re-accreditation, it is important to provide a brief overview of the achievements and/or the progress (if applicable)**



### III. 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 HEI. Programme learning outcomes are assessed on a regular basis to improve the programme. The content and consistent structure of the programme ensure the achievement of the set goals and expected learning outcomes.

##### 1.1 Programme Objectives

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

#### Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

The objectives of the program are 1) to provide a PhD-student with the ability to perform scientific research in the field of Theology - History of the Georgian Church, which allows for the expansion of existing knowledge or the use of innovative methods; 2) to teach the student to correlate the theological directions and issues of the history of the Georgian Church, a scientific understanding of the sources of church history and the worldview of the Holy Fathers; 3) to prepare highly professional academic staff in the field of church history, who will be able to conduct independent, interdisciplinary scientific research and teaching in a higher educational institution (see SER, 7 and Description of the Doctoral Program, 3).

The above summary shows that the program objectives are clearly defined and closely related to the specific field for which this program is devised, i.e. a PhD in theology, in particular the history of the Georgian Church. The program aims to provide the students with methodological competence and a profound knowledge of the history of the Georgian Church and its sources, both of which are essential to complete a dissertation in this field of study.

Although the Strategic Plan of the Georgian Technical University 2022-2028 does not mention theology or church history explicitly, the deputy rector stated in the interview that this program and the Center for Theology are well integrated into the university. An important aspect of the university's mission is to preserve important achievements of national educational traditions, the popularization of the intellectual and moral interests of Georgia, and the preservation and development of high-level and rich national traditions achieved in the field of theology (See Interviews). The dean of the Faculty of Engineering Economics, Media Technologies, and Social Sciences gave a similar statement as to the integration of this program into the faculty. During the interview, the head and lecturers of this program confirmed this information from their side. A concrete example of this integration of this program is provided by the fact that the program has benefited a lot from the competent internal quality assurance of GTU and the Faculty (e.g. Individual Workplan, Instruction concerning the Educational Project management, Regulations for Planning, Elaboration, Development, and Assessment of the Educational Curriculum, Regulations of the PhD-program, Program Learning Outcomes, Evaluation Mechanism, and Targets, etc.).

The Expert Panel welcomes that the program staff has taken numerous initiatives to improve and update the program since its previous accreditation in 2016 (see SER, 4f. and Description of the Doctoral Program, 5, Interviews). These improvements and updates, resulting from the internal and external quality assurance, concern the focus of the program on the history of the Georgian Church (instead of theology in general), the introduction of methodological courses, preparing the students for doctoral research, a thematic course, teaching students how to write a research paper, a course in teaching methods and another one in scientific communication techniques, preparing the students for a future position as experts in the history of the Georgian

Church, assisting a professor in his or her work, which familiarizes students with the practical aspects of academic research and teaching. All these elements contribute to the development of the field and the relevance of this program to the Georgian Society. The courses in teaching and scientific communication illustrate the program's initiatives to take into account the demands of the labor market, inside as well as outside the academia. The interview with an employer in a non-academic sector confirmed this impression; he appreciated the communicative and teaching skills of the graduates from this program, as well as their knowledge of other religions. A major improvement is also the introduction of additional admission requirements, in particular a developed research project, an interview with the lecturers, and proof of sufficient proficiency in English, besides the formal requirement of an MA degree.

The program is publicly available on the website of the faculty, although only in Georgian, and is common knowledge among the lecturers and students involved in the program, as the interviews showed.

Despite all these commendable initiatives to improve the quality of the program, the major concern of the Expert Panel is that its objectives are not realistic and achievable. The reason is that the admission requirements to the program (see Description of the Doctoral Program, 2) are not rigorous enough for a PhD program in the History of the Georgian Church. It is unclear whether "the master's or equal academic degree of an applicant [indeed] corresponds to the qualification of the selected doctoral educational program", as the English text of the PhD-regulations runs, or whether what is required is just an equal academic degree in any field, as the Georgian text says (see Doctoral Educational Program Regulations, 3.5). The Description of the Doctoral Program (p. 2) is rather vague in this respect. As a consequence of the rather lax admission requirements, some elements of the methodological courses are rather on a BA or MA than on a doctoral level (see syllabus of Communication Techniques, Theological Methods of Research, and Comparative Theology). Reversely, a profound knowledge of elements that are vital for doctoral research in the history of the Georgian Church and that are explicitly mentioned as objectives of the program (see Description of the Doctoral Program, 2) get only marginal attention (5 ECTS). This shows that there is an inconsistency between the general description of the goals of the program in SER, 7 and the much more specific description in the Description of the Doctoral Program, 2. The result may be that the students are not able to complete their dissertations in a period of three years' time as they lack some essential knowledge and skills at the start of their research trajectory. However, this was not confirmed during the interview. Therefore, the most probable effect of the admission policy of the program is that the quality of the dissertations does not meet international academic standards. This comes as no surprise since the internationalization of the program is low (for the evaluation of this aspect and suggestions to improve it, see section 1.2). During the interview, the head of the program said that the Georgian Church and the HEIs in theology are still in a build-up phase after more than 70 years of communist rule, so it is not realistic to require a MA in theology as an admission requirement to the program. Some other interviewees recognized that there is a problem admitting students with deficiencies to the program. The program tries to address this problem by requiring prospective students to submit a research project and hold an interview with them, but the Expert Panel deems that this is not enough to compensate for these deficiencies; furthermore, this policy compromises the transparency of the admission process.

### **Evidences/Indicators**

- Self-Evaluation Report
- Description of the Doctoral Program
- Doctoral Educational Program Regulations
- Interviews
- Strategic Plan of the Georgian Technical University 2022-2028
- Syllabi of the courses
- Forms and Criteria of Evaluation of PhD Applicant's interview

### **Recommendations:**

- The program should resolve the inconsistency between the general description of its goals and the far more precise Description of the Doctoral Program. The latter should be leading for the general description of the goals of the program to enhance its academic quality and upgrade it to a proper doctoral level.

## Suggestions for the Programme Development

- The Georgian Church plays an important role in Georgian Society and is protected by the constitution. For the future of theology and the Georgian Church in general the Expert Panel suggests that the Georgian HEIs in theology, including the seminaries, create a joint research school, in which introductory and general methodological courses and the training of PhD-students in theology can be pooled.
- The student-intake of this program is rather low (according to the information provided during the interview, there are currently 9 students enrolled in the program), and the program employs only five (associated) professors in the field of the history of the Georgian Church. Establishing a research school enables the PhD-students to communicate with each other, to get acquainted with other fields of theology and other approaches to the field, and to present part of their research. Furthermore, such a school also enables the academic staff of all these HEIs to exchange ideas and experiences in their field of research, and creates the opportunity for developing joint research projects, external assistance in the supervision and assessment of dissertations, etc.

## Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
1.1 Programme Objectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 1.2 Programme Learning Outcomes

➤ The learning outcomes of the programme are logically related to the programme objectives and the specifics of the study field.

➤ Programme learning outcomes describe knowledge, skills, and/or the responsibility and autonomy that students gain upon completion of the programme.

## Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

The learning outcomes of the program are 1) to determine scientific research problems on the basis of a scientific-research methodology; 2) to analyze multidisciplinary information related to research objects in the field of study; 3) to use analytical methods in theological research; 4) to obtain research results and reflect them in international publications; 5) to obtain knowledge in this field in a substantiated manner and to develop new ideas based on new scientific achievements; 6) to make the defense of religious values accessible to a larger audience; 7) to carry out teaching independently, thereby using new methods and strategies of teaching (see SER, 7f. and Description of the Doctoral Program, 3, Program Learning Outcomes, Evaluation Mechanisms and Targets, 4-9).

According to the Expert Panel, the learning outcomes of the program correspond to its objectives as regards the required knowledge, research skills and methods, etc. (see Program Learning Outcomes, Evaluation Mechanisms and Targets, 4-9); they are also quantified in the document of the Program Learning Outcomes (page 7) and in the syllabi of the individual courses. These outcomes indeed enable students to work at a university or outside the academia, as was confirmed during the interview with a non-academic employer. The Description of the Doctoral Program and the syllabi of the individual courses show that these learning outcomes are assessed

transparently. The interviews also made clear that the tenured staff of the Center of Theology collaborates very well with the invited professors and with those from other departments of GTU. According to the answers to the questions of the Expert Panel in the interviews, the students are well-informed about the ins and outs of the program and are satisfied with the guidance they receive. The Expert Panel appreciates that all the courses of the education component use a wide variety of teaching and evaluation methods.

In 2022 the University organized an international conference on Temirbolat Namsurov, but it is unclear to what extent the PhD-students of the program actively participated in this conference by presenting short-papers, although this is an important learning outcome of the program.

Although this program is well-designed, the Expert Panel deems that some intended learning outcomes are not realistic. For students without previous education in theology, it is almost impossible to get an idea of the inherently multidisciplinary character of theology, and to relate their research in the history of the Georgian Church to other fields of theology (e.g. dogmatics, exegesis, moral theology, etc.). One of the interviewees acknowledged that there is a gap between the history of the Georgian Church and other fields of theology, and that this gap needs to be filled. The opinion of the Expert Panel that some learning outcomes are not realistic also applies to the in-depth knowledge of research methodology in the field of church history and the knowledge of old Liturgical Georgian for the study of the early Church. The courses taught by the program are very relevant but do not compensate for these deficiencies in the fields of methodology and specific research skills (for a detailed analysis and evaluation, see section 1.5). Furthermore, although the learning outcomes claim that the students are able to reflect on the results in international publications, all courses are given in Georgian and all dissertations are written in Georgian (with the exception of a summary in (often poor) English). Hence, the claimed ability of the students to present the results of their research at international conferences and publish them in international journals is not realized. In sum, these deficiencies correspond with the above-mentioned ones about the general objectives of the program.

#### **Evidences/Indicators**

- Self-Evaluation Report
- Description of the Doctoral Program
- Syllabi of individual courses
- Interviews
- Program Learning Outcomes, Evaluation Mechanism and Targets

#### **Recommendations:**

- The program should devise a preliminary program, which introduces the students who lack an academic education in theology into this field of study. Elements of the existing courses of the PhD-program can be used to realize this (see also the first recommendation to standard 2.1).

#### **Suggestions for Programme Development**

- To enhance the international outlook of the program, the Expert Panel suggests that at least one course should be taught in English.
- For the same reason, the students should be stimulated to write at least one research paper in English.

#### **Evaluation**

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
1.2 Programme Learning Outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 1.3 Evaluation Mechanism of the Programme Learning Outcomes

- Evaluation mechanisms of the programme learning outcomes are defined; the programme learning outcomes evaluation cycle consists of defining, collecting and analyzing data necessary to measure learning outcomes;
- Programme learning outcomes assessment results are utilized for the improvement of the programme.

### Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

The Evaluation mechanisms of the program as a whole, of most individual courses and of the research component (especially the procedure for the defense and assessment of the dissertation) are very well-defined and transparent. They are also in accordance with the learning outcomes of the program and with the relevant regulations and instructions of the university (see the SER, 8f, Educational and research components of doctoral programs and the procedure for their evaluation, Instruction on the Educational Process Management).

The syllabi of the individual courses include a very detailed and transparent overview of the outcomes of that specific course and link these expected outcomes to the evaluation mechanisms and the criteria for assessment. They also comprise a detailed quantified grading system. An understandable exception to this rule is the course "Assisting a professor". The syllabi of some courses are only available in Georgian; the Georgian members of the Panel confirmed that these syllabi also comply with the requirements.

The SER (p. 8-11) describes the assessment of the program learning outcomes, consisting of four stages (Establishing the learning outcomes, Analyzing the curriculum, Assessing the learning outcomes, Using these data to improve the program). As such, this loop is a very effective way to evaluate and improve the quality of the program, but the SER is very descriptive in this regard and gives no information at all about the lessons that the program has learned from it (SER, 11). Hence, the claim of the SER (p. 12) that the program is in no need for improvement remains unsubstantiated (see analysis and recommendations in section 5.1). The Expert Panel has not received an English translation of the survey results (SER, 11), despite its explicit request.

#### Evidences/Indicators

- Self Evaluation Report
- Educational and research components of doctoral programs and the procedure for their evaluation
- Description of the Doctoral Program
- Syllabi of individual courses
- Applicant's Research Project Assessment Criteria
- Individual workplan
- Educational and Research Components
- Instructions for the dissertation and the abstract
- Instruction on the Educational Process Management
- Regulations for PhD programs
- Program Learning Outcomes, Evaluation Mechanism and Targets

#### Recommendations:

## Suggestions for the Programme Development

### Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
1.3 Evaluation Mechanism of the Programme Learning Outcomes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 1.4. Structure and Content of Education Programme

- The Programme is designed according to HEI's methodology for planning, designing and developing of education programmes.
- The Programme structure is consistent and logical. The content and structure of the programme ensure the achievement of programme learning outcomes. The qualification to be granted is consistent with the content and learning outcomes of the programme.

### Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

As already argued above in section 1.1 and 1.2, the planning, design and development of the educational part of the program by and large follow the guidelines and the instructions of the HEI (see SER, 11f, Description of the Doctoral Program, Educational and research components of doctoral programs and the procedure for their evaluation, section 2.1, Instruction on the Educational Process Management). All individual courses are allotted a well-defined amount of ECTS and the whole educational part of the program consists of 50 ECTS; moreover, the program as a whole takes no less than three years. All this is in accordance with the existing regulations. The volume of the courses corresponds to the nature of the learning cycle, but the content comprises too many introductory courses and too few specialized courses on specialized methodological questions and topics related to the history of the Georgian Church (for more details, see section 1.5). The individual specialized components consistently and logically contribute to the main objective of the program, i.e. completing a dissertation on the History of the Georgian Church, although the amount of ECTS allotted to them is too small (see above). This problem inevitably has a negative effect on the qualification to be awarded by this program. As to the problem of the admission requirements, see the analysis in 1.1 and 2.1 and the recommendations in 2.1. In this context, the Expert Panel notes that the Educational and Research Components of Doctoral Programs and the Procedure for Their Evaluation stipulate that the research proposal for the dissertation should be drafted during the second semester of the first year of study (see Research Components, 3.4), which differs from what is written in the Description of the Doctoral Program, p. 2 and contradicts what is stated in SER, 11. As the syllabi of the specialized methodological courses and the courses in the history of the Georgian Church show, the program considers new research findings and modern achievements in the field, even though the same cannot be said of all general courses, because of their rather introductory nature. Furthermore, the program as a whole, i.e. the students and the teaching staff, has a rather low level of internationalization, as the SER 20 and 22 admit. The SER and the Interviews with the stakeholders show that the program is indeed the result of a collaborative process.

Therefore, the Expert Team recommends that the balance between the general (methodological, communicative, and teaching) courses and the specialized courses in the history of the Georgian Church needs to be adjusted to the specialized, doctoral level of the program.

## Evidences/Indicators

- Self Evaluation Report
- Educational and research components of doctoral programs and the procedure for their evaluation
- Description of the Doctoral Program
- Syllabi of individual courses
- Applicant’s Research Project Assessment Criteria
- Individual workplan
- Educational and Research Components
- Instructions for the dissertation and the abstract
- Instruction on the Educational Process Management
- Regulations for PhD programs
- Program Learning Outcomes, Evaluation Mechanism and Targets
- Interviews

## Recommendations:

- The Expert Panel recommends the program to resolve the inconsistency regarding the research proposal.
- The program should introduce specialized courses on research methodology and auxiliary disciplines that are vital to the study of Georgian Church history (see Description of the Doctoral Program, 2) to provide the PhD-students with an in-depth knowledge of this field of study. The best option seems to be to work with tutorials related to the dissertation's specific topic.

## Suggestions for the programme development

- The program should develop an internationalization strategy, not only by strengthening its ecclesiastical contacts but also those with other universities

## Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
1.4 Structure and Content of Educational Programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 1.5. Academic Course/Subject

- The content of the academic course / subject and the number of credits ensure the achievement of the learning outcomes defined by this course / subject.
- The content and the learning outcomes of the academic course/subject of the main field of study ensure the achievement of the learning outcomes of the programme.
- The study materials indicated in the syllabus ensure the achievement of the learning outcomes of the programme.

## Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

The syllabi of the individual courses show that every learning outcome of each course is assessed appropriately. The compulsory literature and other learning resources are up to date and correspond to the learning outcomes of the individual courses. However, most of the literature is in Georgian (and published by Georgian publishing houses), and therefore, does not fully correspond to the international state of the art for a doctoral program in this field.

More in general, the content of some courses is not consistent with the qualification to be granted (PhD). Some of the methodological courses contain elements that rather belong to undergraduate courses (e.g. in the course “Scientific Communication: ways of finding information, scientific text, sources of scientific research, types of scientific work, abstract and footnotes; in the course Theological Methods: basic concepts of scientific research, use of computer technologies in research, empirical and theoretical research methods, strategies for finding scientific literature, primary, secondary and tertiary sources, hermeneutics). The same applies to some elements of the course Comparative Theology (e.g. the main Western confessions, division of churches in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the main teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and of the Protestant confessions). At the same time, other elements that are vital to a PhD-research in this field do not receive enough credits to achieve the learning outcomes of a PhD-program in this field (especially an in-depth knowledge of old Georgian and other aspects of Georgian Church history). Against this background the Expert Panel does not agree with the claims of SER, 12 that the program meets the requirements of the PhD and that there is no need for improvement (SER, 13). See also section 1.2 for additional examples.

### Evidences/Indicators

- SER
- Syllabi of the courses
- Description of Doctoral Program

### Recommendations:

- The program should distinguish clearly between introductory courses, meant for students without a sufficient academic background in theology, and educational courses on a doctoral level. The former should be part of a preliminary program, the second should be part of the PhD-program and can be adjusted to the specific needs of the PhD-student.
- The program should take a critical look at the skills and competencies that are essential for a PhD in the History of the Georgian Church and adapt the content of the individual courses accordingly.

### Suggestions for the programme development

### Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
1.5. Academic Course/Subject	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Compliance of the Programme with the Standard



1. Educational objectives, learning and their compliance with the programme programme outcomes	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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## 2. Methodology and Organisation of Teaching, Adequacy of Evaluation of Programme Mastering

Prerequisites for admission to the programme, teaching-learning methods and student assessment consider the specificity of the study field, level requirements, student needs, and ensure the achievement of the objectives and expected learning outcomes of the programme.

### 2.1 Programme Admission Preconditions

The HEI has relevant, transparent, fair, public and accessible programme admission preconditions and procedures that ensure the engagement of individuals with relevant knowledge and skills in the programme to achieve learning outcomes.

### Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

The HEI established public, fair, and accessible admission preconditions and procedures, which are consistent with the existing legislation; According to the institution, admission to the program is given to a person with a master's (or equal academic) degree that satisfies the requirements set by GTU to apply for a PhD. The applicant must submit a research project that describes the direction and purpose of the research; Documents related to educational/research activities will also be taken into account. A prerequisite for admission to the program is also knowledge of English at level B2. After considering all the documents the applicant is interviewed by the faculty provisional committee, where his/her general knowledge, skills, and competencies are evaluated. The experts had certain concerns about the prerequisites for the program. However, representatives of the HEI noted in the interview that some changes have been made to the PhD program regulations. The updated regulation states that "the master's or equal academic degree of an applicant should correspond [to] qualification of selected doctoral educational program" (Art. 3.5, English version; Ibid. in the Georgian version it is stated differently: Corresponding to the qualification of selected doctoral education program only applies to regulated professions; this is probably the old version of the regulation). Therefore, the provided documents in English and Georgian must convey the same message, and an updated Georgian version needs to be uploaded on HEI's webpage). Yet even if this problem is due to a translation inaccuracy, the Description of the Educational Doctoral Program (p. 2) does not clarify what an academic degree that is equal to a MA in theology means. Therefore, the program should define how many ECTS in theological courses and/or methodological courses on a BA or MA level an applicant should have completed before being admitted to the PhD-program.

Based on the information provided by the HEI (Documents, interviews) some of the program admission preconditions, especially a substantial research proposal and proficiency in English on a B2 level, are logically linked to program content, learning outcomes, level of education, the qualification to be awarded and the instruction language. However, the experts recommend that the program must include more detailed information in addition to the general PhD program regulations (Art. 3.5). Furthermore, after the interview with the HEI representatives and the submission of the *Applicant's research project assessment criterion*, the evaluation criteria for the admission and *The forms and criterium of evaluation of Ph.D. applicant's interview* should include more details for a fair assessment, thereby following the legal forms and/or the regulations of the university. Finally, all the necessary information (Documents to be submitted, prerequisites for admission etc.) must be placed on the HEI's website. All the above changes will contribute to the provision of information on prerequisites and admission procedures, making them more transparent and accessible, and giving the applicants a more realistic picture of what is expected from them. As for the applicant's interview with the faculty provisional committee, the head of the program stated that applicants are evaluated on issues related to the thesis

and the educational field. Nevertheless, the Expert Panel recommends developing the main topics and establishing evaluation criteria, which will make the evaluation more transparent and fair.

During the interviews with the academic staff of the university and the head of the program, the Expert Panel expressed its opinion on the knowledge of doctoral students in the Old Georgian language, because this is closely related to the study of the history of the Georgian Church. Therefore, passive knowledge of old Georgian should either be part of the prerequisites to enter the program or should be included in the educational component of the program. This was confirmed by the HEI representatives.

The university determines the methodology for planning the proportion of students in the educational program, taking into account the specifics of the program and the resources of the university and ensuring the uninterrupted course of educational processes. The definition of vacant positions is regulated by legal acts and planned in a persistent way. It involves the relevant academic department of the faculty, the head/heads of the doctoral program, the dean of the faculty, and the vice-rector. According to the PhD regulations “The number of vacant positions, terms of application and admission, members and head/heads of the temporary faculty councils are approved by the academic council presented by the Department” (Art. 2.5). The number of presumable positions for admission to the doctorate is defined no later than one month before the announcement. Admission of the students to the program is carried out in accordance with the method of planning the proportion of students.

### **Evidences/Indicators**

- Doctoral Educational Program;
- Self-Assessment Report;
- Doctoral Educational Program Regulations;
- Applicant’s research project assessment criterion;
- The instructions on the student’s admission and mobility;
- Web-page;
- Interview results.

### **Recommendations:**

- The Expert Panel recommends that the program develops more precise and rigorous admission requirements for students without a MA in theology. In particular, the program should specify how many ECTS in theological and methodological courses are required to be admitted to the program.
- The updated doctorate regulation must be uploaded on the HEI’s webpage;
- It is recommended to develop detailed criteria for evaluating the research project for admission.
- The main topics and evaluation criteria must be elaborated and documented for the applicant’s interview with a faculty provisional committee.
- All the necessary information for admission to the program must be placed on the webpage in a consistent way (no difference between the info in Georgian and English).

### **Suggestions for the programme development**

- The program can realize the recommendation to make the admission requirements more rigorous by devising a preliminary program with introductory courses in theology and methodology, to compensate for students’ deficiencies in these matters. Elements of the existing courses of the PhD-program can be used to realize this.
- The HEI shall review the documents accurately before submission since the content of some documents in Georgian is not identical to the English version.
- The Expert Panel suggests including knowledge of old Georgian in the educational part of the program. It should be assessed in a fair and transparent way.

### **Evaluation**

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
2.1 Programme Admission Preconditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 2.2. The Development of Practical, Scientific/Research/Creative/Performing and Transferable Skills

Programme ensures the development of students' practical, scientific/research/creative/performing and transferable skills and/or their involvement in research projects, in accordance with the programme learning outcomes.

### Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

According to the PhD statute, the aim of the educational component of the doctoral education program is to contribute to the proper quality of the research component of the doctoral student, which is carried out by developing transferable skills and deepening knowledge on current issues/trends in the field. It also provides methodological guidelines for the proper planning and implementation of the research component (Art. 6.3).

Courses in Teaching methods, Scientific communication technics, and Theological methods of research on the history of the Georgian Church are focused on the development of scientific, creative, and performing skills. As for the elective learning courses, they aim to deepen the knowledge in the study field, provide knowledge on current achievements (for instance.: a course on "Urgent issues regarding Georgian church history"), and develop scientific thinking (for instance: a course on "Comparative theology"). However, some of the courses are partly rather on a BA or MA level than on a PhD level. Therefore, the Expert Panel recommends the program to bring these courses in accordance with the level of study and transfer the introductory part of the courses of the educational part of the program to the program admission requirements (see the recommendations and suggestions for the standards 1.1, 1.2, and 1.5 of this report).

As for the research component, the PhD statute states that its goal is the formation and development of a professional research culture (Art. 6.4). Thematic seminar, assisting a professor, the whole process of working on a dissertation, colloquium -1,2,3, the preliminary defense, completion and defending the thesis contributes to the development of research and performing skills and competences.

All the above-mentioned activities are in compliance with the program learning outcomes.

According to the PhD statute, the doctoral student is obliged to publish at least three scientific articles showing the main results of the research related to the dissertation topic, from which at least one must be published in a journal indexed in Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar or other relevant databases provided by the doctoral educational program (Art. 8.4). However, there is no note where the databases are listed, so the Expert Panel was not able to determine their relevance to the field of study. Moreover, in order to contribute to the development of transferable skills and competencies the program/PhD statute should require doctoral students to take part in at least one international conference. The doctoral students also must be able to clearly present and communicate ideas, research outcomes, etc. not only to their local colleagues but also abroad. The development of these skills and competencies is of paramount importance, especially for a doctoral program in the history of the Georgian Church, since its research area is not only important to the Georgian Orthodox Church but also to the country (for instance: The boundaries of Georgian Church jurisdiction). The interview with the doctoral students and alumni showed that the program should contribute to the development of their language skills in English at least to level C1 ("Level C1 corresponds to proficient users of the language, i.e. those able to perform complex tasks related to work and study"<sup>2</sup>, which might be more relevant for the third cycle than B2) or more. Also, some doctoral students might need to deepen their knowledge of old Georgian, skills in working with manuscripts,

<sup>2</sup> The definition from British Council web-site (<https://www.britishcouncil.es/en/english/levels/c1>) (28.10.2022)

etc. The Expert Panel deems that these skills and knowledge are only partially realized by the program. The interview with doctoral students and alumni also showed that the program needs to pay more attention to internationalization. The university presented documents confirming the existence of scientific agreements, of which the agreement with the Vatopedi Monastery should be mentioned. According to the agreement, this gives access to the library of St. Athos and, in particular, Vatopeti. However, the results of the interview showed that the students have not yet taken advantage of this particular opportunity (library). Therefore, the program should encourage the students to make use of these opportunities, as well as participate in international programs (Erasmus +, DAAD, etc.). During the site visit, the representatives of the university mentioned that they are establishing links with a specific university in Munich, but the experts need more evidence to assess the level of the mentioned cooperation, and its structural character. In addition, the university provided some information about similar programs abroad, but their connection with the program under review remained unclear. During the visit, the Expert Panel recommended strengthening connections within the country with a similar program, because this is much easier and requires less funding. These links would provide more field experts for the program (the proportion of supervisors, and lecturers for additional training courses...) and encourage its development. Cooperation should be at the legal level and supported by agreements.

Lastly, during the interview, the students and alumni mentioned that they have produced scientific papers, and are involved in scientific/creative projects. Despite the request for relevant documentation by the Expert Panel, the program has not submitted any documentation related to these scientific/creative/research activities (Scientific papers published with co-authorship of students; Information and evidence confirming Students' participation in international conferences, etc., implemented creative/performing projects relevant to the field; Funded, ongoing/planned scientific-research projects and documents confirming student involvement). Some of the students mentioned that they are involved in scientific projects funded by the national science foundation. One student presented his book with relevant international reviews. Also, the experts reviewed defended dissertations that were relevant to the field and high-level scientific works. All of them were written in Georgian and only had a short summary in rather poor English. This shows the need to enhance the student's proficiency in English.

#### **Evidences/Indicators**

- Doctoral Educational Program;
- Self-Assessment Report;
- Doctoral Educational Program Regulations;
- Enclosed syllabi;
- The defended theses;
- Interview results.

#### **Recommendations:**

- The HEI shall consider that taking part in at least one international conference, forum, congress or symposium should be mandatory for doctoral students.
- The university must increase its structural cooperation with theological institutions inside the country and abroad.
- Students should be more involved in scientific/research/creative projects (both locally and internationally) in line with the program learning outcomes.

#### **Suggestions for the programme development**

- It is suggested to contribute to the development of the PhD-students' language skills and competencies.

#### **Evaluation**

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
2.2.The Development of practical, scientific/research/creative/performing and transferable skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 2.3. Teaching and Learning Methods

The programme is implemented by use student-oriented teaching and learning methods. Teaching and learning methods correspond to the level of education, course/subject content, learning outcomes, and ensure their achievement.

#### Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

The program employs various teaching and learning methods, which are relevant to the field and level of education. The methods are student-oriented, and ensure students' active engagement in the learning process, interaction, and the achievement of learning outcomes established by the program. The teaching/learning methods are consistent with the courses in which they are implemented and ensure the achievement of their learning outcomes. As for the correspondence of teaching methods to modern challenges in the field of higher education, they can be used for distance learning. It is important that the university has access to up-to-date databases of electronic libraries, and that the program is conducted not only with material but also with digital resources, which guarantees the implementation of distance learning without changing the learning outcomes of the program. The HEI has a portal for electronic learning (elearning.gtu.ge), which allows teachers to upload learning material, create interactivity activities for students (assignments, tests, etc.), manage lecture topics, and give feedback, which encourages the teaching/learning process. At the same time, the platform facilitates students to work with learning material.

#### Evidences/Indicators

- Doctoral Educational Program;
- Self-Assessment Report;
- Teaching - learning methods reflected in enclosed syllabi;
- Electronic resources utilized to implement the program in the HEI;
- Website;
- Results of the interview.

#### Recommendations:

#### Suggestions for the programme development

#### Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
2.3. Teaching and learning methods	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 2.4. Student Evaluation

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

### Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

Student evaluation is transparent and complies with the existing legislation. The educational program was developed according to the European credit-transfer system ECTS. 1 credit corresponds to 25 academic hours, which is reflected in each course syllabus;

The program consists of educational and research components. The educational component amounts to 50 ECTS. There are no credits given to the research component.

The evaluation components, methods of assessment, and criteria reflected in program syllabi are reliable and fair to every student.

The university has established requirements for the dissertation, which describe instructions about the form of the work in a detailed and transparent way.

According to the PhD statute and the program, a doctoral candidate must perform four stages of the scientific-research component:

- 1) draft/prospectus;
- 2) colloquium - 1, 2, 3 (The colloquium should reflect the results of research conducted by the doctoral candidate);
- 3) preliminary defense of the thesis;
- 4) completion and defense of the thesis.

The PhD student starts his or her research component in the second semester. Each stage of the scientific component is a mandatory prerequisite for the next stage. Fulfillment of the particular stage is confirmed by the scientific supervisor in the electronic system. It is important that the assessment of colloquia is carried out by a commission (5-7 people including the teaching staff), which is approved by the order of the dean of the faculty on the basis of the submission of the department. The possibility to conduct colloquia online is also taken into account by the PhD regulations, as well as online consultations with the supervisor in the process of working on the prospectus/colloquium/thesis.

The HEI established requirements for the academic style of the dissertation that are known in advance to the students and are considered when evaluating the dissertations of the students;

The university has a plagiarism prevention, detection, and response mechanism.

According to the PhD regulations, "The reviewer must be a person with a doctorate or equivalent academic degree (professor, associate professor, including visiting, chief/senior scientist-collaborator of an independent scientific research unit), who has scientific research experience and published publications in the relevant field/specialty/direction of the doctoral educational program" (Art. 9.3), which is a good practice. Also "The reviewer may not be a co-author of any work done by the doctoral student. It is not allowed that both reviewers are employees of the same structural unit of any organization, as well as the chairman, deputy or secretary of the thesis defense Panel" (Art. 9.4). However, the HEI's profile is not theology and it doesn't have enough theological scientific capacity to involve field specialists from other departments/faculties. So it is important for the program to involve external evaluator(s), specialists from outside the university in the assessment of the dissertation;

The dissertation defense is a public event, carried out at a meeting of the dissertation council. It is important that the time limit of the reports and the speeches is not established as a rule for all defenses, but regulated by the Council at the proposal of the chairman at the meeting. In case of an unsatisfactory assessment, the Ph.D. student

has the right to present a revised thesis in one year. The HEI established appeal-mechanisms of students' assessment results, which are transparent and fair.

All the information mentioned above is public and uploaded on the HEI's website.

The university has submitted student's and alumni's survey results which reflect the evaluation of the program. However, the Expert Panel noted a lack of critical reflection; moreover, the survey doesn't conduct any analytical documents. Although the HEI submitted minutes that provided information about changes made to the program, no evidence was established for analyzing the evaluation results and changes based on that analysis.

#### Evidences/Indicators

- Doctoral Educational Program;
- Self-Assessment Report;
- Doctoral Educational Program Regulations;
- Evaluation components, and methods presented in syllabi enclosed with the educational programme;
- Instructions on the forms of the abstract to be submitted for obtaining the academic degree of doctor;
- Instruction on format of dissertation submitted for obtaining doctoral degree.
- Instruction on the Educational Process Management;
- Electronic student assessment portal - <https://vici.gtu.ge/>;
- Website;
- Results of the interview.

#### Recommendations:

- The analysis of the student's evaluation results must be improved;
- It is recommended to involve specialists in the field from outside of the HEI in the assessment of the dissertation thesis (see also the recommendation to standard 4.2).

#### Suggestions for the programme development

#### Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
2.4. Student evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Compliance with the programme standards

2. Methodology and Organisation of Teaching, Adequacy of Evaluation of Programme Mastering	Complies with requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Substantially complies with requirements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Partly complies with requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Does not comply with requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 3. Student Achievements, Individual Work with Them

The programme ensures the creation of a student-centered environment by providing students with relevant services; promotes maximum student awareness, implements a variety of activities and facilitates student involvement in local and/or international projects; proper quality of scientific guidance is provided for master's and doctoral students.

#### 3.1 Student Consulting and Support Services

Students receive consultation and support regarding the planning of learning process, improvement of academic achievement, and career development from the people involved in the programme and/or structural units of the HEI. A student has an opportunity to have a diverse learning process and receive relevant information and recommendations from those involved in the programme.

#### Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

Based on the presented documentation and interviews with the students and graduates of the "Theology-History of the Church of Georgia" program, it was revealed, that:

Students receive counseling and support from the lecturers of this program regarding their academic achievements through a separate university electronic student portal and website. Through this medium, they also get information about conferences, employment opportunities and exchange programs. The students also receive feedback from their lecturers on how to improve their performance. The interview with the students and graduates revealed that none of them participate(d) in international student mobility. The surveys, which are conducted by the university regularly, show that students are satisfied with the university, the learning process and the learning environment development process. However, the Expert Panel notes that the surveys are not in compliance with the needs and circumstances of doctoral students. Specifically: what is their opinion about the working process on a doctoral thesis level and about their relationship with their supervisor. Therefore, the Expert Panel recommends that the university, c.q. the program, develops a questionnaire directly taking into account the specifics of studying at a doctoral level. During the interview with the students, they pointed out that they have experience with involvement and participation in conferences at a local, but not at an international level. Therefore, the Expert Panel recommends that the lecturers involved in the program intensify their strategy in the mentioned direction, so that the students can be involved in scientific activities and conferences both at local and international levels (for the detailed evaluation and recommendations related to this substandard, see sections 2.1 and 5.3).

#### Evidences/Indicators

- Self-evaluation report (SER);
- Site-visit;
- University webpage.
- Student survey results;

#### Recommendations:



## Suggestions for Programme Development

- The Expert Panel suggests the program to take more initiatives to involve students in international conferences or exchange programs.

## Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
3.1 Student Consulting and Support Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 3.2. Master's and Doctoral Student Supervision

- A scientific supervisor provides proper support to master's and doctoral students to perform the scientific-research component successfully.
- Within master's and doctoral programmes, ration of students and supervisors enables to perform scientific supervision properly.

## Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

Students and graduates of the program “Theology-History of Georgian Church”, have qualified supervisors who, as evidenced by the interviews, are in constant and active communication with their students throughout the doctoral program and monitor them step by step. In addition, the function/duties of the supervisor are defined in the following document - Regulations of Phd program of the Georgian Technical University, which is publicly available to any interested person on the website of the university. According to the mentioned document, the supervisor is required to have regular consultations with doctoral students. The frequency of consultations corresponds to the specifics of the program and the research topic, and as students and graduates noted during the interview, contacting their supervisors is an easy process for them, and their readiness is constantly felt and noted in this regard. In addition, according to the regulations, the supervisor is obliged to advise the student on research methodology, design, structure, and supporting scientific literature. For this, the university offers students electronic scientific databases, which they can access from the university. Moreover, according to the university's doctoral level regulations, all doctoral theses are checked for plagiarism and only after that has student the right to defend his or her dissertation.

The student-intake of this program is rather low (all together 9 students over at least three years of study). This implies that on the one hand that the PhD-students receive all the support they need for the successful completion of their research and that the workload of the supervisors is not too high in relation to the number of students. This was confirmed by the interviews with the students and their supervisors. Yet, on the other hand, as a consequence of the (very) small number of PhD-students, they may feel somewhat isolated, since they do not regularly meet other PhD-students in the same field, with whom they could talk about the progress of their research formally and informally. Although the PhD-students did not experience this as a problem, the Expert Panel deems that more academic interaction between students in the same field (theology) from other HEIs in Georgia would benefit the program.

According to the regulations of the PhD program, the student's thesis should be posted on the university's website by the faculty and should be public. However, the website contains only the information of those students who have defended their doctoral thesis, and the theses of the graduates of the mentioned program are not posted.

Thus, this is a violation of the university's own regulations. Therefore, the Expert Panel recommends that the program follows the procedure defined by the regulations of the PhD program.

<b>Data related to the supervision of master's/ doctoral students</b>	
Quantity of master/PhD theses	<b>3</b>
Number of master's/doctoral students	<b>9</b>
Ratio	

#### **Evidences/Indicators**

- Self-evaluation report (SER);
- Regulations of PhD Program;
- Site-visit;
- University website.
- Student survey results;

#### **Recommendations:**

- The Expert Panel recommends the program to check the fulfillment of the rules defined by the regulations of the PhD program, in particular regarding the transfer of the abstract and dissertation to the university library and their placement on the website of the faculty.

#### **Suggestions for the programme development**

- The Expert Panel suggests developing a research school in theology in Georgia, in which all the PhD-students of all HEIs in Georgia in the same field (theology) can participate, to discuss the progress and results of their research formally and informally.

#### **Evaluation**

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

<b>Component</b>	<b>Complies with requirements</b>	<b>Substantially complies with requirements</b>	<b>Partially complies with requirements</b>	<b>Does not comply with requirements</b>
<b>3.2. Master's and Doctoral Students Supervision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>3. Students Achievements, Individual Work with them</b>	Complies with requirements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Substantially complies with requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Partly complies with requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Does not comply with requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### 4. Providing Teaching Resources

Human, material, information and financial resources of educational programme ensure sustainable, stable, efficient and effective functioning of the programme and the achievement of the defined objectives.

##### 4.1 Human Resources

- Programme staff consists of qualified persons, who have necessary competences in order to help students to achieve the 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. Quantitative indicators related to academic/scientific/invited staff ensure programme sustainability.
- The Head of the Programme possesses necessary knowledge and experience required for programme elaboration, and also the appropriate competences in the field of study of the programme. He/she is personally involved in programme implementation.
- Programme students are provided with an adequate number of administrative and support staff of appropriate competence.

#### Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

The teaching staff of this program consists of 7 lecturers, five of whom are full professors, and five hold a phd in theology or in (art) history (see the overview below and the list of executors of the program). All of them have published numerous books and articles in their fields of study (see CVs of the lecturers). Furthermore, most of the lecturers have ample experience in teaching academic courses in the domain of study. Finally, especially important in the case of theology – history of the Georgian Church is that three lecturers serve in various positions in the Georgian Church. Hence, they can facilitate students in accessing non-publicly available documents, as was confirmed by the students during the interview. In conclusion, it is obvious that the program staff has the educational and research competencies that are needed to teach in this program and to help the students achieve the learning outcomes of the program. The students confirmed this during the interview. Thus, the findings of the Expert Panel confirm what the SER, 19 states in this respect. The number and workload of the program staff are beyond doubt proportionate to the relatively small number of phd-students (9) and the limited size of the educational component of the program (50 ECTS), thus ensuring its sustainability. The CVs of the lecturers show that only two of them are proficient in English, and the SER 19 states that they only participate in regional and local scientific seminars and conferences. For the internationalization of the program, the Expert Panel recommends that proficiency in English gets more attention in the future hiring of academic staff and that presenting papers at international conferences is stimulated.

The CV of Levan Mateshvili (doctorate in theology, extensive list of publications, ample teaching experience in theology and church history, archpriest of the Georgian Church, proficiency in English) shows that he has the required knowledge, competencies, and experience to serve as the head of the program. This was confirmed during the interview with him, as he could situate the program in the broader context of recent developments in Georgian society and the Georgian Church.

The interviews with the students confirmed that the program staff gives them all the academic and administrative support they need.

The SER, 19 describes the selection procedures of the academic staff of the program, which is in accordance with the international rules of academic hiring.

Number of the staff involved in the programme (including academic, scientific, and invited staff)	Number of Programme Staff	Including the staff with sectoral expertise <sup>3</sup>	Including the staff holding PhD degree in the sectoral direction <sup>4</sup>	Among them, the affiliated staff
Total number of academic staff	7	5	5	2
- Professor	5	3	3	2
- Associate Professor	2	2	2	0
- Assistant-Professor	0	0	0	0
- Assistant	0	0	0	0
Visiting Staff	0	0	0	–
Scientific Staff	0	0	0	–

#### Evidences/Indicators

- CVs of the lecturers
- Interviews
- Executors of the program
- SER
- Budget of the program
- Academic Workload Distribution of the affiliated staff

#### Recommendations:

#### Suggestions for Programme Development

- The program should pay more attention to proficiency in English when hiring academic staff in the future
- The program should stimulate and facilitate the academic staff in giving papers at international conferences.

#### Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
4.1 Human Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### 4.2 Qualification of Supervisors of Master's and Doctoral Students

<sup>3</sup> Staff implementing the relevant components of the main field of study, i.e. theology and history

<sup>4</sup> Staff with a degree in theology or history.

The Master's and Doctoral students have qualified supervisor/supervisors and, if necessary, co-supervisor/co-supervisors who have relevant scientific-research experience in the field of research.

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### **Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard**

As argued in the previous subsection, there are five supervisors for the research component of the program (three full professors and two associate professors). All of them hold a PhD in one of the disciplines of the program (theology and history). This is amply sufficient to supervise the nine students who are currently enrolled in the program, which is in accordance with what is stated in the SER, 20. The students confirmed that they can contact their supervisors easily. However, taking into account the regulations of the HEI as to the supervision and reviewing of doctoral theses, the program needs to include more affiliated supervisors, possibly from other HEIs in the same field in Georgia.

As the SER, 19 and the regulations of GTU show, the HEI has developed transparent qualification standards for the positions of (co-)supervisor in this field of study. These standards correspond with the international requirements in the field. Yet, the Expert Panel notes that the international outreach of the lecturers is very limited, which comes as no surprise given that only two of them are proficient in English. The lecturers have the required competencies to supervise PhD-students in the field and regularly publish academic papers in their field of study, but their limited proficiency in English and/or other international academic languages (e.g. German and French) is yet again a handicap to keep themselves informed about new international developments in the research in this field of study and to participate actively in its development.

<b>Number of supervisors of Master's/Doctoral theses</b>	<b>Thesis supervisors</b>	<b>Including the supervisors holding PhD degree in the sectoral direction</b>	<b>Among them, the affiliated staff</b>
Number of supervisors of Master's/Doctoral thesis	5	5	0
- Professor	3	3	0
- Associate Professor	2	2	0
- Assistant-Professor	0	0	0
Visiting personnel	0	0	–
Scientific Staff	0	0	–

#### **Evidences/Indicators**

- CVs of the lecturers
- Interviews
- Executors of the program
- SER

#### **Recommendations:**

- Taking into account the small number of (associate) professors with a doctoral degree in theology of history employed in this program, the Expert Panel recommends hiring more affiliate supervisors for this program.

#### **Suggestions for the programme development**

- The Expert Panel suggests that the program invests extra (financial) means to enhance the international experience of the academic staff, as this is a means to stimulate the internationalization of the program, including its students.

## Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
4.2 Qualification of Supervisors of Master's and Doctoral Students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 4.3 Professional Development of Academic, Scientific and Invited Staff

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

## Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

The SER, 20f. gives a detailed description of the assessment and survey of satisfaction of the academic staff of the program, on the level of the university and of the faculty. Unfortunately, the Expert Panel has not received an English translation of the results of these surveys. As the SER 4f. shows, these evaluations have resulted in numerous changes to the program, which the Expert Panel appreciates (see section 1.1 of this report). According to the SER, 21 the academic staff receives substantial support from the Center for Advanced Training to improve the quality of their courses and teaching. This is substantiated by the syllabi of the individual courses. The Expert Panel especially appreciates the wide variety of teaching methods employed by the program. In sum, the university and the faculty have a well-functioning system of professional development of the academic staff in place. However, the SER of the program does not analyze the effect of the student's evaluations of the courses on the development of the academic staff working in the program. The SER, 21f. only describes how Professional Development functions at the level of the university/faculty, but it does not analyze its results for and effects upon the program (for the recommendations regarding this aspect, see section 5.1).

The Expert Panel agrees with the statement in the SER, 20 to give priority to the internationalization of the program, but in addition to personnel management, an internationalization strategy proper should be developed as well. The Expert Panel received a list of foreign universities, with which the program has made contact, and evidence of an international conference co-organized by the Center of Theology, but the nature, size, and number of these contacts and initiatives remain unclear. Furthermore, there seems not to be a strategy behind these contacts. The claim on SER, 22, that the members of the academic staff participate in international grant competitions, give lectures at partner universities of GTU, and are members of the editorial boards of international journals is not substantiated by the CVs of the lecturers. Furthermore, one of the interviewees stated that all PhD-students are required to participate in international conferences, but the SER, the additional documents, and the interviews with the students offered no information as to if and how this requirement was met. The interview with the head of the program and the lecturers has not resulted in a clarification of this impression. Finally, during the interviews, it was stated that all international contacts go through the Georgian Church and not through the university. The Expert Panel understands that this is inevitable in the build-up phase of theology in Georgia and appreciates the good contacts of the program with the Georgian Church, but

nevertheless strongly recommends complementing the ecclesiastic contacts with purely academic ones in order to enhance the international outlook of the program in the academic world.

#### Evidences/Indicators

- CVs of the lecturers
- Overview of the evaluation system of GTU professors and teachers
- Rule of evaluation of educational and scientific-research work of GTU
- Website - "Professional Development Center" (<http://hpep.ge/ge/>)
- List of contacts with foreign universities
- Syllabi
- Interviews

#### Recommendations:

#### Suggestions for the programme development

#### Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
4.3 Professional development of academic, scientific and invited staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### 4.4. Material Resources

Programme is provided by necessary infrastructure, information resources relevant to the field of study and technical equipment required for achieving programme learning outcomes.

#### Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

The extensive tour of the university campus and the library confirmed the claim of the SER, 22 that the material resources, in particular class- and seminar-rooms, working places for phd students, offices of the academic staff, library facilities, internet facilities, printing facilities, etc. ensure achieving the learning outcomes of the program. Unfortunately, the SER, 22 only comprises general information about the library facilities of GTU and offers no indication of access to specialized literature on the history of the Georgian Church. The Expert Panel's visit to the library of CTU did not clarify this issue. During the interviews with the academic staff and the students, it was confirmed that students and staff have access to all the major databases of the world, but it was not clear what this concretely means in the case of theology and church history. One of the interviewees pointed out that students have access to the rich library of Mount Athos and to other libraries. Yet, to further improve this aspect of the material resources, the Expert Panel thinks that closer structural cooperation between the libraries of various theological HEIs in Georgia as regards specialized literature in theology would benefit the material infrastructure considerably.

### Evidences/Indicators

- SER
- Tour of the university campus, including the library
- Interviews
- List of Journal subscriptions of the library

### Recommendations:

### Suggestions for the programme development

- Examination of the possibilities of closer cooperation between theological HEIs in the field of library facilities.

### Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
4.4 Material Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 4.5 Programme/Faculty/School Budget and Programme Financial Sustainability

The allocation of financial resources stipulated in the programme/faculty/school budget is economically feasible and corresponds to the programme needs.

### Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

Although the Budget of the Faculty of Engineering Economics, Media Technologies and Social Sciences provides no specific information about the budget allotted to the program, the Expert Panel has the impression that the program receives adequate financial support from the faculty, thus ensuring its long-term viability. This is confirmed by the budget of the program (although it also offers only scarce information) and by the interview with the program leader. The program leader also confirmed that the program is financially sustainable in the long run.

The proportion between the number of academic staff and the number of students is amply sufficient to execute the program. During the interview, it was confirmed that, following Georgian legislation, the permanent academic staff of the program has the same academic rights as the invited lecturers. This further enhances the personnel and financial sustainability of the program.

### Evidences/Indicators

- Faculty Budget
- Program Budget
- Interviews

### Recommendations:



## Suggestions for the programme development

- The Expert Panel suggests that the Program gives more detailed information about its receipts and expenditure.

## Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
4.5. Programme/ Faculty/School Budget and Programme Financial Sustainability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Compliance with the programme standard

4. Providing Teaching Resources	Complies with requirements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Substantially complies with requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Partly complies with requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Does not comply with requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 5. Teaching Quality Enhancement Opportunities

In order to enhance teaching quality, programme utilises 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.

### 5.1 Internal Quality Evaluation

Programme staff collaborates with internal quality assurance department(s)/staff available at the HEI when planning the process of programme quality assurance, developing assessment instruments, and implementing assessment process. Programme staff utilizes quality assurance results for programme improvement.

## Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

According to the interviews with representatives of the GTU administration, academic and invited personnel, students, graduates, and an employer, also according to the self-evaluation report presented by the GTU a special working group was created to conduct the self-evaluation of the doctoral educational program "Theology-History of Georgian Church". The program director was selected as the leader of the working group, members of the working group were academic personnel, representatives of the administration and the Faculty's Quality Assurance Service, students, graduates, and employers. The work plan was designed and tasks were assigned to each member of the group. According to the standards, the work to be performed was distributed among the

members of the self-assessment group. The members of the self-assessment group met systematically at work meetings in order to clarify and analyze the information. The process was coordinated by the Head of the group. The self-assessment report, the program, and the attached documentation were reviewed by the quality assurance service of the faculty for the purpose of agreement and submission to the quality assurance service of GTU. The Quality Assurance Service of GTU and the Faculty provided consultation and assistance to the group members during the preparation of the self-assessment report and the attached documentation. It should be noted that the self-evaluation report is mainly informative and descriptive, and less analytical.

Based on the information collected through the self-evaluation report (SER), the enclosed and additional documents, also based on interviews results and the site visit the Expert Panel concludes that interested parties, including academic personnel and the Quality Assurance Service staff, need to collaborate more effectively to conduct a deeply analytical self-evaluation of the educational program and elaborate a precise self-evaluation report that identifies strengths and areas for improvement of the program as well as develops planned activities and timelines for improvement of the program. The claims in SER, 13, 17, and 26 that the program does not need improvement are telling examples of the lack of self-critical potential of the program.

Although the doctoral program does not foresee delivering courses electronically/remotely, the regulations in GTU need to develop a methodology for implementing the learning process electronically / remotely. Such a methodology is absolutely necessary nowadays during Covid-19 pandemic time and digitalization era. The institution must ensure the adaptation of internal quality assurance mechanisms and their proper implementation for monitoring and evaluation of the electronic/distance learning process.

#### **Evidences/Indicators**

- The Regulations of the Quality Assurance Service of Georgian Technical University; <http://gtu.ge/quality/About-Us/Statue.php>
- The Regulation for Planning, Elaboration, Assessment and Development of Educational Curriculum;
- Georgian Technical University Quality Assurance Service Website; <http://gtu.ge/quality/>
- Internal quality assurance mechanisms approved by the resolution of the Academic Council of GTU dated April 17, 2018 No. 01-05-04 / 108;
- Interviews results;
- Additional documents provided by GTU -The minutes of the working group/GTU Theology Research Center/Faculty Council meetings.

#### **Recommendations:**

- The academic staff and the Quality Assurance Service staff need to collaborate more effectively in order to conduct comprehensive self-evaluations and elaborate a precise and detailed self-evaluation report, which identifies strengths and areas for improvement of the program and is rather self-critical than descriptive.
- The methodology for implementing the learning process electronically/remotely needs to be developed. The institution must ensure the adaptation of internal quality assurance mechanisms and their proper implementation for monitoring and evaluating the electronic/distance learning process.

#### **Suggestions for the programme development**

#### **Evaluation**

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
5.1 Internal quality evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 5.2 External Quality Evaluation

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

### Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

The external mechanisms for evaluating the implementation of the educational program in Georgia are provided by the accreditation process administered by The National Center for the Enhancement of Educational Quality in Georgia. The program submitted for accreditation was accredited by decision No. 57 of July 19, 2016 by the Council for the Accreditation of Educational Programs. A long list of amendments made as a result of external quality evaluation is described in the self-evaluation report. Currently, the modified program includes the recommendations and expert advice that the academic staff involved in the modification process found useful for the development of the program. The academic and administrative staff participating in the program used the results of the external quality assessment to improve the program- the draft of the program was submitted to the employers for evaluation.

It should be noted that academic personnel and administrative staff of the program should seek to receive and consider developmental peer reviews from local and foreign colleagues working at other HEIs/ scientific-research institutions.

### Evidences/Indicators

- Doctoral educational program;
- Analysis of the labor market and demand of employers;
- The report of previous accreditation experts group in 2016; <https://eqe.ge/ka/decisions/6166/show>
- The decision of accreditation board in 2016; <https://eqe.ge/ka/decisions/6166/show>
- Minutes of the accreditation board meeting in 2016; <https://eqe.ge/ka/decisions/6166/show>
- Interviews results.

### Recommendations:

- External developmental peer reviews from local and foreign colleagues need to be conducted periodically.

### Suggestions for the programme development

## Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
5.2. External Quality Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 5.3 Programme Monitoring and Periodic Review

Programme monitoring and periodic evaluation is conducted with the involvement of academic, scientific, invited, administrative, supporting staff, students, graduates, employers and other stakeholders through systematic data collection, study and analysis. Evaluation results are applied for the programme improvement.

#### Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

The process of monitoring and evaluating the quality of an educational program involves all parties. Periodic evaluation is carried out by systematic collection, processing, and analysis of information with the participation of academic, scientific, invited, administrative, and support staff, students, graduates, employers, and other interested parties. Based on the analysis of the evaluation results, the program is modified. The evaluation of the program submitted for accreditation was conducted by the Quality Assurance Service of GTU and the faculty. Academic and invited staff, employers, specialized specialists, students, graduates were involved in the evaluation process. Evaluations were carried out both at meetings and through questionnaires. To evaluate the program, the information received was processed, analyzed, and its strengths and areas for improvement were identified. The self-assessment group of the educational program participated in assessing the quality of the educational program and in the process of preparing for accreditation.

At the end of each core study course, students anonymously evaluate (through questionnaires) the instructor. Although this anonymous survey evaluates mainly the teaching component of the doctoral program, the questionnaire does not include questions that give the opportunity to doctoral students to evaluate the implementation of the scientific-research component, as well as scientific supervision anonymously. It is necessary to conduct a special survey of doctoral students in order to ensure anonymous evaluation of the implementation of the scientific-research component and scientific supervision.

It should be noted that in order to bring the program in compliance with modern requirements and to apply the best international practices, benchmarking must be conducted, and the doctoral program periodically must be compared with similar programs of foreign universities.

#### Evidences/Indicators

- The Regulations of the Quality Assurance Service of Georgian Technical University; <http://gtu.ge/quality/About-Us/Statue.php>
- The Regulation for Planning, Elaboration, Assessment and Development of Educational Curriculum;
- Georgian Technical University Quality Assurance Service Website; <http://gtu.ge/quality/>
- Internal quality assurance mechanisms approved by the resolution of the Academic Council of GTU dated April 17, 2018 No. 01-05-04 / 108;
- Doctoral Educational Program;
- Self-Assessment Report;
- The minutes of the working group/GTU Theology Research Center.
- Doctoral Educational Program Regulations;
- Forms of surveys of interested parties;
- Results of surveys of interested parties;
- Assessment mechanisms of program learning outcomes;
- Analysis of labor market and employer demands;
- Interviews results;

- Additional documents provided by GTU -The minutes of the working group/GTU Theology Research Center/Faculty Council meetings.
- Instruction on the Educational Process Management;
- Electronic student assessment portal - <https://vici.gtu.ge/>.

**Recommendations:**

- The program should conduct a special survey of doctoral students in order to ensure the anonymous evaluation of the implementation of the scientific-research component and scientific supervision.
- Benchmarking must be conducted and the doctoral program must be periodically compared with similar programs of foreign universities.

**Suggestions for the programme development**

- The teaching of the academic and invited staff should be evaluated by using a pre-determined classroom observation template.

**Evaluation**

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
5.3. Programme monitoring and periodic review	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Compliance with the programme standards**

5. Teaching Quality Enhancement Opportunities	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	<input type="checkbox"/>

Attached documentation (if applicable):

Name of the Higher Education Institution:

Name of Higher Education Programme, Level:

**Compliance with the Programme Standards**

Evaluation Standards	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
1. Education Programme Objectives, Learning Outcomes and their Compliance with the Programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Teaching Methodology and Organisation, Adequacy Evaluation of Programme Mastering	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Student Achievements, Individual Work with them	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Providing Teaching Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Teaching Quality Enhancement Opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signatures:

Chair of Accreditation Expert Panel

Peter Jonkers

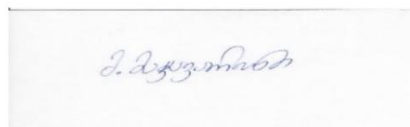


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