განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

**Report on
The University of Georgia
Authorization**

Expert Panel Members
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Tbilisi
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Authorization Report Resume

General information on the educational institution[1]

Located in Tbilisi, the University of Georgia (UG) is one of the largest private universities in the country, with over 6.500 local and international students. The University has accredited programmes on three levels of higher education (Bachelor, Master and PhD) in English and Georgian.

UG boasts a well-organised educational process and a modern infrastructure. UG aims at offering an attractive and varied set of disciplines. At present, the university has six schools and six research institutes and centres. The academic staff is said to be highly qualified and well-experienced. According to the university, UG students acquire quality education and practical skills, and its graduates have good employment prospects.

UG is proud of its diverse community with cross cultural awareness. Its multicultural environment is expected to shape intelligent, educated individuals with human values capable to meet modern challenges. UG wants to encourage the personal development of each student and to educate highly qualified professionals.

Brief overview of the authorization site visit

The previous external evaluation of UG was in 2014. The 2021 evaluation covers another period of six years, that is from 2014 until 2020, including early 2021. Because of the pandemic, the 2020 evaluation was delayed until 2021.

The panel studied the documents made available by the University of Georgia and NCEQE. These include the university's Self-Evaluation Report (SER; March 2021) with reference to the Georgian Authorization Standards for Higher Education Institutions, the university's website, and some additional documents provided at the request of the panel prior to the visit. Because of the pandemic, the site visit was mainly online.

The members of the panel exchanged their initial impressions and prepared for the different sessions of the online site visit by email. During a preparatory meeting on 12 April 2021, the panel exchanged its views and discussed the main topics for the interviews. It also agreed on the draft programme for the visit.

The site visit took place from 27 April to 29 April 2021. The programme consisted of two parts: online meetings and on-site visits. During the peer review, the panel met with the leadership, the assembly of partners, students and alumni, academic staff, supporting staff, quality assurance staff, management, and external stakeholders. In the afternoon of the second day, the Georgian members of the panel participated in an on-site visit of the premises. The interviews in more than twenty sessions offered ample opportunity to discuss and verify the findings in the SER, and to gather more specific evidence. At the end of the visit, the panel passed judgement on compliance for each standard. Scores used are fully, substantially, partially compliant, or non-compliant. A final de-briefing meeting with the university completed the site visit.

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[1] See also the university's website at https://www.ug.edu.ge/en/about-us

The SER follows the format provided by NCEQE. The document is informative and complete, but the self-critical analysis was rather concise. Also, the SER did not include any reference to the previous institutional review. Some documents listed as annexes were missing.

The draft evaluation report of the panel was completed on 25 May 2021 and sent to the university for corrections of factual errors. Upon receipt of the university's comments, the panel finalised the evaluation report on 9 June 2021. Factual errors were taken into consideration and corrected in the final report. Many comments, however, did not result in amendments because of two reasons. First, on several occasions during the peer review, the panel established discrepancies between facts presented by the university and the panel's analysis of these facts. Also, the university's perception of the educational processes differs considerably from how stakeholders, and especially staff and students, perceive them. Second, recommendations are about 'what' needs improvement, and not 'how' to implement these improvements. How to implement the recommendations and make them fit for purpose is the prerogative of the university. The panel should refrain from imposing detailed improvement measures that might work for one institution for higher education, and not for another. All recommendations are explained in the full text of the report under the relevant standards. The report specifies the context, indicates what is missing, and where the flaws are. This context should enable the university to proceed along the lines as recommended by the panel.

Overview of the HEI's compliance with standards

☐ **Standard 1 – Mission and strategic development of HEI: substantially compliant**

The panel established that the mission of the University of Georgia (UG) complies largely with higher educational goals in Georgia and Europe. Given the university's ambitions expressed in the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and in the various meetings during the panel's online visit, the panel encourages rephrasing the mission accordingly. Of special attention is the necessary link between education and research. The panel confirms that the mission is broadly supported across the university. The impact of stakeholders' involvement in revising and developing the mission, however, remains unclear. The panel has seen ample evidence of activities underscoring the university's main goals.

The strategic plans specify the aims and objectives, and offer insight in the budgeting and monitoring. Leadership is taken full responsibility for the achievement of the strategic goals and any adjustments when needed. Even so, the panel recommends developing policies for the various areas of interest for reasons of coherence and more efficiency in strategic planning and decision-making. Also, a more realistic view on the university's position and possibilities in terms of high-quality education is needed. Furthermore, explicit links with the previous strategy, and the SWOT and PEST analyses are missing.

☐ **Standard 2 – Organizational structure and management of HEI: substantially compliant**

The organisation, configuration and structure of GU is well defined and follows the main articles in the Georgian laws of higher educational institutions. However, the panel noticed that UG management and the main decision-making processes are mainly top down and rely

mainly on the General Assembly and Presidents' bodies and the rector. The structural units of the university are organized and ensure sustainability of the development of programmes. The procedures of appointments or election of the management bodies of the university are transparent, fair and in line with Georgian laws. UG has a plan for risk management as well as a plan for internationalisation. However, the last plan is concentrating more on international student attraction as opposed to the other international elements of internationalisation.

There is a mechanism for internal quality assurance at UG headed by the Accreditation Board and the Quality Assurance Department. Most of the implementation of this mechanism depends on control and inspection, as opposed to, developing quality assurance culture at all levels of the educational process. UG invested in online systems for teaching and assessment which give them a leverage to teaching, learning and assessment during the Covid-19 pandemic. UG has a website in Georgian and the English language, however, the English version should be updated with recent quality assurance information.

UG follows the rules of Georgian higher educational laws in developing and implementing a regulation mechanism for ethics, code of honors, integrity, and academic freedom.

▢ Standard 3 – Educational Programmes: substantially compliant

UG has a policy for planning and development of educational programmes. The special document describes exact methodology, process of designing, renewal of programmes, involvement of all stakeholders. interviews with Deans of Faculty, Academic council, Quality Assurance Office, Academic Staff, and Employers confirmed that the procedures regarding programme planning are followed. At the same time, the role of students and alumni in developing and revising the programmes stays unclear. UG should therefore encourage the involvement of student and alumni, and make their input more transparent.

Programmes are well-constructed based on a logical connection between the various components, allowing students to have a smooth learning progress. However, some programmes (e.g., medical) need updating to reflect all revised standards for medicine (Sector Benchmarks of Higher Education in Medicine). The university should ensure that a variety of innovative teaching and learning methods are applied to enhance student-centredness.

Programmes have clearly defined learning outcomes. The learning objectives of all programmes are posted on the UG website. UG is suggested to better communicate with students about the learning outcomes, the teaching methods, and the assessments.

UG has implemented a system for the assessment of learning outcomes – direct and indirect. Students can observe their assessment results through the electronic system. Although assessment principles are available for all programmes and syllabi, the information provided could be clearer. For the medical programme, the panel suggests implementing direct assessment tools such as SCO, OSCE/Standardized Patient, Portfolio/logbook, Mini-CEX.

▢ Standard 4 – Personnel of HEI: compliant

UG has a complex administrative structure with a top-down approach of management and a lot of power concentrated within the Presidents, the General Assembly, and the Rector. With

their declared ambition to grow and internationalize, UG could make use of more distributive and inclusive leadership and thus allow an easier decision-making process.

The university has a staff management policy which provides detailed account of the institution's staff planning and management philosophy; there is an array of formal documents available which are used as the basis of human resource management at the university. UG invests continuously in developing, running, and updating an in-house electronic system of the staff management, which on the one hand allows for unobstructed sharing of relevant information and regulations among the university staff and on the other hand, guarantees that the digital literacy skills of the staff are constantly in use (and updated).

A dedicated budget is available for staff development, both at central and school level. However, the panel was unable to identify a clear plan for staff development. At present, the budget is mainly used in support of an initiative of an individual staff member.

At least one staff satisfaction survey has been carried out. The panel, however, could not establish what were the actions taken by the institution as a follow up measure. Nor was it clear to the panel if the staff satisfaction survey is routinely performed.

☐ Standard 5 – Students and their support services: compliant

The panel assesses that the mechanisms of obtaining and changing student status, the recognition of education, and protection of student rights are well implemented at the university.

There are various counselling and support services available to students at UG to plan their study process and improve their academic achievement. Overall, these mechanisms are well-defined and various activities are carried out to promote student support services. However, the panel sees that more work has to be done to ensure full implementation of these procedures, particularly, students' awareness about them. The panel suggests strengthening student representation, implementing mentorship programmes, and assigning an ombudsperson to improve the student support services.

☐ Standard 6 – Research, development and/or other creative work: substantially compliant

The university's aim is to expand scientific-research activities and to be the most innovative university in Georgia, as a School and research institution. However, UG has not presented the document of R&D strategy. Also, on several occasions, the panel found discrepancies about students' involvement in research and about the notion of research itself. These inconsistencies are not conducive for a good understanding of the university's aims and objectives for research. Also, not all students are actively involved in research. This is a major concern of the panel, and not only from an international perspective. Therefore, the panel urges UG to develop a research strategy and action plan, and to ensure that research methodology and research activities are mandatory for all bachelor and master students, also in medical education.

The expert panel learned that doctoral and master's projects are implemented based within various research institutes/centres of the university. Also, publications of the academic staff

are reflected in training courses. However, the integration of scientific research in the educational process as a strategic development goal is not clearly defined by UG.

The functions and responsibilities of the doctoral supervisors are clearly stated. It should be mentioned that there is no limit how many doctoral students with active status may be supervised by the scientific supervisor. UG has public, transparent, and fair procedures for the evaluation and defense of the dissertation. UG supports joint supervision practices by international and local professors. The dissertation defense indicator is somewhat low.

UG has developed regulations for supporting research. However, the rule for issuing grants is very general and not transparent. The initiative taken by the University in recent years is significant in terms of attracting new staff. However, there is a lack of a structured and well-thought-out strategy of attracting especially young researchers to ensure solid and sustainable research.

UG carries out a variety of activities for the internationalisation of research. Nevertheless, it is important to increase the rate of participation in international collaborations towards UG research priorities and also increase student involvement.

UG has set and formalized evaluation criteria for scientific research performance. However, the evaluation of the research results of the research centres is not explained in the documentation.

▨ Standard 7 – Material, information, and financial resources: compliant

The panel established that UG currently has sufficient material resources, movable and immovable property, and plans to acquire more assets to support new developments envisaged in the strategic plan. The panel concludes that the financial situation of UG is currently healthy. UG has financial rules and procedures defining the financial structure and responsibilities for each unit within UG. Even so, the panel advises establishing an internal audit unit to ensure an independent financial control. The unit will also serve as an additional line of defence against risks. At present, the main financial risk that UG needs to address is possibly the decrease of student fees. This is the result of the lower number of international students due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The UG library and information systems are full operational and well-functioning. UG website needs some improvements, though, to make information more accessible to potential international students and staff, and other interested parties.

Summary of Recommendations

1. ST 1 – Ensure that **education and research** are always at the core of the university as is the case for all higher education institutes worldwide.
2. ST 1 – Make sure to give due attention to **quality culture, research, student-centred learning, and internationalisation** when reviewing the mission statement and subsequent policies, also in accordance with the 2015 ESG.
3. ST 1 – Formalise the **revision cycle** of the mission and vision, and secure the accessibility (publication) and history (date) of the various editions.
4. ST 1 – Make sure to link the new strategy more explicitly to the **previous strategy** for a good understanding of progress made.

5. ST 1 – Develop **policy documents** and annual plans for each area of interest making good use of the input of relevant stakeholders and make these document accessible to the broader public by posting them on the university's website.
6. ST 1 – Adopt a more realistic view on the university's position and possibilities in terms of **high-quality education**.
7. ST 1 – Make good use of the available analyses such as **SWOT and PEST** for strategic planning and decision-making.

8. ST 2 - Analyse the effectiveness and efficiency of the internal **decision-making processes** with a particular focus on well-balanced top-down and bottom-up methods and fortify it with a robust system of checks and balances.
9. ST 2 – Ensure that the **cycle of Plan-Do-Check-Act** as a continuous process of quality improvement is fully realised involving all stakeholders.
10. ST 2 – Continue seeking a balance between accountability and **enhancement**.
11. ST 2 – Invest in the further development of a **quality culture**, starting with revising the mission statement and opening a discussion on the notion of quality culture.
12. ST 2 – Ensure that all **information on quality assuranc**e is easily accessible for all stakeholders for reasons of transparency and maximum involvement of all stakeholders. Especially students should be able to find all necessary information on student's involvement without too much effort.
13. ST 2 – Invest in creating an **educational community based on trust** and do away with the document on organisational culture and dress-code.

14. ST 3 – **Modernise the educational design** of the programmes by implementing innovative ideas such as student-centred learning, problem-based learning, multidisciplinary programmes, and flexible learning paths.
15. ST 3 – Invest in the further **involvement of invited staff, students and alumni** in programme development and renewal.
16. ST 3 – Clarify and update the information on the **teaching and learning methods** in the programme syllabi.
17. ST 3 – Increase the efforts in **Georgian language learning** for international medical students as they need to acquire good communication skills with patients.
18. ST 3 – Consider setting clear **targets for success rates** in line with UG's ambitions.
19. ST 3 – Specify a **minimal midterm score** for passing the exam.
20. ST 3 – Revise the **assessment of practical skills** in medical education and make good use of OSCE, SCO, Mini-Cex et cetera.

21. ST 4 – Formalise the **training of staff** with a clear focus on educational skills. Make educational courses mandatory, more intensive and personalised.
22. ST 4 – Set **institutional expectations toward staff** in advance and share it with staff; make **necessary resources** available to achieve the expectations by each and every staff member.
23. ST 4 – Make **training in the assessment of practical skills** using different methods compulsory for invited staff (doctors) in medical education.
24. ST 4 – Ensure that the **staff performance evaluation and satisfaction surveys** are carried out on regular basis and the result are carefully analysed and used as a tool to further advance the university's overall performance.

25. ST 5 – Ensure **full implementation of the student support services**, particularly, students' awareness about them.

26. ST 6 – Ensure that **research methodology and research activities** are **mandatory for all students,** also in medical education.
27. ST 6 – **Differentiate**, if need be, between **fundamental (scientific) research and applied research**.
28. ST 6 – Enable the **broader involvement of students** in the research activities of the university
29. ST 6 – Develop a **research strategy and action plan**.
30. ST 6 – Monitor the effectiveness of the **scientific-research institute**.
31. ST 6 – Develop transparent procedures with clear **criteria for selecting and funding** research projects and other research activities.
32. ST 6 – Broaden the i**nternational connections** in (at least some) fields of its research.
33. ST 6 – Increase the number of UG researchers taking part in **international** events and staying at partner universities to further integrate international components.
34. ST 6 – Encourage and enable staff, PhD candidates and even master students to **publish** more regularly on research activities and outcomes in international peer-reviewed journals.

35. ST 7 – Complete the **university's website** with all relevant documents (also in English) and make this information easily accessible, especially for prospective students and staff members.

Summary of Suggestions
1. ST 1 – Consider making both the **mission and vision more concise** for reasons of strategic focus and clarity.
2. ST 1 – Consider implementing a **formal procedure for stakeholders' involvement** when revising and formulating the university's mission.
3. ST 1 – Keep investing in the development of **entrepreneurial competencies and skills**, and contemplate introducing a minor or elective in entrepreneurship open to all students.
4. ST 1 – Conceive ways/tools for **measuring UG's contribution to the development of society**.
5. ST 1 – Turn **local circumstances and challenges** into opportunities for the further development of society.

6. ST 2 – Contemplate combining the rectors and partner of the assembly committee in one body or assign different presidents' members to the **supervisory body**.
7. ST 2 – Distribute the job description of **vice rector**s more uniformly according to the mission of the university.
8. ST 2 – Review the strategic plan for **internationalisation**, put it in a planning form and define the KPIs, to measure achievements.
9. ST 2 – Contemplate **publishing the Self-Evaluation Report** on the university's website to maximise openness and inclusiveness.
10. ST 2 – Involve the academic and administrative staff in their **yearly evaluation mechanism**.

11. ST 2 – Implement appropriate procedures for dealing with **students' complaints** according to international c.q. European guidelines for the implementation of student-centred learning and teaching.
12. ST 2 – Extend the contract between the Business School and the detection of **plagiarism** company to include all six schools of the university.

13. ST 3 – Implement more directed learning in **skills and practical training** in medicine.
14. ST 3 - Improve the **communication about the learning outcomes** to ensure that all students are well-informed.
15. ST 3 – Implement more **directed learning** in skills and practical training in medicinal education.
16. ST 3 - Use **Standardized Patients** both in the teaching and assessment process in medical education.

17. ST 4 – Contemplate introducing a **special teaching certificate** for staff members with a focus on educational or didactical skills.
18. ST 4 – Ensure that the capacity and capability of the **human capital development unit** at the faculty/departmental level is used to its full potential.
19. ST 4 – Clarify the various options to take a **sabbatical** and encourage staff members more actively to apply and make good use of the opportunity for self-development.

20. ST 5 – Revise and reorganise the formal status of students' representation at all levels to guarantee maximal impact on the quality of the teaching and learning process.
21. ST 5 – Encourage and facilitate the co-operation with other **students' organisations** and bodies, both in Georgia and abroad, for a better understanding of UG students' representation.
22. ST 5 – Introduce a **system of student mentors** to the benefit of especially first-year students.
23. ST 5 – Create the organisational function of an **ombudsperson** as an impartial intermediary official who offers informal and independent help for problem solving in a safe and comfortable environment.

24. ST 6 – Delineate the status of **PhD candidates versus PhD students** taking into account what is internationally accepted.
25. ST 6 – Support **consistently and systematically** research at all levels of university life.
26. ST 6 – Review the university's strategy of attracting **young researchers** for participating in the research projects
27. ST 6 – Support **supervision practices** by international and local professors at all levels.
28. ST 6 – Evaluate the **quality of research activities** of academic staff using both criteria/indicators and coefficients assigned to each activity.
29. ST 6 – Introduce a specific procedure for **evaluating the UG research centres**.

30. ST 7 – Create an **internal audit unit** for monitoring independently UG's transactions and risks.
31. ST 7 – Enforce **measures to mitigate the risk** of possible loss of revenues from the international students due to Covid 19 pandemic.
32. ST 7 – Increase expenses on **staff development**.

33. ST 7 – Develop a policy plan to accommodate **students with special needs** and to guarantee their inclusion in UG education. Also, make this information easily and publicly accessible.
34. ST 7 – Subscribe to **more international databases** in line with the university's ambitions in a variety of (research) disciplines.

Summary of the Best Practices

1. Together with staff and students the university is successful in creating an inviting teaching and learning community. **Staff is highly committed** to offer good education, and very dedicated to their tasks. As a result, students feel well catered for.
2. As a private university, UG is well-established and this generates a f**avourable working relationship with various stakeholders**, both in Georgia and abroad. Cooperation is essential for higher education and especially future research activities will benefit from international teamwork.

3. ST 1 – **International benchmarks** such as AACSB and CEEMAN confirm the university's high-quality ambitions.

4. ST 2 – UG is successful in attracting many **international students**, especially in the medical field.

5. ST 3 – UG managed to shift successfully to **online teaching during the pandemic**.

6. ST 4 – UG offers a variety of **supportive services** to its staff such as an effective online staff management system and a well-planned human capital development unit.
7. ST 4 – UG manages **retention of young generation** in many key positions.
8. ST 4 – The **working conditions** are favourable and UG takes proper action to guarantee a good **work-life balance** of its staff.

9. ST 5 – UG students the panel met during the evaluation procedure were mostly satisfied with the **student support services** provided for at present.

10. ST 6 – Increasingly **more funds** become available for research purposes.

11. ST 7 – At present, the university's **financial situation** is stable, and UG seems to take proper precautions to continue this sound status. It also allows UG to increase investments in infrastructure.
12. ST 7 – The university boasts **attractive and functional facilities**.
13. ST 7 – UG has invested considerably in the f**acilities for medical education**.
14. ST 7 – **My UG and Online UG** offer an attractive system to both students and staff with a multitude of functions such as monitoring study progress.

Summary Table

	Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
1.	**Mission and strategic development of HEI**	☐	☒	☐	☐
1.1	Mission of HEI	☐	☒	☐	☐
1.2	Strategic development	☐	☐	☒	☐
2.	**Organizational structure and management of HEI**	☐	☒	☐	☐
2.1	Organizational structure and management	☐	☒	☐	☐
2.2	Internal quality assurance mechanisms	☐	☐	☒	☐
2.3	Observing principles of ethics and integrity	☐	☒	☐	☐
3.	**Educational Programmes**	☐	☒	☐	☐
3.1	Design and development of educational programmes	☐	☒	☐	☐
3.2	Structure and content of educational programmes	☐	☒	☐	☐
3.3	Assessment of learning outcomes	☐	☒	☐	☐
4	**Staff of the HEI**	☒	☐	☐	☐
4.1	Staff management	☐	☒	☐	☐
4.2	Academic/Scientific and invited Staff workload	☒	☐	☐	☐
5	**Students and their support services**	☒	☐	☐	☐
5.1	The Rule for obtaining and changing student status, the recognition of education, and student rights	☒	☐	☐	☐
5.2	Student support services	☐	☒	☐	☐
6	**Research, development and/or other creative work**	☐	☒	☐	☐
6.1	Research activities	☐	☐	☒	☐
6.2	Research support and internationalization	☐	☒	☐	☐
6.3	Evaluation of research activities	☐	☒	☐	☐
7	**Material, information, and financial resources**	☒	☐	☐	☐

7.1	Material resources	☒	☐	☐	☐
7.2	Library resources	☒	☐	☐	☐
7.3	Information resources	☐	☒	☐	☐
7.4	Financial resources	☒	☐	☐	☐

Signature of expert panel members

1. Michèle Wera (chair)

2. Nadia Badrawi (co-chair)

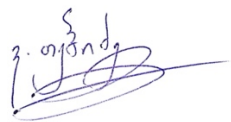3. Tea Gergedava (member)

4. Ketevan Aptarashvili (member)

5. Nani Kavlashvili (member)

6. Nikoloz Kavelashvili (member)

7. Vakhtang Tebidze (student member)

Compliance of the Authorization Applicant HEI with the Authorization Standard Components

1. Mission and strategic development of HEI

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The panel found the vision elaborate and in line with what the University of Georgia (UG) stands for. Its mission holds a special emphasis on creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, and excellence. In general, UG's educational aims and objectives follow higher educational goals in both Georgia and Europe. The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) specifies how the mission relates to these goals. All stakeholders whom the panel met, said that they recognized the university's main characteristics in the vision. When revising the mission, the university might opt for a more concise statement for reasons of strategic focus and clarity. Also, the vision could benefit from more focus.

The panel has seen ample evidence of activities underscoring the university's main goals. Entrepreneurship and innovation for example are prominent on the strategic agenda and they are evidently at the basis of the UG start-up factory. The panel encourages the university in its endeavours to engage students in these activities. A minor or elective in entrepreneurship open to all students might be a next step.

Education and Research

Higher education is defined by research and is therefore at the core of any university. Even so, the panel feels that the interrelation between education and research is somewhat lacking in the exact wording of the mission statement. Given UG's ambitions and research activities, it might help to make the link with research more explicit in the mission statement. In doing so, UG's positioning becomes more distinctive for prospective students and staff.

The mission is published on the university's website together with its vision and values: liberty, humanity, and excellence. Of special interest to the panel, is the explicit reference to research in the vision. At least in the vision, it seems that education and research play equally prominent roles. It underscores the panel's advice to include research in the mission statement. It also strengthens the panel's trust in the university's intentions to prioritise research. See also under standard 6.

Quality Culture

Somewhat disappointing is that nor the mission nor the vision refers to quality culture. Also, the SER does not mention quality culture once. When discussing this topic, the panel noticed that interviewees held different views on what quality culture entails. The panel will discuss this in more detail under Standard 2. For now, it suffices to state that the panel recommends emphasizing the development of a quality culture and revising the mission statement accordingly.

Student-Centred Learning

As asserted in the SER, the university's main activity is "to produce knowledge and educate a person". The panel assumes that the underlying principle of student-centred learning and teaching is implied. In line with the revised 2015 European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), student-centred education is fundamental in higher education. Again, it would foster the university's ambitions and the students' educational process to incorporate the concept of student-centred learning in the mission and subsequent policies.

At the same time, the phrase "to produce knowledge and educate a person" clearly focuses on the individual student. In doing so, it might unintentionally overlook the more common purpose of higher education serving the community at large.

International Ambitions

In accordance with UG's international ambitions as expressed in most meetings and in the SER, the panel had expected a clear statement on this topic also in the mission. However, this is not the case. The SER under Standard 1.1 only mentions Georgian and European educational goals. No reference is made to the diverse and international community, and the strong affiliation with American parties. This omission stands in sharp contrast with the following chapters, starting with standard 1.2 that covers the strategic development plan and the three-year action plans. It seems that UG's strong focus on internationalisation is not congruent with its mission statement. At the same time, the panel recognizes that higher education is internationally orientated by definition.

Stakeholders

When discussing the mission statement in the various meetings during the site visit, the panel established that both internal and external stakeholders are familiar with the main characteristics. Less clear was to what extend these stakeholders have been involved in formulating and revising the mission. No evidence was presented about their impact on the present mission statement. The SER states that various meetings have been organised for discussing the mission. Even so, it seems no formal procedure is in place for safeguarding the contribution of stakeholders in developing the mission. Although the final mission statement remains the prerogative of the university's leadership, it is advisable to take into account different – and critical – views if one wants to secure maximal commitment. Apart from this suggestion, the panel confirms that the mission is broadly supported across the university.

Market Needs

The mission and vision refer to market needs and the university as a business entity. As a private university, UG does well to offer educational programmes meeting demands of the market. Especially the international market of MD students is of paramount importance from a financial point of view. The panel learned that the majority of students are indeed medical students. They generate more than 70% of UG's income. It seems that UG primarily looks at the profitable side of the international market needs as befits a business enterprise. As an institution of higher education in Georgie, UG seems less preoccupied with meeting local requirements. The panel urges UG to continue investing in both sides of its educational endeavours.

Revision Cycle

Finally, the panel could not establish how the present mission relates to the previous mission. The SER mentions previous editions but offers no information of changes made. As the period under review covers six years (2014-2020), an earlier version of the mission would have been of interest to the panel. The panel found that one version building on the next is a fluid process without strict regulations. The panel can see the advantages of such a pragmatic approach, but it strongly suggests adhering to a more formal procedure as part of a continuous quality assurance cycle. Also, one way of securing the history and accessibility of any document, including the mission statement, is to clearly indicate the dates of formal approval and publication.

Taking into consideration the description and evaluation criteria for substandard 1.1, the panel concludes that the present mission does not fully comply with the NCEQE requirements. It remained unclear how the present mission (2020-2027) relates to the previous mission although the period under review mainly covers the past six years (2014-2020). Also, UG needs to make its unique role and characteristics more explicit, and to embrace the 2015 ESG more convincingly.

Evidence/indicators

UG Mission

UG Strategic Plan 2020-2027

Interviews with leadership and management, staff and students, alumni, and employers.

Recommendations:

ST 1 – Ensure that education and research are always at the core of the university as is the case for all higher education institutes worldwide.

ST 1 – Make sure to give due attention to quality culture, student-centred learning and internationalisation when reviewing the mission statement and subsequent policies, also in accordance with the 2015 ESG.

ST 1 – Formalise the revision cycle of the mission and vision, and secure the accessibility (publication) and history (date) of the various editions.

Suggestions:

ST 1 – Consider making both the mission and vision more concise for reasons of strategic focus and clarity.

ST 1 – Consider implementing a formal procedure for stakeholders' involvement when revising and formulating the university's mission.

ST 1 – Keep investing in the development of entrepreneurial competencies and skills, and contemplate introducing a minor or elective in entrepreneurship open to all students.

Best Practices (if applicable):

-

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

1.2 Strategic Development

- o HEI has a strategic development (7-year) and an action plans (3-year) in place.
- o HEI contributes to the development of the society, shares with the society the knowledge gathered in the institution, and facilitates lifelong learning
- o HEI evaluates implementation of strategic and action plans, and duly acts on evaluation results.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Strategic and Action Plans

The university presented its Strategic Development Plan 2020-2027 and three-year Action Plan (2020-2024) as annexes to the SER. The panel scrutinized the set of documents and found them very instructive. The strategy plan is a comprehensive document also including a SWOT-analysis, subgoals and objectives, and the budget. The action plan for the period 2020 until 2024 was only available in Georgian which hampered the discussion with the international panel members. Also, none of the documents are posted on the English version of the university's website.

The university has a formal procedure in place for developing and monitoring the strategic plan. This process is presented as a participatory activity involving the university's academic and administrative staff, students, employers, and other stakeholders. The procedure suggests a bottom-up approach, but the panel learned that especially leadership and management were engaged in formulating the strategic goals. During the meetings with the panel, staff and students seemed to be aware of the existence of the strategic goals but they could not give an example of their contribution or impact. Employers were even less informed about the strategy plan. At the level of subgoals and objectives, schools were more actively involved according to the deans.

As mentioned before, the period under review basically covers the past six years of operation (2014-2020). The documents presented in the SER under Standard 1 mainly cover the next period of six or seven years (2020-2027). For a good understanding of the present situation, it would have been useful to elaborate more explicitly on progress made. A critical appraisal of past experiences is valuable in terms of quality enhancement and strategic planning. Furthermore, it provides insight about continuous improvement and future developments. When comparing the present and previous

strategy, leadership mentioned an increased interest in research as the main difference. This is said to be the result of international market needs: if UG want to compete internationally, it must intensify its research efforts. The panel supports this development but would have preferred a more intrinsic motivation.

Policies

The Strategic Plan and Action Plans present activities supporting the strategic goals. For a more coherent approach, the panel advises developing policies for each area of interest. A good start for any university would be policy documents on the basics: teaching, research, students' assessment, personnel, facilities, international collaboration, and quality assurance. At a later stage, other policies can follow, highlighting and elaborating the areas of interests in which UG wants to be distinctive. Examples could be entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation. The policy document on internationalisation will be discussed under standard 2. These are prominent features in both mission and vision, and deserve proper attention. At present, most of these short-term policy documents are missing. Operational or action plans with measurable targets follow next and are essential for the achievement of the strategic goals. Both policy documents and action plans should be accessible to all and posted on the university's website.

Goals, Subgoals and Objectives

The SER states that the strategic goals are derived from the mission and vision of the university. Internationalisation is the first of six goals. As noted, before, internationalisation is not mentioned in the mission. Also, the six goals in the SER differ from those in the strategy document. The second goal in the SER – "increase in scientific level and productivity" - is missing in the strategy document. And the fifth goal in the SER combines two aims listed separately in the strategy. These discrepancies are best avoided.

The six strategic goals are subdivided into three categories: educational, scientific, and institutional goals. For each of these three categories, the strategy plan lists subgoals and objectives including the achievement strategy, the performance indicators, the time, and the resources. The document claims that all subgoals and objectives contribute to the realization of all six strategic goals without further differentiation. A matrix might be helpful for monitoring the achievement of each individual goal, subgoal and objective.

During the site visit, the panel learned about the annual presidents' week. At that occasion, leadership discusses the state of affairs, progress made and also quality assurance matters. Although not mentioned in the SER, this arrangement seems to suit the needs for monitoring and managing 'a big educational company' in the words of one of the presidents. In doing so, leadership takes full responsibility for achieving the strategic goals and making the necessary adjustments when required. These strategic decisions are based on evaluation results being part of the university's quality assurance and monitoring systems.

High-Quality Education

In the mission statement, the quality of the UG educational programmes is emphasized in terms of excellence, prestige, high standards, et cetera. No doubt the university has a good understanding of its place in higher education, both in Georgia and abroad. One or two national or international benchmarks for some of its educational programmes will help to define and possibly confirm these ambitions. The benchmarks can also be used in midterm reviews of programmes. The panel supports these initiatives and encourages the universities to increase the effort. Examples of such international quality benchmarks are AACSB and CEEMAN for business and management programmes. The panel considers this good practice.

At the same time, some goals and objectives are not necessarily linked to high-quality education as envisaged by the university or the panel. Planning an academic calendar (objective 1.1.1) and reaccreditation of existing programmes (1.2.4) are regular activities of any university and have no direct relation with the ambition of excellence. A policy document can help to better define the meaning of high-quality education.

As UG recognizes in the SWOT analysis, international rankings have not yet confirmed this institutional excellence. The ambition is certainly present throughout the organisation, but expectations might need some tempering especially against the backdrop of challenging circumstances and severe competition

in the region. A more realistic view on the university's position and possibilities might bring more focus into its strategic planning and subsequent activities.

Lastly, the panel points out that the Law of Georgia on Higher Education (Article 43) stipulates that "students shall have the right to acquire high-quality education". In other words, high-quality education is a requirement rather than a distinctive characteristic for any higher education institution in Georgia.

Analyses

The SWOT-analysis as part of the strategy document lists not less than twenty strengths, numerous weaknesses and opportunities, and four threats. Neither the SER nor the strategy document explains how the SWOT is used as a strategic planning tool. It certainly offers a unique insight in the organisation, but the panel feels that better use can be made of the analysis. For the panel, it remained unclear what the correlation was between the SWOT and the SER, on the one hand, and between the SWOT and the strategic agenda, on the other hand.

The same applies to the PEST analysis describing the political, economic, socio-cultural, and technological factors, and the competition analysis. The material is interesting enough for strategic planning and decision-making, but no further mention is made of either of these analyses.

When asked about UG's contribution to the development of society, leadership referred to activities such as tolerance week, the multi ethnical student population, and numerous public lectures. UG's aim is to enhance the democratic process in Georgia. It remains a challenge, however, for the university to measure its impact on the further development of democratic levels of Georgian society. As both the SWOT and PEST analyses also consider local circumstances, the panel recommends taking those into account and turning them into opportunities.

All in all, the panel concludes that UG partially meets the requirements for substandard 1.2. The documents presented to the panel do not adequately cover the university's goals and the panel established some flaws in the strategic planning that need to be addressed.

Evidence/indicators

Law of Georgia on Higher Education

Strategic Planning Methodology and Monitoring Mechanisms of the University of Georgia

UG Strategic Development Plan 2020-2027

UG Action Plan 2020-2024 (Georgian)

Policy Document on Internalization – Short Term Strategic Plan for UG Internationalization (2019-2022)

Policy Document on Research - Scientific-Research Institute Regulations and Statute of PhD with their annexes

Interviews with leadership and management, staff and students, alumni, and employers.

Recommendations:

ST 1 – Make sure to link the new strategy more explicitly to the previous strategy for a good understanding of progress made.

ST 1 – Develop policy documents and annual plans for each area of interest making good use of the input of relevant stakeholders and make these document accessible to the broader public by posting them on the university's website.

ST 1 – Redefine high-quality education and adopt a more realistic view on the university's position and possibilities.

ST 1 – Make good use of the available analyses such as SWOT and PEST for strategic planning and decision-making.

Suggestions:

ST 1 – Conceive ways/tools for measuring UG's contribution to the development of society.

ST 1 – Turn local circumstances and challenges into opportunities for the further development of society.

Best Practices (if applicable):

ST 1 – International benchmarks such as AACSB and CEEMAN confirm the university's high-quality ambitions.

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☐ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☒ **Partially complies with requirements**

☐ Does not comply with requirements

2. Organizational Structure and Management of HEI

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

2.1 Organizational Structure and Management

- o Organizational structure of HEI ensures implementation of goals and activities described in its strategic plan
- o Procedures for election/appointment of the management bodies of HEI are transparent, equitable, and in line with legislation
- o HEI's Leadership/Management body ensures effective management of the activities of the institution
- o Considering the mission and goals of HEI, leadership of the HEI supports international cooperation of the institution and the process of internationalization.

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

Organisational Structure

The organisational configuration of UG is well structured. The document attached with SER include all the functions and job descriptions of the three levels of management (top, middle and low). The top level includes the assembly of partners, the presidents, the rector, the vice rectors, and the heads of schools. However, the panel noticed that the two most important and influential bodies in the university structure are the assembly of partners and the presidents, and both are comprised of the same two members. Furthermore, those said two members also own the university and they also control the management. This situation negates the statement in the SER proclaiming that these responsibilities and tasks are separated. In addition, the rector as the main governing body, is closely related to the assembly partners and the presidents. These singular circumstances result in a mainly top-down management with a closely-knit governance structure. This management style comes with the advantage that clear goals are set but it also might hamper creativity and new development.

Effective leadership has proven to benefit from a more balanced approach combining top-down and bottom-up methods. Likewise, every organisation needs a system of checks and balances, and this basic principle of good governance is especially true for a private university. Often, it all comes down to trust, trust in leadership and management, trust in staff and students. Therefore, the panel recommends analysing the effectiveness and the efficiency of the internal decision-making processes.

The UG risk plan is well organized and is planned to accommodate multiple risk factors. Their plan is classified and categorized and includes a strategy of management for numerous risk factors.

Leadership and Management Bodies

The mission of the university includes three main pillars, knowledge production and education the person, followed by creation of environment to give maximum opportunity to manifest and realize creative, innovative, research and entrepreneurial opportunity and lastly democratic development of the societies by striving the perfection of the institution. The panel, however, noticed that the roles of the vice rectors were not evenly distributed to encompass all the pillars. There is only one vice rector for the academics and scientific field.

UG structural units are satisfactorily organized and ensure the sustainability of the development of the program. UG has six schools, and the deans of these schools are involved in the strategic planning, programme development, structural development, budget management, and conduction of scientific/research activities. Within the structural units, there are many other services to carry administrative and academic functions such as departments, centres, and offices; these services ensure the implementation of the goals, sub goals, tasks, and activities of the strategic plan. Most of these services are headed by the vice rectors. Some of the work between the services and the schools are intertwined which allows many of the academic staff to work in both teaching and services. During the multiple online interview session, the panel noticed that many of the faculty members hold more than one function in the university. Even so, all staff members refuted any overload or extra working hours.

Appointment & Election

The procedures of appointment or election in the management bodies of the university are transparent, fair and in line with the law. The university has a well-kept data base. The structure of the university permits elective and appointed positions. Throughout meetings with the various levels of employees, all expressed their confidence in the fairness of employment procedure at the university.

Internationalization

The panel recognises that the UG mission and goals along with its leadership support the international cooperation of the institution and the process of internationalisation. At the same, as discussed under the previous standard 1, internationalisation as a goal remains rather implicit. Even so, UG manages to attract large numbers of students from abroad, mainly in the field of medicine.

The university has submitted an internationalisation strategic plan which includes training, work exchange programmes, finding finances, and organisation of international conferences and workshops. However, the document presented by UG is not a strategic plan, but more of a descriptive text structured in the form of recommendations with no objectives or KPIs. Moreover, being almost 16 months into the strategic plan for internationalisation timeline, the panel noticed an isolated focus on international student mobility over other recommendations. The quality assurance department is using international benchmarks such as AACSB and CEEMAN to confirm the university's high-quality ambitions. As mentioned under standard 1, the panel considers this good practice. Furthermore, the UG's strategy plan gives weight to international programme accreditation and yet the panel established that only one programme received this international recognition. Others are still in the pipeline.

Evidence/indicators

UG Strategic Development Plan 2020-2027

UG Action Plan 2020-2024 (Georgian)

Strategic Planning Methodology and Monitoring Mechanisms of the University of Georgia

Management procedures

Plan of business process risk assessment and business continuity procedure and business continuity plan

Policy Document on Internalization – Short Term Strategic Plan for UG Internationalization (2019-2022)

Interviews with the Assembly Partners and the Presidents

Interviews with leadership and management, staff and students, alumni, and employers.

Recommendations:

ST 2 – Analyse the effectiveness and efficiency of the internal decision-making processes with a particular focus on well-balanced top-down and bottom-up methods and fortify it with a robust system of checks and balances.

Suggestions:

ST 2 – Contemplate combining the rectors and partner of the assembly committee in one body or assign different presidents' members to the supervisory body.

ST 2 – Distribute the job description of vice rectors more uniformly according to the mission and strategy of the university.

ST 2 – Review the strategic plan for internationalisation, put it in a planning form and define the KPIs, in order to measure achievement.

Best Practices

ST 2 – UG is successful in attracting many international students, especially in the medical field.

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

☐ Partially complies with requirements

o ☐ Does not comply with requirements

2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms

o Institution effectively implements internal quality assurance mechanisms. Leadership of the institution constantly works to strengthen quality assurance function and promotes establishment of quality culture in the institution.

o HEI has a mechanism for planning student body, which will give each student an opportunity to get a high-quality education.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Accountability and Enhancement

In accordance with the Law of Georgia on Higher Education, GU has a solid internal quality assurance system including proper development and renewal of educational programmes. Quality assurance mechanisms at programme level are in place. External evaluations follow a six-year cycle, and also mid-term evaluations are being organised. These evaluations are said to result in improvement measures. The SER mentions a mechanism of a scoring system to evaluate the various courses. However, no evidence or example of any of the evaluated programmes or courses was provided. Also, the reports of such evaluations (in Georgian) and their follow-up actions are not easily accessible to all stakeholders and the panel has not been able to establish their effectiveness. It would be helpful for all stakeholders to communicate more clearly about the cycle of Plan-Do-Check-Act as a continuous process of quality improvement.

Also, time has come to find a balance between quality control and quality improvement. Accountability and enhancement are interrelated, and both are the fundamentals of the European quality assurance system. Once educational programmes have undergone successfully one or two cycles of external evaluations, one can trust the effectiveness of the procedure. In that case, the focus can shift towards recommendations for improving the quality of the programmes.

Quality Culture

That said, the panel has noticed through the SER and the various interviews that this mechanism is mainly based on a control system rather than quality enhancement. The SER described the mechanism of the programme's final control including inspection of the quality assurance services and accreditation board interference in case of inaccuracies. Again, this mechanism is focused solely on control and does not measure up to the quality culture in a university.

During the review process, the notion of quality culture was not mentioned. Also, the SER does not make any reference to quality culture. When discussing this with staff, quality culture was mainly determined in terms of quality control, quality mechanism, and quality checks. A common understanding of what a quality culture might entail, however, was missing throughout the panel's visit. Those findings do not necessarily mean the absence of a quality culture. It merely means that quality culture is not prominent

on the agenda. The panel made the same observation under standard 1 when discussing the mission and strategy. Therefore, the panel invites UG to reflect on this and encourage the further development of a quality culture across all levels of the university.

Stakeholders' Involvement

The SER mentions that "in order to develop or upgrade any curriculum, the quality assurance department will carry out a survey to the potential employers, academic staff, and students". This however has not been evidenced by survey results included in the SER documents. During the meetings with the panel, academic staff and students confirmed that they had participated regularly in surveys sent by the university. However, they were not familiar with the outcomes of these surveys and whether these results had any impact on the further development of the curriculum.

The same observation is applicable to academic staff and researchers and their involvement in internal quality assurance. It seems that they are not actively involved in their self-evaluation and quality assurance mechanism of the university.

The panel's more general observation is that information about quality assurance is not well disseminated within the university. During the various interviews with deans, staff and students, the panel discussed their awareness of the internal quality assurance system. Their response was disappointing. They were made aware of quality assurance either during the orientation period or during the multiple surveys done by the quality assurance department. They were not aware of the outcomes of the surveys.

Also, the panel established that the UG website does not post any information on quality assurance. Therefore, the panel invites UG to make all information on quality assurance easily accessible for all stakeholders for reasons of transparency and maximum involvement of all stakeholders. Especially students should be able to find all necessary information on student's involvement without too much effort. UG needs to update all relevant documents on the university's internal quality assurance including the various committees and subcommittees.

Self-Evaluation Report

The panel found the SER rather descriptive. A self-critical appraisal is largely missing. The same can be said of the SWOT-analysis as part of the Strategic Plan. An essential part of a functional quality assurance system is the frankness about weaknesses and shortcomings. These need to be identified in order to develop a quality improvement plan alongside quality action plans with quantifiable targets. It is the panel's firm believe that the university, being a solidly based institution of higher education in Georgia, is well capable of offering this openness of affairs. Making the information on quality assurance available to all stakeholders creates an environment of trust and transparency. This will enhance the involvement of stakeholders, especially of staff and students. In line with this, the university might contemplate publishing the SER on its website. By now, this is standard practice throughout Europe.

Furthermore, during the review process, the panel established some discrepancies between the SER and the SWOT, and also between the SER and the testimony of stakeholders. This was already noted under standard 1

Student Body

The mechanism for planning student body, which will give each student an opportunity to get a high-quality education in UG was summarized in the SER as a mechanism for achieving /checking the learning outcomes by a student and defined as an assessment to identify weakness, discovering new findings, and making recommendations to the units responsible for the programme in general. However, during the interviews meeting with students, they did not recall this mechanism. Also, the information was not available in English to the panel.

The panel concludes that UG partially meets the NCEQE requirements for substandard 2.2. Emphasising on control mechanisms the university is missing out on the essentials of continuous quality improvement and the development of a quality culture. Also, UG's perception of stakeholders' involvement differs considerably from how staff and students perceive their impact.

Evidence/indicators

Law of Georgia on Higher Education

QA mechanism and assessment in the Statute of Educational Programs

UG Strategic Development Plan 2020-2027

Guide to employee performance evaluation

Online UG

Regulation of an educational program

Interviews with leadership and management, staff and students, alumni, and employers

Recommendations:

ST 2 – Ensure that the cycle of Plan-Do-Check-Act as a continuous process of quality improvement is fully realized involving all stakeholders.

ST 2 – Continue seeking a balance between accountability and enhancement.

ST 2 – Invest in the further development of a quality culture, starting with revising the mission statement and opening a discussion on the notion of quality culture.

ST 2 – Ensure that all information on quality assurance is easily accessible for all stakeholders for reasons of transparency and maximum involvement of all stakeholders. Especially students should be able to find all necessary information on student's involvement without too much effort.

Suggestions:

ST 2 – Contemplate publishing the Self-Evaluation Report on the university's website to maximise openness and inclusiveness.

ST 2 – Involve the academic and administrative staff in their yearly evaluation mechanism.

Best Practices (if applicable):

-

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

       ☐ Complies with requirements

       ☐ Substantially complies with requirements

       ☒ **Partially complies with requirements**

       ☐ Does not comply with requirements

2.3. Observing Principles of Ethics and Integrity

- o HEI has developed regulations and mechanisms that follow principles of ethics and integrity. Such regulations are publicly accessible.
- o Institution has implemented mechanisms for detecting plagiarism and its prevention.
- o HEI follows the principles of academic freedom.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Ethics and integrity

In accordance with the Law of Georgia on Higher Education, GU has developed a regulation and mechanism that follows principles of ethics and integrity. GU has provided in the various documents attached to the SER a well written report on the university's internal regulation and code of honors policy of academic integrity. The documents include a full description of possible violation and actions taken in case of any illegal act in this domain. Although through interviews it was made clear that some of the students and academic staff were aware of these codes, this awareness and its detailed mechanisms were not universally shared by all staff members and students at the university.

Prevention of Plagiarism

The university has developed rules and procedures for responding to plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. The UG documents on plagiarism had a detailed description of the violation and the action taken in case of plagiarism. GU uses the electronic programme of Turnitin in the educational process and facilitates the detection and elimination of plagiarism. This is an important step in maintaining the university policy of academic integrity. However, the only evidence of using this platform is a contract

signed in Feb 19/2018 between Turnitin company and the School of Business but not with the university at large.

Academic Freedom

The SER and the various interviews with academic staff and students showed that there is good dissemination of information on the academic freedom policies and that the academic process at the university is based upon these principles.

Complaints and Appeals

UG seems to have a proper system in place for appeals by students. During the meetings with the panel, students confirmed they were familiar with the formal procedure for requesting an appeal against the result of an assessment. An appeal procedure for staff in case of work-related issues is not available. Neither does UG provide a procedure for complaints to staff and students. Although not part of the NCEQE evaluation standards, the panel urges the university to consider the matter with some urgency. From an international perspective, also with reference to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG 1.3), students are entitled to appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints befitting a student-centred learning and teaching environment. The same would apply for staff.

Organisational Culture

Upon perusal of the various documents on ethics, the panel came across a bylaw on 'organisational culture and dress-code' (folder 2.13). Among the five paragraphs this article contains, the first three are particularly striking especially from an international perspective. Although the document clearly states that the various statements on hairstyle, attire and accessories are not meant to suppress human individualism, the panel finds these proclamations highly inappropriate and strongly recommends revising the text or better still, do away with the document. Staff and students alike should be trusted to function and behave according to internationally accepted standards. To suggest otherwise gives reason for skepticism about UG's quality culture.

The panel concludes that UG substantially meets the requirements as it disregards the basic principles of ethics and norms that are common within the European Higher Education Area.

Evidence/indicators
Internal regulation
Code of Honor
Policy of academic integrity
Turnitin agreement
Rule for application of Turnitum in Schools
Orgnisational culture and dress-code

Recommendations:
ST 2 – Invest in creating an educational community based on trust and do away with the document on organisational culture and dress-code.

Suggestions:
ST 2 – Implement appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints according to international c.q. European guidelines for the implementation of student-centred learning and teaching.
ST 2 – Extend the contract between the Business School and the detection of plagiarism company to include all six schools of the university.

Best Practices (if applicable):
-

Evaluation
Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard ☐ Complies with requirements **☒ Substantially complies with requirements** ☐ Partially complies with requirements ☐ Does not comply with requirements

3.   Educational Programmes

HEI has procedures for planning, designing, approving, developing and annulling educational programmes. Programme learning outcomes are clearly defined and are in line with the National Qualifications Framework. A programme ensures achievement of its objectives and intended learning outcomes

3.1 Design and Development of Educational Programmes

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Currently, UG runs 65 accredited educational programmes; 30 at Bachelor level, 21 Master level, 2 One-cycle programmes, 11 PhD programmes, 1 teachers' training programme (60 ECTS).

Policy and Practice

UG has elaborated a policy for planning, designing, implementation, evaluation, and development of educational programmes. The document "The Provision of an Educational Program" describes this methodology of planning, developing and approval of educational programmes. It defines who oversees the administration of programmes and implementing the educational programmes. Also, it describes the structure of the curriculum, the methodology for developing an individual study plan, the mechanisms of renewal of educational programmes, and the procedures for annulling of the programmes. The document includes mechanism for continuous improvement of educational programme evaluation and development – direct and indirect assessment.

The panel established that the programme development process is more top down than bottom-up. The invited staff does not participate much in programme development as they told the panel. Also, in the meetings with the panel, the alumni and students confirmed that they are not directly involved in the programme development/updating process.

Involvement of Stakeholders

According to the aforementioned document, academic / invited / administrative staff, students, graduates, and employers are involved in the process of development and renewal of educational programmes. The heads of programmes assert that all stakeholders (among them students and alumni) are involved in the process of curriculum development in two ways: they directly participate in the process and by different surveys. However, this information was not confirmed at the meetings with the panel. Students in particular said to be less involved in updating and developing the programmes than the SER maintains.

Interviews with Academic council, Quality Assurance Staff, Academic Staff confirmed that the procedures regarding programme planning and renewal are usually followed. UG staff mentioned by way of an example that more hours were included for practical work for nurses. The meeting with the employers showed that they participate in different surveys. They are involved in programme development and some of their recommendations are taken into consideration. For instance, teaching of ancient languages was enhanced according to the request of one of the employers. In meeting with the panel, students

confirmed that their feedback was considered in some programmes and changes were done. In Law School, for example, the written exam was changed into a practical one.

As already mentioned under the previous standard 2, the panel found that not all stakeholders are well-informed about the follow-up of their involvement. For reasons of transparency and stakeholders' commitment, UG should reconsider its communication strategy.

Latest Developments in Higher Education

UG has the ambition that its graduates will be competitive not only in Georgia but also in the international market. The university is focusing on internationalisation, planning to attract more foreign students, especially in the field of medicine. In line with UG's ambition, it is crucial to keep up with latest development in higher education and design its programmes accordingly. The panel also noted that many documents including the SER and the syllabi mention student-centred learning and other innovative pedagogical ideas. However, these ideas have not yet materialised.

Not too many staff members seemed to be engaged in modern teaching methods. The panel could not detect a clear focus on introducing innovative ideas in the teaching and learning process. This became clear in various meetings with the panel, also and especially during the visits in the hospitals. On several occasions, both students and staff referred to more traditional modes of study despite UG's intentions to introduce modern modes of delivery and pedagogical methods. UG should implement more student-centred learning and teaching approaches. This will help UG to meet its high-quality ambitions and demands of the international labour market.

Education during the Pandemic

GU was able to adapt to online teaching during the pandemic by using My UG and online UG. UG also used Microsoft team, and Cisco-Webex in the Learning Management System. During the meetings with the panel, students and staff seemed to be pleased with the capacity building received on using the online system of GU. Moreover, GU conducted the spring semester final exam online successfully.

All in all, the panel concludes that UG substantially complies with substandard 3.1. The panel recognizes the efforts made but in keeping with the university's mission, it needs to increase these efforts substantially. Again, UG's perception of stakeholders' involvement differs considerably from their experience as related to the panel in the various meetings.

Evidence/indicators Educational programmes, syllabi Provision of Educational Programs Provision of the Bachelor's Degree Studies Provision of the Master's Degree Studies Provision of Doctoral Studies Interviews with UG staff, students, alumni, and employers
Recommendations: ST 3 – Modernize the educational design of the programmes by implementing innovative ideas such as student-centred learning, problem-based learning, multidisciplinary programmes, and flexible learning paths. ST 3 – Invest in the further involvement of invited staff, students and alumni in programme development and renewal.
Suggestions: -
Best Practices: ST 3 – UG managed to shift successfully to online teaching during the pandemic.

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

3.2 Structure and Content of Educational Programmes

- o Programme learning outcomes are clearly stated and are in line with higher education level and qualification to be granted
- o With the help of individualized education programmes, HEI takes into consideration various requirements, needs and academic readiness of students, and ensures their unhindered involvement into the educational process.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Compliance

All programmes of the University of Georgia are developed in accordance with the legislation of Georgia and the regulations of the University and are guided by the guidelines of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). All educational programmes of the UG have been transferred to three-component learning outcomes, which include knowledge, skills, responsibility, and autonomy. Also, all UG educational programmes are accredited.

The learning outcomes for each programme are clearly stated and are in line with the higher education level and qualification to be granted. However, the panel learned that not all students are familiar with the learning outcomes. UG should address this issue. An introduction on intended learning outcomes and how to achieve them during the orientation programme for students might solve this problem.

Programme structure and content are constructed based on logical connection and consequence between the components. Attainment of learning outcomes is defined within a reasonable timeframe, considering the specifics of the field. Overall, the content of the programmes is aligned with the programme goals, and the structure allows the smooth progress of students through the programme.

Programmes

All bachelor programmes comprise 240 credits. Master's Degree Programmes are 120 credits, Doctoral degree programmes are 180 credits, with the learning component not exceeding 60 credits. All three-level educational programmes provide mandatory and elective courses. One cycle medical programme covers 360 credits, 6 years of teaching, Core course - 334 ECTS (Including Professional core – 322 ECTS and Georgian Language – 12 ECTS) Elective - 26 ECTS. One cycle dentistry programme has 300 ECTS and includes 5 years of teaching, consisting of compulsory (288 ECTS) and elective (12 ECTS) components. The amount of the ECTS of dental specializations is 126.

UG provides access to programme information through the website where the programme catalogue is located. The catalogue includes information on all programmes offered at the University. The catalogue is updated periodically in accordance with changes in educational programmes.

The teaching methods used in various programmes throughout the University are as follows: lecture-quiz, interactive lectures, teamwork, seminars, practical work et cetera. As established before, a more student-centred learning and teaching approach should be implemented. For a better understanding of the learning process, the teaching methods should be clarified. Of importance for students is the present situation and the actual mode of teaching and learning. Plans are interesting enough but not always of direct consequence for students enlisted in the programmes.

Medical Education

As UG plans to attract more international students in the medicine programme, more student-centered and directed learning are needed, especially in skills training in medicine. The medicine programmes have detailed national guidelines for the content and delivery of the knowledge and skills required to be a medical graduate. There are revised standards for medicine for which all Georgian medical schools must demonstrate compliance.

Teaching methods described in the medical programme and syllabi are as following: Lectures, Seminars, Case Based Learning (CBL), Problem Based Learning (PBL), Team Working, Tutorials, Clinical Rotations at University /Teaching Hospitals, Bedside –teaching, Role-playing, Communication (with Outpatients and Hospitalized Patients), Portfolio based education, Workshops, Workplace learning, Teaching in clinical and simulation environment, Case Based Clinical Reasoning (CBCR), Studying video movies, Team working with resuscitative patient, Clinical rotation in Practice in Medical settings (outpatients and inpatients), Clinical rotation.

Some of these methods are almost the same e.g., Clinical rotation in Practice in Medical settings and Clinical rotation. Some methods need explanation – e.g., workplace learning, studying video movies. Information in the syllabi is not very helpful for a good understanding of how the teaching process works in reality; this is especially the case for the practical part. Working with standardized patients is crucial for international students as their knowledge of Georgian is poor and they are not able to communicate with real patients unless through an interpreter. UG should step up its efforts in language learning as medical students need to acquire good communication skills with patients.

To conclude, the panel established that not all above mentioned teaching methods are used in real life. Also, the information on the mode of teaching is not always clear in the documents presented. Finally, medical students cannot communicate with their patients in a direct and effective way due to language barriers. This should be a major source of concern for the university as it hinders these students in their educational process.

Evidence/indicators
Educational programmes, syllabi
Provision of Educational Programs
Provision of the Bachelor's Degree Studies
Provision of the Master's Degree Studies
Provision of Doctoral Studies
Manual of teaching methods
My-UG - electronic portal
Website of UG
Interviews with UG staff, students, alumni, and employers

Recommendations:
ST 3 – Clarify and update the information on the teaching and learning methods in the programme syllabi.
ST 3 – Increase the efforts in Georgian language learning for international medical students as they need to acquire good communication skills with patients.

Suggestions:
ST 3 – Improve the communication about the learning outcomes to ensure that all students are well-informed.
ST 3 – Implement more directed learning in skills and practical training in medicine.

Best Practices (if applicable):
-

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

        ☐ Complies with requirements

        ☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

        ☐ Partially complies with requirements

    o   ☐ Does not comply with requirements

3.3 Assessment of Learning Outcomes

HEI has law-compliant, transparent and fair system of learning outcomes assessment, which promotes the improvement of students' academic performance.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Assessment System

The learning outcomes assessment system takes into consideration specifics of the field, and mostly includes adequate assessment formats, components, and methods. The university has a centralized assessment system regarding the midterm and final grades distribution and minimal competency level set for them.

The assessment system of student knowledge in UG is clearly described and is in line with legal acts of Georgia. The attainment of student's learning outcomes considers the interim and final assessments, for which relative proportions out of the total score (100 points) and a minimum competence level are allocated - midterm evaluation with maximum 60 points and final evaluation with maximum 40 points.

The learning outcomes are achieved if: (A) The student has mastered all the components; (B) The average score of the student is at least 51. It is necessary to get at least 20 points (50%) to pass the final exam. A student who fails the final exam is eligible to take it again in the following cases: A) A student who fails to get the minimum score (20 points) to pass the final exam, but accumulates at least 41 points in the form of intermediate assessments, will be admitted to the additional exam; B) A student who received the minimum score for passing the final exam, could not accumulate total of 51 points in all assessment forms, however accumulated at least 41 points, will be admitted to the additional exam.

The panel is of the opinion that 20 points (50%) is too low for a university that has the ambition to be among the leading universities in the region. Although these and other percentages for passing are in line with the Law of Georgia on Higher Education, UG can set the bar higher in terms of a minimal percentage of students obtaining better success rates. Especially in an American context, success rates are important parameters in a competitive market. Also, it was not always clear what the minimal required points are for passing an exam.

Academic staff is entitled to select the appropriate assessment methods, the adequate components and the forms of the evaluation, and a set of assessment criteria. Students can observe their assessment results through the electronic system – My UG. The university also has an assessment appellation system in place and students are aware of how it works.

Medical Education

In the medical programme, midterm assessment is mainly done by lecture-quizzes and presentation. Less clear is how practical skills are assessed (history taking, physical exam skills, et cetera). The syllabi mention a practical component of the exam, but the type of practical assessment is not specified.

The workplace-based assessments in practice, structured clinical observation, OSCE exams, including the evaluation of student professional behaviors and skills-acquisition, are very important and it should be implemented. UG has some space for OSCE, but under OSCE only assessment of skills as CPR, lumbar puncture, injections et cetera are considered.

Furthermore, UG staff needs training to understand the concept of OSCE exam. The panel will return to this issue under the next standard 4. Lastly, the panel strongly advises using Standardized Patients both in the teaching and assessment process.

The panel concludes that UG substantially complies with substandard 3.3 on assessment. At present, UG's ambitions are insufficiently reflected in the assessment policy, also in medical education.

Evidence/indicators

Educational programmes, syllabi

Provision of Educational Programs

Provision of the Bachelor's Degree Studies

Provision of the Master's Degree Studies

Provision of Doctoral Studies

Interviews with UG staff, students, alumni, and employers

Recommendations:

ST 3 – Consider setting clear targets for success rates in line with UG's ambitions.

ST 3 – Revise the assessment of practical skills in medical education and make good use of OSCE, SCO, Mini-Cex et cetera.

Suggestions:

ST 3 - Use Standardized Patients both in the teaching and assessment process.

ST 3 – Specify a minimal midterm score for passing the exam.

Best Practices (if applicable):

-

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

        ☐ Complies with requirements

        ☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

        ☐ Partially complies with requirements

        ☐ Does not comply with requirements

4. Staff of the HEI

HEI ensures that the staff employed in the institution (academic, scientific, invited, administrative, support) are highly qualified, so that they are able to effectively manage educational, scientific and administrative processes and achieve the goals defined by the strategic plan of the institution. On its hand, the institution constantly provides its staff with professional development opportunities and improved work conditions.

4.1. Staff Management

- o HEI has staff management policy and procedures that ensure the implementation of educational process and other activities defined in its strategic plan.
- o HEI ensures the employment of qualified academic/scientific/invited/administrative/ support staff.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The university has up to date regulations and descriptions of the processes on the basis of which the institution manages its human resources. The institution has staff planning guide, management regulations, statute for the personnel and the Honour Code. All are elaborate documents which pinpoint the expectations UG has towards its staff members, both permanent and temporary alike. The institution uses diversified staff search methods, takes active steps in recruiting talent, and provides new hires with onboarding assistance and orientation programme. Its entry level positions are open exclusively to UG students and alumni.

UG has a variety of contract types used when it decides to enter into contractual relations with the newly appointed staff members, both academic and administrative. The institution has a system of sabbatical leave implying an extended period of absence from work. However, the panel was unable to establish the frequency of its use. Nor was the panel able to meet with a single staff member that had benefited from the system in the past. Also, when meeting with the panel, staff members gave different accounts of the meaning and implications of sabbatical leave. The UG has a well-structured human capital development office at the central level with a highly motivated and visionary head. Even so, the panel had an impression that the capacity and capability of the unit is not fully utilized at the faculty/departmental level.

The SER and supporting documents submitted for review also include formal documents detailing statistical data about the staff including the number of academic, invited and administrative staff, the gender distribution, ratio of the academic and support staff as well as the student-staff ratio. In addition, it provides information about the staff retention and shows that the UG has a core of dedicated staff that are highly devoted to the institution and many are on board from the very early days of the institution's establishment. Staff feel that top management is easily approachable. The submitted material also includes documents related to the affiliation and as well as sample contract types with the affiliated and non-affiliated staff of the UG. Contract drafts provided clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the contracting sides.

Decision Making

UG has a complex administrative structure with a top-down **approach** of management and a lot of power concentrated within the Presidents, the General Assembly, and the Rector. This may be feasible for a small institution, however, with the UG's declared ambition to grow and internationalize, it could make use of more distributive and inclusive leadership and thus allow easier decision-making process. Delegating not only operational processes, but decisions to the key staff will save valuable time of the Rector that can be used to continue focusing more on strategy.

The information on the inclusive and shared approach used by the top management while elaborating the strategic development plan and the subsequent action plan was evident in some but not all meetings with the faculty members.

Staff Development Plan
The panel learned about various initiatives to familiarize staff with concepts such as student-centred learning and teaching, problem-based learning, and other innovations in education. Even so, the panel feels that a more structural approach is needed based on a staff development plan. At the current stage, the identification of need for a staff development as well as the process itself is left as an individual initiative of the staff. With a solid human capital development unit, a more structural and carefully planned approach seems to be easily attainable in case necessary resources are devoted to it.

Also, the panel suggests considering a separate and mandatory training programme covering state-of-the-art methodologies tailored to various disciplines and specific needs. Structural alignment between intended learning outcomes, the teaching and learning environment, and students' assessment is the guiding principle for any such training programme. UG could also consider introducing a special teaching certificate for staff members who have successfully gone through such training. As already mentioned under standard 3, staff with the latest didactical knowhow can help modernising the educational programmes in more than one way (design, content, assessment et cetera).

Lastly, the panel was made aware of the existence of separate budgetary items at faculty/ departmental level for staff development. According to the 2021 budget, less than 1% of the total expenses is allocated for staff development and well-being. Even with this modest budget, it was not clear to the panel if such a resource is routinely used for its initial purpose (training and retraining staff). To the university's advantage, the budget for training purposes needs to be increased in accordance with UG's goals for staff development. The SER also mentions that more investments are needed but this is not reflected in the budget presented (see also under standard 7).

English Proficiency

During the interviews, the panel could not but notice that many staff members are lacking in English proficiency. Given the international setting and the international ambitions of the university, it is advisable to increase the training efforts and/or apply stricter criteria for new staff members. The same applies to PhD candidates who are employed by the university. The panel even noticed that some attendees were reluctant to speak English although they proved to be fluent in the language. In an international peer review, this is not the type of attitude conducive for a good understanding. The panel, therefore, supports UG's efforts in that area of improvement as referred to in the SER. This is particularly crucial given the UG's heavy focus on increasing international student body on its campus. It is also of critical value for the institution's aspiration of boosting its research profile; being well versed in English will undoubtedly be advantageous for the UG faculty and staff in accessing the information and developments within their fields of study and research as well as their participation in international networks.

Evidence/indicators

Result staff evaluation in the Evaluation Report 2019

UG Bylaw

UG Management Regulations

UG Honor Code

Personnel Planning Guide

Personnel Statute

Recommendations:

ST 4 – Formalise the training of staff with a clear focus on educational skills. Make educational courses mandatory, more intensive and personalised.

ST 4 – Set institutional expectations toward staff in advance and share it with staff; make necessary resources available to achieve the expectations by each and every staff member.

ST 4 – Make training in the assessment of practical skills using different methods compulsory for invited staff (doctors) in medical education.

ST 4 – Ensure that the staff performance evaluation and satisfaction surveys are carried out on regular basis and the results are carefully analysed and used as a tool to further advance the university's overall performance.

Suggestions:

ST 4 – Contemplate introducing a special teaching certificate for staff members with a focus on educational or didactical skills.

ST 4 – Keep investing in the training of English proficiency of the staff.

ST 4 – Ensure that the capacity and capability of the human capital development unit at the faculty/departmental level is used to its full potential.

ST 4 – Clarify the various options to take a sabbatical and encourage staff members more actively to apply and make good use of the opportunity for self-development.

Best Practices:

ST 4 – UG offers a variety of supportive services to its staff such as an effective online staff management system and a well-well planned human capital development unit.

ST 4 – UG manages retention of young generation in many key positions.

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

4.2. Academic/Scientific and Invited Staff Workload

Number and workload of academic/scientific and invited staff is adequate to HEI's educational programmes and scientific-research activities, and also other functions assigned to them

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

UG has academic and invited staff. The staff planning guideline provides a detailed account of the university's approach to staffing policy. The university uses the four distinctive principles as the basis of its staff management: systematic approach, flexibility, resouce provision and diversity. Taking into account UG's ambitions to grow nationally and internationally, the panel finds these principles to be of great value in achieving the goals UG has set to itself.

Aligned with the existing national regulations, UG has affiliated and non-affiliated staff members. Some of the academic staff define UG as their primary HEI and sign corresponding affiliation agreements. Affiliation terms and conditions are written out in a formal agreement between the academic staff and the university. The number and workload of academic and scientific staff are calculated using an algorithm of the "online UG" and it is made sure that the workload allows for a smooth implementation of educational programmes, and proper fulfilment of duties assigned to staff. While the UG bylaw allows the possibility of holding more than one position within the university (personnel statute, article X.2), it was made clear to the panel that in cases when a staff member has two or more parallel positions, the maximum possible overall weekly workload of 40 hours is considered as the cap.

During the site visit, the panel had a chance to meet with academic staff of UG on several occasions, elected faculty member as well as invited lecturers seemed to be satisfied with their workload, working conditions and general atmosphere in the institution is positive and nurtures enthusiasm. Moreover, the Employee Satisfaction Questionnaire carried out in 2020 shows that the majority of the institution's staff are satisfied with their job; most seem to be particularly satisfied with the freedom to use their own judgement and try their own methods. Even so, the panel encourages the university to establish both a formal procedure for complaints (see under standard 2) and an informal and safe procedure for dealing with work-related issues (see under standard 5).

The invited lecturers have considerable independence in planning the content of their courses and feel involved in the overall management of the academic programme they are invited to. The invited staff have same level of access to the UG's online staff management portal and the newcomers are offered induction training when joining the institution; while a new hire is onboarding, s/he receives personalized support from the Human Capital Development Service, the introductory trainings are compulsory for the newly recruited.

UG positions itself as a private university with an ambition to advance scientific knowledge for the benefit of humanity. From the early days of foundation, it supports research in several academic fields, the results of which it is particularly proud of (e.g. archaeology). With the current edition of the strategic development plan, UG puts special emphasis on boosting its research profile for which it has assigned budgetary means. The panel found that many of the interviewed staff members are aware of the UG's ambitions with regard to increasing research output and the funding available for these purposes. The panel supports the increased focus on research for multiple reasons as will be further discussed under standard 6.

Evidence/indicators

Component evidence/indicators including the relevant documents, interview results, etc.

UG Bylaw

UG Management Regulations

UG Honor Code

Personnel Planning Guide

Personnel Statute

Recommendations:

-

Suggestions:
-

Best Practices:
ST 4 – UG offers favourable working conditions and takes action to guarantee a good work-life balance of its staff
ST 4 – Newly recruited staff members are offered induction trainings.

Evaluation
Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard
☒ **Complies with requirements**   ☐ Substantially complies with requirements   ☐ Partially complies with requirements   ☐ Does not comply with requirements

5. Students and Their Support Services

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

5.1. The Rule for Obtaining and Changing Student Status, the Recognition of Education, and Student Rights
o   For each of the educational levels, HEI has developed regulations for assignment, suspension and termination of student status, mobility, qualification granting, issuing educational documents as well as recognition of education received during the learning period.   o   HEI ensures the protection of student rights and lawful interests.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements
The university has developed a rule for obtaining, suspending and terminating student status, mobility, awarding qualifications and recognition of education, which is transparent, fair, in accordance with applicable law and available to all students and other stakeholders in Georgian and English. The official website of the University of Georgia, along with various documents, contains: bachelor's, master's, doctoral and management regulations, which ensure that the above procedures are conducted in accordance with the law. The panel sees that these procedures are implemented and the students are aware of them.   Administrative-technical issues related to the study at the Student University are managed by the Educational Process Administration Service. Recognition of mobility and education received at other institutions also defines the involvement of the programme director.   In addition to the contract, the relationship between the university and the student is governed by internal university regulations, including the Code of Honor and the Statute. Both are available to interested parties. Students have the opportunity to receive explanations about the rights and responsibilities defined by the contract, to attend the orientation days and to receive information in the form of a guide through the information journal.   Mechanisms defined by the statute and other regulatory documents are in place at the University to respond to violations or alleged violations of students' rights and legitimate interests. Also, the mechanisms for appealing the results of the mid-term evaluation and final exam through "My UG" portal are defined.   The panel assesses that the mechanisms of obtaining and changing student status, the recognition of education, and protection of student rights are well implemented at the university.
Evidence/indicators

| Samples of the contract between the HEI and the student |
| Regulations for undergraduate education |
| Regulations for postgraduate studies |
| Doctoral regulations |
| Questionnaire and analysis |
| Code of Honor |
| Internal regulations |
| Management regulations |
| online.ug.edu.ge; ug.edu.ge; my.ug.edu.ge |

Recommendations:

-

Suggestions:

-

Best Practices (if applicable):

-

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☒ **Complies with requirements**

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

5.2 Student Support Services

- o HEI has student consulting services in order to plan educational process and improve academic performance
- o HEI has career support service, which provides students with appropriate counselling and support regarding employment and career development
- o HEI ensures students awareness and involvement in various university-level, local and international projects and events, and supports student initiatives
- o HEI has mechanisms, including financial mechanisms to support low SES students

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

There are various counseling and support services available to students at UG to plan their study process and improve their academic achievement. These services are provided by the Office of Study Process Administration, the schools, and the academic staff.

The university has career support services through which students can receive advice and support on employment and career development. Information about internships and vacancies is posted on the portal "My UG" and on the university website. This can be used by all students and graduates seeking employment. The university provided the information about the conducted trainings and workshops to promote the career advancement and improvement of the employment skills of students and graduates. In addition, the self-evaluation reports states that the university periodically hosts employment forums where representatives of potential employers participate. However, the interviews with students showed that majority of them could not recall when it was held last time or what was their involvement in such events.

UG students are given the opportunity to participate in exchange programmes, information about which is available on the university's official sources. In addition, information about local and international projects, conferences and studies is published on the university website. All students can participate according to the competition conditions of a specific programme or project. However, the interviews

with the students have revealed that not all of them were fully aware of these possibilities or procedures to use them.

The university promotes the active involvement of students in cultural and sports activities. UG has a system of student clubs. Students have the opportunity to unite around a common interest and form a student club through which they can promote topics of interest to them, organize events, and more. The club can apply to the university to fund its activities. For more support of the club system, a "star system" has been introduced, which means the possibility of increasing financial resources for active clubs. In addition to encouraging group activities, the university also promotes the implementation of individual ideas.

The university takes into account the social status of the students and allows them to draw up a flexible schedule for paying tuition fees. If a student is not able to pay the tuition fee on time due to a socio-economic problem, he/she is given the opportunity to apply to the Social Affairs Commission and write an adjusted payment schedule, which is reviewed by the commission based on the student's academic performance. The University has provided statistics on applications approved by the Social Commission in recent academic years. In addition, there are financial incentive and scholarship mechanisms for same family members, students with high academic achievement and successful students in various competitions. The interviews with the students and other persons involved in these procedures showed that the financial support mechanisms are well-implemented, and the students are aware of these possibilities.

Student Representation

The panel finds that the formal representation of students in official bodies and committees at the level of the university, the schools and the individual programmes needs revision. It seems students are members of some bodies, but their role is unclear, and their impact is limited. The panel, therefore, strongly advises reconsidering the formal status of this students' representation at all levels. It would be an interesting idea, for example, to invite students as full members of the programme board to guarantee their input and their impact. The students' voice is essential for quality enhancement and helps to further develop a quality culture.

Students should also be trained in their representative capacity. Co-operation with national and international students' organisations, and student bodies from other universities might help UG students gaining a better insight in the various opportunities. The university might encourage and facilitate these contacts.

Mentorship

During the meeting with the panel, students found it hard to differentiate between tutors and mentors. Also, the SER refers to mentors in a different meaning than what the panel implies. A student mentor can be very helpful for junior students solving practical issues. Especially new students will welcome the idea and benefit from the experience of their peers who once were also new students. Usually, senior students will act as mentors on a voluntary basis and can offer individual support and help their younger peers with the management of their studies. The university, however, should set up a system for matching mentors and students. Especially, first-year students can benefit from peer mentorship.

Ombudsperson

The panel learned that UG has no ombudsperson although this is common practice in (western) higher education institutions. When meeting with the panel, students appeared not to be familiar with the function. As an impartial intermediary official, an ombudsperson provides a safe, comfortable, and confidential setting for students and staff to address issues related to study or work. Especially students might run into problems within the university which are not properly dealt with. To them it is reassuring to know that they can apply to the ombudsperson for help. An ombudsperson offers informal and independent services for problem solving. Two recent developments – #metoo and Covid-19 – have prompted many organisations including universities to increase the efforts. The panel, therefore, strongly encourages the university to create this organisational function.

Previously, under standard 2, the panel already suggested developing a complaint procedure for both students and staff. This would be a formal procedure as opposed to and complementary to the informal function of an ombudsman.

Overall, the university has the well-defined student support services, however, the university has to ensure full implementation of these procedures, particularly, students' awareness about them. Also, with reference to international good practice, the panel encourages UG to step up the efforts and further invest in the general welfare of its students. This can be done through better student representation, student mentorship and an ombudsperson for informal and impartial help.

Evidence/indicators

Student system "My UG"

University website - ug.edu.ge.

Job descriptions of relevant services

Activities carried out by the Center for Employment and Career Development

Activities carried out by schools

Student Affairs Regulations

Memoranda and international agreements

Internal regulations

Management regulations

Interviews with students, alumni, and administration

Recommendations:

ST 5 – Ensure full implementation of the student support services, particularly, students' awareness about them.

Suggestions:

ST 5 – Revise and reorganise the formal status of students' representation at all levels to guarantee maximal impact on the quality of the teaching and learning process.

ST 5 – Encourage and facilitate the co-operation with other students' organisations and bodies, both in Georgia and abroad, for a better understanding of UG students' representation.

ST 5 – Introduce a system of student mentors to the benefit of especially first-year students.

ST 5 – Create the organisational function of an ombudsperson as an impartial intermediary official who offers informal and independent help for problem solving in a safe and comfortable environment.

Best Practices:

ST 5 – UG students the panel met during the evaluation procedure were mostly satisfied with the student support services provided for at present.

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

      ☐ Complies with requirements

      ☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

      ☐ Partially complies with requirements

     ☐ Does not comply with requirements

6. Research, development and/or other creative work

Higher Education Institution, considering its type and specifics of field(s), works on the strengthening of its research function, ensures proper conditions to support research activities and improve the quality of research activities

6.1 Research Activities

- o HEI, based on its type and specifics of its fields, carries out research/creative activities.
- o Ensuring the effectiveness of doctoral research supervision
- o HEI has public, transparent and fair procedures for the assessment and defense of dissertations which are relevant to the specifics of the field

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The expansion of scientific-research activities is defined as one of the strategic goals for 2020 in the 7-year Strategic Plan. According to the Mission and Strategic Development Plan of UG, the university's aim is to expand scientific-research activities to be the most innovative university in Georgia, as a School and research institution. However, it should be mentioned that UG has not presented the document of R&D strategy, where can be defined more detailed main directions of the scientific-research development.

The university has a scientific-research institute, which coordinates the current and implemented scientific research activities at the University, whose tasks are to: a) Organize and promote scientific-research activities at the University; b) To promote modern knowledge and quality-oriented research at the University and to integrate it with the educational process; c) Institutional cooperation with international and local organisations, as well as governmental and non-governmental, commercial and non-commercial organisations and diplomatic missions et cetera.

UG carries out scientific-research activities in exact, natural sciences, engineering, medicine, as well as humanities and social sciences. Research is carried out by both schools and the scientific-research units of the university. UG has 9 research centres engaged in many research projects. According to the SER, the number of researches conducted within the latest authorization period and ongoing researches are 148.

UG periodicals include the following scientific journals: Caucasus Journal of Social Sciences; Caucasus Journal of Health Sciences; Journal "Archeology". The editorial board of the Caucasus Journal of Social Sciences is international. In 2019, the University of Georgia has published about 20 books and periodicals.

The International Center of Archeology operating, which was founded in 2013, deserves special mention. This centre is working intensively on archeological and interdisciplinary research in the historic former town of ''Samshvilde''. Through this project, the university contributes to the scientific and cultural development of the country at the regional level.

The university also has laboratories, independent research Institutes to implement various educational programmes and research. During the various interviews, the panel learned that doctoral and master's projects are implemented based within various research institutes/centres of the university. Also, publications of the academic staff are reflected in training courses. However, the integration of scientific research in the educational process as a strategic development goal is not clearly defined by UG.

Doctoral Programmes

The university has 11 (eleven) Doctoral programmes and during the last authorization period (2014-2020) 31 dissertations were defended. There are 83 active PhD students and 110 PhD students with suspended status. The ratio of the number of supervisors and doctoral students is 1/2, the target benchmark for 2027 is 1/4. As mentioned, the dissertation defense indicator is 31, which is somewhat low.

The functions and responsibilities of the doctoral supervisors are also clearly stated (described in the Provision on Doctoral Studies and job-description). The supervisor determines the direction of the research of the doctoral student, monitors the research results and the dissertation, provides consultations on research methods and data analysis, and together with the doctoral student reviews his/her research results and articles. To ensure the efficiency of the doctoral research supervision in connection with each doctoral research, a Scientific Advisory Board is formed.

The individual workload of the academic and research staff is determined by the workload scheme for the academic year and includes Scientific-research activities, Consultations. Scientific-research activities include the Inclusion of master's and Doctoral students in the research and guide them by providing an individual lecture-seminar. It should be mentioned that there is no limit how many doctoral students with active status may be supervised by the scientific supervisor.

UG has public, transparent, and fair procedures for the evaluation and defense of the dissertation according to the specificity of the field, which are described in the regulations of the Doctoral Studies and its annexes. The defense of the dissertation is carried out at the session of the Dissertation Defense Committee. The dissertation will be assessed confidentially by this Committee according to a 100-point

scale. Some selected PhD theses that were provided by the university showed variations in the level of scientific achievement and originality.

PhD Candidates

Opinions vary on the most appropriate terminology: PhD students or PhD candidates. In the western world of academia, the term PhD candidates would be more common. The Georgian law, however, refers to doctoral students and so do all UG documents. To avoid confusion, especially in international contacts, the panel suggests delineating the status of PhD candidates versus PhD students taking into account what is internationally accepted.

Defining Research

On several occasions, the panel found discrepancies about students' involvement in research and about the notion of research itself. These inconsistencies are not conducive for a good understanding of the university's aims and objectives for research. Indeed, many interviewees referred to practical work and applied sciences when asked about their involvement in research activities. It might well be that UG differentiates between fundamental or scientific research and applied research depending on the field of discipline and the educational programme or project. If that is the case, the university should be clear about it. In doing so, UG can avoid misunderstandings and disappointments from both staff and students, and ultimately employers.

Dublin Descriptors

Research is part of the Bologna process, and therefore part of every European framework. The Dublin Descriptors clearly state that students upon completion of the first cycle (Bachelor) should be able to analyse and interpret data, and communicate – that is, write reports such as a bachelor's thesis – about the findings. These students should also be prepared for more complex research activities at the master's level.

Seen from an international perspective, the panel expects UG to comply with these regulations, even if they are not explicitly mentioned in the standards for the present evaluation. The Law of Georgia on Higher Education (article 43), however, states that "students shall have the right to participate in scientific research". Article 48 continues this line of thought and specifies the purpose of a bachelor's programme: "to deepen the knowledge of theoretical aspects of academic disciplines in order to ensure the training of persons through research programmes" et cetera. Also, the Higher Education Qualifications Framework of Georgia states that the learning outcomes relevant to the first cycle of higher education include applying knowledge, meaning "the ability to carry out research and practical projects under predetermined directions". There can be no doubt about the compulsory research component in the curriculum, also at bachelor's level. The panel learned that not all students take the courses on research which are offered at bachelor's level (e.g., Academic Writing, Quantitative Research Methods, and Qualitative Research Methods). It remained unclear whether all students write abstracts and a bachelor's theses.

The panel strongly supports the university's future investments in research – see also under standard 7 – but would like to reiterate that all students should be involved in research. All students means all bachelor and master students, and this within the regular curriculum, not extracurricular on a voluntary basis. Every university combines education and research because no higher education can exist without research. Therefore, each single programme should include a research line across the length of the programme, preferably starting with a course in basic research methodology in year one.

Lastly, the SER identified the involvements of students (also in undergraduate studies) in research projects and conferences as one of the strengths. The panel recognizes the importance of their participation but expects nothing less. However, the interviews with students and academic staff could not provide sufficient evidence for this statement. The university will have to make significant efforts in this direction, especially at the undergraduate level.

Medical Education

Going over the medical programmes, the panel established that research is part of the curriculum. During the meetings with students, the panel learned that they are not actively engaged in research activities. Also, the publication of research papers is not yet common practice. With reference to the Medicine Sector Benchmarks of Higher Education (2017), all students from year one should be engaged in scientific research and activities. Field-specific competences include research activities in all stages

of the six-year curriculum. WFME has similar requirements for basic medical education. The panel recommends reviewing the medical programme to ensure that research and research activities are fully integrated in the curriculum. The medical teaching staff who are well-trained in curriculum design and who are also researchers should be involved in this analysis and revision. They are also of great value as role models in research matters for the medical students.

The university partially complies with substandard 6.1 on research activities given its ambitions and areas of improvements. A more structural approach is needed for a truly integrated approach involving all students and staff members.

Evidence/indicators

Law of Georgia on Higher Education

Higher Education Qualifications Framework of Georgia

Medicine Sector Benchmarks of Higher Education (2017)

The Mission of the University of Georgia

Strategic Development Plan of the University of Georgia (2020-2027);

Provision of the Scientific-Research Institute of the University of Georgia;

Annex # 1 of the Provision of the Scientific Research Institute (award procedure

Provision of Doctoral Studies of the University of Georgia

Academic staff workload scheme

List of current Doctoral students and Supervisors of the University of Georgia

PhD and Master theses

Interviews Results

Website of Ug

Recommendations:

ST 6 – Ensure that research methodology and research activities are mandatory for all students from year one, also in medical education.

ST 6 – Differentiate, if need be, between fundamental (scientific) research and applied research.

ST 6 - Enable the broader involvement of students in the research activities of the university

ST 6 – Develop a research strategy and action plan.

ST 6 – Monitor the effectivenss of the scientic-research institute.

Suggestions:

ST 6 – Delineate the status of PhD candidates versus PhD students taking into account what is internationally accepted.

Best Practices:

ST 6 – Increasingly more funds become available for research purposes.

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☐ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☒ **Partially complies with requirements**

☐ Does not comply with requirements

6.2. Research Support and Internationalization

- o HEI has an effective system in place for supporting research, development and creative activities
- o Attracting new staff and their involvement in research/arts-creative activities.
- o University works on internationalization of research, development and creative activities.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

UG have developed regulations in order to create the basis for supporting research (e.g. - Annex # 13 to the Doctoral Studies Provision - Rule for Issuing Grant, awarding prizes). It is also important that the Doctoral student of the University of Georgia is eligible to receive a grant to fund the activities that make up the research components, but this right has a Doctoral student whose annual tuition fee is GEL 3000 and more. However, the rule for issuing grant is very general and not transparent.

The university aims at increasing the scientific motivation and output of its academic staff. UG introduced new approaches to scientific development including bonuses for high-quality scientific publications. The university has established an Award for Scientific Publication. In 2018-2020, about 32 people used this bonus system. However, only a few research projects were funded at the University of Georgia under the Internal Grants Programme till 2014. According to the SER, at this stage, UG plans to issue internal grants and support projects again. For this purpose, each department has already submitted its project to the Scientific Research Institute.

It should be noted that UG offers financial support to the affiliated academic staff for the implementation of the research project of the School/department/programme, which he/she has submitted within the competition, announced for holding an academic position. In addition, affiliated staff can use financial incentives for the publication of scientific papers and reimbursement of the costs for publishing a scientific paper. Interview results show that academic staff are familiar with this supporting system and uses it.

The budget allocated includes the development of scientific infrastructure (archeological infrastructure, development of infrastructure for chemistry and biology laboratories) as well as scientific research, scientific trips / conferences, remuneration of scientific workers and scientific research projects. Research is appropriately financed in UG (see standard 7.4) and spending for research and development of research infrastructure has been constantly increasing for the last five years. This is in accordance with reports presented by university. According to the strategic development plan (2020-2027), every year in 2020-2027, at least 100,000 GEL will be allocated from the Central Budget of the University for the disposal of the Academic Council, which will be used to finance the selected project applications. So, UG is paying great attention to increasing scientific motivation and supporting research, development and creative activities, but it the important that the institution consistently and systematically supports research at all levels of university life.

The initiative taken by the University in recent years is significant in terms of attracting new staff. When announcing a vacancy, the contestant is evaluated according to the criteria established by law (basic) and university (additional) criteria. A crucial role is given to the applicant's submission of a research project and in this case the academic staff is provided with more chance to fill the announced vacancy. However, there is a lack of a structured and well-thought-out strategy of attracting especially young researchers in order to ensure solid and sustainable research.

One of the strategic aims of UG is "Internationalization of teaching and scientific-research activities''. For internationalisation of research/development/creative activities, UG is engaged in several initiatives. As the SER and interview results have shown, UG carries out a variety of activities for the internationalisation of research. Nevertheless, it is important to increase the rate of participation in international collaborations towards UG research priorities and also increase student involvement. The international direction needs to be intensified and deepened. It is a positive sign that the university has recognized this deficiency and noted it in the SWOT analysis as a matter for improvement.

PhD theses that were provided by the UG showed that the university supports joint supervision practices by international and local professors. UG also plans to support creating joint master's and PhD programmes. Also, UG can strengthen support supervision practices by international and local professors.

The university substantially complies with substandard 6.2. Again, a more structural and integrated approach is called for, also for international cooperation in research.

Evidence/indicators

Strategic Development Plan of the University of Georgia (2020-2027)

Annex # 1 of the Provision of the Scientific Research Institute (award procedure);

Annex # 13 to the Doctoral Studies Provision - Rule for Issuing Grant

International research projects implemented by the Schools of the University of Georgia;

List of international conferences organized by the University of Georgia

Budget of the University of Georgia

Interviews Results

PhD theses

Recommendations:

ST 6 – Develop transparent procedures with clear criteria for selecting and funding research projects and other research activities.
ST 6 – Broaden the international connections in (at least some) fields of its research.
ST 6 – Increase the number of UG researchers taking part in international events and staying at partner universities to further integrate international components.

Suggestions:

ST 6 – Support consistently and systematically research at all levels of university life.
ST 6 – Review the university's strategy of attracting young researchers for participating in the research projects.
ST 6 – Support supervision practices by international and local professors at all levels.

Best Practices (if applicable):

-

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

6.3. Evaluation of Research Activities

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

UG has set and formalized evaluation criteria for scientific research performance (''Scientific staff productivity assessment system'', approved by the Academic Council, 2019). The UG evaluation system of the research activity includes the evaluation of the research activities of the academic staff. However, the evaluation of the research results of the research centres is not explained in the documentation. There is no specific procedure for evaluating the centres.

The process of evaluation of scientific-research activities is led by the Scientific Commission of the University of Georgia Scientific Institute. Scientific productivity of the personal is determined by the number of academic papers and the impact factor of papers. Priority is given to publishing scientific articles in journals that are featured in the world's leading international scientific databases - Scopus and Web of Science. An additional tool for the university is evaluation of papers and citations listed in Google Scholar. UG uses evaluation results to encourage the staff's engagement in research activities. (e.g., through financial support). The university has clearly defined indicators for evaluating the productivity of research activities, though it is not clear how UG determines the coefficients in the system of individual assessment of academic staff. It is interesting, the dynamics of the number of articles in highly cited journals, which shows the growing tendency in the last two years compared to previous years.

The panel noted that the academic staff uses the internal system of Online UG for recording their scientific activities (publication, conference, project). Also, one of the mechanisms for evaluating academic staff is the attestation, which is held at the University.

Evidence/indicators

Scientific staff productivity assessment system

Website of UG

Interviews Results

Recommendations:

ST 6 – Encourage and enable staff, PhD candidates and even master students to publish more regularly on research activities and outcomes in international peer-reviewed journals.

Suggestions:

ST 6 – Evaluate the quality of research activities of academic staff using both criteria/indicators and coefficients assigned to each activity.

ST 6 – Introduce a specific procedure for evaluating the UG research centres.

Best Practices (if applicable):

-

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

7. Material, Information and Financial Resources

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

7.1 Material Resources

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

UG owns or leases buildings and spaces for teaching and research activities. The main building as well as the medical clinics are located at the central district of the Georgian capital and are wholly owned by the UG. The main building has all necessary facilities to conduct studies and research. It has 6 stories and was renovated with a loan received from the US Government Agency - OPIC in 2011 (this loan is fully repaid now). Lecture auditoriums, library, archeological museum, computer classes and examination centres as well as UG's administrative offices and offices of some subsidiaries and laboratories are all located in the main building.

All the buildings of the university have natural light and heating-cooling system. To ensure continuation of business in case of power cuts UG has a diesel generator. Health and safety of staff and students are

protected in all buildings of the university. The buildings are equipped with smoke detectors. Emergency escape plans and firefighting equipment (fire extinguishers) are properly deployed on the walls.

To prevent the spread of Covid 19, UG implements the recommendations made by the Ministry of Health of Georgia. Disinfection facilities with appropriate information materials can be found at many locations in the buildings. At the entrance of the main buildings, the panel observed a wheelchair ramp.

UG maintains a detailed register of all movable property (IT, medical and laboratory equipment, furniture and fixtures, automobiles) which is periodically updated.

Medical Education

The university also owns a building near the headquarters in which the university health clinic is located. The clinic contains well equipped teaching and practice spaces for medical students. In the same building there is UG dental. This clinic has state of art dental equipment as well the rooms for practice of dental students.

The panel established that UG has invested considerably in the facilities for medical education such as an anatomy lab and a dental clinic simulation lab with fantoms. Also, a clinical skills lab is operational with different mannequins for acquiring different skills such as CPR, injections, lumbar puncture, gynaecological exam and so on within the School of Medicine.

Evidence/indicators
State registry records
Long term lease contracts and other agreements
External auditor's reports for years 2016-2019
UG budgets for years 2020 and 2021

Recommendations:
-

Suggestions:
ST 7 – Develop a policy plan to accommodate students with special needs and to guarantee their inclusion in UG education. Also, make this information easily and publicly accessible.

Best Practices:
ST 7 – At present, the university's financial situation is stable, and UG seems to take proper precautions to continue this sound status. It also allows UG to increase investments in infrastructure.
ST 7 – The university boasts attractive and functional facilities.
ST 7 – UG has invested considerably in the facilities for medical education.

Evaluation
Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard
☐ x **Complies with requirements**
☐ Substantially complies with requirements
☐ Partially complies with requirements
☐ Does not comply with requirements

7.2. Library Resources
Library environment, resources and service support effective implementation of educational and research activities, and HEI constantly works for its improvement.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements
UG has two library halls in buildings 1 and 4. It also uses the presidential library located adjacent to the main building. UG cooperates with the State Public Library to help its staff and students to find some specific editions. Library rules are detailed in the Library Statute. University staff and students as well as outsiders can use the UG library services. UG students are automatically registered at the library after enrollment. Outsiders as well as alumni must purchase a library card to have access to the library

materials. Library working hours are from 9:00 to 21:00 on weekdays and Saturday, and from 10:00 to 18:00 on Sunday.

The panel established that the UG library is well equipped with computers, printers, and copiers. All library spaces have access to the internet. Visitors of the library can search for books and articles and print or copy selected material in the library space. The library has spaces for group work.

UG staff and students can search and order electronic copy of library materials from outside the campus online from webpage ug.edu.ge/public/library.

UG maintains an extensive catalogue of its printed editions, electronic books, and teaching materials. According to the catalogue in UG libraries there are more than 40.000 books, about 4.000 electronic books and in addition teaching materials. The catalogue can be accessed from the UG internal net as well from the UG webpage.

UG is connected with several international library networks: EBSCO, Cambridge Journal, JSTOR, Hein Online and HinariResearch4Life. The university presented agreements with these databases and prove of payment of subscription fees.

The SER states that the library constantly purchase new books to ensure that it has all books and materials mentioned in syllabi of the university programmes. Purchase of new books is automatically requested every time a new subject and its syllabus are introduced and registered in the UG online system. Also, UG constantly maintains statistics of the usage of its books and electronic databases.

All in all, the panel is satisfied with the library facilities and services offered to both UG staff and students, and the general public. Even so, the panel suggests subscribing to more international databases given the university's ambitions in a variety of (research) disciplines.

Evidence/indicators

UG webpage

Library Statute and other procedures

Electronic Catalogue

Interviews and actions completed during site visit

Recommendations:

-

Suggestions:

ST 7 – Subscribe to more international databases in line with the university's ambitions in a variety of (research) disciplines.

Best Practices (if applicable):

-

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

      ☒ **Complies with requirements**

      ☐ Substantially complies with requirements

      ☐ Partially complies with requirements

      ☐ Does not comply with requirements

7.3 Information Resources

- o HEI has created infrastructure for information technologies and its administration and accessibility are ensured
- o Electronic services and electronic management systems are implemented and mechanisms for their constant improvement are in place
- o HEI ensures business continuity
- o HEI has a functional webpage in Georgian and English languages.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Information Infrastructure

Information technology infrastructure within UG ensures the successful implementation of the teaching and research process. UG's main website is https://www.ug.edu.ge/. UG owns about twenty other web domains for its various subsidiaries, projects, centres, and laboratories. All students and staff of UG have a personal e-mail address.

UG developed and implements Policies and Procedures for the Management of IT. According to this document, the IT system in UG is managed by 4 units, namely: Infrastructure Development Service, Database Development Service, Web Technology Development Service, and IT Academy. All these units are under supervision of a Vice Rector, who is responsible for communicating and presenting innovations to UG top managements and initiation and implementation of the new IT systems.

In support of the administrative and teaching processes, UG developed an electronic case management and training process management system. This system assists both academic and administrative staff to perform nearly all routine processes related to teaching and administrative processes within UG electronically.

UG has hundreds of computers, printers, copiers, and other IT equipment. About half of the computers are used for teaching purposes. All teaching spaces and laboratories are equipped with computers. In the medical school we observed a large state of art computer which simulates the human body. UG has working spaces furnished with computers at several locations on campus.

My UG and Online UG

UG has a comprehensive online system for students as well. Both international and local students can use this system to register to courses, access to lectures and exams schedules and materials, track performance, participate in student activities and surveys, communicate with lecturers et cetera.

The SER explains that the learning and management platform "My UG" and "Online UG" was created by the IT service of the university. Both have multiple functions, one of which is to conduct the study process interactively in the university. During the evaluation procedure, the panel had access to the platform My UG. It was impressed with the various possibilities the platform offers and the practicality of the system to both students and staff. The panel considers this good practice as the current system is efficient and the IT department can assure its constant improvement tailored to meet UG requirements.

Business Continuity

To ensure business continuity during power cuts university has alternative power supply (diesel generator). Virtualization technologies are in place for daily backups of data on physical storage and cloud. UG has two alternative channels to connect to internet. Both connections are protected from hackers' attacks. Also, UG created a distant learning lab to facilitate online learning during the Covid–19 pandemic.

Website

UG has a website in English and Georgian languages. The English language version does not tantamount to the Georgian one. Providing that internationalisation and attraction of international students are strategic goals of the UG, the English version of the website should be enhanced to serve as a comprehensive source of information for prospective international students, staff, and other interested parties. Also, this group of external and international stakeholders is interested in different types of information such as policy documents (internationalisation, research, student-centred learning, students' assessment, education for students with special needs, internal and external quality assurance staff development), teaching staff, researchers, education and research activities, publications et cetera. It is always instructive to look for examples for inspiration on how to reach out to stakeholders.

Evidence/indicators

UG webpage library statute and other procedures, electronic catalog, interviews and actions completed during site visit.

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard
 	
  ☐ Fully complies with requirements
  ☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**
  ☐ Partially complies with requirements
  ☐ Does not comply with requirements

Recommendations:
ST 7 – Complete the university's website with all relevant documents (also in English) and make this information easily accessible especially for prospective students and staff members.

Suggestions:
-

Best Practices:
ST 7 – My UG and Online UG offer an attractive system to both students and staff with a multitude of functions such as monitoring study progress.

7.4 Financial Resources

- o Allocation of financial resources described in the budget of HEI is economically achievable
- o Financial standing of HEI ensures performance of activities described in strategic and mid-term action plans
- o HEI financial resources are focused on effective implementation of core activities of the institution
- o HEI budget provides funding for scientific research and library functioning and development
- o HEI has an effective system of accountability, financial management and control

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Two Presidents of UG who together own 82.5% stake in the university make the main financial decisions, based on the UG long term strategical goals. They are approving the annual budget and financial statements, and together with the Rector they are responsible for UG finances.

The university's financial department which is headed by a Vice Rector takes care of routine financial transactions and preparation of the financial reports.

UG has a policy of financial control and risk management. However, it does not have an internal audit department. This would be an additional line of defense and provides independent assurance that an organisation's risk management, governance and internal control processes are operating effectively.

The university claims that an internationally recognized audit company has audited UG since 2012. As evidence, UG submitted financial reports from 2016 to 2019 audited by Baker Tilly Georgia. This company is part of the Baker Tilly international network, which is in the list of the world's top 10 audit companies.

An analysis of the audited financial statements shows that UG is financially stable and has sufficient resources for future development. Even so, the financial risk connected to the reduction of revenues from international students due to the continuing Covid 19 pandemic should be closely monitored and proactively addressed.

According to the audited financial statements, UG assets, as well as revenues (99% of which are tuition fees) have been increasing for the last five years and according to the 2021 budget, these will continue to grow. Net profit of UG varies though but remains positive for most of the years.

Analyses of year 2021 budget shows that 93% of the revenues UG plans to receive from students studying at bachelor programmes and 6% from master and doctoral programmes. Almost 70% of the total revenues are expected to be received from the international students.

University has six schools, and each is making a positive contribution to the central budget. Almost 82% of the contributions comes from three schools: Health Science School (63%), Business and Administration Science School (10%) and Arts Science School (9%).

In 2021 operating expenses will constitute 69.3% of the total UG total cash expenses, while financing expenses (mostly servicing of the loans) will be 8.9% and UG investments 21.8% of total.

Research is appropriately financed in UG. Spending for research and development of research infrastructure has been constantly increasing for the last five years. It increased sharply in 2020 and is planned to increase further in 2021 reaching 5.8% of the total expense budget.

More than a quarter of the total expense in 2021 is allocated for the compensation of permanent and invited academic staff and 15% for administrative staff. Spending on staff development will be about 1% of the budget.

Overall, UG expect to increase its cash position in 2021 by 8.3 million GEL reaching more than 14 million GEL cash balance by the end of the year, which is about one third of UG's annual total revenues.

According to the audited financial report, UG has the number of wholly owned subsidiaries; some of those are registered at the same address as university. In 2021 UG plans to invest in 3 of them, namely UG Medical Ltd., UG Musical Academy and UG Books. In addition to these subsidiaries in 2021, the university plans to invest in teaching laboratories, land, new IT and other equipment, startups and UG camp.

The panel concludes that the financial situation of UG is currently healthy. UG has financial rules and procedures defining the financial structure and responsibilities for each unit within UG. Even so, the panel advises to establish an internal audit unit and to address the main financial risk of a possible decrease of international student fees due to the pandemic.

Evidence/indicators

UG years 2020 and 2021 budget, audited financial statements for years from 2016 through 2019, other financial statements, policy, and procedures for risk assessment of business processes and business continuity and plan to ensure business continuity, financial management and control rules.

Recommendations:

-

Suggestions:

ST 7 – Create an internal audit unit for monitoring independently UG's transactions and risks.

ST 7 – Enforce measures to mitigate the risk of possible loss of revenues from the international students due to Covid 19 pandemic.

ST 7 – Increase expenses on staff development.

Best Practices (if applicable):

-

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

⊠ **Complies with requirements**

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements