NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Accreditation Expert Group Report on Higher Education Programme

Mass Communication Bachelor Program

First level of academic higher education (bachelor's degree)

International University of Management and Communication Alterbridge

Evaluation Date: May 24, 2023

Report Submission Date: July 5, 2023

Tbilisi

Contents

Information about a Higher Education Institution

Name of Institution Indicating its Organizational Legal Form	International University of Management and Communication Alterbridge
Identification Code of Institution	405284473
Type of the Institution	Teaching University

Expert Panel Members

Chair (Name, Surname, HEI/Organisation, Country)	Professor Adrian Hadland, University of Stirling, UK (The Chair)
Member (Name, Surname, HEI/Organisation, Country)	Magda Memanishvili, International Black Sea University, Tbilisi, Georgia
Member (Name, Surname, HEI/Organisation, Country)	Nino Makhviladze, Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA)
Member (Name, Surname, HEI/Organisation, Country)	Nino Pataraia (education expert), EK Law Office, Tbilisi
Member (Name, Surname, HEI/Organisation, Country)	Davit Kakiashvili, student (PhD candidate).

I.Information on the education programme

Name of Higher Education Programme (in Georgian)	მასობრივი კომუნიკაციის საბაკალავრო პროგრამა

Name of Higher Education Programme (in English)	Mass Communication bachelor's program
Level of Higher Education	Level 1 (bachelor's degree)
Qualification to be Awarded	Bachelor's degree
Name and Code of the Detailed Field	0321 - Journalism and Reporting
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	240
Programme Status (Accredited/ Non-accredited/ Conditionally accredited/new/International accreditation) Indicating Relevant Decision (number, date)	Conditionally accredited July 29, 2022, N 858757
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**

The program to be evaluated is the BA in Mass Communication, situated at International University of Management and Communication "Alterbridge", a teaching university located in Tbilisi, Georgia, and founded in 2018. The language of instruction is Georgian. There are 54 people involved in the delivery of the program, 19 academic staff (including 14 people with a doctor's degree, and 5 with professional qualifications), and 35 are invited specialists. The focus on equipping students with a full range of communication skills to enter a wide spectrum of businesses and companies in Georgia and internationally is appropriate and necessary. The program was started was conditionally accredited on July 29, 2022 and began functioning from September 19, 2022. The conditional accreditation was for one year, until July 29, 2023. A number of recommendations were made by the experts panel and these recommendations are reflected upon within this report. It is the current panel's belief that the BA in Mass Communication offered by Alterbridge has fulfilled the requirements for accreditation, has shown significant development and progress in the six months following the conditional accreditation and is ready to provide the Georgian Higher Education system and economy with an important new dimension.

In this First Level of Higher Education program (Level 6), students accumulate 240 credits according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), 135 ECTS are awarded for compulsory courses of the major field of study, 40 ECTS for elective courses of the major field of study, 42 ECTS for compulsory courses based on general transferable skills and 23 ECTS may be selected from other programs. The key relevance of the program lies in the training and preparation of general communication specialists able to work in a wide spectrum of industries including government, the media, public relations, the creative industries, advertising, marketing and third sector organizations both in Georgia and internationally. There are strong ties to local media businesses - some of whom sign Memoranda of Understandings (MoUs) with the university to formalize their relationship - and regular visits by professional practitioners ("alterguests").

The main aspects of the program involve the theoretical understanding of key concepts drawing on various disciplines such as communication or psychology, and the learning of practical skills to prepare media content for various formats in efficient, ethically responsible, and creative ways, particularly with the help of state-of the art technology. While the program has a scientific and theoretical foundation, an important focus is the provision of practical media education, an aspect which is integrated into many of the courses from photography to video editing.

The mass communication programme at Alterbridge has a great relevance for the cultural region in general and the media and communication market in Georgia in particular. Effective communication is of utmost importance to democracy and to the economy, and the practical and theoretical training provided by Alterbridge in an ever-changing media environment is certainly relevant for civil society, particularly in the age of misinformation, global challenges, and uncertain truths.

The objectives of the bachelor's educational program of mass communication, as elaborated by Alterbridge's team, are:
- To give the graduate socio-culturally and technologically determined academic knowledge of the major elements, functions, process of mass communication.
- To develop the graduate's skills of use of modern communication technologies for creating and disseminating messages.
- To form the graduate's skills of argumentative reasoning and critical thinking
- To develop graduate's responsibility and the ability to observe professional ethics while carrying out activities.
- To provide an opportunity to independently determine learning and professional needs.

The evaluation panel is in agreement that these objectives are clearly established and logically connected to each other. From the documents provided and from information gathered during the site visit on May 24, 2023, the program objectives are consistent with the mission, objectives and strategic plan of the institution.

- **Overview of the Accreditation Site Visit**

The site visit took place on May 24, 2023 at the university's campus in Tbilisi, Georgia. In the weeks leading up to the visit, the panel of experts received access to a wide range of documents, including the Self-Evaluation Report, information on Georgia's higher education laws, the National Qualifications Framework, personnel lists, memoranda and program syllabi and maps. Later, upon

request, further documents were provided such as the program budget, the university's three year strategic plan as well as information on a previous decision and the reports that accompanied it. Some of these documents had to be translated from Georgian into English (for the benefit of the chair), while a translator was helpfully provided by the Higher Education Quality Assurance department of the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) for the site visit to ensure all those giving evidence to the panel could do so in their own language and that the chair could follow proceedings.

The panel had a full day of interviews and information gathering beginning with the university's senior management team and including the Self-Evaluation Report team, heads of department, departmental lecturers, representatives from industry, alumni and students. The panel were taken on a tour of the university's facilities, including the library, editing suites, a studio and computer work stations. The overall impression was that the general atmosphere at Alterbridge was friendly and collegial and provided an ideal working and learning environment for staff and students alike.

The panel was impressed with the whole group's enthusiasm about the program, by their resilience (through Covid-19 and through the exhaustive, two year evaluation process), by their honest and transparent opinions and by their willingness to improve and develop. The panel noted the program's potential for providing students with critical communication skills to the Georgian economy, and the benefit this would have for the consolidation of democracy in Georgia in the longer term.

The panel found the university's members to be efficient and helpful and at all levels of the institution, from senior management to the students and we experienced a keenness to help the panel with whatever it needed, from documents and information to refreshments.

The panel feels it is important to note the great efficiency, support and pleasant attitude it experienced from members of the very professional NCEQE team, who are a credit to Georgian quality assurance processes and who took to their role with energy and professionalism.

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

The evaluation panel found that in the majority of areas, Alterbridge's Mass Communications program fully complied with the expected standards. The fully compliant areas were the educational program objectives and learning outcomes (section 1), student achievements and individual work (section 3) and teaching resources and professional development (section 4). In these sections, no substantive recommendations were made but a range of suggestions were provided. In two of the evaluated areas, methodology and organization of teaching (section 2) and teaching quality enhancement (section 5), substantive recommendations were made. However, in both of these areas, the program was considered to have "substantially complied" with the regulations. The panel has highlighted 8 recommendations and a number of suggestions to help the institution upgrade all sections to fully compliant and is optimistic it will be able to do so within a reasonable time frame.

- **Recommendations**

  - Information about which compulsory and optional subjects applicants have to pass in the unified national exams must be mentioned in the program in the rubric "*Prerequisite for*

admission to the educational program";

- For those applicants who skip Unified National Exams, the university's administration and the program heads must clearly describe the procedures for passing the Georgian language test. Georgian and English descriptions should be published in the program and on the University's website;

- The HEI has signed memoranda of cooperation with media organizations (online media outlets, televisions, radios) and private structures whose public relations and strategic communications departments will provide opportunities for students' practice. One part of the memoranda focuses on implementing student practice, while the other (for example, the memorandum signed with the Caucasus University) only considers institutional cooperation. The program managers should categorize these memoranda according to their purpose;

- It is recommended to transfer the "Professional practice" course to the 7th or 6th semester;

- Authors of subject syllabi should, together with the heads of the Program, review teaching and learning methods and align them with all specific subject learning objectives, activities, and assessment components;

- Assessment methods in the syllabi of the following mandatory subjects - "TV media," "Effective Presentation Techniques," and "Digital Media and Communication" must be revised;

- The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) provided to this panel was not adequate as it omitted key information. The SER is required to be informative, analytical and argumentative, according to the presented evidence and indicators. The internal quality office, together with the personnel involved in the program, should take care to eliminate the deficiencies identified during the work on the self-assessment report;

- It is recommended the university develops a special response form (or report form) so that the response to the implementation of the recommended issues will be presented in a documentary form, in order to verify whether the improvement areas have been implemented;

- **Suggestions for Programme Development**

  - It is important the teaching staff stay in touch with contemporary research in mass communication, digital media and journalism to ensure the program continues to be relevant and useful for employers, and are able to help the students to access this research;

  - Ensure the university website and departmental records contain full details of extra-curricular activities, training sessions and meetings (eg focus groups) and that these are communicated to students and to the university community and partners;

  - Revisit the structure of courses in the program with a view to creating better pathways to specialized skill acquisition;

  - Revisit the proportion of compulsory courses in the program with a view to creating more elective choices;

  - Continue working to internationalize the syllabus;

  - Consider revising assessment methods to enable more formative assessment;

- Revisit the few modules that do not seem very relevant to a mass communication program;

- To protect applicants and potential students from being misled, the university administration should delete information about the cancelled Bachelor's program "Public Relations" from the University website;

- The heads of the program should maintain a register/report mentioning activities (Projects) implemented in the university which aim to develop students' creative/performance and transferable skills. Such a register/report will serve as evidence for program development reports or re-accreditation;

- In addition to the document, Mechanism for evaluating learning outcomes, the university should make publicly available information on the workings of the mechanism, on the scheduling of focus groups and information gathering and should report back on findings and proposed changes;

- We would encourage the program to expand the opportunities for international student and staff exchanges;

- We would encourage the university to ensure the website is regularly updated to provide international exchange, internship and program change information;

- Where practice has been integrated into courses, this should be indicated more clearly in syllabi and learning outcomes;

- The teaching team should continue to work hard to ensure that materials and resources are up to date and reflect modern themes and developments within the communications sector;

- It is advisable for the university to explore the possibility of utilizing existing human resources to teach specific subjects more efficiently;

- Consider team-teaching some modules to better improve the sustainability of teaching provision.

- It is advisable to consider integrating the program into long-term international projects, such as Erasmus+, as this would offer valuable opportunities for academic staff and students to actively engage with the international educational community. Participation in such projects can greatly contribute to the development of the field and facilitate its alignment with global standards and best practices;

- It is advisable for the university to proactively procure additional equipment to ensure the seamless implementation of the educational process, particularly as expansion of the program is anticipated;

- in order to ensure long-term financial sustainability of the program, it would be advisable to include additional sources of income in the budget;

- It is suggested to focus on more in-depth analysis in the labour market research, which will be directly related to the field.

- the university should provide an evacuation plan for the building, demonstrating preparedness and response measures in case of emergencies. This would enable safety protocols and procedures implemented within the university premises to be assessed.

- **Brief Overview of the Best Practices (if applicable)**

Alterbridge Training Center. Since 2012, the university (in its former guise as the PR Academy) has provided a variety of training services to the Georgian communications market, including corporate training, individual courses, coaching, consulting, and mentoring. The training center offers short and long-term certificate programs in psychology, public relations, coaching, human resources, and other fields. The panel found the Mass Communication program benefited directly from the experiences, expertise and courses of the Training Center and agreed this was a strong example of Best Practice.

- **Information on Sharing or Not Sharing the Argumentative Position of the HEI**

The International University of Management and Communication "Alterbridge" has indicated it will make oral representation to the Accreditation Council regarding its position on the experts' recommendations and advice and has not requested any changes to this report.

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

The panel found clear evidence of the program's progress since the last evaluation in 2022. We found most of the items on the list of 22 substantive recommendations had been addressed. In some cases, the program had already fulfilled the recommendations proposed, but had not provided information to support this. Indeed, the panel found the Self-Evaluation Report for this evaluation, while reasonably thorough, was missing key information for example on the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered to students. Similarly, it is evident that the university has hosted training activities, led meetings and created focus groups to evaluate the program, but none of these are reflected in the documents or on the university website.

The panel believes these omissions were in part because this is a small, new department still finding its feet. In addition, the world pandemic, Covid-19, certainly would have had an impact on information sharing and meeting planning.

While there are some areas that will continue to require work, such as in providing access to international research on mass communication in Georgian or in ensuring full information is contained on the university website, the panel was satisfied that the program's progress since the last evaluation was notable and adequate. In the last session of the site visit, the university's administrative team took the expert panel through every one of the 22 recommendations explaining the institution's response, the current situation and plans for the future. We are confident, as will be seen from our own recommendations and suggestions, that the program has worked extremely hard to develop a relevant, enjoyable and valuable educational experience.

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

According to UNESCO's Classifier of Fields of Study (ISCED-F-2013, ISCED-Foet-2013), the education program being evaluated – BA in Mass Communication - falls under the Broad Field of the Social Sciences, and in the detailed field of Journalism and Reporting (0321) which is described as "the study of the theory and practices of journalism/reporting as part of the field of mass communication. Journalism and reporting is about the wording and content of messages".

As elaborated in the Self-Evaluation Report (SER), the purpose of this program is to train qualified communication specialists able to establish effective communication with target audiences, who can obtain, process and disseminate information in compliance with ethical standards and who are able to research media and evaluate the media environment. These skills are understood to be in demand in the local employment market but also further afield. In addition, the program aims to provide its graduates with knowledge of mass communication theories and principles, an understanding of traditional and digital media approaches and a general competency in media literacy.

The program managers note the importance of the program content responding to the rapidly changing field of communication both in terms of the evolving theoretical knowledge which underpins it but also with regard to the entire range of practical and transferable skills. Ensuring graduates are fully equipped to respond to the challenges of today's digital world was highlighted as a priority in syllabus design. It is important any changes in program content or provision of opportunities to students, such as extra-curricular experiences or training, are set out in the university website and departmental records and that these are communicated to students and to the university community and partners.

As the original benchmarking document explains, later verified by an external, international reviewer, the university's comprehensive curriculum of required and elective courses was developed after extensive research into programs at other universities in Georgia, the United States, and Europe. According to the external reviewer, the resulting curriculum is consistent with the described aims and outcomes, including recognition of the multifaceted system of mass communication for development of democratic processes. The evaluation panel established to consider the compliance of the program with accreditation standards (ie. this one) is in agreement with the external reviewer.

Evidences/Indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report

- Labour market analysis Report

- Interviews with Corporate partners and labor market employers

- Interviews with program managers

- Interviews with students

- Program syllabi and maps

Recommendations:

- -

Suggestions for the Programme Development

- It is important the teaching staff stay in touch with contemporary research in mass communication, digital media and journalism to ensure the program continues to be relevant and useful for employers, and are able to enable the students to access this research.

- Ensure the university website and departmental records contain full details of extra-curricular activities, training sessions and meetings (eg focus groups) and that these are communicated to students and to the university community and partners.

Evaluation

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
1.1 Programme Objectives	☒	☐	☐	☐

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 program syllabi and maps demonstrate that the Mass Communication Bachelor's degree complies with the Georgian higher education framework. Though the degree falls within the detailed field of Journalism and Reporting (0321), the intention of syllabus designers is to prepare students for entry into the labor market with a wide range of communication, language and digital skills. This enables students to enter a number of different occupations, including state and corporate communications, public relations, advertising and the broadcast and print media.

Most of the courses offered are stand-alone modules with no pre-requisite and no pathway to gain more advanced skills. With so many compulsory modules (including THREE languages: English,

Georgian and either Russian, French or German), there is little room for choice or for specialization. Photographic Art, for example, is compulsory when in many institutions around Europe, it tends to be an elective subject for students with a specific interest in photography. The panel believes there should be more scope for the development of pathways for specialization purposes, for example in public relations. In terms of the evaluation criteria, this finding relates to the ability of graduates to continue their education on to the next level and also to ensure both the deepening and reinforcement of the learning outcomes.

Evidences/Indicators

- Interviews with staff, program leaders, corporate partners and students
- Program syllabus maps and descriptors

Recommendations:

- -

Suggestions for Programme Development

- Revisit the structure of courses in the program with a view to creating better pathways to specialized skill acquisition;

Evaluation

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
1.2 Programme Learning Outcomes	☒	☐	☐	☐

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

Program leaders described thorough and ongoing processes of learning outcome evaluation including the use of focus groups. While the details of these processes were not always provided in the documents, and became evident during the on site interviews, the self-evaluation report is relatively clear on how things work at Alterbridge. This information is set out within the document entitled 'Mechanism for evaluating the learning outcomes of the program', which the university has made available to the public. The document describes the rules and indicators for evaluating the implementation of the higher academic educational program, the stages, methods and instruments for evaluating the learning outcomes of the program, and the target levels for learning outcomes. The university reports that staff implementing the educational programme receive ongoing support to develop skills of designing, measuring and analyzing learning outcomes. In addition to the

document, the university should make publicly available information on the workings of the mechanism, such as the scheduling of focus groups, information gathering and should report back on findings and proposed changes.

The courses offered in the Mass Communication bachelor's degree are very heavy on summative assessment with compulsory mid-year and end-year examinations as well as multiple assessment points throughout some courses. While this level of assessment is not unusual within this market, it is stressful for students, makes it difficult for them to make mistakes and learn from them (formative learning) and also does not reflect the activities and reality of the workplace. While there is some group and project work in some of the courses on this degree, a more flexible approach to assessment, in keeping with many other European higher education institutions, is advisable, with a greater emphasis on summative rather than formative assessment. The assessment system and periodicity of assessment are part of the evaluative criteria for this section and need to be re-examined on an ongoing basis.

According to the self-evaluation report, the system and periodicity of the evaluation of learning outcomes takes into account the qualification requirements of the field of mass communication and the respective specificity of the bachelor's level and includes adequate forms and methods of evaluation (direct and indirect evaluation methods) which determine the students' achievement of the learning outcomes provided by the educational program. The criteria for evaluating the learning outcomes of the Bachelor's Program of Mass Communication were established with the involvement of representatives of partner organizations, members of employers' association and PR association, local and international experts.

In addition, the self-evaluation report indicates that the target levels for each learning outcome of the bachelor's educational program of mass communication were defined and based on the monitoring of the results revealed by the evaluation, comparison is made with these levels. Analysis of program purposes and learning outcome assessments is a prerequisite for improvement of the program.

The university reports that the heads of the program, with the involvement of the implementing staff, elaborated maps of program purposes, learning outcomes and curriculum, and prepared a plan for evaluating the learning outcomes of the program. The learning outcomes evaluation procedures were checked by a group of employers and an external expert.

The panel is satisfied that these mechanisms are in place and that learning outcomes in the program are effectively and appropriately monitored and assessed.

Evidences/Indicators

- Interviews with program managers, senior management and staff.
- Mechanism for evaluating the learning outcomes.
- Plan for evaluating the learning outcomes of the educational programs
- Curriculum map.
- Bachelor's Educational Program of Mass Communication;
- Maps for the evaluation of learning outcomes.

Recommendations:

- -

Suggestions for the Programme Development

- In addition to the document, Mechanism for evaluating learning outcomes, the university should make publicly available information on the workings of the mechanism, on the scheduling of focus groups and information gathering and should report back on findings and proposed changes.

- Consider revising assessment methods to enable more formative assessment;

Evaluation

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	☒	☐	☐	☐

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

From the outset, the design of the Mass Communication bachelor's degree at Alterbridge was undertaken with advice from international experts and in line with identified international benchmarking and practice. According to the report of one of these experts from Michigan State University, Alterbridge's "comprehensive curriculum of required and elective courses was developed after extensive research into programs at other universities in Georgia, the United States, and Europe. The resulting curriculum is consistent with the described aims and outcomes, including recognition of the multifaceted system of mass communication for development of democratic processes."

The structure of the degree is equivalent to a "Liberal Arts" qualification, popular among many institutions in Europe, North America and globally. In this, students are given access to a wide range of skills and practices developing knowledge across a number of subjects and enhancing employability status on graduation. During the interviews, corporate partners indicated they had participated in the design. The program complies with Georgian legal and HEI frameworks for a degree of this kind and appears logical, consistent and in line with projected learning outcomes.

Based on Alterbridge's mission and strategic vision, which highlights its adherence to the principle of collaboration, academic/invited staff, students, employers and external experts are appropriately involved in programme development. The programme is new and therefore has no graduates to participate in planning or program design activities.

According to the Self-Evaluation Report, and confirmed during the interviews, program planners took into account the recommendations of accreditation experts and board members, the advice

and opinions of the parties involved in the preparation for reaccreditation (external experts, implementing staff, representatives of partner organizations, professionals in the field), which were reflected in the revised programme, as well as in the syllabi and other necessary documents.

In addition, in the period since the last evaluation - Alterbridge was conditionally accredited for one year and has no graduates so far – has modified the program and its learning outcomes while the components of the educational program, the sequence of the courses and the pre-requisites for studying were verified with the involvement of the academic and invited staff. The SER states that based on the recommendation of the group of accreditation experts, the instruction for the Bachelor's Thesis was modified and the syllabus of the bachelor's thesis course was updated, specifying the learning outcomes and evaluation criteria corresponding to the mass communication qualification requirements. The experts' report also highlighted that the programme was adjusted to the needs identified through market analysis, and therefore, the potential of a graduate of this programme became much more attractive to the employers.

During interviews, the departmental heads and staff confirmed they have made a number of adjustments to courses to integrate more practical work into the program. This is not always clear from the syllabi maps.

In terms of internationalization, it is clear to the panel that opportunities exist for students to participate in international exchanges such as the Erasmus Plus program. However, from the interviews with the students, there is a desire for an expansion of these opportunities. During the interviews, program leaders and staff indicated they work hard to ensure the Mass Communications degree program is up to date and meets the challenges of today's digital world. Evidence for this was presented in the revision of the syllabi to include courses such as Digital Media Literacy, Digital Media and Communication, Social Media Marketing and Information Technologies.

The Alterbridge Training Center, identified in this report as an example of sectoral best practice, facilitates staff involvement in training and exchanges with other institutions and universities. This also adds to Alterbridge's awareness of broader themes and developments in the sector and enables its contribution to these.

The Mass Communication Bachelor's program offers a range of foreign languages for students to learn including Russian and German while current students have taken up internships with institutions such as the Czech Republic Embassy in Tbilisi. These opportunities also give an international dimension to the program and strengthen its learning outcomes.

Since the last evaluation in 2022, and the awarding of conditional accreditation, the proportion of compulsory courses was reduced, in line with recommendations.

The panel notes efforts by the HEI to strengthen the practice component, evidence for which was gathered during the site visit interviews. There is also a degree of flexibility around subject choices. The elective courses of the major field of study, diversely presented in the program allow a student to choose the relevant courses in the amount of 40 credits to satisfy his/her interest and/or to strengthen his/her competency. Within the scope of free credits, s/he has opportunity to choose other courses in the amount of 23 credits from the related bachelor's educational programs implemented at the Teaching University.

In the panel's view, and based on the content and learning outcomes of the program, the structure and content of the Mass Communication Bachelor's degree at Alterbridge is in line with the requirements defined by the first level of academic higher education in Georgia. The course also complies with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). The Learning Outcomes elaborated in the documents are realistically being delivered.

Evidences/Indicators

- Educational programme with the enclosed syllabi.

- Curriculum map.

- Evidence of participation of stakeholders in the development of the programme.

- International Expert benchmarking report

- Website.

- Interview results

Recommendations:

- -

Suggestions for the programme development

- We would encourage the program to expand the opportunities for international student and staff exchanges;

- We would encourage the university to ensure the website is regularly updated to provide international exchange, internship and program change information;

- Where practice has been integrated into courses, this should be indicated more clearly in syllabi and learning outcomes.

Evaluation

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	☒	☐	☐	☐

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

Mass communications is a subject that changes rapidly as our digital world evolves and new technologies and platforms emerge, such as social media. A strong connection with employers is critical to ensure students are receiving appropriate skills and experiences. During the interviews, this connection with employers was effectively demonstrated. Alterbridge clearly has a teaching

team that are aware of changing conditions and are responsive to the needs of industry and commerce and to the wishes of students (who almost always want more practical work).

The panel was persuaded that the compulsory courses of the program would enable students to learn, strengthen or deepen their knowledge of this evolving, multidisciplinary field. Compulsory courses such as Introduction to Mass Communication, Theories of Mass Communication, Professional Ethics and Digital Media Literacy all contribute to this knowledge acquisition and to familiarity with modern trends, the observance of ethical norms and with the expression of practical skills for establishing communication in the digital world.

A number of courses have been updated and improved, in consultation with partner organisations. According to the SER, the courses entitled Multimedia Technologies, and Digital Media and Communication have both been enriched with practical components, which strengthen the achievement of the 5th and 6th learning outcomes defined by the Program. At the same time, these revisions respond to the latest trends in the field around message creation, audience identification and the use of optimal modern technologies. It is important the teaching team continue to work hard to ensure that materials and resources are up to date and reflect modern themes and developments within the communications sector.

The documents supplied and interviews confirm that credits are calculated for each course according to the amount of material to be learned under study topics and the outcome to be achieved. Independent and contact hours are adequately distributed according to the purpose of the particular academic course. In courses focused on acquiring practical skills and strengthening general transferable skills, the hours of seminars or practical classes are balanced and relatively more time is devoted to independent work.

After examination of the course materials and the holdings in the Alterbridge library, it is evident that each academic course is equipped with appropriate educational resources. Where resources are not available in Georgian, course leaders have prepared handouts and materials, including online resources, that ensure students are able to access the information they require to develop the required competences.

Though the number of compulsory credits has been reduced in the program from 200 ECTS to 180 since the last evaluation, the panel is of the view that there is still too high a proportion of ECTS that are compulsory.

A number of new courses have been added to the compulsory section of the major field of study including Georgian Language, Communication Psychology, Media Research Methods and Design; and also Integrated Marketing Communications was transferred from the elective courses. Taking into account the specificity of the field of mass communication, the content of the Radio Journalism course was modified and accordingly its name was changed - Audio Narration, and TV Journalism was replaced by two courses - Art of Video Shooting and Editing and TV Media. The name and content of Photojournalism changed and became - Photographic Art.

Based on the refinement of the program structure, the working group transferred several courses from compulsory to elective ones, namely, the Art of Public Speaking, Creative Communication, Basics of Psycholinguistics, Analytical Journalism, and added a course of Thinking Strategies in the free component. Consequently, the amount of credits and the scope of choice of both the elective and free components of the field were increased which has enhanced diversity and flexibility in course choices.

While there is some room for improvement and development, the learning outcomes of the program are logical and relevant to the study field and the knowledge, skills and the responsibility and/or autonomy gained by students on completion are accurately represented.

Evidences/Indicators

- Bachelor's Educational Program of Mass Communication and syllabi of the courses/components included in it.

- Curriculum map;

- Results of the evaluation of the learning outcomes of the courses/subjects;

- The Educational Program, study material/resources described in the attached syllabi, international electronic library databases;

- Books and digital resources of the library.

Recommendations:

- –

Suggestions for the programme development

- The teaching team should continue to work hard to ensure that materials and resources are up to date and reflect modern themes and developments within the communications sector.

Evaluation

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
1.5. Academic Course/Subject	☒	☐	☐	☐

Compliance of the Programme with the Standard

1. **Educational programme objectives, learning outcomes and their compliance with the programme**	Complies with requirements ☒
	Substantially complies with requirements ☐
	Partially complies with requirements ☐
	Does not comply with requirements ☐

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

Prerequisites for admission to the program generally comply with accreditation standards. Program admission preconditions consider program characteristics and ensure students' entry with relevant knowledge and skills. Program admission preconditions and procedures are consistent with the existing legislation. Program admission preconditions are logically linked to program content, learning outcomes, and level of education.

Despite compliance with the standard, several inconsistencies exist in the Prerequisites for admission.

According to the Self-Evaluation Document, the Higher Educational Institution notes that "*Prerequisites for admission to the bachelor's educational program of mass communication comply with the applicable legislation, are fair and transparent, based on the specificity of the program, ensure the admission of persons with relevant knowledge, skills and competence*" (Self-Evaluation Report on Accreditation; pg.14). The prerequisite for admission to the Bachelors' program of mass communication is formulated as follows: "*The prerequisites and procedures for admission to the bachelor's educational program of Mass Communication are in compliance with the applicable legislation, are prescribed in the Regulations for Educational Process, are posted on the website and are available to all interested persons. A person with complete general education, who has an appropriate document (school leaving certificate) certified by the state or a document equivalent to it, and who, based on the results of the unified national exams, has the right to study at the bachelor's educational program has the right to study on the mentioned program and completes administrative registration at the Teaching University*" (Bachelors' program of Mass Communication; pg.14).

In the educational program, the rubric "*Prerequisite for admission to the educational program*" does not specify which compulsory and optional subjects the student must pass on the unified national exams. The educational program does not specify which mandatory and optional subjects the student must pass on the unified national exams. This information is placed only on the university's website**.** The mentioned information should be placed in the educational program as well.

According to the Self-Evaluation Report, interested persons who apply to the program without the unified national exams are obliged to pass the Georgian language exam at the university: „*An interview is conducted to determine the language proficiency of persons wishing to obtain the right to study without passing the unified national exams. The Teaching University provides access to the video recording of the said interview for interested persons*" (Self-Evaluation Report on Accreditation; pg.15).

The educational program or the university's website must reflect the obligation to pass the Georgian language. Thus, it is still being determined what the exam will be - test, oral, or - both test and oral.

In addition, it needs to be specified what level of knowledge of the Georgian language should be proved by those who enrol in the program without passing the unified national exams. It is necessary for applicants who can skip the unified national exams, the university's administration and the program heads to clearly describe the procedures for passing the Georgian language. Georgian and English Descriptions should be published in the program and on the university's website.

The "Student Contingent Planning Methodology" document is not in the accreditation package. Thus, experts could not evaluate if the admission of students to the program complies with the methodology of student body planning.

Information about the "Public Relations" undergraduate program is still being sought on the university's website https://alterbridge.edu.ge/en/public-relations/. However, during the experts' visit, the higher educational institution representatives explained that the program was authorized. After the new bachelor's program "Mass Communication" received a one-year accreditation, the "Public Relations" students transferred to the accredited bachelor's program through internal mobility. Therefore, the Bachelor's program "Public Relations" is not functioning. Despite this, according to the old information published on the website, "Public Relations" appears to be an active bachelor's program. To protect applicants and potential students from being misled, the university administration should delete information about the cancelled Bachelor's program "Public Relations" from the University website.

There appears to be a need for higher levels of internationalization in the curriculum, though this is far from absent in the current program. It is a challenge that there is not much material available in Georgian on mass communication theory or practice or which reflects diverse markets and audiences or the communication experience of the global south (which in many ways drives the global communication agenda, for instance through China's communication sector). It is important that students from Georgia, if they are to assimilate into the global economy as well as the local one, engage with case studies, research and material that is sourced from as wide an international experience as possible and that the teaching and library staff make this access possible.

Some of the (compulsory) courses offered on the program are unusual for communications students. These include the course entitled "The art of storytelling", and also "Communication psychology".

The substantial weighting of compulsory modules also makes it difficult to introduce new areas, such as artificial intelligence, data analysis, immersive media experiences or even the use of drones, in what is a rapidly evolving subject area involving constantly changing technologies and platforms. Program staff agreed this was something they were working hard to incorporate in their teaching and research.

The panel is of the opinion that the content and structure of the Mass Communication educational program is appropriate and complies with requirements. The number of credits, course content, learning outcomes and study materials are all suitably targeted or available to ensure students achieve the required level of knowledge and practice intended by the program.

Evidences/Indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report on Accreditation

- Bachelors' program of Mass Communication

- Website of Higher Education Institute

- Interview Results

Recommendations:

- Information about which compulsory and optional subjects applicants have to pass in the unified national exams must be mentioned in the program in the rubric "*Prerequisite for admission to the educational program";*

- For those applicants who skip Unified National Exams, the university's administration and the program heads must clearly describe the procedures for passing the Georgian language test. Georgian and English descriptions should be published in the program and on the University's website.

Suggestions for the programme development

- To protect applicants and potential students from being misled, the university administration should delete information about the cancelled Bachelor's program "Public Relations" from the University website.

- Revisit the proportion of compulsory courses in the program with a view to creating more elective choices and better pathways to specialized skill acquisition;

- Continue working to internationalize the syllabus;

- Revisit the few modules that do not seem very relevant to a mass communication program;

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	☐	☒	☐	☐

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

The program's self-evaluation report presented scant information on practical, scientific, creative, scientific-research, and transferable skills development activities (Self-Evaluation Report on Accreditation; pg.15-16). It was indicated as evidence in the same document - Instruction for Bachelor's Thesis; Practice Regulations; Memoranda/agreements with employers and practice facilities; Factual circumstance. During the accreditation visit, the experts requested additional evidence for Factual circumstances. HEI's administration provided additional evidence of student-run projects, extra-curricular activities, and hands-on activities. Evidence was presented through Facebook, YouTube, and other social networks' links (name of the document "Performed Activities" / "შესრულებული აქტივობები").

After analyzing the additional materials, the experts concluded that the program ensures the development of Students' Practical and creative/performance skills. Students run the extracurricular project "The Alter Guest." Within the project, they invite professionals from different areas (Journalists, filmmakers, foreign diplomats..) and conduct public lectures, master classes, and discussions. This project enhances transfer skills – communication, time management, leadership, listening, collaboration…

Students' other project, "Alterphoto", develops visual communication skills; it helps students to create their professional portfolios. Project "Alter Lecturer" aims to introduce the program's invited and academic staff to a broader audience. Students prepare short videos about professors and publish them on the University's youtube channel - this project provides better communication between professors and students and

develops students' creative and performance abilities. The HEI hosted many events during the 2022-2023 academic year, including discussions, scientific conferences, study expeditions, closing the student competition with the Czech embassy, and master classes.

The program's administration should maintain a register/report mentioning such activities (Projects) implemented in the university, aiming to develop students' creative/performance and transferable skills. Such register/report will serve as evidence for program development reports or re-accreditation.

During interviews with the accreditation experts, the heads of the program noted that some first and second-year students completed internships at the Czech Embassy. According to the program structure, this internship should be considered an extracurricular activity because "Professional Practice" is a 10-credit compulsory subject that students take in the final 8th semester. The HEI has signed memoranda of cooperation with media organizations (online media outlets, televisions, radios) and private structures whose public relations and strategic communications departments will provide vacancies for the Students' practice.

One part of the memoranda focuses on implementing student practice, while the other (for example, the memorandum signed with the Caucasus University) only considers institutional cooperation. The program managers should categorize the memorandums according to their purpose.

"Professional practice" (10 ESTC) and "Bachelor Thesis" (10 ESTC) – both are 8th-semester mandatory subjects. It is necessary to change the structure of the program and transfer the "Professional practice" to the 7th or 6th semester because in the 8th semester, when the graduate student has to work on a bachelor's thesis, it will be challenging to allocate ten credits (250 hours) to professional practice, which is also a compulsory subject.

In the self-assessment report on scientific activities, it is noted that „*Based on the Teaching University's vision, students are actively involved in research-informative and practical activities carried out with periodic intensity, which includes participation in the planning and organization of student/scientific conferences, applied research, forums, discussions, workshops, open-door days, meetings with entrants and student attraction campaigns. Through these activities, they will develop and/or strengthen their creative, research and transferable skills, which will help them in personal self-realization*"(Self-Evaluation Report on Accreditation; pg.16). Student scientific conferences or evidence of student involvement in research projects are not included in the program's accreditation package. However, since the program received conditional one-year accreditation in the summer of 2022, planning scientific research projects and involving students was impossible. In addition, only first-year students and sophomores study in the program. The absence of junior and senior students (who should work on their Bachelor's thesis) is an objective reason why scientific and research projects have not been implemented.

Evidences/Indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report on Accreditation

- The document "Performed Activities" / "შესრულებული აქტივობები"

- Website and Social Networks accounts of Higher Education Institute

- Memoranda

- Rules for completing Bachelor Thesis and Practice

- Professional Practice syllabus

- Bachelors' program of Mass Communication

- Interview Results

Recommendations:

- The HEI has signed memoranda of cooperation with media organizations (online media outlets, televisions, radios) and private structures whose public relations and strategic communications departments will provide opportunities for students' practice. One part of the memoranda focuses on implementing student practice, while the other (for example, the memorandum signed with the Caucasus University) only considers institutional cooperation. The program managers should categorize these memoranda according to their purpose;

- It is recommended to transfer the "Professional practice" course to the 7th or 6th semester.

Suggestions for the programme development

- The heads of the program should maintain a register/report mentioning such activities (Projects) implemented in the university, aiming to develop students' creative/performance and transferable skills. Such a register/report will serve as evidence for program development reports or re-accreditation.

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	☐	☒	☐	☐

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.

According to the Bachelor Program, academic and invited staff in various compulsory and optional subjects use the following teaching methods: Learning by doing, Discussion / Participation in Debates, Experience-based learning, Brainstorming, Demonstration Method, action-oriented Teaching, Working in pairs based on coaching principle, book-based independent learning method, Written work method, Case study, Verbal or oral practice, Collaborative work, Role-playing; and situational play, Project-based learning, Dialogue by Socratic method, Heuristic method, Continuum, Inductive method, Deductive method, Analysis method, Synthesis method, Cooperative Teaching, Simulation.

The teaching-learning methods described in the Program are diverse, ensuring students' active involvement in the learning process and aiming to develop students' independent, critical thinking.

Despite the variety of learning methods, some courses need to add such methods, the use of which is necessary depending on the content and goals of subjects.

For example, the book-based independent learning method is not mentioned in syllabi of the mandatory subjects such as:

- "Introduction to Mass Communication,"
- "Theories of Mass Communication,"
- "Professional Ethics,"
- "Media Research Methods and Design,"
- "Digital Media Literacy,"
- "Basics of public relations,"
- "The Art of Storytelling."

The same method is not mentioned in elective courses:

- "Basics of Psycholinguistics,"
- "Analytical Journalism,"
- "Intercultural Communication."

Synthesis, deduction, and induction are not specified in subjects that will undoubtedly require these methods, such as "Social Research Methods "and "Media Research Methods and Design."

Role-playing, Brainstorming, and Case Study methods are not in the "Basics of Public Relations" syllabus. However, the assessment components of the subject indicate the Case Study.

Evidences/Indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report on Accreditation;

- syllabi of the mandatory subjects - "Introduction to Mass Communication," "Theories of Mass Communication, "Professional Ethics," "Media Research Methods and Design," "Digital Media Literacy," "Basics of public relations," "The Art of Storytelling.";

- syllabi of the elective subjects - "Basics of Psycholinguistics," "Analytical Journalism," "Intercultural Communication."

Recommendations:

- Authors of subject syllabi should, together with the heads of the Program, review teaching and learning methods and align them with all specific subject learning objectives, activities, and assessment components.

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	☐	☒	☐	☐

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

The assessment of students in the Teaching University "Alterbridge" is carried out in accordance with the principles, rules and procedures defined by the educational process regulation, which is based on the order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia N3, 05.01.07.

The student knowledge evaluation system provides for:

A) Five positive grades:

A.a) (A) Excellent – 91-100 points of grading;

A.b) (B) Very good – 81-90 points of maximum grade;

A.c) (C) Good – 71-80 points of maximum grade;

A.d) (D) Satisfactory – 61-70 points of maximum grade;

A.e) (E) Acceptable – 51-60 points of maximum grade.

B) Two types of negative grades:

B.a) (FX) Fail – 41-50 points of maximum grade, meaning that a student needs some more work to pass and is given a chance to sit an additional examination once again after independent work;

B.b) (F) Fail – 40 points and less of maximum grade, meaning that the work of a student is not acceptable and s/he has to study the subject anew.

C) Each component of midterm and final assessment takes into account the specificity of the course.

D) In case of one of the negative grades: (FX) fail, the student has the right to take an additional exam in the same semester, not less than 5 days after the announcement of the final exam result. The number of points obtained in the final evaluation is not added to the grade received by the student in the additional exam. The grade obtained in the additional exam is the final grade and is reflected in the gross grade of the educational program component. Taking into account the grade received at the additional exam, in case of accumulating 0-50 points in the gross grade of the educational component, the student is assigned an F-0 points.

The distribution and components of midterm and final assessments are determined by the course lecturer based on his/her own views and the needs of the course. By default, the ratio of midterm and final assessments can be 70/30 or 60/40.

Evaluation components and methods are fair to every student, transparent and complies with existing legislation. During interviews students mentioned that evaluation components and methods are published and known to students in advance, syllabi are posted on students' electronic portal and also, they receive guidance before starting courses and before exams. Students receive feedback on their strengths and weaknesses.

Evaluation forms and criteria are prescribed in detail in the syllabi of the courses/components. There are appeals procedures available at the teaching university. Process is regulated by the Examination process administration rule. During the visit interview one of the students shared his experience regarding the appeal procedure: After entering the marks in the information system, within 3 days, the student has the right to discuss the exam work with the lecturer and receive feedback. If the student does not agree with the result of the feedback, within 5 days, he/she applies a written statement to the Dean, who, in agreement with the head of the program, creates a commission. The commission includes a specialist from the relevant branch, the head of the corresponding program, the Dean of the corresponding school and a representative of the quality assurance service. The commission ensures re-correction of the exam paper (part of it). The result of the realignment is final.

The Teaching University "Alterbridge" has developed a procedure for completing the bachelor's thesis and Bachelor Thesis syllabus. As well as the Statute of Practice, a bachelor thesis/project is a thesis/project completed by a student within the framework of a bachelor educational program. The thesis/project supervisor is selected by the student and approved by the school board. The selection of the bachelor thesis/project is carried out by the student in agreement with the supervisor of the thesis. A student may have one or more supervisors who have relevant scientific-research/practical experience for the subject of the thesis/project.

The supervisor of the bachelor's thesis/project guides the student's work, helps him/her in developing and formulating the thesis/project, select literature sources, formulate the problem and form questions and hypotheses. The supervisor of the bachelor's thesis/project evaluates the thesis/project performed by the student and determines the issue of transferring the completed thesis/project to the reviewer for evaluation. The thesis supervisor checks the thesis/project for plagiarism before submitting it to the reviewer. In case of successful completion of the bachelor's thesis/project component, which is expressed by receiving one of the positive evaluations (51-100 points), the student is awarded credit in the bachelor's thesis/project component. The student has the right to file an appeal application for the purpose of appealing the evaluation results no later than 5 days after getting acquainted with the evaluation of the bachelor's thesis / project.

Some syllabus grading needs to be revised. Namely:

1. The "TV media" syllabus states that students must do eight practical works during the semester: four as homework and another four - when working in groups. But despite this, all eight are evaluated with 3-3 points. Logically, homework should be more complex and require more time and resources than group work in class. Thus, homework should have a higher grade than - group work or vice versa.

2. The "Effective Presentation Techniques" (mandatory training course of the free component) syllabus only mentions that "final exam evaluation - total 40 points group presentation - 20 minutes, 4-5 minute speech for each member of the group individual evaluation of oral presentation - max. 10 points" In the syllabus, a 30-point assessment of group work (probably a group project?) is given as rubrics. However, there needs to be details on how many people the group prepares for the final exam project. How many pages should it be if it means a written study? Should it be sent to the teacher before the final exam? What is this project about, and whether the evaluation applies to all group members?

3. According to the syllabus of the subject "Digital Media and Communication," 30 points of the intermediate exam are written in registering a personal blog. "30" total points are divided into unequal subpoints (the highest is -29-30, although the next level includes a 6-scale assessment - 23,24,25,26,27). The same rubric cannot include grades "23" and "27". A maximum of four

digits are allowed in one rubric - 25,26,27,28. When registering a personal blog is assigned 30 points, it is preferable to divide it into three different components (for example, 10 points for topic relevance and content, 10 points for technical execution, and 10 points for visual design) and break down the 10-point components into 2-3 level rubrics. In the same subject, the final 40-point exam involves "writing the communication strategy of a specific company and selecting the appropriate digital tools for its implementation." Like the midterm exam, the 40 points of the final exam are not divided into components. The assessment levels are enormous. For example, according to the proposed redistribution, "30" and "21" points are one-level evaluations. Besides, there is no explanation for the "31-40" score.

Evidences/Indicators

- Interviews during site visit with different stakeholders;

- Self-Evaluation Report on Accreditation of Higher Education Programme;

- Program and Syllabi of learning courses of educational program;

- Webpage of the University https://alterbridge.edu.ge/en/;

- The provision of Educational Process Management;

- International University Of Management and Communication "Alterbridge" provision.

Recommendations:

- Assessment methods in the syllabi of the following mandatory subjects - "TV media," "Effective Presentation Techniques," and "Digital Media and Communication" must be revised.

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	☐	☒	☐	☐

Compliance with the programme standards

	Complies with requirements	☐
2. **Methodology and Organisation of Teaching, Adequacy of Evaluation of Programme Mastering**	Substantially complies with requirements	☒

	Partly complies with requirements	☐
	Does not comply with requirements	☐

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.

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

At "Alterbridge", students receive appropriate consultations and support regarding the planning of the learning process, After, enrolling in the university, students are given an orientation meeting with the Heads of programme, quality Assurance Office and academic staff. Students are provided with all the information about university services: The latest information in the university space; Electronic management system of the educational process - INI.GE, which ensures the transparency of the content of educational programs and their implementation process, portal gives students maximum information about learning-related and other university activities. All the information is uploaded at the university website.

During the visit students expressed that they receive guidance from lecturers on their needs at any time, in the teaching University space or online. In addition, they can communicate directly and openly with university management and heads of program. At the first introductory lecture of each academic course, the student receives complete information about the requirements provided by the syllabus. In the syllabuses the counselling hours and contact information of the teacher are indicated.

Students of educational programs have an opportunity to participate in local and international projects and events. The program is young but students have the opportunity to participate in international projects and short exchange programs. University have memorandums with international universities such as Tenerife university and Polish universities. Students are involved in various activities: Media voice - 3-day training for students, support of media, value of media; The Green Movement, - reports in the implementation section of the United Nations Development Plan and various social campaigns. The university operates the enter for Innovative Education. It also has various initiatives in which students can participate, such as: Alter photo; Alter blog and Alter lecture.

"Alterbridge" provides employment and professional development opportunities for students. During visit interviews students, told the panel that they regularly receive various vacancies via email

and sms. Several students were employed after completing the internship program offered by the university. Within the framework of the Practice course provided by the program of mass communication, students are distributed to partner organizations for the purpose of professional development and future career advancement.

The Teaching University has a close relationship with employers, who are involved in program evaluation and development process. Students can benefit with various internship programs: "Palitra holding" and "Comersant" offer students internship programs. Lectures are held with the involvement of employers, for example: the latest topic presented to students was: artificial intelligence, new challenges related to AI.

During visit interviews, students and alumni (of a neighboring program) expressed a positive attitude regarding the program. They are satisfied with the quality of teaching, the level of professors and teachers, teaching methods and student services. Students indicated that they felt they were given the opportunity to express their opinions and that these views were taken seriously. The university was good at communicating any changes being considered. Students were able to take advantage of internal and high performance grants offered by the university.

Students and alumni of a neighboring program at Alterbridge agreed they were invited to participate in the process of self evaluation. Students felt their suggestions were taken into account when developing the programs. For example, their suggestion was to add more practical components to the course syllabus, and this was implemented. During interviews, experts were told that the Quality Assurance Office works with students in focus groups to collect more feedback from students.

Evidences/Indicators

- Interviews during site visit with different stakeholders;
- Self-Evaluation Report on Accreditation of Higher Education Programme
- Program and Syllabi of learning courses of educational program
- Webpage of the University https://alterbridge.edu.ge/en/
- The provision of Educational Process Management
- International University Of Management and Communication "Alterbridge" provision

Recommendations:

- –

Suggestions for 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

3.1 Student Consulting and Support Services	☒	☐	☐	☐

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, ratio 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

As the program being evaluated is a Bachelor's degree, there is no master's or doctoral student supervision.

Data related to the supervision of master's/ doctoral students	
Quantity of master/PhD theses	
Number of master's/doctoral students	
Ratio	

Evidences/Indicators

- Component evidences/indicators, including the relevant documents and interview results

Recommendations:

- Proposal (s), which should be considered by the HEI, the programme to meet the requirements of the standard

Suggestions for the programme development

- Non-binding suggestions for the programme development

Evaluation

n/a

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

3.2. Master's and Doctoral Students Supervision	☐	☐	☐	☐

Compliance with the programme standards

	Complies with requirements	☒
3. Students Achievements, Individual Work with them	Substantially complies with requirements	☐
	Partly complies with requirements	☐
	Does not comply with requirements	☐

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 individuals involved in implementing the Bachelor of Mass Communication program at Alterbridge University, including affiliated academic staff and adjunct lecturers, participate in the program in accordance with the university's legislation and internal regulations. The qualifications of the personnel align with the requirements of their respective positions, functions, and applicable legislation.

A total of 38 teachers contribute to the program, including 17 academic personnel. Among them, 11 are affiliated professors, while the remaining 21 are invited lecturers. Based on the self-evaluation document, the program maintains a sustainable ratio between academic and visiting staff, which is determined to be 17/21.

The current ratio of academic staff to the number of students, which stands at 2.11, is relatively high. However, considering the projected increase in the student population in the future and to

ensure the seamless implementation of program subjects, it would be advantageous for the university to consider inviting additional academic staff to teach certain subjects. This measure would enhance the overall learning experience for students and effectively manage larger class sizes. In the event of a lecturer's absence, arrangements will be promptly made for another qualified lecturer to cover the subject, ensuring continuity and uninterrupted progress in the learning process.

The academic and invited staff involved in the educational program possess the necessary competencies to effectively guide students towards achieving the desired learning outcomes outlined in the curriculum. These competencies are derived from their academic degrees, practical experience, and recent scientific contributions. In the past five years, they have made a total of 317 scientific contributions, with 148 published in local journals and 40 in international scientific journals. To further enhance the program's relevance, industry practitioners are engaged in the teaching process, ensuring that it aligns with the demands of the contemporary media and communications market in Georgia.

Diplomas validating higher education and academic qualifications, along with documents verifying professional experience, published scientific works, monographs, publications, and other essential documentation, are provided to demonstrate the necessary competence of a specific teacher participating in the training course. These credentials establish the teacher's capability to foster the development of the intended learning outcomes.

To ensure the continuous improvement of the program and maintain a high standard of education, it is advisable for the university to consider suggestions of the external experts and explore the possibility of utilizing existing human resources to teach specific subjects more efficiently.

The program is led by highly qualified individuals who hold doctoral degrees and possess extensive expertise in the field of mass communication. With their knowledge, experience and skill set, they are capable of developing and refining the BA program of mass communication. These leaders actively contribute to the ongoing evaluation and improvement of the program, actively participate in its implementation, and offer individual consultations to students, ensuring a well-rounded learning experience.

Based on the interviews conducted with the administrative staff of the university during the visit and referring to the university's statutes, it is evident that the program is supported by competent administrative resources, including the program heads. However, a more comprehensive assessment of the competencies and qualifications of the administrative team specifically dedicated to the program's implementation could have been provided if the university had supplied a detailed list and personal files of these staff members.

Most of the modules are taught by individual members of staff. While this is a pattern that is common in some parts of Europe and appears standard in Georgia, increasingly communications modules are being team-taught. This encourages staff members to teach their strengths and interests while also protecting students from any instability (through, for example, staff illness), avoiding what can be classed as "single points of failure", or over-reliance on individuals. As the evaluation criteria indicate, a good balance of teaching loads enhances the sustainability of the program.

Number of the staff involved in the programme (including academic, scientific, and invited staff)	Number of Programme Staff	Including the staff with sectoral expertise	Including the staff holding PhD degree in the sectoral direction	Among them, the affiliated staff
Total number of academic staff	17	16	12	11

- Professor	4	4	2	3
Associate Professor	8	8	5	6
- Assistant-Professor	5	4	5	2
- Assistant	0	0	0	0
Visiting Staff	21	19	5	–
Scientific Staff	0	0	0	–

Evidences/Indicators

- The Self-evaluation Report

- Bachelor's Program of Mass Communication

- Annex 1 Information About the Quantitative Data of the Educational Program

- University Statute

- Personnel List & Personal Files (CVs)

- Academic/invited personnel workload chart, including an individual workload index for academic staff, which considers their workload in other higher education institutions as well

- The ratio of academic and invited staff to the number of students enrolled in the program

- The balance between academic staff and invited staff

- The turnover rate of academic, scientific, and invited staff

Recommendations:

- –

Suggestions for Programme Development

- It is advisable for the university to explore the possibility of utilizing existing human resources to teach specific subjects more efficiently.

- Consider team-teaching some modules to better improve the sustainability of teaching provision.

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	☒	☐	☐	☐

4.2 Qualification of Supervisors of Master's and Doctoral Students

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.

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

n/a (no Master's or Doctoral students in this program).

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

Evidences/Indicators

- Component evidences/indicators, including the relevant documents and interview results

Recommendations:

- Proposal (s), which should be considered by the HEI, the programme to meet the requirements of the standard

Suggestions for the programme development

- Non-binding suggestions for 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

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

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

Alterbridge's Quality Assurance Office and program managers conduct regular evaluations of the performance and quality of work of both visiting and academic staff engaged in the program. They consistently engage with the invited staff participating in the program, providing them with clear explanations of the university's regulations, rules, and the available electronic resources that can be utilized.

According to internal university regulations, the evaluation of a teacher's performance encompasses multiple components, including feedback from students, the quality of test preparation for midterms and final exams, and more. Additionally, the university has implemented a system of collegial evaluation. During interviews, the staff expressed their active involvement in this process. Through analysis and evaluation, recommendations are provided to teachers based on their performance.

The university prioritizes the scientific development of its academic staff by providing financial incentives to publish scientific articles under the university's name, both in local publications such as the university-based scientific journal "Modern Science Challenges" and in international peer-reviewed journals. Academic staff are also encouraged to participate in international scientific conferences, collaborate on joint projects with international partners, and contribute to the creation of books and manuals. To enhance current practices, the university conducts an annual staff survey aimed at assessing staff satisfaction and using the feedback to implement improvements.

Evidences/Indicators

- Interviews conducted with academic, visiting, and administrative staff; Interviews conducted with the program heads and students;

- Quality Assurance documents including results of staff performance evaluations and satisfaction surveys; utilization of evaluation and survey results for staff management and development purposes, etc.

- The Self-Assessment Report;

- Indicator of staff involvement in international projects, conferences, research, and events;

- Statistical data on personnel;

- The Program Budget.

Recommendations:

- –

Suggestions for the programme development

- It is advisable to consider integrating the program into long-term international projects, such as Erasmus+, as this would offer valuable opportunities for academic staff and students to actively engage with the international educational community. Participation in such projects can greatly contribute to the development of the field and facilitate its alignment with global standards and best practices.

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	☒	☐	☐	☐

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

Alterbridge University is situated in a modern facility, ensuring a safe and secure environment for both learning and work. The classrooms are furnished with appropriate equipment, including information and communication technologies, computers with relevant software, and projectors. Additionally, the university boasts a library that meets contemporary standards, dedicated working spaces for academic staff, a computer center, a conference hall, and a cafeteria.

The university maintains cleanliness and aesthetic appeal across its campus, prioritizing the safety and well-being of its occupants. The heating, ventilation, air conditioning, lighting systems, and bathrooms are all fully operational. The classrooms are designed to receive natural light, and there is an uninterrupted power supply system in place. Additionally, the university provides a medical center equipped with essential medicines. It would be beneficial if the university could provide an evacuation plan for the building, demonstrating the preparedness and response measures in case of emergencies. This would enable us to assess the safety protocols and procedures implemented within the university premises.

The practical components of the mass communication bachelor's program are conducted in the dedicated media center located on the university campus. In line with the recommendation of the previous expert commission, Alterbridge University has allocated a bigger area for the media center, ensuring it can accommodate the current student population. During discussions with the university's top management, it was confirmed that in the future, when the anticipated annual intake of students is achieved, the university plans to utilize additional floors in its own building

(currently rented) to cater to the growing number of students, thus expanding its capacity. To substantiate this argument, it would be helpful if the university could provide documentation or proof of ownership of the building. This would provide assurance and clarity regarding the university's legal ownership and control over the premises.

Currently, the university possesses a range of technical resources including one studio video camera, four photo/video cameras, three tripods, microphones, lighting systems, sound recording equipment, and three editing computers with audio-visual editing programs installed. For the present student population, this allocation of technical resources can be considered sufficient. However, with the anticipation of admitting a new cohort of students and considering that media production begins in the second year of education (2023-2024 academic year) according to the curriculum, it is advisable for the university to proactively procure additional equipment to ensure the seamless implementation of the educational process. This is especially important as enhancing the material and technical infrastructure aligns with the university's strategic plan, and the program's budget from 2023 includes funds allocated for the acquisition of technical and material resources. By timely investing in additional equipment, the university can effectively support the practical needs of the growing student body.

The mandatory literature required in the program syllabi is readily accessible through the university's physical library and electronic library. The electronic library not only provides access to electronic books but also hosts lecture presentations and other supplementary materials prepared by lecturers for each subject. These resources are essential in facilitating the attainment of learning outcomes. Additionally, during our assessment, we verified the availability of Georgian translations or adaptations of English-language literature, commonly referred to as "readers," within the library's collection.

Students of the program have access to a wide range of international electronic library databases, providing them with the opportunity to stay updated on the latest scientific advancements in the field of mass communication. Alterbridge University is a registered member of the following e-libraries, which further enhance the learning and research capabilities of the students:

- Cambridge Journals Online https://www.cambridge.org/core

- e-Duke Journals Scholarly Collection https://read.dukeupress.edu/

- Edward Elgar Publishing Journals and Development Studies e-books https://www.elgaronline.com/

- IMechE Journals https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/IMEchE

- Openedition Journals https://www.openedition.org/

- Royal Society Journals Collection https://royalsociety.org/journals/

- SAGE Journals https://journals.sagepub.com

- SAGE APCs for Open Access Journals https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/pure-gold-open-access-journals-at-sage

The university utilizes an electronic learning management system (ELMS) to facilitate the organization of teaching materials. This platform serves as a centralized hub where subject syllabi, student attendance records, assignments, and their corrections are uploaded. The ELMS system empowers students to track their grades in each subject, establish direct communication with their respective lecturers, and access other relevant resources. This seamless integration of technology greatly enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of the educational process.

All material resources present within the university's facilities are accessible to both students and staff participating in the program. Students and staff have the opportunity to utilize these resources to enhance their educational experience and carry out their academic endeavors effectively.

Evidences/Indicators

- Evaluation of the university facilities observed during our visit

- Evaluation of the observed production equipment at the university

- Assessment of the library's book collection alignment with the essential literature specified in the educational programs

- University's strategic development plan

- The budget of the program

- Interviews conducted with the university administration, the program heads, students, and library staff

Recommendations:

- –

Suggestions for the programme development

- It is advisable for the university to proactively procure additional equipment to ensure the seamless implementation of the educational process, particularly as expansion of the program is anticipated.

- the university should provide an evacuation plan for the building, demonstrating the preparedness and response measures in case of emergencies. This would enable us to assess the safety protocols and procedures implemented within the university premises.

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	☒	☐	☐	☐

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

The program's budget is initially planned based on an average of 40 students per level of education. However, upon analyzing the budget, it becomes evident that the program can break even with an average of 30 students. Considering that 18 students were enrolled in the program during its inaugural year (2022-2023), it is realistic to expect the admission of at least 30 students in subsequent years. This indicates that obtaining the necessary financial resources for program implementation is economically feasible. It is important to note that the budget should be adjusted to reflect the actual revenues from tuition fees for the 2022-2023 academic year.

In addition to covering the salaries of academic and administrative staff, the program's budget includes provisions for student incentives and support for socially vulnerable students. It also allocates funds for staff professional development and research incentives. Furthermore, the budget accounts for the expansion of the library's book fund and the renewal and acquisition of technical resources. These considerations indicate that the budget is designed to support the long-term development of the program.

However, in order to ensure long-term financial sustainability of the program, it would be advisable to include additional sources of income in the budget. It is noteworthy that the university's policy and the commitment of the top management are evident in their willingness to allocate additional financial resources to the program if needed. This commitment was demonstrated in the 2022-2023 academic year when the program had fewer students than initially projected, resulting in insufficient income for its operation. The university provided financial support to the program during this period. During our visit, the university management emphasized that the development of the program is a top priority, and the university is prepared to allocate additional revenues to support its growth. It is worth mentioning that many Georgian universities adopt a similar policy regarding new programs.

Evidences/Indicators

- The budget of the program

- Interviews with the top management, financial manager and heads of the program

Recommendations:

- –

Suggestions for the programme development

- In order to ensure long-term financial sustainability of the program, it would be advisable to identify additional sources of income in the budget.

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		

Compliance with the programme standard

	Complies with requirements	☒
4. **Providing Teaching Resources**	Substantially complies with requirements	☐
	Partly complies with requirements	☐
	Does not comply with requirements	☐

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

For quality assurance and development at "Alterbridge" University, the Quality Assurance Office is guided by Georgia's Law on Higher Education, Authorization and Accreditation Regulations, and other regulatory documents.

Based on the Self-Assessment Report submitted by the university, the attached documentation and the interviews conducted during the accreditation visit, it is clear that the personnel involved in the program cooperate with the internal quality assurance office.

During the previous accreditation process, it was the opinion of the experts that active involvement in the preparation of the program still remained within the narrow circle of the educational program and the administration of the university. This was taken into consideration by the university and now the involvement of various units in the development of the program is evident.

It should also be noted that the mechanisms and procedures for ensuring the quality of programs are subject to the principle: "PDCA" Plan - Do - Check - Act.

The binding of this cycle is ensured by the effective involvement of all parties in the implementation of internal quality assurance mechanisms of the university. The conducted studies are analysed, the results of the study and ways of responding to them are reflected in the reports of the relevant structural units and presented to the decision-making bodies.

Based on these decisions, further changes were made, which actively contributed to the development and improvement of the program.

At the beginning of each academic year, the quality assurance office determines the work which should be carried out during the year and which is reflected in the action plan.

In each area of activity of the quality assurance office (educational programs; personnel and research; learning/teaching process; student services and information; smooth operation of the structures of the university), tools for gathering the opinion of interested parties have been developed, which ensure the evaluation of various components.

In the presented document of labour market research, there is mostly shared general reasoning. This is why in some cases it is difficult to clearly define that the present labour market research is focused on the research of mass communication employment. It is suggested to focus on more in-depth analysis in the labour market research, which will be directly related to the field.

During the interviews, the expert group had the opportunity to work with the self-assessment group. It should be noted that the recommendations made during the previous accreditation visit was taken into account and this time the self-assessment group included students, graduates and academic and visiting staff, although the experts were able to identify this only during the interviews, since this was not indicated in the self-assessment report, nor was there any relevant supporting documentation presented.

The expert group additionally requested protocols of the meeting of the working group of the program confirming the discussion of the mass communication educational program with employers, evidence of extracurricular activities that were carried out and what the program heads discussed during the interviews.

The Self-Assessment Report itself is weak, both analytically and argumentatively. As a critically important document, it is necessary to describe in detail the activities carried out by the university, especially in terms of the implementation of previous recommendations/suggestions. It took a lot of effort for the expert group to identify the work done. It is necessary for the SER to be informative, analytical and argumentative, according to the presented evidence and indicators. The internal quality office, together with the personnel involved in the program, should take care to eliminate the deficiencies identified during the work on the self-assessment report.

Evidences/Indicators

- Internal quality assurance mechanisms

- The results of the internal quality assessments

- The questionnaires of the quality assurance office

- External evaluation of the program

- Self-Assessment Report

- Results of conducted interviews

Recommendations:

- The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) provided to this panel was not adequate as it omitted key information. The SER is required to be informative, analytical and argumentative, according to the presented evidence and indicators. The internal quality office, together with the

personnel involved in the program, should take care to eliminate the deficiencies identified during the work on the self-assessment report;

Suggestions for the programme development

- It is suggested to focus on more in-depth analysis in the labour market research, which will be directly related to the field.

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	☐	☒	☐	☐

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 university uses external assessment tools for program accreditation in the process of preparing higher education programs. It cooperates with the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement.

Based on the fact that the program is conditionally accredited, the team working on the program and the involved units actively worked on the implementation of the previously issued recommendations, which was highlighted during the visit.

As a result of documents and interviews, it was confirmed that the recommendations given earlier by external evaluators (accreditation experts of the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement) were actively taken into consideration in the process of work on re-accreditation of the program and improvement of it.

The conclusions of the external evaluator were also presented. The external evaluators were not representatives of the evaluated program, did not represent an interested party and had competencies in relevant fields.

The external evaluators noted that the program is relevant, interesting, and the presented courses respond to labour market requirements.

Evidences/Indicators

- Presented educational program;

- Previous report of accreditation expert group;
- External peer review;
- Self-Assessment Report;
- Results of conducted 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
5.2. External Quality Evaluation	☒	☐	☐	☐

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

Monitoring and periodic evaluation of the program is carried out with the involvement of academic, visiting, administrative, support staff, students, alumni, employers and other interested parties, through the systematic collection, processing and analysis of information.

In order to monitor and periodically evaluate the program and improve the quality of the program, according to the purpose, various tools are used - surveys, collection and analysis of statistical data, internal collegial evaluation, comparison of the program with analogues.

The university has pre-developed and approved questionnaires that allow students to express their opinion about the educational process and the content of the educational program, human and material resources, with complete anonymity. The assessment timetable is pre-defined, where the type of questionnaire, participants of the questionnaire and their mandatory periodicity are written.

The quality assurance office carries out statistical processing of the answers to the compiled questions, analysing the results, specifying the data if necessary (meetings with the respondent, in-depth interviews/surveys), developing recommendations.

It should be noted that for the continuity of the PDCA cycle, the implementation of the recommended issues must be monitored until the problem or issue is finally resolved. It is recommended for the university to develop a special response form (or report form), where the response to the implementation of the recommended issues will be presented in a documentary form, in order to verify whether the improvement areas have been done on or not.

It is also important that during the previous visit, recommendations were made by the group of experts, which were related to the development of a specific methodology for the monitoring process by the university, and the creation of procedures and processes, in order to purposefully implement the improvement of the educational program.

The university took into consideration the recommendations developed by the council. The mechanisms of internal quality assurance are detailed in the relevant document, and the performance of these mechanisms is confirmed by the evidence presented.

According to the benchmarking document presented by the university, both local and international similar programs were analysed. In order to comply with modern requirements, the best international practices have been used.

Evidences/Indicators

- Quality assurance mechanisms;

- The questionnaires of the quality assurance office;

- The research of the quality department (personnel, students);

- Analysis of the personnel performance study;

- Self-Assessment Report;

- Results of conducted interviews;

- External evaluation of the program.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended the university develops a special response form (or report form) so that the response to the implementation of the recommended issues will be presented in a documentary form, in order to verify whether the improvement areas have been done on or not.

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

5.3. Programme monitoring and periodic review	☐	☒	☐	☐

Compliance with the programme standards

		Complies with requirements	☐
5.	**Teaching Quality Enhancement Opportunities**	Substantially complies with requirements	☒
		Partially complies with requirements	☐
		Does not comply with requirements	☐

Attached documentation (if applicable):

Name of the Higher Education Institution: International University of Management and Communication (Alterbridge)
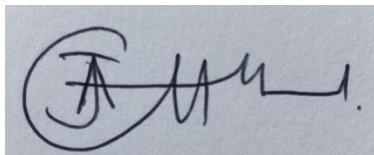
Name of Higher Education Programme, Level: Bachelor's Degree of Mass Communication (First level of academic higher education)

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	☒	☐	☐	☐
2. Teaching Methodology and Organisation, Adequacy Evaluation of Programme Mastering	☐	☒	☐	☐
3. Student Achievements, Individual Work with them	☒	☐	☐	☐
4. Providing Teaching Resources	☒	☐	☐	☐
5. Teaching Quality Enhancement Opportunities	☐	☒	☐	☐

Signatures:

Chair of Accreditation Expert Panel
Professor Adrian Hadland

Accreditation Expert Panel Members

Magda Memanishvili

Davit Kakiashvili

Nino Makhviladze

Nino Pataraia

ნ. პატარაია