



განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

**Final Report on the request for Authorisation of the**  
**FREE UNIVERSITY OF TBILISI (FUT)**

**Panel Members**

Chair: Guy HAUG, Independent Expert in HE, France/Spain

Members:

Irma GRDZELIDZE, HERE Expert, Georgia

Tornike GURULI, Labour Market expert, Georgia

Giorgi KURDIANI, Student expert, Apolon Kutateladze Tbilisi Art Academy, Georgia

Rusudan SANADZE, Tbilisi State University, Georgia

Revaz SHANIDZE, Tbilisi State University, Georgia

## Authorization Report Summary

### General information on the educational institution

The Free University of Tbilisi (FUT) is a young university that was created under the umbrella of the Knowledge Fund, a charity organization that also runs FUT's sister institution, the Agrarian University, with whom it shares its campus in the outskirts of Tbilisi.

FUT consists of 8 "schools" (including its recent "Doctoral School") and 6 scientific internationally oriented scientific "centres" or "institutes". Some of these entities, like the Business School, the Institute for Asian and African Studies or the Centre for the Study of Arab countries and the Islamic world, pre-existed and became part of the University at the time of its creation in 2007.

FUT offers the following accredited study programmes:

#### Bachelor's Degree programmes:

- Business Administration
- Computer Science and Mathematics
- Electrical and Computer Engineering
- Law
- Management and Social Sciences
- International Relations
- Physics
- Architecture
- Visual Arts and Design

#### Master's Degree programmes

- Social Sciences (MSS)
- Business Law (LLM)
- Business Administration (MBA)
- Business Administration - Operational Management (MBA in OM)
- Natural Sciences, jointly with Agrarian University (MNS)

#### PhD Programmes

- Doctoral programme in Social and Human Sciences
- Doctoral programme in Natural Sciences, jointly with Agrarian University

In February 2018, the total number of students registered at the University was 2,100 at the Bachelor level, 316 at the Master level and 12 at the doctoral level. Among its distinctive features, FUT mentions its ambition to be a student-centred

university emphasizing liberal education in the Georgian language and an effective preparation for the labour market. Among its main achievements, FUT emphasizes the high level of its annual intake of undergraduate students in the Unified National Examination and the outstanding employment opportunities of its graduates.

## **Brief overview of the evaluation procedure for authorisation**

The Free University of Tbilisi is seeking the renewal of its authorisation that was first awarded from the academic year 2012-2013 and expires at the end of the academic year 2017-2018.

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) was received by the NCEQE on 14 March 2018. The evaluation panel was appointed on 5 April 2018 and consists of 6 members, including an international higher education expert as chair, and 5 Georgian members (3 academic experts, a labour market expert and a student expert).

While the SER and accompanying documents provided a good starting point, many points of information needed additional clarification and/or cross-checking before they could properly be interpreted and evaluated by panel members.

In this respect, the dense site visit that took place from 1 to 3 May 2018 proved to be very effective. It consisted of 25 interview sessions conducted by the evaluating panel with FUT's leadership, academic/scientific and administrative staff, students, alumni and external stakeholders (employers) and a campus visit. The practical organisation of the site visit was excellent. The timetable of interview sessions could be strictly respected, all invited persons took actually part, and in each session all members of the panel and all interviewees were involved in the debate. Interviews took place in an open and friendly atmosphere. They were generally in English, with translation from/into Georgian being provided as necessary.

Panel members were sorry not to have enough time in their timetable to listen to the Powerpoint presentation prepared by the Rector of FUT, but it requested the file in electronic format and gratefully received it. The panel could also request on site a few additional documents (such as contracts for academic staff, diploma supplement model, master theses, etc.) that it requested and were provided immediately.

The panel wishes to confirm that it had access to all the information it needed and that its evaluation is therefore based on sufficient relevant information, allowing it to reach reliable assessments of the University in each of the 7 dimensions required for Authorisation. It also wants to stress that the views of its different members were very convergent in the assessment of all key dimensions, which means that the conclusions shown in the present report reflect a very broad consensus between all its members.

## Summary of assessments

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

### Signature of expert panel members

1. Guy HAUG (Chair)
2. Irma GRDZELIDZE (Member)
3. Tornike GURULI (Member)
4. Giorgi KURDIANI (Member)
5. Rusudan SANADZE (Member)
6. Revaz SHANIDZE (Member)

## Summary of Best Practices

The panel was most impressed by 3 major achievements of the University, namely:

- FUT's clear vision of itself as a student-centred university in every respect: customised learning itineraries for students, learning of skills and competencies on top of knowledge, direct and open relationship of students with staff (academic and administrative), responsiveness to students' demands. This orientation towards students implies for the University a highly innovative, ground-breaking approach to teaching and learning and to internal management. It was also supported by a cautious and controlled growth strategy emphasising the need for quality and relevance rather than rapid expansion of intakes.
- The remarkable alignment of the university's whole staff and resources (including the Education Management Information System) with the profile of the university as outlined by the founder. The panel could not detect any serious diversion, and all persons met seem to adhere in a very dedicated way to the principles defined in FUT's mission and vision, in particular in the area of teaching/learning. The interaction seems to be very fluid and effective between students and teaching staff, coordination staff, support services, campus services and even administrative staff, who try hard to keep students satisfied and involved.
- The high level of confidence of students, alumni and employers in the quality and relevance of what FUT graduates learn during their studies. This is clearly related to the quality of the Universities campus and equipment; the qualification and dedication of all various categories of staff, their stability and high level of satisfaction, cooperative attitude and their focus on the development of students' skills; the flat and non- bureaucratic management style, with short decision-making channels. It is also due to the high expectations of the Universities applicants and students. Furthermore, FUT's development is set to continue in these same directions, with e.g. further growth of career opportunities for graduates and the recent hosting of the first start-up company on campus.

The panel is unanimously of opinion that in all these aspects, FUT is not just harvesting the fruits of the hard work of the past years: its outstanding achievements deserve congratulations and could be used as role models for other higher education institutions, both in Georgia and elsewhere.

## Summary of Recommendations and Suggestions

The Free University of Tbilisi has undergone a very positive development cycle since it was first authorised, and the panel is fully confident that FUT is on sound tracks for a new stage of qualitative development in the foreseeable future, as outlined in the university' strategic plan.

In view of this, the panel has only two formal recommendations and three broad suggestions.



## Recommendations

The panel recommends that FUT should start formalising some of its internal structures and processes, in particular for the integration of its decentralised Internal Quality Assurance system and for its Human Resource Management. Hitherto, the flat structures and flexible, informal and cooperative processes have been strong assets for FUT as a relatively small entity inspired by the spirit of its founder, where people know each other and work in a collegial way; yet, as the university matures, grows bigger and more complex, it will need more formal internal structures, with more clearly defined roles and more formalised procedures.

The panel also recommends that FUT should firmly keep investing in the further expansion of its research capacities and activities, in particular through the development of its staff (both permanent and visiting, both national and international), support activities (such as library and publication units) and research evaluation procedures (by adapting them to each type of research and researchers). This recommendation applies to the building-up of the Doctoral School along the innovative principles that have prevailed when it was created (inter-disciplinarity, internationality, applicability) and to the continued investment in new research projects and in the research-based Institutes and Centres.

## Suggestions

These suggestions are mainly meant as hints allowing the Rector and leadership of the Free University of Tbilisi to capitalise on their previous success and focus on the most critical factors for its next development stage. They should be understood as a reinforcement of measures anyway foreseen in FUT's development plan, as recorded in the Powerpoint presentation prepared by FUT's Rector for his meeting with the evaluation panel on the first day of the site visit.

The panel suggests that over the next 5 years FUT should:

- Adjust its mission statement, in order to make certain it keeps up with the university's planned development, in particular with regard to research activities, postgraduate studies and internationalisation. FUT may also wish to anticipate on future environmental norms and commit itself to further upgrading its campus and facilities in order to make them fully "green" (i.e. ecological)
- Firmly stick to its plans to further invest in the development of its postgraduate activities; major new steps in this direction have been taken in recent years, e.g. through significant new investments in the development of research, the successful addition of physics and creative disciplines (visual arts and design, architecture) and the creation of the Doctoral School. Since the development of Master degrees is hindered in some areas (such as Physics) because a significant number of students take a job before finishing their bachelor degree, the panel suggests that FUT should boost incoming mobility from other Georgian universities for Master and PhD students and further invest in the development of start-up companies on its campus, possibly within the framework of a "business park".

- Define a broader-based internationalisation strategy, in line with its unique profile and its focus on the Georgian language and culture; Georgian society will be even better served if FUT's graduates at all levels acquire the international competencies allowing them to interact effectively with their international colleagues. The panel suggests that FUT could capitalise on its already successful Asian/African and Arab/Muslim studies to develop more ties with Europe, North and Latin America. It would also be timely to establish closer links with European/international libraries, make the webpage more attractive to foreigners, boost efforts to attract more foreign researchers and start attracting foreign students to FUT's campus, (e.g. for a few Master programmes in English and/or for international Summer courses featuring Georgian, Caucasian or European Studies, in cooperation with foreign partner universities).

## Compliance of the 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.

<b>1.1 Mission of HEI</b>
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.
<b>Summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b> The university has a clear and elaborate mission statement. Although it is more geared to the teaching/learning functions as to the research roles of the HEI, it sets out clearly its profile and the functions it wants to serve in Georgian society. FUT's mission statement emphasises its role as a student-centred institution and the importance of employability, which are two essential aspects of the Bologna proposals for the European Higher Education Area.
<b>Evidences/indicators</b> Self-evaluation report, several interviews during the site visit, in particular those with FUT's leadership and academic/scientific staff, the file of the Rector's Powerpoint presentation.
<b>Recommendations:</b>
<b>Suggestions:</b>

<p>Within the next 5 years, adjust the Mission Statement in order to make certain that it keeps up with the university's planned development, in particular with regard to research, postgraduate studies and internationalisation.</p>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p> <p>Few universities in the world could demonstrate as clearly as FUT that they are indeed a student-centred institution. At FUT, this permeates each and every aspect of the HEI's activities and has become part of the ADN shared by its staff and students. The University is therefore also an excellent example of alignment of its actual functioning with its declared mission, and could serve as a source of inspiration for other HEIs nationally and internationally.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>
<p><b>1.2 Strategic Development</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEI has a strategic development (7-year) and an action plans (3-year) in place.</li> <li>○ HEI contributes to the development of the society, shares with the society the knowledge gathered in the institution, and facilitates lifelong learning</li> <li>○ HEI evaluates implementation of strategic and action plans, and duly acts on evaluation results.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>FUT has a well-established policy and participative practice for the development of medium-term strategic development plans and shorter-term action plans, together with similar budgeting exercises. The implementation of both plans and budgets are being checked regularly and the necessary adjustments are made on a continuous basis.</p> <p>Within the still short time of its existence, FUT has achieved to be the first choice of a significant proportion of Georgian's best students, at least at undergraduate level. Its clear option for teaching/learning in the Georgian language and for employability skills also mean that its graduates enjoy a high rate of employment in the country and that FUT makes an outstanding contribution to Georgia as a country. Lifelong Learning opportunities are mainly for FUT graduates and transfer students from other Georgian HEIs.</p>
<p><b>Evidences/indicators</b></p> <p>Self-evaluation report, Strategic plan and SWOT analysis, implementation plan, interviews with academic and administrative staff involved in planning.</p>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p> <p>A possible future priority could be to encourage more incoming mobility from other Georgian and foreign partner universities, in order to strengthen FUT's postgraduate, research and LLL activities.</p>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p> <p>Very good and shared vision of strategic planning encompassing teaching, learning, student planning, science and service to society. Effective control of pace of growth emphasising quality rather than high return on investment.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>Complies with requirements</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>

## 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

- Organizational structure of HEI ensures implementation of goals and activities described in its strategic plan
- Procedures for election/appointment of the management bodies of HEI are transparent, equitable, and in line with legislation
- HEI's Leadership/Management body ensures effective management of the activities of the institution
- 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**

The Free University of Tbilisi (FUT) belongs to the Knowledge Fund, the same as its sister university (the Agrarian University) and Agromet Ltd, from whom both universities rent their joint campus. Before the interviews the panel was concerned that maybe the dual management between FUT and the Agrarian University might be a source of concern, but it soon became clear that it was actually a source of efficiency. The interviews also allowed the panel to check that the same spirit and commitment of the founder of the Knowledge Fund and FUT is shared by the current chairperson of the Knowledge Fund.

The procedures for the selection and appointment of the management bodies of FUT are transparent, equitable, and in line with legislation. The head of the management and administration of the university and the official representative of the university is the Rector. The Rector oversees two Vice-Rectors and the Chancellor and several important units/offices that include in particular the Quality Assurance office, the Head of Human Resources Management, the International Relations Coordinator, the Examination Centre and the Directors of the research centres/institutes (Confucius Institute, Centre for the Study of Arab Countries and Islamic World, National Institute for Human Rights, National Centre for Commercial Law, Institute of Cognitive Neurosciences, and Asia and Africa Institute).

The University has two vice-rectors: one is responsible for the educational programmes and their development, and the other is responsible for the administration of the educational processes. The vice-rectors are in charge of the following operational units: Registration and Academic Process Management Service, the 6 Schools that run the undergraduate and master programmes and the Doctoral School. The following units are subordinate to the Chancellor: Legal Service, Media Studio, Publishing and Events Manager, Student Relations Service, Information and Technology Service, Library, Museum, Sports Centre, Arts Centre, Agricultural Service, Janitorial Service, Manager of Purchases, Internal Service Infrastructure, External Service Infrastructure, Administration, and Archives.

The panel was satisfied that FUT's leadership was well aware of the benefits of internationalisation and genuinely committed to the development of internationalisation, which has been demonstrated through the development of e.g. the international units, multilingual programmes and activities and the corresponding investment.

The panel could also check that FUT's internal structure currently provides for the effective and efficient management of its activities as a student-centred university. Part of the success is due to FUT's deliberately rather flat, non-bureaucratic structure, with few committees and commissions, a short distance between students and the persons who are in decision-making positions and their orientation towards problem solving. It is also due to the strong spirit of internal cooperation and the remarkable commitment of the entire staff to FUT's mission and priorities.

The panel trusts that these key structural factors of success that have shaped FUT's success can continue shaping its future, but that some of its internal structure and procedures will need to become more formalised. Some of the rather *ad hoc* arrangements that remain from the time of the merger of the various units into FUT may have to be revisited, and the sharing of tasks between units may have to become more organised as time since its creation by a visionary person elapses, FUT grows bigger and more complex and some of the key historical persons will need to be substituted.

### **Evidences/indicators**

Interviews during the site visit (Rector, Vice Rectors, Chancellor, Deans, Heads of Institutes, Students), document on Organizational Structure, Contract between Agromet and FUT, Strategic Plan

**Recommendations:** Hitherto, the flat structures and informal and cooperative processes have been strong assets for FUT as a young and relatively small entity. Yet, as the university matures, grows bigger and more complex, it will need more formal internal structures, with more clearly defined roles, and more formalised procedures. Therefore, the panel recommends that FUT should revisit some of its internal structures and formalise some of its procedures (in particular for a closer integration of its Internal Quality Assurance system, some of its Human Resource Management processes and the allocation of resources for investments), in order to guarantee their continued efficiency under the university's new circumstances.

### **Suggestions:**

<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>
<b>2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ HEI has a mechanism for planning student body, which will give each student an opportunity to get a high-quality education.</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b> <p>FUT's Quality Assurance Office is a one-person entity that carries out a number of formal activities of the quality assurance cycle according to the principles of "Plan-Do-Check-Act" (PDCA). Its main task is to conduct regular qualitative and quantitative surveys aimed at assessing the quality of teaching/learning and of the various persons and units that contribute to it – in particular the teachers. Internal assessments are carried out systematically throughout the academic process using the SurveyMonkey platform. Students are entitled and encouraged to evaluate their academic and invited staff, academic programs, the school administration and all other issues related to their educational processes in a free and anonymous manner. Questionnaires are created based on specific requirements; there are no pre-existing questionnaire forms. Quantitative research encompasses the technical as well as contextual side of the academic process. The results of surveys are analysed and used for the purpose of planning and syllabus renewal. Academic and invited staff are always informed of results and are thus given an opportunity to assess their own teaching methods, the content of academic programs and the evaluation process itself. In addition to quantitative surveys, qualitative studies, comprehensive interviews with focus groups and individual meetings are conducted on an ad hoc basis.</p> <p>While the QA <u>office</u> is small and limited in its direct activities, FUT's decentralised QA <u>system</u> is fully comprehensive. It is distributed between various administrative and academic units and persons, notably the schools' deans and coordinators, the student Dean and student services, the Educational Management Information System and various support services such as the library, the IT services, the career office, etc.</p> <p>FUT has set in place a elaborate mechanism for the planning of the size of its student body. Its core objective is to guarantee that all students will have access to high quality education, taking into account the university's resources in terms of teaching staff, space, equipment, and counselling, supervision and coaching of students. In this way, FUT has been able to program its expansion in a controlled and cautious way, while always putting the quality of learning at the core of its system.</p>
<b>Evidences/indicators</b> <p>SER, Strategic Plan, interviews during the site visit, especially with Vice Rectors, Deans, Coordinators, QA office and Students</p>
<b>Recommendations:</b>
<b>Suggestions:</b> In view of the widely distributed structure of FUT's internal QA system, the panel suggests that over the coming years the University should enhance its efforts to formalise the gathering and integration of QA data at institutional level.
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>
<b>2.3. Observing Principles of Ethics and Integrity</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEI has developed regulations and mechanisms that follow principles of ethics and integrity. Such regulations are publicly accessible.</li> <li>○ Institution has implemented mechanisms for detecting plagiarism and its prevention.</li> <li>○ HEI follows the principles of academic freedom.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>FUT's Ethics Code is available on its official website <a href="http://www.freeuni.edu.ge">www.freeuni.edu.ge</a> and is a central piece in the university's internal communication plan. Its importance is emphasized during the induction week for freshmen conducted by the Student Dean and FUT staff. The institution's strict measures against cheating and plagiarism are presented and explained, and the panel could check that they are known, understood and adhered to.</p> <p>Since 2015 after formation of the Ethics Council 11 cases of plagiarism have been reported and investigated by the Ethics Committee which includes members of the main stakeholders involved, including teachers, administrators and the Student Dean. Ten cases led to the issuance of an official written warning, and in one case the student's status was terminated.</p> <p>FUT's Examination Centre is a core piece of the University's educational process. It counts 200 fully-equipped stations and handles all formal examinations for all schools and teachers and has been designed with the highest security measures against cheating and the use of external sources or support.</p>
<p><b>Evidences/indicators</b></p> <p>Ethics code of FUT. SER and interviews with students and teachers. Visit of Examination Centre during campus visit.</p>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>

### 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

<p><b>3.1 Design and Development of Educational Programmes</b></p>
<p>HEI has a policy for planning, designing, implementing and developing educational programmes.</p>
<p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>FUT has a policy for planning, designing, implementing and developing educational programmes, which is well described in the document "Structure of Educational Programs of FUT". During the interviews the deans and the academic staff indicated that the educational program is created and developed within the framework of the relevant school of the university. A working team is being created, which is headed by the school's Dean. The process is iterative during the program planning and looks into all various dimensions of the exercise (university mission; labour market requirements based on market research; Student surveys, etc.).</p> <p>The interviews confirmed that FUT has strong mechanisms for implementing and developing educational programmes. The representatives of top management emphasised that when deciding on the implementation, the development or cancelation of an educational programme, FUT pays attention to labour market needs, feedback from alumni and employers, the results of students and alumni satisfaction surveys, students' academic performance (monitoring of the achievement of planned learning outcomes), etc. FUT conducts systematic and regular surveys, there is a system of regular programme reporting and the data collected is analysed by school coordinators, deans, the quality assurance office, vice rectors and other units. Thus, the high quality of FUT's educational programmes is ensured on the basis of best practices in internal quality assurance: the conduct of quantitative and qualitative surveys; the analysis of survey results; appropriate improvement measures; institutional</p>

<p>support for programme improvement, and the better definition of more measurable and realistic Learning Outcomes.</p> <p>Several examples of how programmes are being assessed and developed were also gathered during the interviews with students and with academic and administrative staff. This clearly demonstrated that the mechanisms presented in the FUT's documents are actually in place and are shared by the different categories of stakeholders of the institution.</p>
<p><b>Evidences/indicators</b></p> <p>Educational programmes of FUT; Structure of Educational Programs of FUT; interviews</p>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p> <p>FUT's learning model follows the principles of liberal education. The University offers language courses in 8 different languages. Programmes are geared towards the development of students' skills, but disciplinary knowledge is also strong (according to employers).</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>
<p><b>3.2 Structure and Content of Educational Programmes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme learning outcomes are clearly stated and are in line with higher education level and qualification to be granted</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>FUT's document "Evaluation system of learning outcomes" provides evidence that the university's teaching model is being constantly developed by taking into account the best current practices, in line with the methodological approaches proposed by a leading authority in this area, John Biggs. In particular, this means that the most appropriate evaluation method is selected for each learning outcome. Concrete learning outcomes of the teaching course are achieved by knowledge-testing techniques that are relevant and adequate, which in turn is important and decisive in achieving the competencies set out in the educational program.</p> <p>The assessment of the planned Learning Outcomes is defined already at the time of preparing the syllabus and the academic staff constantly checks its relevance, fairness and comprehensiveness (in order to ascertain that all main components are being taken into account).</p> <p>The methods for the assessment of students' learning outcomes are also consistent with Order No. 3 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia. The evaluation of LOs is based on written and oral items, tests, practical works, projects, portfolios, exhibitions, etc. and the analysis of the learning outcomes actually achieved serves in turn for the revision of the LOs shown as objectives in syllabi. All relevant information is available on FUT's Learning Process Management Information System.</p> <p>The evaluation system is always geared towards learning outcomes and assesses them according to different criteria: what the student has achieved when completing a specific course, what he/she knows and what he/she can do; learning outcomes specific to certain fields. Written guidelines for each evaluation component and detailed criteria put academic staff in a position to objectively and fairly evaluate the knowledge and skills gained by the student. Interviews have shown that this view is shared by staff and also by students.</p> <p>FUT has developed an electronic system that provides students with information about their learning outcomes and at the same time provides the university with statistical data on students' academic performance. This data is monitored, analysed and used to identify the most suitable change that may be required. The usefulness of these mechanisms also relies on the quality of the Examination Centre as a objective and trusted tool for the assessment of students' knowledge.</p> <p>Another distinctive feature of FUT is that students have a significant degree of freedom to design their own education plan and to modify it. This allows the university to respond in a flexible way to the needs of students with different profiles and goals. The interviews have shown how important this is for students, all the more that in the eyes of academic staff FUT's students are very "demanding" and result</p>

<p>driven. This also allows the university to use some highly talented and successful students as teaching assistants for freshmen.</p> <p>FUT uses reliable tools for the assignment of European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) points to the various learning units within a given study programme and applies the TUNING methodology to measure students' workload for individual courses. FUT has developed a formula for the distribution of ECTS points between the various components of curricula, in accordance with the total time students have to dedicate to each of them. After implementing the courses, FUT survey students in order to find out whether the number of ECTS points assigned to it is correct or should be reviewed. In the latter case, students' workload is redefined in order to fit the ECTS requirements.</p>
<p><b>Evidences/indicators</b></p> <p>Evaluation system of learning outcomes of FUT; Methodology of elaborating individual learning itineraries; Interviews with academic staff and students; Educational programmes of FUT</p>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p> <p>ECTS calculation, outcomes of Tuning, flexibility, orientation towards skills acquisition on top of knowledge, information on programmes remarkably well disseminated to potential applicants in order to attract the best ones, induction programme, students may change tracks, Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="radio"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.3 Assessment of Learning Outcomes</b></p>
<p>HEI has law-compliant, transparent and fair system of learning outcomes assessment, which promotes the improvement of students' academic performance.</p>
<p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>FUT's "Evaluation system of learning outcomes" is fully in accordance with the Order of the Minister of Education and Science (Order No. 3 of January 5, 2007 on "Approval of the Rules for Calculation of Higher Education Program Credits"). In particular, the evaluation system is multi-component, it consists of midterm and final evaluation forms, the minimum threshold of competence is determined for midterm and final evaluations, the minimum threshold for the final exam does not exceed 40% and all requirements are clearly indicated in all syllabuses.</p> <p>The diverse evaluation system at Free University includes the following components: evaluation of the participation in discussions; Evaluation of work in seminars; Evaluation of attendance/activity; Evaluation of midterm exams; Homework; Quizzes; Case Studies; Laboratory works; Practical works; Blitz survey; Evaluation of work in painting, fine arts, architectural studios; Evaluation of exhibitions; Portfolio; Evaluation of projects; Essays; Written work; Oral exams; Presentations; Open and closed tests; Control test; Written work; Debates; Bachelor's thesis; Junior and Senior projects; Final exams.</p> <p>In order to ensure the transparency of the criteria, there are guidelines for each component of the evaluation system and grading scale is presented according to the guidelines. All information and assessments/grades are available for students on the Learning Process Management Information System. The Learning Outcomes assessment system takes into consideration the specific requirements of each field.</p> <p>Midterm, final or other forms of knowledge assessment at Free University may be of the closed book or the open book type. Open book exams consist of questions aimed at assessing students' analytic and creative thinking rather than checking their ability to memorise and understand what was taught; this echoes the university's mission.</p> <p>In the interview with students, the panel could check that the information about the evaluation system is indeed included in syllabi, as well as in the regulation about the conduct of examinations, in the charter of Bachelor programmes and on the webpage. This information is also presented to freshmen as part of the 3-week orientation program that precedes the beginning of the first semester.</p> <p>FUT also monitors students' academic performance in a different way. The Learning Process Management Information System also includes an analysis of the statistical distribution of grades, which allows the university to determine to what extent the evaluation method used by the lecturer was</p>

adequate. In case the distribution of results is asymmetric, the lecturer is informed and his/her grading may need to be reconsidered. This also contributes to the improvement of students' academic performance and achievement of the expected learning outcomes. All written exams at FUT are conducted at the Examination Centre, which is accommodate 200 students. The risks of 'cribbing' and using external sources is through access to Internet are neutralised in the Examination Centre.
<b>Evidences/indicators</b> FUT's Evaluation system of learning outcomes of FUT; Interviews; FUT's Educational programmes and syllabi; Student surveys; FUT Webpage
<b>Recommendations:</b>
<b>Suggestions:</b>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="radio"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>

#### 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.

<b>4.1. Staff Management</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEI has staff management policy and procedures that ensure the implementation of educational process and other activities defined in its strategic plan.</li> <li>○ HEI ensures the employment of qualified academic/scientific/invited/administrative/ support staff.</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b> The documents provided by FUT describe clearly all main procedures that apply to staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff selection procedure, required qualifications, personal management policy, affiliation regulations, all of them clearly linked to the university's overall strategy.</li> <li>• All contracts between FUT and its staff members refer to the HEI's mission and strategy. They also include a detailed job description in correlation with HEI's strategy, benchmarks and KPI.</li> <li>• Staff development mechanisms and the role of the staff development manager are set out in detail and are seen as part of the IQA system.</li> </ul> <p>FUT's staff management emphasises the importance of staff development. It also supports teachers'/researchers' extracurricular activities, provides incentives for research and curriculum development activities, including in the form of additional salary and additional funding if needed (for example for traveling, publication, etc.)</p> <p>Hiring procedures are clearly described and are followed in practice for existing staff, new comers and potential candidates. The university also runs special induction program for new staff members, which include in particular briefing on the HEI's profile and mission and on internal regulations like ethics.</p> <p>Staff assessment are conducted on a regular basis for both academic and administrative personnel, as part of FUT's annual cycle of internal QA procedures. The main tools for this purpose are surveys among students and peers and the review of personal performance during interviews with managers.</p> <p>All main procedures have been cross-checked during the interviews with the university's leadership, managers, academic and administrative staff.</p> <p>The majority of staff members speak English and/or other foreign languages and can therefore keep track with developments in their teaching and research area and participate in international networks for science, teaching and research. Overall, the qualifications required from staff and the level of qualification of hired staff are fully in line with the university's profile as a demanding, student-centred university</p>



involved in effective teaching and research. These staff procedures emphasise quality and excellence and have allowed FUT to engage highly motivated and dedicated staff.
<b>Evidences/indicators</b> Self-evaluation report, Qualification requirements document, Staff Selection procedure, Personnel management procedure, Affiliation regulations, Staff portfolio, staff contract templates, interviews Selection criteria for administrative staff, test-lecture and evaluation by peers for academic staff
<b>Recommendations:</b>
<b>Suggestions:</b>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b> Contract management, alignment of all staff (administrative and academic/scientific) with FUT's mission and strategy; role model of what a student-centred university means for its staff.
<b>Evaluation</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements
<b>4.2. Academic/Scientific and Invited Staff Workload</b>
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
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b> The distribution of staff between affiliated, permanent and invited/part-time staff and their respective workload including teaching, research, scientific development and other tasks are adequate and in line with FUT's objectives. Staff members know and understand FUT's mission and requirements and the vast majority of staff adheres to them. The workload for both permanent and invited staff is described in details in their contracts, which are customised for each staff member. All staff members have real opportunities to grow in their position and FUT helps them in several different ways. There are examples of invited staff who became a full staff member. This policy has allowed FUT to enjoy a high degree of dedication, loyalty and continuity from its staff; there are few examples of firing or resignation. Staff is involved in curricular development, personal development activities as well as in the selection of other teaching/scientific staff and of students. Academic staff enjoy a high level of freedom about the best way to meet the defined learning objectives and to meet students' and market demands. The affiliation procedure is well described and understood by staff members; the affiliation procedure is a part of affiliated staff members' contract. The university monitors staff results on the basis of the individual contracts.
<b>Evidences/indicators</b> Interviews. All staff management documents provided.
<b>Recommendations:</b>
<b>Suggestions:</b>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b> Assignment of permanent staff to teaching/learning, curricular development, tutoring and research; use of very diverse, qualified invited lecturers also involved in practical work
<b>Evaluation</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements

## 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

- 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.
- HEI ensures the protection of student rights and lawful interests.

#### **Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements**

**QA Surveys.** The University's website (<http://freeuni.edu.ge/ge/documents>), the SER and the sampling of contract templates demonstrate that the regulations for assignment, suspension and termination of student status, mobility, qualification granting and recognition of education are transparent and fair and are in line with current legislation. This information is public and accessible by everyone (in Georgian language, in accordance with FUT's mission).

According to SER, FUT has 2,428 Active students and 417 students with Suspended status. The site visit confirmed that the University is aware of the main reason of these suspensions, i.e. the high demand for FUT students on the labour market, even before they graduate. When students suspend their studies before finishing their degree, the University may actually become a victim of its own success in recruiting highly qualified and highly demanding students and meeting the skills equation sought by employers. FUT remains in contact with students who have their status suspended and encourages them to finish their degree. Some students have indeed returned from their internships (including internships abroad) to do the last semester and finish their degree. During the interviews, students confirmed that several of them had to postpone a job or internship because they wanted to graduate. Another main reason for suspending studies could be the cost of studies, but FUT offers various formulas for students to defer the payment of fees and/or to find grants/ scholarships; The Knowledge Fund plays a major role in supporting students in financial need.

The competitiveness of FUT students on the labour market became obvious during the interviews with students, alumni and employers. They all praise the controlled quality of education and the accurate assessment of learning outcomes on top of (not instead of) knowledge of their discipline. The Examination Centre is a core guarantee for fair, unbiased assessment of students, as befits FUT as a student-centred institution. This was also confirmed in all interviews. Students are duly informed of assessment rules and calendar and of the code of ethics of the University. The Centre is well equipped (some 200 computers), seats are randomly assigned, the area is constantly monitored and access to external digital resources is made impossible.

The Code of Ethics is communicated frequently to all students, and according to interviews they all feel well-informed about their rights and responsibilities and the consequences of cheating or plagiarism. In case of any violation of the Ethics code, the case is brought to the Ethics Council. The Student Dean is a member of it. The first violation normally leads to a warning, and in case of repetition the student may be expelled. In FUT's experience, such cases are however very rare.

**Evidences/indicators:** Meeting with students and Alumni, with Academic Staff, with University representatives, with representatives of IT department, with the IQA office; with Student Dean / student relation office, with School coordinators. Campus visit: Examination centre, Library, theatre; <http://freeuni.edu.ge/ge/documents>, <https://emis.freeuni.edu.ge> (evaluated with help from a student of the University)

#### **Recommendations:**

#### **Suggestions:**

#### **Best Practices (if applicable):**

A fundamental basis for the development of FUT as a student-centred university is that the University signs a customised Study Contract with each student. While the practice in itself is not uncommon anymore, at FUT it is really comprehensive and adjusted to the profile and priorities of each student's learning itinerary, with a possibility to change tracks or minors. Language policy of FUT, both for what is required and what is offered as part of the curriculum. Possibility for students to defer tuition fee until after graduation. Effective handling of students' rights and responsibilities. Continuity of contact with Alumni.

#### **Evaluation**

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

## 5.2 Student Support Services

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

### **Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements**

FUT's Student Support Services are very comprehensive and include the Students and Entrants office (which also plays a key role in attracting excellent secondary-education leavers to FUT) and the employment/career office (for students and alumni). The Student Dean is the main contact person and is seen as very available and helpful (this was confirmed by students and Alumni during the interviews).

Employment office manages FUT's large network of employers and the job vacancies and helps students to prepare for effective job search. There is an annual employment forum that gives students an opportunity to meet potential employers. Students speak highly of the career support centre, which also serves the network of alumni, who keep their FUT-email address after graduation. The interviews provided evidence that Alumni actually use the career services and that career enhancement may happen via the University or the network of Alumni.

The Student Relation Office is involved in curricular change/development, the planning of the educational processes and the improvement of academic performance. It runs an Introductory meeting during which the new intake receives all relevant information about programmes and learning itineraries, laws and regulations, their rights and duties (including ethical issues), the library and IT services; all entrants have free access to personal e-mail address and to the EMIS portal (<https://emis.freeuni.edu.ge>) for the exchange of information between all students and all services and staff of the University. Students confirmed during the interviews that EMIS is a very useful, up-to-date and reliable system, including with respect to examinations and assessments.

The Student Relation office is also responsible for helping students taking part in exchange programs. This means counselling them, helping them to prepare the required documentation, managing internal or external scholarships and planning for the whole exchange semester. The Knowledge fund is the main sponsor of mobile students, but the Student office also provides access to other grants and resources.

FUT students are strongly encouraged to get involved in some of the many extracurricular activities, clubs, sports or cultural activities offered by the university or run by students themselves. Students organize local and international events and activities where they show their ability to take initiatives, be creative, manage a budget and find sponsors. FUT has a special budget line aimed at supporting those activities that contribute to the educational goals of the University. The quality and range of student support services is impressive and students take real advantage of them. Student support services play a major role in making FUT a student-centred institution.

The internal QA office of the university carried out QA surveys of many different types among different audiences and disseminates the results to relevant persons and services. Answering surveys is not compulsory for students, but some 30% of students take part in them, even if they don't have any particular complaint. Academic staff and service personnel confirmed the usefulness of the information gathered and claim to use it to improve their own performance.

**Evidences/indicators:** Meeting with students and Alumni, with Academic Staff, with University representatives, with IT department, with IQA Office, with Student Dean and student relation office, with Public relations and marketing manager, with school coordinators and with Chancellor. Campus visit: Examination centre, Library, start-up space. [http://freeuni.edu.ge/ge/documents\\_and\\_https://emis.freeuni.edu.ge](http://freeuni.edu.ge/ge/documents_and_https://emis.freeuni.edu.ge) (evaluated with help from a student of FUT)

### **Recommendations:**

### **Suggestions:**

### **Best Practices (if applicable):**

FUT should be commended for the high quality and broad range of its Student Services and for the dedication and effectiveness of the Student Dean and the personnel of the Student Relation Office.

### **Evaluation**

- ☒ 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

<b>6.1 Research Activities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEI, based on its type and specifics of its fields, carries out research/creative activities.</li> <li>○ Ensuring the effectiveness of doctoral research supervision</li> <li>○ HEI has public, transparent and fair procedures for the assessment and defence of dissertations which are relevant to the specifics of the field</li> </ul>
<p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>Research/creative activities are designed to serve the mission and strategic development of the Free University. These activities are performed by individual professors/researchers at the University's 8 schools and 6 research institutes and centres. FUT has stated in its mission that it aims at creating the best environment for learning, teaching and researching in Georgia for distinguished young people.</p> <p>The structure and activities of FUT are organized in a way to attract the best (distinguished) students and give them the best possible education in the country. To meet these high requirements FUT has to include distinguished academic staff, researchers and teachers. The University prioritizes interdisciplinary research in a form of theoretical and applied knowledge. Master and doctoral programmes (in the social and natural sciences) and the projects of the research institutes and centres are designed accordingly. The research activities are in a close connection with the educational programs of the University schools.</p> <p>Currently the number of master and doctoral students at the Free University is at the level of 15% of the number of undergraduate students. This relatively low rate of second and third stage students ensures effective supervision of their research projects.</p> <p>FUT has a dedicated Doctoral School for the doctoral programmes and students, which is not at all typical for Georgia. The School aims at the fulfilment of the University's mission in research and has 12 doctoral students in 2 programmes, one in social sciences and humanities and the other one in natural sciences (a joint doctoral programme with the Agrarian University).</p> <p>The Doctoral academic degree is granted by the Dissertation Council. The composition and activities of this Council as well as the activities of the Doctoral School are regulated in a special document (Provisions for Doctoral School and Dissertation Council). This document includes procedures for public, transparent and fair assessment and defence of doctoral dissertations. So far only one doctoral dissertation has been completed in the University, thus it is premature to draw firm conclusions about the effectiveness of these regulations.</p> <p>The panel recalls that a good scientific reputation of institution requires many years of high level research. Current scientific reputation of FUT, as a young university (it was created in 2007), is based on a distinguished research record of its academic staff. Several of them belong to well-known Georgian scientific schools, such as in oriental studies or theoretical physics.</p>
<p><b>Evidences/indicators</b></p> <p>Self-evaluation report, document "Mission of the Free University of Tbilisi", document "Free University of Tbilisi: Research Activities", other provided documents, site visit and interviews</p>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b> FUT should continue investing in the development of its various creative, research and publication activities along the lines followed in recent years, as foreseen in its development plan.</p>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p> <p>Innovative Doctoral School (in early stage of development)</p> <p>Distinguished bachelor students from the Physics school are involved in research and are co-authors of scientific publications together with their professors.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>
<b>6.2. Research Support and Internationalization</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEI has an effective system in place for supporting research, development and creative activities</li> <li>○ Attracting new staff and their involvement in research/arts-creative activities.</li> <li>○ University works on internationalization of research, development and creative activities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>Research/creative activities are supported in different ways. A main support of academic staff is provided through an attractive salary, which is significantly higher than at other Georgian universities. For professors who do not at the same time have an administrative position, the research component accounts for one half of their salary.</p> <p>Academic staff and researchers may get additional funding for their projects from the Knowledge Fund or external sources. University researchers have received substantial funding from Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation, the Open Society Foundation, USAID and other funding agencies.</p> <p>The new "creative units", several research units and the Doctoral school were created recently and are all focused on interdisciplinary and inter-university research activities. Their work is supported by other University units, such as the Library and the Publishing and Event Manager Office.</p> <p>The internationalisation at FUT is supported by 3 dedicated, high-level research units: the Confucius Institute, the Centre for the Study of Arab Countries and Islamic World and the Institute for Asian and African studies. There are however no similar centres dealing with the Western world. Another important aspect of FUT's attention to internationalisation is the teaching of 8 different languages and the attention given to English for Master students. Internationalisation is also supported by FUT's academic staff: 20% of them have experience of living/working abroad, and new academic and research personnel is required to have at least a B2 level of knowledge of English and there is invited staff from several world regions. In spite of this, FUT has no international students – a feature that may be in line with its strategic option for the Georgian language, but limits the international flavour of FUT's campus.</p>
<p><b>Evidences/indicators</b></p> <p>Self-evaluation report, documents "Organizational Structure of the Free University of Tbilisi" and "Free University of Tbilisi: Research Activities ", site visit and interviews</p>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b> FUT should keep investing in the expansion of its research capacities and activities, including through the development of its permanent and visiting research staff, its facilities and its research-based programmes including the Doctoral School. This would create a virtuous circle benefitting the whole institution.</p>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p> <p>The internationalisation of FUT could be enhanced e.g. by offering a few postgraduate programmes allowing it to host foreign students on its campus. This would not jeopardise its ADN as a Georgian-language university; it may on the contrary help promoting FUT as well as the Georgian language and culture at the international level. FUT could also attract more foreign visiting teachers and researchers (including with the support of existing programs, for example Erasmus+).</p>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements  <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements  <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements         </p>
<p><b>6.3. Evaluation of Research Activities</b></p>
<p>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.</p>
<p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>The evaluation of the research activities of individual researchers as well as of research institutes/centres is a complex task that is usually based on productivity indicators measuring such factors as publications, funding, talks at conferences and seminars, the supervision of master and PhD students, etc. Depending on each HEI's status, each of these activities is weighed differently in the overall evaluation. FUT has developed its own evaluation system based on 11 criteria that may be grouped into 4 categories: grants/funding received, publications, involvement in academic process and effectiveness in the use of university's research resources. The category of grants/funding received differentiates between funds from external sources and from the Knowledge Fund (which is closer to internal source) but assigns the same weight to each of them, even though the competition factor and the project evaluation factors are different. This means that any comparison between research performance based on "internal" and "external" should be very cautious. FUT's evaluation system for research/researchers is still recent but fundamentally sound and it can be further developed as a tool for the stimulation of research and researchers.</p>

<b>Evidences/indicators</b> Self-evaluation report, document "Methodology for Assessment of the Personnel's Scientific Productivity", interviews
<b>Recommendations:</b>
<b>Suggestions:</b> University research is based on the individual projects of academic/research staff of different schools and dedicated research units of the University (4 institutes and 2 centres). In the future, the evaluation of these 2 categories might be easier to develop if they were done separately, on the basis of the existing methodology, with slight adjustments for each category. The Knowledge Fund might find it useful to further define the criteria for the allocation of research funding and make them public, for example on the University's web-page.
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements

## 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.

<b>7.1 Material Resources</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ HEI offers environment necessary for implementing educational activities: sanitary units, natural light possibilities, and central heating system.</li> <li>○ Health and safety of students and staff is protected within the institution.</li> <li>○ HEI has adapted environment for people with special needs</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b> FUT has very adequate material resources on the rented campus it shares with its sister university (the Agrarian University) just outside Tbilisi city centre. Space is sufficient for current and foreseeable use, equipment is of very good quality and the University invests continuously in its updating and improvement, in response to new demands from students (e.g. for the parking space or the accommodation of start-up companies) or new needs for education and research (e.g. for the accommodation of the new activities in Visual Arts and design and in Architecture, including a powerful 3D printer). The health, safety and security of users are taken seriously and the campus is adapted to people with special needs. The team in charge of the management of material resources demonstrated both a high degree of attention to needs and cautious/efficient procurement procedures.
<b>Evidences/indicators</b> Campus visit including laboratories, research institutes, open-access facilities, safety measures, etc.), self-evaluation report, interviews with all various categories of users and the Chancellor.
<b>Recommendations:</b>
<b>Suggestions:</b> The panel suggests that FUT might want to anticipate future environmental norms and commit itself to further upgrading its campus and facilities in order to make them fully "green" (ecological)".
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b> Careful planning of size of student body. Responsiveness to new needs of students and educational/research activities. Efficient management in line with FUT's profile as a student-centred institution.



<b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>
<b>7.2. Library Resources</b>
<p>Library environment, resources and service support effective implementation of educational and research activities, and HEI constantly works for its improvement.</p>
<p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>The library is well provided and well used and has the capacity (in terms of staff, training and funding) to cope with new/changing needs. It is well integrated in its local environment (shared campus with Agrarian University) and collaborates with other Georgian university libraries, other national sources of documentation and keeps in touch with European/international counterparts, e.g. within the framework of the partnerships of its international Centres and Institutes. The libraries resources are accessible permanently.</p>
<p><b>Evidences/indicators</b></p> <p>SER, interviews with library staff and users (teachers, researchers, students, alumni), campus visit showing that the library was actually very used.</p>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p> <p>FUT may want to build up its relationship with European/international networks of university libraries, e.g. The International Association of University Libraries (IATUL), the Association of European Research Libraries (LIBER) or the association of Directors of University Libraries (ADBU).</p>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p> <p>24-hour accessibility of buildings and library</p>
<b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>
<b>7.3 Information Resources</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEI has created infrastructure for information technologies and its administration and accessibility are ensured</li> <li>○ Electronic services and electronic management systems are implemented and mechanisms for their constant improvement are in place</li> <li>○ HEI ensures business continuity</li> <li>○ HEI has a functional web-page in Georgian and English languages.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>The University has full, state-of-the art information technology for its internal management and for the teaching/learning and research activities. Computers freely accessible by students are provided throughout the campus. FUT makes excellent use of its Educational Management Information System, which is being used for all activities, reaching from book reservation to exams, interaction between administrative and teaching staff and students, investment needs or complaints management. The whole IT structure is completely duplicated in order to ensure continuity in case any part of it gets out of order. FUT's webpage is of good quality both in Georgian and in English. FUT also has rooms equipped for distance education or conferences and a highly secure Examination Centre.</p>
<p><b>Evidences/indicators</b></p> <p>SER, Campus visit, interviews with ICT-management and users. Website in Georgian and English</p>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p> <p>The webpage may need to become more attractive for foreigners, as part of the internationalisation strategy</p>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p> <p>Development of digital competencies of students and staff.</p>

<b>Evaluation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>
<b>7.4 Financial Resources</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Allocation of financial resources described in the budget of HEI is economically achievable</li> <li>o Financial standing of HEI ensures performance of activities described in strategic and mid-term action plans</li> <li>o HEI financial resources are focused on effective implementation of core activities of the institution</li> <li>o HEI budget provides funding for scientific research and library functioning and development</li> <li>o HEI has an effective system of accountability, financial management and control</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b> <p>FUT's financial situation is very healthy. It enjoys the support of the Knowledge Fund, although according to information provided by the financial manager it covers all of its recurrent expenses with its own current resources. Surpluses are reinvested in FUT's activities. The panel had no formal evidence of this, but has not any reason to doubt the financial good shape of FUT, neither currently nor in the foreseeable future.</p> <p>The financial management of FUT is closely tight to the budget and the strategic and implementation plans. Financial procedures are clearly established and controlled, which allows for efficient spending of financial resources. The Chancellor and his team are dedicated to guaranteeing the quality of the university's activities and this has also been confirmed by resources users, mainly staff from teaching, research and service units, but also students. The University supports student services and extra-curricular learning, as well as on-campus cultural and sports activities. The allocation of financial resources to the various types of activities is adequate to their current level of development, but will in all likelihood need to be adjusted to the planned expansion of some of them (e.g. research, postgraduate studies, internationalisation).</p>
<b>Evidences/indicators</b> <p>SER, strategic and implementation plans, interviews with Chancellor and financial managers</p>
<b>Recommendations:</b>
<b>Suggestions:</b> <p>FUT should firmly stick to its intention to further invest in its research, postgraduate and international activities. The panel also suggests that FUT should continue investing in the development of start-up companies and possibly a business park.</p>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b> <p>Remarkable formula of study today &amp; pay later (deferment of tuition payment beyond entrance in professional life)</p>
<b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>