



Accreditation Expert Group Report on Higher Education Programme

Applied Public Health, Joint Masters

GIPA and TMA

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Tbilisi

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Information about a Higher Education Institution ¹

Name of Institution Indicating its Organizational Legal Form	LLC - Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy NNLE -GIPA - Georgian Institute of Public Affairs
Identification Code of Institution	204861961 204429341
Type of the Institution	Teaching University University

2. Expert Panel Members

Chair (Name, Surname, HEI/Organisation, Country)	Heikki Hiilamo, University of Helsinki, Finland
Member (Name, Surname, HEI/Organisation, Country)	Natia Nogaideli, Geo Hospitals LLC, Georgia
Member (Name, Surname, HEI/Organisation, Country)	Giga Khositashvili, Ilia State University, Georgia
Member (Name, Surname, HEI/Organisation, Country)	Shota Silagadze, Tbilisi State Medical University, Georgia

¹ In the case of joint education programme: Please indicate the HEIs that carry out the programme. The indication of an identification code and type of institution is not obligatory if a HEI is recognised in accordance with the legislation of a foreign country.

I. Information on the education programme

Name of Higher Education Programme (in Georgian)	გამოყენებითი საზოგადოებრივი ჯანმრთელობა (ერთობლივი)
Name of Higher Education Programme (in English)	Applied public health (Joint)
Level of Higher Education	II
Qualification to be Awarded ²	Master of Public Health
Name and Code of the Detailed Field	0919 Health or elsewhere classified
Indication of the right to provide the teaching of subject/subjects/group of subjects of the relevant cycle of the general education ³	
Language of Instruction	English
Number of ECTS credits	120 ETC
Programme Status (Accredited/ Non-accredited/ Conditionally accredited/new/International accreditation) Indicating Relevant Decision (number, date)	New
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)	

² In case of implementing a joint higher education programme with a higher education institution recognized in accordance with the legislation of a foreign country, if the title of the qualification to be awarded differs, it shall be indicated separately for each institution.

³ In case of Integrated Bachelor's-Master's Teacher Training Educational Programme and Teacher Training Educational Programme

II. Accreditation Report Executive Summary

✦ General Information on Education Programme⁴

The creation of a Master's Program in Applied Public Health began with TMA initiating the curriculum design. Collaboration with the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA) led to a joint program, with TMA focusing on biomedical aspects and GIPA contributing strengths in marketing, communication, and public health finance. In 2021, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia approved the implementation of the program in English. Agreements were also established with the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement.

The program is designed to address identified deficiencies and incorporate the necessary knowledge and skills. These critical skills included the capacity to assess evidence-based public health programs tailored to public needs, manage healthcare finances, address ethical concerns, measure policy impact on population health, design and oversee research projects, analyze various influencing factors, and monitor public health programs while developing relevant evaluation criteria. Practical skills are emphasized, differentiating the program from other health care master's programs in Georgia.

The curriculum mandates an internship in partner organizations. The initial semester focuses on foundational tools for public health professionals and researchers, while subsequent semesters concentrate on sector-specific knowledge and practical skill development.

✦ Overview of the Accreditation Site Visit

Site visit took place on Friday October 6th. The Accreditation team met with TMA and GIPA management, the team members who completed Self-Evaluation Report, Program heads, academic staff/teachers, students from TMA's and GIPA's already existing programs, employers and quality assurance team. At the end of the visit the chair of the accreditation team gave a brief overview of initial observations.

✦ Recommendations

1. In the precondition for admission to the programme, the main sectoral directions of the university's internal oral exam should be determined based on the areas of public health competence (2.1)
2. International experience and diverse background should be considered, and applicants with non-health qualifications should be required to prove knowledge specifically in the field of public health with transparent evaluation criteria such as public health content courses completed with a determined volume (credits), as well as proof of relevant skills through work experience, or research activities or in another form (2.1)
3. Add a tool of periodic formative assessment of the master student's progress by their scientific supervisor (2.4)
4. It is necessary to define in regulatory papers how are student support services distributed between the two HEIs and additionally determine orientation meetings format; (3.1)
5. Determine in student-HEI contract and regulatory documents details about student supporting procedures, if the program is cancelled (3.1)

⁴ When providing general information related to the programme, it is appropriate to also present the quantitative data analysis of the educational programme.

6. The university should take care of raising the scientific potential of academic and visiting staff (4.3)
7. Improve reading spaces for students to study books which are not available for borrowing from the library and increase the number of books available for borrowing (4.4)
8. It is recommended that the financial risk strategy is designed, the roles and responsibilities are defined clearly, to guarantee the financial sustainability of the program (4.5)

✦ **Suggestions for Programme Development**

1. Continue to develop the programme together with stakeholders after the launch of the programme (1.1)
2. Reconsider the name of the programme (1.1)
3. Continue developing the learning outcomes by including input from the students after the launch of the programme (1.2)
4. To expand the list of organizations where programme participants will undergo training practice (1.5)
5. Invest in developing joint research project with TMA and GIPA where students can contribute through writing their master's thesis (2.2)
6. Continue developing teaching and learning methods by using student feedback once the programme is in operation (2.3)
7. Describe master's thesis defense committee's members' election procedure in the Regulatory document (2.4)
8. Add the requirement about supervising maximum 3, co-supervising maximum 5 theses in the agreement form between the Program and the supervisor (3.2)
9. For the programme administration, it is appropriate to define a mechanism for determining the coordination and rights/duties of the partner universities and their administrative services (4.1)
10. Implement mechanism of reserving a reading room/space in advance (4.4)
11. It is suggested the universities design a well-defined QA procedures between the two HEIs (divide the task and responsibilities between them in order to avoid overlapping and the working process to be more dynamic and effective) (5.1)

✦ **Brief Overview of the Best Practices (if applicable)⁵**

Program has not started yet.

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

The experts have reviewed the argumentative position of the HEIs (TMA and GIPA) with the following conclusions:

HEIs argued against the recommendation according to which “Learning outcomes should be formed in the form of 3 competences” (1.5). We share the HEIs argumentative position. We have changed the evaluation text and deleted the recommendation. As a result, assessment on 1.

⁵ A practice that is exceptionally effective and that can serve as a benchmark or example for other educational programme/programmes.

Educational objectives, learning and their compliance with programme is changed from "Substantially Compliant" to "Fully Compliant".

HEIs argued against the recommendation according to which "In the precondition for admission to the programme, the main sectoral directions of the university's internal oral exam should be determined based on the areas of public health competence" (2.1). We do not share the HEIs position. The recommendation stands.

HEIs argued against the recommendation according to which "International experience should be considered, and applicants with non-health qualifications should be required to prove knowledge specifically in the field of public health with transparent evaluation criteria such as public health content courses completed with a determined volume (credits), as well as proof of relevant skills through work experience, or research activities or in another form (2.1)". We do not share the HEIs position. The recommendation stands.

HEIs argued against the recommendation to "Add a tool of periodic formative assessment of the master student's progress". We did not share their opinion and did not change recommendation. There is no clarification and determination of the assessment mechanism in any regulatory documents. The Standard 2 "The Development of Practical, Scientific/Research/Creative/Performing and Transferable Skills" remains as "substantially compliant".

The HEIs argued against the recommendation "Create a distinguished student supporting unit, besides coordinator, which will serve specifically this program's students; and determine orientation meetings format (3.1). We have reformulated the recommendation to read as follows: "It is necessary to define in regulatory papers how are student support services distributed between the two HEIs and additionally determine orientation meetings format."

The HEIs argued against the recommendation "Determine in student-HEI contract and regulatory documents details about student supporting procedures, if the program is canceled" (3.1). According to argumentative the position the issue is already envisaged by the "Regulatory Rule for the Educational Process of the Joint Higher Education Programme in Applied Public Health by GIPA - Georgian Institute of Public Affairs NNLE and Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy LLC", Chapter IX, Article 33. Canceling the joint master's programme. We did not agree with HEIs' position and did not change the recommendation because the issue is discussed in the document generally, without clarifying which HEI, which units, in what type of cooperation they will provide all necessary steps.

The HEIs argued against the recommendation "Make it clear how are the students' voices heard in self representative unit(s) within a joint program" (3.1). The argument was that the issue is not related to the evaluation criteria of Accreditation Standard 3.1 (3.1 Student Counseling and Support Services). 3. We share HEIs' argumentative position, and we have removed the recommendation. Article 52 in the "Regulatory Rule for the Educational Process" mostly covers the issue.

The HEIs argued against the recommendation according to which "For the programme administration, it is appropriate to define a mechanism for determining the coordination and rights/duties of the partner universities and their administrative services (4.1)". We share the

HEIs position. The text has been changed and the recommendation has been changed from a recommendation to a suggestion for improvement.

The HEI's argued against the recommendation "Improve reading spaces for students to study books which are not available for borrowing from the library and increase the number of books available for borrowing (4.4)". We do not share HEIs' position. Given the increased number of students the recommendation is valid.

The HEIs argued against the recommendation N10 "It is recommended that the financial risk strategy is designed, the roles and responsibilities are defined clearly, to guarantee the financial sustainability of the program (4.5)". We did not share HEIs' position. As mentioned below the program agreement does not describe the responsibility in case of the financial crisis, it only states vaguely that both institutions will be in charge. The Accreditation Standard 4 (Providing Teaching Resources) remains "Substantially Compliant".

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

III. Compliance of the Programme with Accreditation Standards

1. Educational Programme Objectives, Learning Outcomes and their Compliance with the Programme

A programme has clearly established objectives and learning outcomes, which are logically connected to each other. Programme objectives are consistent with the mission, objectives and strategic plan of the HEI. Programme learning outcomes are assessed on a regular basis to improve the programme. The content and consistent structure of the programme ensure the achievement of the set goals and expected learning outcomes.

1.1 Programme Objectives

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

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

Both TMA and GIPA had been planning for a public health program for some time to respond to a need for public health professionals in Georgia (Georgina employers and international organizations active in Georgia). In 2020, TMA conducted a survey of employers to gauge their perceptions of the quality of teaching and master's programs in public health. Participants included representatives from various healthrelated organizations and international organizations active in Georgia. The survey indicated that most employers believed that graduates of public health master's programs lacked practical skills and knowledge. Key skills identified as crucial included the ability to evaluate evidence-based public health programs, manage healthcare finances, address ethical issues, and more.

Two institutions decided to join forces and to develop a program which aims to combine their strengths. The basis for the collaboration was recognition of common values and that fact that the institutions areas of competence complement each other's. TMA is specialized in developing practical skills and knowledge in the medical field, while GIPA has experience in developing competence in policy field and management. Reflecting GIPA's involvement and competence as well as the unique emphasis of the programme was named as Applied Public Health programme. However, that appears as truism since public health is by definition an applied discipline.

By combining resources from two institutions the program can offer a wide range of electives, allowing students to specialize in their areas of interest. Notably, the program includes mandatory internships in partner organizations aiming to enhance students' employability. The curriculum covers fundamental tools in public health, followed by in-depth sector-specific knowledge and practical application. To stay updated with evolving post-pandemic labor market needs, a new employer survey on medical issues was conducted in 2023, and its findings were incorporated into the program. The program has been developed to make a unique contribution to the public health field in Georgia.

The programme aims to equip students with modern knowledge and practical skills in public health. There is a strong element of research competence which was emphasized as an important qualification by the employers. According to SER the program aligns with the Strategic Plans of TMA and GIPA, emphasizing high-quality teaching and internationalization. This was also emphasized during the interviews. The program's goals and development directions are supported by partner organizations, academic staff, and stakeholders, although it was unclear if the findings of the second employer survey conducted in 2023 include any relevant information for further development of a public health program. This survey mostly related to TMA's MD program.. However, the programme objectives do consider the specificity of the field

of study, level and educational programme. They define the set of knowledge, skills and competences a programme aims to develop in graduate students.

The objectives were drafted in collaboration between the two institutions and the stakeholders. The interviews confirmed the curriculum is designed with input from the local and international labor markets. The ongoing development of the program involves various stakeholders. The preparation of the programme involved international experts and benchmarking with similar programs in Georgia (five in Tbilisi, two of them in English) and in universities abroad demonstrating that the programme aligning with global educational standards.

Evidences/Indicators o

Interviews o

Employer surveys

- o Analysis of the labor market and employer requirements o Missions and strategic development plans of the partner HEIs; o Analysis document for similar programmes;
- o Webpages

Recommendations:

Suggestions for the Programme Development

- o Continue to develop the programme together with stakeholders after the launch of the programme
- o Reconsider the name of the programme.

Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

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

1.2 Programme Learning Outcomes

- The learning outcomes of the programme are logically related to the programme objectives and the specifics of the study field.
- Programme learning outcomes describe knowledge, skills, and/or the responsibility and autonomy that students gain upon completion of the programme.

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

Through consultations with stakeholders, the two institutions developing the program identified nine specific learning outcomes. These outcomes encompass fundamental knowledge and skills in the field of public health. They also pertain to responsibility and autonomy as a professional in the field of public health. In abridged form the outcomes read as follows:

Knowledge and Understanding:

Learning Outcome 1: Provides a comprehensive understanding of how behavioral, biological, social, cultural, and political factors influence population health.

Learning Outcome 2: Demonstrates an in-depth understanding and outlines practical and scientific approaches for problem-solving in public health policy-making and administration.

Learning Outcome 3: Evaluates and articulates the strengths and limitations of various approaches across multiple disciplines in the development of public health policies.

Skills:

Learning Outcome 4: Formulates research plans, analyzes qualitative and quantitative data using advanced technologies, and applies biostatistical and epidemiological methodologies to provide evidence-based recommendations.

Learning Outcome 5: Independently plans and manages budgets for interventions, systematically analyzes expenses, and makes financial forecasts based on principles of financial management.

Learning Outcome 6: Establishes criteria for managing, monitoring, and evaluating public health programs, tailoring policies and interventions to the specific needs of target populations.

Learning Outcome 7: Effectively communicates research findings, arguments, and conclusions in English, utilizing modern information technologies and adhering to academic standards.

Responsibility and Autonomy:

Learning Outcome 8: Exercises independent decision-making to address real-world Public Health challenges, while adhering to professional ethics and legal regulations.

Learning Outcome 9: Demonstrates forward-thinking by independently envisioning prospective solutions, effectively delegates responsibilities in team settings, and fosters collaboration through leadership principles in the decision-making process. The learning outcomes align with national benchmarks (Public Healthcare, Higher Education Field Characteristic, LEPL - National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, 2019).

Based on employer survey and employer's interview during on-site interviews these outcomes are responsive to the local labor market's demands. The program design considers best practices in both foreign and Georgian educational programs, as well as employer expectations. Furthermore, the learning outcomes have been developed in accordance with the National Qualifications Framework. Research skills development holds a prominent place in the program. During the onsite-visit the academic staff (teachers) were able to recall the learning outcomes.

The curriculum structure, moving from general to specific, reflects modern educational principles, meeting contemporary field requirements effectively. Overall, the Master's Programme in Applied Public Health is designed in line with the advancements in the field, incorporating essential training for attaining the Master in Public Health qualification. In short, the learning outcomes of the programme are logically related to the programme objectives and the specifics of the study field. They also describe knowledge, skills, and/or the responsibility and autonomy that students gain upon completion of the programme.

Evidences/Indicators

- o On-site interviews

- o Self-evaluation report

- o Employer surveys

- o The document that proves involvement of stakeholders in developing the programme learning outcomes

- o Map of the programme objectives and learning outcomes
- o Corresponding programme analysis document;
- o Webpages

Recommendations:

Suggestions for Programme Development

- o Continue developing the learning outcomes by including input from the students after the launch of the programme.

Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

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

1.3 Evaluation Mechanism of the Programme Learning Outcomes

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

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

As it is described in SER the system of the evaluation of learning outcomes involves direct and indirect mechanisms, such as questionnaire responses from students, employers and academic staff, as well as the analyses of the students' academic achievements. The expert team double checked this during the interviews with different stakeholders and found out that the employers are having regular meetings and discussions with heads of program and contribute towards assessing the learning outcomes. As the given program currently does not have students enrolled the expert panel met the students from different programs, who also confirmed that they are asked to attend the focus groups and from time to time getting the surveys to be filled.

According to the submitted documents there is an inter-university rule on 'The mechanisms of Evaluation the Learning Outcomes for Applied Public Health Program'. This document describes the principles of working on learning outcomes and by providing some practical instruments demonstrates the evaluation/assessment strategies. It is prepared in accordance with the National Qualification Framework and Study Field Classifier.

The submitted documentation illustrates that the institution has a plan to analyze a student's academic achievements yearly and compare it to pre-defined benchmarks. Based on this analysis interventions will be initiated. The process is managed by either the heads of the programs or by the QA office. Although the students are not enrolled in the given program, the detailed procedures of the evaluation of program learning outcomes are described in the submitted documents.

For the given program the institution prepared the ‘Map of the Learning Outcomes’, in which the links between the program learning outcomes and learning outcomes on each course level are linked and visualized. The expert team asked a few questions to both academics and invited staff to find out whether they were involved in working on the programs’ learning outcomes. As it was declared the teaching staff is familiar with the programs’ learning outcomes, moreover, few of them mentioned attending the training provided by the QA Office in drafting them. In addition to this, it was declared that the university invited an international expert to conduct training in designing and evaluation the program’s learning outcomes. As mentioned, the expert had a critical remark, and the self-evaluation team mostly considered the recommendations (modifying the learning outcomes on both program and study course level) However the expert team has minor concern regarding the learning outcomes that is described in 1.5 sub-standard. According to the submitted documentation the procedures and the mechanisms existing in the institution aim to support the programs’ development. The heads of the programs together with the QA office representatives confirm that assessing of the program learning outcomes by itself is planned to be used for further changes and improvements in the given program. Although the comparison of the course learning outcomes and benchmarks are not conducted so far, the rules and mechanisms that exist can be seen as a guarantee.

Evidences/Indicators

Self-Evaluation Report

The mechanisms of Evaluation the Learning Outcomes for Applied Public Health Program

Map of the Learning Outcomes

Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Interviews during the study visit University

Webpages (GIPA; TMA)

Recommendations:

Suggestions for the Programme Development

Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

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

1.4. Structure and Content of Education Programme

- The Programme is designed according to HEI’s methodology for planning, designing and developing of education programmes.

- The Programme structure is consistent and logical. The content and structure of the programme ensure the achievement of programme learning outcomes. The qualification to be granted is consistent with the content and learning outcomes of the programme.

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

The core directions of the programme include: Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Social and Behavioral Aspects of Health, Health Policy and Management, Health Budgeting and Assessment of Effectiveness. These are consistent with learning outcomes of the programme.

The programme has been developed to align with Georgian legislation and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). According to SER and the information provided during the site-visit the programme is designed according to HEI's methodology for planning, designing and developing of education programmes.

The program's structure (120 ECTS) and content match the Master's level. It spans 4 semesters and adheres to ECTS credit norms. The curriculum integrates sector-specific and transferable competencies logically, with prerequisites for progression. It follows a progressive complexity principle, featuring both mandatory and elective courses. However, the students' diverse background may pose problems for progression (see 2.1.).

The development of the curriculum started from the learning outcomes. Core components encompass of the programme include epidemiology, biostatistics, healthcare's biological, social, and behavioral facets, health policy, management, budgeting, and performance evaluation. As a new topic the curriculum also includes planetary health. An 8 ECTS credit internship is obligatory, followed by a 30 ECTS credit research-based master's thesis in public health. The great majority of students is expected to come from outside Georgia. That is reflected in the content of the programme where emphasis is given to global health. According to the existing plans master's thesis could be written as part of research projects. Electives cover a wide range of public health areas, allowing specialization in diverse issues.

Teaching methods include knowledge acquisition, understanding, practical application, communication, teamwork, and autonomy. The programme structure appears as consistent and logical. The content and structure of the programme is likely to ensure the achievement of programme learning outcomes. The qualification to be granted is consistent with the content and learning outcomes of the programme.

Evidences/Indicators o On-

site interviews o Self-
evaluation report o
Programme syllabi;

- o Methodology for planning, designing and development of educational programmes; o Intermediate evaluation by an external expert; o Analysis of corresponding programmes; o Agreement on implementation of the joint programme; o Comparing the structure and content of the programme with similar programs abroad; o Curriculum map.
- o Webpages

Recommendations:

Suggestions for the programme development

Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

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

1.5. Academic Course/Subject

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

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

The master's programme is presented in the form of the corresponding syllabi of the study courses and the concept of the master's thesis (30 credits).

The educational component is represented by compulsory and elective courses, and the volume of the training courses is different. The number of credits for each training course is defined by considering its content, achievable outcomes and workload. The main academic subjects/syllabi are 4-6 ECTS volume, 16 subjects in total, 1 credit 25 hours. In most academic subjects, the contact time is 32 hours, which is formed by the contact period required for lectures and practical/seminar studies. The main academic subjects/syllabi also include "learning practice", which comprises 8 ECTS. Elective academic subjects comprise 2 ECTS. Students choose 4 out of 10 elective subjects, a total of 8 ECTS. Master's thesis comprises 30 ECTS. The ratio between the contact and independent hours is adequate and considers the specificity of the course and the achievement of the learning outcomes determined by the academic course. According to the syllabi, the prerequisites of the courses are logically determined. The number of credits allocated for each study course is consistent with the content and learning outcomes of this academic course; Also, the ratio between contact and independent hours is adequate and takes into account the specificities of the academic course; The number of contact hours and different teaching-learning methods correspond to the content and learning outcomes of this course.

The learning outcomes of the study course correspond to the learning outcomes of the programme, and the content and number of credits of each study course correspond to the learning outcomes of this course;

Teaching materials listed in syllabi are based on the actual achievements within the field and ensure the achievement of the learning outcomes. The content of the academic courses envisages the latest achievements in the field, the basic and supporting literature is used within each course. Learning material is based on the recent research and existing sources within the field.

The syllabi/courses use multiple and modern teaching methods, which is the strength of the programme and contributes to the achievement of learning outcomes.

It is important to note that the list of partner organizations where the programme participants will undergo training is represented only by the non-governmental sector and the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health, while employment area of programme graduates is significantly broader. Therefore, it is advisable to consider expanding the list of organizations where programme participants can gain practical training.

Evidences/indicators o Educational programme of Applied Public Health; o Syllabi of academic courses
o Curriculum map o The self-evaluation report

Recommendations:

Suggestions for the programme development

o To expand the list of organizations where programme participants will undergo training practice.

Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

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

Compliance of the Programme with the Standard

1. Educational objectives, programme learning and their outcomes compliance with programme	Complies with requirements	X
	Substantially complies with requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Partially complies with requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Does not comply with requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

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

2.1 Programme Admission Preconditions

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

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

The prerequisites for admission to the master's programme are the following:

- Bachelor's or equivalent academic degree;
- Successful pass of the common Master's Examination; • Internal procedure

which consists of the following stages: - Analysis of documentation

o Analysis of the application form filled by the candidate, which includes the evaluation of the professional biography of the applicant;

- Successful completion of the English (B2 level) exam administered by the programme.
- o Persons who present a certificate of qualification (TOEFL, IELTS) or who have completed a bachelor's or higher education programme in English are exempted from the exam.
- an exam in a specialization, the purpose of which is to assess the applicant's field knowledge.
- o Sample exam questions (in English language and specialization) will be published in advance on the websites of higher educational institutions.

Enrollment in the master's programme without passing the common master's exams is possible in accordance with the order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia N224/N (December 29, 2011).

Based on the information provided above, the prerequisites and admission procedures for the Applied Public Health master's programme comply with the relevant legislation. However, the condition is insufficient for applicants with non-health qualifications.

If we consider the prerequisites for admission of applicants with non-health qualifications to similar master's programmes, it requires the possession of certain ECTS or work experience to demonstrate public health-relevant knowledge and skills. It should be noted that the mentioned programmes are multi-sectoral and have similar outcomes, while the current programme with similar learning outcomes and volume requires much less competence confirmation for non-healthcare applicants; Although the examination in the specialty is a mean of preventing these risks, for non-health applicants there should be a requirement in the form of certain ECTS possession and other additional requirements, such as even targeted work and other experiences, which create the possibility for non-health qualification applicant to achieve programme outcomes. At the same time, it is appropriate to specify in the precondition for admission to the program that the topic of the university's internal oral exam will be determined based on the of public health sectoral directions.

The courses are arranged with full consideration of the prerequisites and the learning outcomes to be achieved. The prerequisite for admission to the master's educational programme ("public health") is transparent, and the information is available to everyone.

It should be noted that the admission prerequisite does not specify the qualifications of a certified physician and certified dentist; During the interview, the answer to the question was that the mentioned qualification is meant.

Evidences/indicators o Educational programme of Applied Public Health o Rules regulating the learning process

- o Academic staff and student body planning methodology for educational programme
- o The self-evaluation report

Recommendations:

- o In the precondition for admission to the programme, the main sectoral directions of the university's internal oral exam should be determined based on the areas of public health competence;
- o International experience and diverse background should be considered, and applicants with non-health qualifications should be required to prove knowledge specifically in the field of public health with transparent evaluation criteria such as public health content courses completed with a determined volume (credits), as well as proof of relevant skills through work experience, or research activities or in another form.

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
2.1 Programme Admission Preconditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

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

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

The programme prioritizes practical, research, and transferable skill development. The programme goals aim to develop skills in independent research planning, data collection, analysis, interpreting and making relevant conclusions in the field of public health using the latest methods and achievements in the field. Another goal is to develop skills for preparing research proposals, developing projects, planning and managing projects using interdisciplinary study and through engaging in scientific research activities at regional, national and international levels. The curriculum includes necessary amount of method course to develop research skills. According to the existing plans master's thesis could be written as part of research projects.

Graduates are also expected to possess the ability to create criteria for managing, evaluating, and planning public health interventions, along with the capability to independently formulate future visions and lead cooperative efforts in team settings. To strengthen research capacity both HEIs aim to increase the number of publications of academic staff in international peer-reviewed journals, to promote joint research activities with local and foreign colleagues, to proactively involve students in research and to implement projects of practical significance. The institutions also aim to develop joint research projects through the implementation of the joint programme.

The program employs a blended practice model, integrating practical tasks within theoretical courses to foster practical and transferable skills. Additionally, students are required to undertake a mandatory internship in partner organizations, providing hands-on experience in applied research and project implementation. The purpose of the internship is to offer real-world experience, promote critical thinking, and instill values characteristic of the public health profession. The internship can also include a research activities, where data collection, sorting, input into the programme analysis will be conducted. During the onsite-interview the employers indicated readiness to offer places for internships. They also emphasized the importance of research skills.

The research component is aimed to culminate in the master's thesis, completed in the final semester. To be eligible, students must accumulate a minimum of 90 ECTS credits from mandatory and select elective courses, including a research methods course. The academic staff is qualified to supervise master's thesis

in terms of volume and qualifications. The regulation dictates the maximum number of students for supervision.

The documents as well as the on-site interviews demonstrate that programme is likely to ensure the development of students' practical, research and transferable skills and their involvement in research projects, in accordance with the programme learning outcomes.

Evidences/Indicators o Interviews

during on-site visit o Self-
evaluation report

o Agreements / Memorandum with partner organizations / practice facilities; o
Practice Syllabus o Academic staff CVs

Recommendations:

Suggestions for the programme development

o Invest in developing joint research project with TMA and GIPA where students can contribute through
writing their master's thesis

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	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.3. Teaching and Learning Methods

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

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

TMA has a long experience and good reputation in developing practical skills for students coming from diverse backgrounds. The teaching appears to be mostly done by TMA while GIPA has a smaller role. The courses will be arranged at TMA campus. The programme employs a diverse range of teaching and learning methods tailored to the specific course content and desired outcomes. These methods are designed to develop competencies and skills in students. The selection of methods considers students' existing knowledge, ethical values, and their ability to work autonomously. They also consider the fact that students are coming from diverse backgrounds.

The program incorporates lectures and seminars as primary teaching tools. Lectures focus on fundamental topic review, delivered interactively with visual aids. Seminars serve to delve deeper into lecture topics, encourage student engagement, and facilitate discussions, presentations, and coursework evaluation. They also provide opportunities for detailed examination of specific subjects for future coursework.

Various course-specific formats, including laboratory work, field visits, problem-based learning, projects, and internships, are included to cater to different learning styles. In line with the programme objectives

research-based learning is particularly emphasized, cultivating analytical skills alongside theoretical knowledge. Method selection considers effectiveness, alignment with students' abilities and experiences, technical feasibility, and the goal of making learning engaging and varied. The teaching approach aims to foster active student involvement, encourage interaction between staff and students, and promote peer interaction. It also seeks to develop critical and analytical skills.

Flexibility in teaching methods accommodates individual student needs. In cases where necessary, individual academic plans will be created to address specific interests and academic readiness levels. These plans may involve adapted learning environments and additional resources, ensuring a supportive and inclusive educational experience. The SER, curriculum, syllabi and other documents together with on-site interviews demonstrate that programme will be implemented by using student-oriented teaching and learning methods. Teaching and learning methods are likely to correspond to the level of education, course/subject content, learning outcomes, and ensure their achievement.

Evidences/Indicators of Self-

evaluation report of On-

site interview

- o Curriculum
- o Syllabi of the learning courses;
- o Electronic resources needed to implement the programme

Recommendations:

Suggestions for the programme development

- o Continue developing teaching and learning methods by using student feedback once the programme is in operation.

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	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.4. Student Evaluation

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

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

Student evaluation and its appealing is conducted in accordance with determined procedures. The process complies with existing legislation, is reliable and fair to every student. The procedures are clearly described

in “Regulatory Rule for the Educational Process of the Joint Higher Education Programme”. The syllabi correspond to the learning outcomes of the program. Evaluation methods are measured by the assessment criteria, the measurement unit of the Evaluation method, thereby determining the level of achievement of learning outcomes. Each assessment tool is determined according to the specifics and content of the study course. In each syllabus, there are distinguished components and methods of assessment, which will be explained to the students by their lecturers/seminors during the first meeting. After intermediate and final exams, students will receive feedback on learning outcomes from lecturers, they will be informed about their mistakes, ways of correcting them, strengths and weaknesses via electronic journal.

As it was clarified by the representatives of the Joint Program, mostly TMA e-portal will be serving masters students. The electronic system allows students to appeal assessment results for each course online, via already implemented appealing mechanism/form on electronic portal used by TMA students. During the site visit and interviews with students, it was mentioned, that the system works successfully and students were able to use appealing right easily without any boundaries. That strengthens panel’s belief, that the same system will successfully serve Masters students.

During the last semester, Master’s program Master’s students have mandatory research component to fulfill. They are obliged to prepare and defense a Master’s thesis. The research component includes 30 ECTs .The completed master's thesis will be reviewed and assessed by the members of the master's thesis defense committee. The process is regulated by the document “Procedure for Planning, Implementing, Assessing and Appealing the Research Component of the Joint Higher Educational Programme” . The members are elected by the Academic Council of the Joint program. The committee consists of at least 5 members from the direction of public health or another Master’ thesis related field. But the election procedures aren’t described in the Regulatory Rule. On the other hand, the document provides information about preparing and defending master’s thesis, its steps and deadlines of each step/procedure. Dissertation thesis defense is conducted according to HEI’s dissertation evaluation and defense procedures with the participation of defense commission. Master’s thesis is additionally assessed by the reviewer, who isn’t a member of the defense committee, he/she can be an academic/visiting staff member of the partner higher education institution, or a staff member invited from another higher education institution who has research or practical experience in the scientific field related/adjacent to the master's thesis. The shares of the reviewer and the Master's thesis defense committee in the final assessment are divided under proportion 50%-50%.

The MA programme should provide periodic formative assessment of the MA student's progress by his / her scientific supervisor; But this requirement isn’t covered by HEI’s regulatory documents : “Procedure for Planning, Implementing, Assessing and Appealing the Research Component of the Joint Higher Educational Programme” or “Regulations of the academic process of the Joint Higher Educational Programme in Applied Public Health”. Because of this incompliance, panel believes that program creators should develop the formative mechanism for assessing the MA student’s progression during the last semester, determine it in the regulatory documents and successfully implement with other assessment mechanisms.

The program also offers the opportunity of appealing the thesis assessment, the procedure is clearly described in the following document: “Procedure for Planning, Implementing, Assessing and Appealing the Research Component of the Joint Higher Educational Programme”.

The partner HEIs have introduced Turnitin, plagiarism checking mechanism. This will prevent ethical mistakes and help not only evaluators, but also students to check their works. Turnitin is already implemented in GIPA, this successful experience strengthens panel’s opinion about implementing it also successfully in the following MA Program too.

Evidences/Indicators

- Assessment methods and criteria outlined in the attached syllabi of the Educational Programme; ○ Electronic student assessment system / portal;
- The procedure for planning, implementing, assessing and appealing the research component of the Joint Higher Educational Programme in Applied Public Health implemented by GIPA - Georgian Institute of Public Affairs NNLE and Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy LLC; ○ Regulations of the academic process of the Joint Higher Educational Programme in Applied Public Health ○
- Site-visit ○
- Interviews

Recommendations:

- Add a tool of periodic formative assessment of the master student's progress by their scientific supervisor.

Suggestions for the programme development

- Describe master's thesis defense committee's members' election procedure in the Regulatory document

Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

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

Compliance with the programme standards

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

3. Student Achievements, Individual Work with Them

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

3.1 Student Consulting and Support Services

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

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

Two partner HEIs, Tbilisi Medical Academy (TMA) and Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA) initiated to develop a joint master's program of Applied Public Health in 2020. These two universities' units distinguished their responsibilities and developed structures for supporting students rights and interests for the new program. Some units and staff, serving this goal, are described in the cooperation agreement, regarding the implementation of the joint program, chapter III (program management and administration). In this document, also in job descriptions of the administrative units, responsibilities are determined. In the SER, it is mentioned that "The programme administration shall provide and coordinate the arrangement of orientation / introductory meetings for newly enrolled students in the joint educational programmes. In particular, a few days before the start of studying, orientation days will be held for newly enrolled students..." But on the other hand, in the regulatory documents, there is no clarification, by which units will these introductory meetings be held. As a representative of GIPA students support and career development service unit attended interviews during the site visit and answered panel questions, the panel has concern, that GIPA will mostly take the responsibility for students supporting and consulting procedures, but it is not clearly determined in the regulatory and cooperation documents. The panel also had opportunity to interview a coordinator of the Master program. She clarified, that she shall conduct with other units introductory meetings and presentations in the first weeks. As in regulation, it is mentioned that the meetings will be held a few days before the start of education process, the non-compliance arises. Also it is still unclear, in which format (onsite or online) will these orientation meetings be held and this needs more clarification.

The head of the program informed experts on another interview, that there will be 2 more coordinators. How are these coordinators co-working and which HEI will they be presenting, it is still unclear and not mentioned in regulatory documents. Students will be receiving consultations about their academic achievements and its improvement also from the academic staff, that is regulated by the Regulatory Rule of the Educational Program and labor contracts between program and employees.

In the SER or regulatory documents, the information about the procedures, that will take place when the program is cancelled, aren't clearly explained. Regarding this, panel members asked heads of the program, which side would take responsibility if such occasion occurs, which units will start working to support students' rights of external mobility and what alternatives could the two HEIs offer. But the panel didn't receive clear information about having a certain plan for such occasion. Additionally, the head of program informed us that one Georgian state university is ready to accept this program's students if it is cancelled. But the agreement is quite suspicious, So, it is crucial for implementing students' rights to determine in regulatory documents and additionally in Student-HEI contract: which unit will provide students with necessary documentation for external mobility, in what period, how long in advance shall students be informed about cancellation of the program.

Also, the programme administration shall provide students with information about enrollment in partner foreign universities, including ERASMUS +, summer / winter schools, spending a semester abroad or participating in bilateral exchange programmes, as well as provide relevant consultations. As we interviewed both HEIs' students, who had to participate in exchange programs from their universities, panel

believes, that the HEIs have good experience providing the services and they will use this experience for the good of the new program.

For the integration of international students in the internal university space, the program offers psychologist's consultations too. That is a good practice, as it is planned, to receive mostly international students in the first years.

Evidences/Indicators

- Career support concept for TMA students;
- Mental Health: Self-help Strategies for Students: The Guide;
- Functions and duties of persons involved in consulting services, their job descriptions; ○ Rules governing the educational process of the Joint Master's Programme ○ Site – visit ○ Interviews

Recommendations:

- It is necessary to define in regulatory papers how are student support services distributed between the two HEIs and additionally determine orientation meetings format;
- Determine in student-HEI contract and regulatory documents details about student supporting procedures, if the program is cancelled;

Suggestions for 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
3.1 Student Consulting and Support Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	✗	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.2. Master's and Doctoral Student Supervision

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

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

In the 4th semester students of the Masters Program in Applied Public Health should prepare mandatory master's thesis. The research component includes 30 ECTs. The development of master's thesis includes following steps:

1. Selection of topic and supervisor;
2. Working on master's thesis and receiving consultations; 3. Defending the project/prospectus of the master's thesis (preliminary defending);
4. Plagiarism check and submission of completed work;
5. Review;
6. Defending in public

These and additional procedures of setting the date for the master's thesis defense, changing supervisor, postponing defense of the master's thesis, assesment and its appealing, are determined and described in the following regulation: "Procedure for Planning, Implementing, Assessing and Appealing the Research Component of the Joint Higher Educational Programme in Applied Public Health Implemented by GIPA - Georgian Institute of Public Affairs NNLE and Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy LLC".

According to the mentioned rule, the master's thesis supervisor can be a Doctor or a person holding an equivalent degree, who has research experience and relevant publications in the scientific field related to the topic of the Master's thesis. The master's thesis supervisor will provide student with necessary instructions, advices and consultations for improvement of the thesis. When appropriate, the master's student can have a consultant (co-supervisor), who is an expert in the field and/or a person with practical experience and the relevant knowledge and experience related to the topic of the master's thesis. Master's thesis's superisors' rights and obligations are determined in the agreement/contract form between the supervisor and the program.

Depending on the importance of the quality indicator of a master's thesis, one person may supervise no more than three master's theses. However, in case of co-supervision, supervision of more than five master's theses are allowed. This is mentioned in the regulatory document about the research component. As it is determined, admission quota of the program is maximum 20 students and there are already chosen 9 probable supervisors, 6 of them are from the invited staff, 3 affiliated, the ratio of diploma theses and students is 20/9, so no more than 3 theses for 1 supervisor. Because most of probable supervisors are invited, the restriction about supervising maximum 3 theses should be mentioned in the agreement form with supervisor.

Data related to the supervision of master's/ doctoral students	
Quantity of master/PhD theses supervisors	9
Number of master's/doctoral students	20
Ratio	20/9

Evidences/Indicators

- The procedure for planning, implementing, assessing and appealing the research component of the Joint Higher Educational Programme in Applied Public Health, implemented by GIPA - Georgian

- Institute of Public Affairs NNLE and Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy LLC;
- Personal Files of Academic and Invited Staff; ○ Sample agreement to be signed with the supervisor of the master's thesis;
- Methodology for determining the number of academic and invited staff and students involved in the implementation of the Joint Higher Educational Programme in Applied Public Health, by GIPA - Georgian Institute of Public Affairs NNLE and Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy LLC;

Recommendations:

Suggestions for the programme development

- Add the requirement about supervising maximum 3, co-supervising maximum 5 theses in the agreement form between the Program and the supervisor.

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
3.2. Master's and Doctoral Students Supervision	✗	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Compliance with the programme standards

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

4. Providing Teaching Resources

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

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 heads of the master's programme - "Applied Public Health" in English language, along with the academic and invited staff involved in its implementation process the essential competencies to achieve the learning outcomes of the relevant component offered by the educational programme, which is confirmed by the academic degree corresponding to the programme profile, teaching and research experience, reports made on local and international conferences, scientific activities (grants/projects) and participation in training.

25 people are involved in the programme implementation process, including 11 in academic positions (3 professors, 7 associate professors, and 1 assistant professor) and 14 invited lecturers. Five of the persons holding academic positions do not have a doctor's academic degree, and one does not have appropriate scientific-pedagogical work experience (a professor needs at least 6 and an associate professor at least 3 years of experience). Scientific-research activity of the staff is confirmed by publications (monographs, textbooks, publications in international and local scientific publications, reports at international and national conferences, etc.), supervision of international and national grant projects or participation in them, participation in joint educational or scientific projects and programmes with foreign higher education institutions, scientific trips and others. An exception is 1 person with an academic title (M. M.), whose research experience in the last 5 years is not confirmed by the CV presented.

Some of the invited personnel also have a doctor's academic degree, while 7 of them (Giorgi Kaloiani, Giorgi Kapanadze, Lela Machaidze, Lia Mikaberidze, Natalia Kochlashvili, Nino Maglakelidze, Tamar Khurtsilava) do not have an academic degree. The research experience of some of the invited staff is not confirmed by scientific works published in the last 5 years (CV of G. K., G. K., L. M., L. M., N. K., T. K. does not include information about scientific works).

The qualifications of the heads of the educational programme align with the qualification requirements. The heads of the programme have in-depth knowledge and practical and expert experience for the development of the programme, which is confirmed by the documentation defining their qualifications and activities, as well as by scientific works published in the last 5 years, reports made at local and international conferences and scientific activities. The heads of the programme are directly involved in the implementation of the programme (V. Tsertsvadze - in the compulsory training course, L. Sturua - in the training elective course) and counselling of students.

Within the programme, 2 out of the 11 academic staff are affiliated professors, 1 professor, 5 affiliated associate professors, 2 associate professors and 1 affiliated assistant professor; The ratio of affiliated staff to potential students of the programme will be 8/40, and the ratio of academic and invited staff to students will be 25/40, which is numerically sufficient to conduct the educational process. The balance between academic and invited staff (11/14) ensures the programme sustainability.

In addition to teaching, academic and visiting staff will be involved in students' counselling.

The submitted documentation is not sufficient to evaluate programme administration; Draft job descriptions of the dean and deputy dean, programme coordinator of the School of Public Health are presented, which is not sufficient for the evaluation of programme administration. In addition, there are no documents for the evaluation of the participation of administrative and support staff (for example, chancellery, material resources management service, learning process management department, scientific research and development service) in the administration processes of the programme.

The programme operates with a semester-based renewable workload scheme of academic/scientific and visiting personnel, which is determined according to academic/scientific and invited personnel's teaching and/or scientific research and other duties/responsibilities, as well as based on contractual workload obligations. The workload of the personnel is sufficient for conducting the educational process and scientific research activities.

Number of the staff involved in the programme (including academic, scientific, and invited staff)	Number of Programme Staff	Including the staff with sectoral expertise⁶	Including the staff holding PhD degree in the sectoral direction⁷	Among them, the affiliated staff
Total number of academic staff	25	25	13	8
- Professor	3	3	3	2
- Associate Professor	7	7	3	5
- Assistant-Professor				
- Assistant	1	1		1
Visiting Staff	14	14	10	—
Scientific Staff				—

Evidences/indicators o Personnel

qualification requirements³ o CVs of the academic and invited staff

- o Methodology for determining the number of academic, scientific and invited staff of the programme;
- o Functions and CVs of programme heads
- o Academic/scientific/invited staff (including affiliated academic staff and master's supervisors) workload scheme

Recommendations:

Suggestions for Programme Development

- o For the programme administration, it is appropriate to define a mechanism for determining the coordination and rights/duties of the partner universities and their administrative services.

⁶ Staff implementing the relevant components of the main field of study

⁷ Staff with relevant doctoral degrees implementing the components of the main field of study

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	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. 2. Qualification of Supervisors of Master's and Doctoral Students

The Master's and Doctoral students have qualified supervisor/supervisors and, if necessary, cosupervisor/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

The supervisors of the master's theses of the master's programme are the faculty's academic and invited staff (9 persons), who are recognized specialists in the field, have relevant publications, research projects, experience of participating in scientific conferences, which is confirmed by the documentation of their activities. A master's thesis may have a co-supervisor.

"According to the rules of planning, implementation, evaluation and appeal of the research component of the joint higher education programme of "Applied Public Health" of Georgian Institute of Public Affairs NNLE and Tbilisi Medical Academy named after Petre Shotadze LTD" one person can supervise 3 theses. However, in case of co-supervision, it is allowed to supervise no more than 5 theses. The number of supervisors of master's thesis corresponds to the number of master's students.

Number of supervisors of Master's/Doctoral theses	Thesis supervisors	Including the supervisors holding the PhD degree in the sectoral direction	Among them, the affiliated staff
Number of supervisors of Master's/Doctoral thesis	9		
- Professor	1	1	1
- Associate Professor	2	1	2
- Assistant-Professor			
Visiting personnel	6	6	
Scientific Staff			

Evidences/indicators o Rules of planning, implementation, evaluation and appeal of the research component of the joint higher education programme of "Applied Public Health" of Georgian Institute of Public Affairs

NNLE and Tbilisi Medical Academy named after Petre Shotadze LTD o
CVs of potential supervisors/co-supervisors
o Sample of contract to be signed with the supervisor of the master's thesis

Recommendations:

Suggestions for the programme development

Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

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

4.3 Professional Development of Academic, Scientific and Invited Staff

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

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

Both higher education institutions have experience in academic, scientific and professional development of invited staff. Tbilisi Medical Academy has a faculty development department, the purpose of which is to promote the professional development of academic and invited staff in the direction of improving teaching-learning and evaluation methods and scientific research skills. Activities supporting the development of academic and invited staff are - trainings/working meetings to familiarize/master the methodology of medical education, participation in international trainings (AMEE-ESME courses), conferences and exchange programmes (Erasmus + Staff Mobility) and sharing of experience with colleagues.

The Teaching Excellence Center (TEC) was set up in Georgian Institute of public affairs to improve the educational process and the pedagogical skills of academic and invited staff. Within the framework of the Center, there were trainings and round-the-clock format meetings for university academic, invited and administrative personnel once or twice a year. Identification of the training to be conducted is carried out by the Teaching Excellence Center based on needs research. Trainings and meetings are conducted by international and local trainers and instructors from partner universities.

Hirsch's (h-index) citation indexes are used to evaluate the scientific productivity of the staff at Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy. In addition, the evaluation of the scientific productivity of the staff is carried out according to the data of the Google Scholar platform (h-, citation and i10-indexes). To enhance the scientific-research skills of the staff, with the support of the scientific-research department of the Medical Academy, regular trainings are held in the direction of identifying the target grant competition, project application and preparing a scientific publication.

The ongoing scientific research activities at Georgian Institute of Public Affairs are coordinated by the Research Department, which analyzes and evaluates the results of the scientific productivity of the staff in coordination with the Quality Assurance Department. The research experience of one person with an academic title (Mamuka Makhataidze) and of some of the invited staff is not confirmed by scientific works published in the last 5 years (CV of Giorgi Kaloyani, Giorgi Kapanadze, Lela Machaidze, Lia Mikabaridze, Natalia Kochlashvili, Tamar Khurtsilava does not include information about scientific works). Both higher education institutions have academic, scientific and visiting staff development mechanisms; At the same time, the budget of the joint master's programme defines funds for financing research activities and professional development.

Evidences/indicators

- o Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy grant programme "Promotion of scientific and research activities"
- o Mechanisms of promoting and encouraging the publication of scientific publications by the academic staff of Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy
- o CVs of the academic and invited staff;
- o Documentation confirming international cooperation; o Staff development report o Programme Budget

Recommendations:

- The university should take care of raising the scientific potential of academic and visiting staff

Suggestions for the programme development

Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Complies with requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially complies with requirements	Does not comply with requirements
4.3 Professional Development of Academic, Scientific and Invited Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>		X	<input type="checkbox"/>

4.4. Material Resources

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

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

The programme will be implemented at TMA campus. The campus is equipped with basic infrastructure and technical resources essential for achieving the educational objectives. This includes lecture halls, seminar rooms, conference facilities, a laboratory, virtual learning options, an examination center with appropriate hardware and software, a library, collaborative workspaces, administrative offices, archival facilities, and amenities. The infrastructure is developed for medical students and not all facilities are necessary for public health students.

Students have access to both TMA and GIPA university libraries, offering reading rooms and areas for independent and group study, complete with computers and internet access. However, TMA resources are more important since the programme is implemented at TMA campus. The libraries stock essential course literature, academic research materials, and various other informational resources. However, not all course material was available during the site visit. According to information provided by TMA and GIPA representatives to panel members combined e-library isn't formed yet. The TMA library also lacks reading space near the book selves. The space is necessary for students who need to use books which are only available for library use. In TMA library, there is no mechanism of booking/reserving a reading space in advance. Panel members agree that implementing this mechanism could partially solve the lack of working areas.

Students are granted electronic access to a range of valuable resources including EBSCO, JSTOR, Scopus, Science Direct, Web of Science (Medline), Hinari, and Turnitin. TMA uses Moodle platform for course material and student interaction. For evaluation and management of academic performance, an electronic system (emis.tma.edu.ge) is employed, ensuring accessible assessment results for students and facilitating administrative oversight of the educational process. The system allows student to enroll in courses and to even make complaints on grades. Wifi is provided for students in campus.

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

Evidences/Indicators o

Site visit

- o Interviews with the librarians
- o Access to international electronic library databases and its supporting documents;
- o Compliance of library books fund with the basic literature indicated in the educational programmes;
- o <http://library.gipa.ge/> o <https://tma.edu.ge/geo/library.php>

Recommendations:

- o Improve reading spaces for students to study books which are not available for borrowing from the library and increase the number of books available for borrowing.

Suggestions for the programme development

- Implement mechanism of reserving a reading room/space in advance

Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

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

4.5 Programme/Faculty/School Budget and Programme Financial Sustainability

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

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

There is a program budget designed by the universities, which consists of incomes and expenditures. The absolute amount of the income is planned to be the tuition fees. The university is planning to get 20 students annually; thus, the budget is planned accordingly. The expenditures are devoted to salaries, as well as some academic staff professional development, some activities for students and enhancing material resources for the program. The institutions are not expecting any profit in the first year of the studies, while from the second year there is significant benefit planned.

The expert team tried to double check with the decision makers to what extend the budget was feasible and how this might be linked with the program's sustainability, in other words, if the program will get less students rather than it is planned, if it still is financially able to operate. The representatives of the universities explained that they have a year of experience with educational agents who will be promote the program abroad and guarantee that the students are enrolled, in addition to this, they also added that in case they do not get students to all places, the universities has agreed to mutually finance the first year of the study process.

Although, the expert team believes due to the TMA experience in medical field it should not be a problem to get foreigner students in the given program, still there are risks and it is linked to the financial issues directly. The agreement between the partner universities defines many different aspects and also mentions a financial risk, saying that in case of financial problems both universities are responsible. However, it is not defined what those responsibilities might be, or what the ration between the universities might be, as it is seen the financial activities should be done by the TMA, but when it comes to not having enough resources, it is unclear how the roles will be divided. Therefore, it is recommended that the financial risk strategy is designed, and the roles and responsibilities are defined clearly, to guarantee the financial sustainability of the program.

Evidences/Indicators

Self-Evaluation Report

The Budget Document

Interviews during the site-visit University

Webpages (GIPA; TMA)

Recommendations:

○ It is recommended that the financial risk strategy is designed, the roles and responsibilities are defined clearly, to guarantee the financial sustainability of the program.

Suggestions for the programme development

Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

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

Compliance with the programme standard

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

5. Teaching Quality Enhancement Opportunities

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

5.1 Internal Quality Evaluation

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

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

According to the submitted documents, in order to manage the internal quality assurance procedures, the Quality Assurance Committee was formed. There are representatives from both universities on the given committee and it works in accordance with the existing regulations and mechanisms. The standard approaches of internal quality assurance are used in the case of this educational program. In particular, the mentioned process works like - "Plan, Implement, Evaluate, Develop" cycle. The Quality Assurance Committee has responsibility for conducting assessments for academic staff and University administrative services. This Office also arranges questionnaires to be sent to employers and alumni. During the interviews with students, employers and academic staff, it was confirmed that they are actively involved in this process by filling out the survey forms and providing feedback. The collected data will be analyzed by the Quality Assurance Committee and further steps will be then planned. According to the existing regulation, once the recommendations are identified they are sent to Program Academic Council for discussion and its adaptation. This council gathers the heads of the programs together with the academic and invited staff and is seen to be the major decisionmaker in the content wise of the given joint program. During the interviews with the QA representatives, it was determined that, besides managing the evaluation processes, they are responsible for program design and for providing support in course syllabus development, design of the assessment methods within the courses, and monitoring the academic achievements of the students within the course. The academic staff confirmed that the support they get from the QA team is oriented towards their professional development. The Expert Team was satisfied that the quality assurance processes ensure both that required standards are met and that there is continuing improvement in performance. The Programs Self-Evaluation teams include both academic and administrative staff at the faculty level and from different structural units from both partner universities. The expert panel had the opportunity to meet the staff involved in the self-evaluation process, because of which it was identified that they actively participate in the process of program designing and development, the roles are distributed according to their competencies. However, the expert team noted that in some cases there is a slight overlap between the staff involved in the process, for example the QA staff from both sides, the student support services etc. The expert team suggest the universities divide the task and responsibilities between them to avoid overlapping and the working process to be more dynamic and effective.

Evidences/Indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report
- Questionnaires of students, teachers, employers developed by the Quality Service; ○ Analyzes of the results of the survey and responses ○ Analysis of the results of internal and external evaluation of quality assurance ○ Interviews with the students, employers, university administrative and academic staff ○ Universities webpage (GIPA, TMA)

Recommendations:

Suggestions for the programme development:

It is suggested the universities design a well-defined QA procedures between the two HEIs (divide the task and responsibilities between them in order to avoid overlapping and the working process to be more dynamic and effective).

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	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5.2 External Quality Evaluation

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

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

As it is described in SER and the additional documents confirmed the university is working in two major dimensions when it comes to external quality evaluation of the programs. The first is the recommendations the programs are given during the program and institutional accreditation process and second is the external reviewers included in the assessment process. As the given program is new, it has not gone through the external quality assurance yet.

As for the external collegial evaluation, the program was sent for assessment to a local university as well as an international one. As seen from the evaluation reports, the assessment is mostly positive but also highlights the recommendations or suggestions. In addition to this, as the program designing started three years ago, there was an additional external evaluator invited from abroad. The QA representamen as well as the academic staff mentioned that they got some critical feedback from the reviewer mostly related to the program aims and outcomes, later on they considered all of the concerns and redesigned the program.

Evidences/Indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report
- External Evaluation Reports
- Interviews with the students, employers, university administrative and academic staff
- Universities webpage (GIPA, TMA)

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	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5.3 Programme Monitoring and Periodic Review

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

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

According to the submitted documentation, the monitoring and periodic evaluation of the given program will be carried out in accordance with the rules and procedures defined by the agreement between the partner institutions. Namely, academic and administrative staff, as well as students, graduates and employers will be involved in this process. The joint QA Committee is planning to meet all the stakeholders, to identify the needs and discuss it first with the self-evaluation team and later forward the initiative to the Academic Council of the program.

The expert team was interested in how all interested parties are involved in the above-mentioned process. As a result of the interviews, it was identified that students mostly fill out questionnaires (due to the fact of being mandatory). The content of the questionnaire covers specific study courses, as well as university services. The employers mentioned they mostly have either meetings or informal communication with the heads of the programs. During the interview, the employers noted that the program mostly covers regional needs.

The expert panel asked whether the program was compared to an international or local analog. As it was explained and later documented – there were few programs, three from Georgia and two from abroad to which the given program was compared. This analysis was done in order to improve the given program, as well as to identify the competitors on the national level.

The universities have introduced the principle of collegial evaluation (peer-assessment), in particular, the quality assurance office and the Head of the Program might attend a randomly selected lecture, but so far there is not any practice, as the program has not got students yet.

The above-mentioned quality procedures define the standard rules of the monitoring and program development, which goes through the steps described in 5.1. **Evidences/Indicators**

- Self-Evaluation Report
- Questionnaires of students, teachers, employers developed by the Quality Service; ○ Analyzes of the results of the survey and responses ○ Analysis of the results of internal and external evaluation of quality assurance ○ Interviews with the students, employers, university administrative and academic staff ○ Universities webpage (GIPA, TMA)

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
5.3. Programme monitoring and periodic review	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Compliance with the programme standards

5. Teaching Quality Enhancement Opportunities	Complies with requirements	X
	Substantially complies with requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Partially complies with requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Does not comply with requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>

Attached documentation (if applicable):

Name of the Higher Education Institution: GIPA and TMA

Name of Higher Education Programme, Level: Applied Public Health, Masters

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	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Teaching Methodology and Organisation, Adequacy Evaluation of Programme Mastering	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Student Achievements, Individual Work with them	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Providing Teaching Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Teaching Quality Enhancement Opportunities	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signatures:

Chair of Accreditation Expert Panel

Heikki Hiilamo, signature



Accreditation Expert Panel Members

Natia Nogaideli, signature



Giga Khositashvili, signature



Shota Silagadze, signature

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of stylized letters and a large loop.