



განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Report on Akaki Tsereteli State University Authorization

Expert Panel Members

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Authorization Report Resume

General information on the educational institution

The current Akaki Tsereteli State University (ATSU) has developed from a series of mergers - Akaki Tsereteli Kutaisi State University and Niko Muskhelishvili Kutaisi Technical University in 2006, then joined by the Sukhumi Subtropical University in 2010. (There are now plans for the University of Movie and Theatre to be included as part of ATSU by 2019). ATSU is a major provider of professional education within the region, offering the range of academic awards, i.e. Bachelor, Masters, doctorate delivered by the nine faculties:

- Faculty of Business, Law and Social Sciences;
- Faculty of Humanities;
- Faculty of Exact and Natural Sciences;
- Faculty of Pedagogy (which also offers the teacher training programs)
- Faculty of Medicine;
- Faculty of Engineering-Technical;
- Faculty of Engineering-Technological;
- Faculty of Agrarian Sciences;
- Faculty of Maritime Transport.

ATSU appears to be multi-lingual, with language courses in Georgian and English offered, and some programs are taught in European languages as well as Georgian, e.g. medicine, pharmacy, leadership and management in higher education.

From discussions with the visiting team, it was clear that ATSU colleagues are conscious of the emerging issues in higher education around internationalization, equality and diversity. To this end they are investing in exchange programs, e.g. Erasmus+, as evidenced by the 60 programs already available. Given their geographic location, they are seeking alliances with universities in south and south eastern European countries. There is enthusiasm for greater external collaborations in order to have joint programs and exchanges at all levels of the organization, to attract overseas professors, academics and students.

There is a commitment to drive the research- and scholarship-informed curricula agenda, which is delivered by academics and Ph.D. students. Investment in the university's administration has been increasing steadily to support these initiatives and linked strategically to the academic requirements of respective disciplines. The significant investment in learning resources and databases to support these endeavours is also apparent.

The university has taken significant steps in creating an Internal Quality Assurance system and has created or updated most of its procedures within the last twelve months. It has already begun to take actions based on internal surveys and monitoring and indeed, many of the issues raised in this report have been identified by the university. To this extent the university knows itself well and the challenges ahead. Not least of these is further implementing and embedding the IQA.

Brief overview of the authorization site visit

A team of National and International experts visited on behalf of the National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement of Georgia, to interview a range of ATSU colleagues, students and Alumni, in order to appraise and ascertain levels of compliance with the NCEQE standards. The following stakeholders were interviewed:

- Senior Leadership Team of ATSU – Rector, Vice Rector and Head of Administration
- Team with responsibility for writing the ATSU Self-Evaluation Report
- Members of Academic Council
- Colleagues of the following professional services:
 - Quality Assurance Office
 - Foreign Affairs and Strategic Development Office
 - Education Management Process
 - Human Resources Management,
 - Legal Office
 - Centre for Continuing Education,
 - Library and IT representatives,

- Financial and Material Resources
- Marketing, Projects and Events Management
- Centre for Culture, Sport and Youth Affairs
- Deans and Quality Assurance colleagues of the Faculties
- Heads of Programs of all Faculties
- Academic, affiliated and invited staff of the Faculties
- Doctoral supervisors and representatives of the Scientific Research Centre.
- Undergraduate and doctoral students of the Faculties
- Student Self-Governance Groups
- Alumni of ATSU and External employers who collaborate with ATSU

In addition to the wealth of information obtained from the helpful and collegiate discussions in the interview process, there was opportunity for the NCEQE team to view the learning infrastructure and look at examples provided of Masters and Ph.D. theses.

Overview of the HEI's compliance with standards

Summary of Recommendations

- Review the mission statement and create a differentiated version that informs those internally and externally of the distinctive role of the university
- Focus on the measurable outcomes of the actions would enable more effective monitoring of the strategic plan
- Reflect and prioritise their activities for the best use of resources to augment their reputation to attract overseas collaborations and create critical mass for sustainability
- Ensure robust monitoring of strategic plans
- Involve international students in self governance
- Support of Alumni Work and put it in University Structure
- Involve student career service in management
- Review the methodology for conducting university wide surveys
- Ensure that all relevant staff address the findings of IQA surveys/outcomes
- Ensure that the quality cycle is complete by ensuring the production and implementation of action plans at faculty/unit level
- Continue to support the development of IQA staff through management support and staff training
- Improve and evaluate the mechanism for student body planning
- That there is a defined and named clinical academic on committees related to the Code of Ethics and Integrity, to assure the professionalism of the medical and healthcare graduates of ATSU.
- Increase the awareness of detection mechanisms of plagiarism cases
- Increase the awareness of Ethic Committee work
- Ensure that the modification and renewal process of education programmes is run at the same pace for all the programmes addressing "the key challenge" of the university, i.e. taking into consideration demands of constantly changing environment
- Ensure that the quality cycle is closed and evidenced by the maintenance of effective records, especially in areas concerning student rights
- The teaching of foreign languages and especially their volume and duration should be organised in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Taking into consideration the number of cumulative hours of study to reach the desired level (B2, Independent User) the format and volume of foreign language courses as well as their duration must be increased
- Develop a system (including facilities) of consulting for students on academic issues (presentations, papers, research plans, other issues)
- Disseminate information about staff competition (including information on employment criteria for invited staff position) not only on University web-site and newspaper, but as well of outside of University
- Reflect on the high numbers of invited staff and the rationale management need for staffing flexibility
- Enhance the System of rewarding and encouragement
- Enhance the strategy for staff development
- Develop a means to track, analyse and reduce the number of status suspensions
- Identify and address the reasons for and consequences of student status suspension
- Refine the workload calculation to include all the time necessary for methodic activities. Total workload calculation also should include other jobs of professors at administrative or industry positions

- Ensure information about PhD positions and enrollment procedures is more publicly available to attract more candidates and create competition
- Given the ambition to attract more international students, develop a structured approach to reach out them
- Student status suspension level has to be recognized as a problem and it is recommended that a system is developed to track, analyse and reduce number of status suspensions
- In cases of programme closure consideration of students' lawful interests should be undertaken and clearly evidenced
- All student support procedures need promotion and need to be pro-active
- International student body needs to be involved in all aspects of university life, including decision-making units
- Electronic system of study process management needs to be actively implemented and student academic achievements need to be monitored with reaction to the monitoring results
- Student self-governance mission needs to be revised and understood by all stakeholders
- Monitor the research development policy closely to ensure effective implementation and ensure improvement on current situation
- Elaborate regulations with regards to the cancellation of number of doctoral programs
- Encourage academic personnel and the students of the Masters and doctoral studies to enhance foreign language skills, to be able to get engaged in international research and have an ability to publish work in foreign journals
- University needs to implement its proposal to determine research directions
- Involve more academic and research staff, students in the development of research and to consider their interests in English language learning
- Review its memoranda of understanding with overseas universities and focus on active partnerships rather than the volume of agreements, particularly with regard to research co-operation
- University needs to establish the specific regulation regarding of research personnel evaluation;
- University needs to establish the specific regulation regarding of involved young researchers and PhD students in scientific project and international mobility process
- Develop language skills amongst research groups
- The University should develop a strategy that will soon (may be approximately 1-2 year) be able to the evaluation of Research Activities and Internationalisation of research activities
- Ensure continuing investment in material resources
- Consideration should be given to enabling access to all areas for students with special needs
- Ensure that University buildings are sufficiently ventilated
- The number of facilities with computer equipment should be increased providing more students with free access to information resources
- ATSU should ensure the transparency of its policy by making the annual reports of structural units available on the web-site
- That the ATSU implements a financial analysis system, for the allocation revenues and expenses to profit and cost centres respectively
- To perform profitability analysis for demonstrating transparency in financial management and reporting, for effective decision-making

Summary of Suggestions

- Consider combining responsibility for communicating with alumni within one functional unit
- The educational programmes (excl. regulated programmes) may be designed in a way, that would allow the students to choose minor
- The number of minor programmes may be increased and offered in a way, that students feel encouraged to elect them
- It is advisable to expand the non-compulsory components of the educations programs ensuring Academic Freedom of the students
- It is strongly suggested to decrease the amount of contact hours in order to ensure the development of research skills

- Increase the practical component in the programs that aim to instruct the specialists in applied fields
- It is advisable to make sure that the assessment system becomes more pluralistic and manifold in accordance with individual needs of each course
- A recruitment drive is highly recommended for OSCE examiners to increase the numbers available. All OSCE examiners need to be trained in this type of assessment to assure the process is both reliable and valid
- Revisit how the medical students are assessed (skills, knowledge and professional conduct), to assure competence to practice at graduation
- Improve the ratio academic staff/invited staff, especially at the Faculty of Medicine
- Consider best international practice as potential benchmarks for target staff ratios
- Review the ATSU system for the audit and tracing of students' status (registered and suspended) to ensure they are not 'lost'
- Determine the structure, responsible for instructing students about all of their rights and obligations at university and monitor the work, as well as consequences of this intervention
- Develop and implement a clear mechanism of addressing administrative issues and appeals raised by students
- To develop within the curriculum, and signpost in the learning outcomes, skills for employment to facilitate students in their career development
- Generic 'soft skills' are included, i.e. around communication and professional attitudes and behaviours, for this can be preparation for life after graduation and employment
- It would be beneficial to involve students in academic council
- Alumni involvement in helping the students understand the duties and job descriptions of the graduates of each program at different jobs in order to facilitate their career planning
- It may be desirable to use Mendelys' program (<https://www.mendeley.com/>) , which is necessary for the PhD students and academic and research staff to perform well in various projects
- Greater clarity around the expectations for research, not just of the methodologies for the project, but more importantly training in: (a) the construction of a research question, (b) how the research question may be answered, (c) methodologies for competence in the analysis of data effectively
- The awareness of the recent research methods should be increased and implemented in research practice. The monitoring on the use of research methods might be very helpful in this regard
- Therefore faculty development is need for researchers to develop their skills in constructing a research question, decisions on the most appropriate methodologies and experimental design to answer the research question, then the methods applied for data analysis
- The e-learning portal should become a general tool of teaching and assessment involving not just 20% of courses and not being used for just testing
- The web-site should be made useful for the international students providing more information in English
- Greater autonomy to Deans is needed for budgeting and activities

Summary of the best practices





- Peer attendance – observation of lectures and teaching sessions between colleagues designed to enhance teaching skills and learning methods
- Tutorship - Senior students assist their young colleagues in all kinds of educational procedures -related issues, including professional orientation. All university bodies are satisfied. The tutors do not get paid, but they get privileged in other situations
- Investment in clinical skills laboratories and affiliated tutors for students within the Faculty of Medicine to acquire skills in simulated practice in advance of practice-based learning in the clinical setting

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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.1	Mission of HEI	<input type="checkbox"/>	x <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	Strategic development	<input type="checkbox"/>	x <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Organizational structure and management of HEI	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.1	Organizational structure and management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2	Internal quality assurance mechanisms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3	Observing principles of ethics and integrity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Educational Programmes	<input type="checkbox"/>	x <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1	Design and development of educational programmes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2	Structure and content of educational programmes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.3	Assessment of learning outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Staff of the HEI	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1.	Staff management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2.	Academic/Scientific and invited Staff workload	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Students and their support services	<input type="checkbox"/>	x <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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.2	Student support services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Research, development and/or other creative work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.1.	Research activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.2.	Research support and internationalization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.3.	Evaluation of research activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Material, information and financial resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.1	Material resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.2.	Library resources	x <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7.3	Information resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.4	Financial resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature of expert panel members

1. Andy Gibbs (Chair) 
2. Olwyn Westwood (Co-chair) 
3. Levan Tsagareli (Member) 
4. Nino Chikhladze (Member) 
5. Tornike Guruli (Member) 
6. Ketevan Kotetishvili (Member) 
7. Ketevani Kankava (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. Directions for strategic development of HEI corresponds with the mission of an institution, are 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 <p>The university has a mission statement, which was revised and updated within the past twelve months. The mission statement describes its goals and is supported by eight principles. The mission statement in itself is adequate but rather generic and doesn't describe the distinctive regional role and its relevance to the local region. Going forward, as the university seeks to establish itself in international markets, it may be useful to differentiate itself more clearly. In other respects, the mission pays attention to knowledge creation, personal development, knowledge creation and dissemination. For example, the university's role in regional development if emphasised more, would help create links and partnerships with regional universities internationally.</p> <p>The mission statement is shared by the university community and given as a rationale to support actions, activities and developments. However, as the mission statement is generic, almost any action, activity or development could be said to be in line with the mission. A more distinctive and differentiated mission statement would also assist in linking the national and international missions and enable more targeted development of the strategic plan (see 1.2).</p>
Evidences/indicators Self-evaluation report University mission statement Strategic and action plans Interviews
Recommendations: Review the mission statement and create a differentiated version that informs those internally and externally of the distinctive role of the university
Suggestions:
Best Practices (if applicable):
Evaluation <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
1.2 Strategic Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HEI has a strategic development (7-year) and an action plans (3-year) in place. • HEI contributes to the social development of the country, shares with the society the knowledge gathered in the institution, and facilitates lifelong learning • 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

The university has well prepared, well presented, costed strategic and action plans. They are time bound and clearly identify who is responsible for the actions. There are targets and performance indicators, however some of these are not measurable but on balance achievable. For example the strategic plan indicates, " Depending on the University objectives, the periodic plans for development of personnel based on the assessment system should be developed and implemented". The action plan indicates that there will be, "Elaboration and development of the system of professional development of personnel". The implementation indicator is " Analysis of the document describing the system of elaboration of periodic plans for professional development of the personnel". The team consider that the strategic plan and associated actions have been well considered and costed, however a focus on the measurable outcomes of the actions would enable more effective monitoring of the strategic plan.

The university has already commenced on creating the foundations on which to build their strategy with considerable investment in infrastructure, reorganisation of functional departments, creation of in internal quality assurance system and library and IT provision.

Many activities call for more of everything. For example, the approach to internationalisation seeks more international students, more mobility, more joint programmes and projects, more international staff and more international research. Whilst this may be a reasonable starting point in testing which markets are viable in the medium to longer term, a strategy which targets all these activities in all countries will be economically unsustainable. A suggested next step in prioritising activities would be to undertake more specific benchmarking by firstly identifying who are the comparator universities and who are competitors. To some extent, this is already taking place and the example of building links with Baltic universities who are undertaking similar reforms confirms this.

The identification of responsibilities reflects the participative process that actively involved all staff in developing the plans and has promoted sharing and ownership.

As mentioned in 1.1 the university is involved in leading social, cultural, economic activity in the region and is a hub and focal point for the community.

Monitoring of the plans is envisaged and is at an early stage with many recent developments yet to be embedded.

A statement in the SER appeared to be at variance with the multi-disciplinary nature of the ATSU.

"From 2017, each faculty has developed a faculty scientific profile, in which the main scientific research directions / sub-directions of the faculty are defined considering the human and material resources of the Faculty." (ATSU SER p3)

Given that there are social sciences, law, and humanities as well as sciences, therefore we would advocate sensitivity to, and acknowledgement of, areas of expertise of all researchers across the wide range of disciplines, not just the sciences. Moreover, for the financial sustainability and progression, the ATSU, might want to reflect and prioritise their activities for the best use of resources to augment their reputation to attract overseas collaborations and investment.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Associated documentation supplied by ATSU
- Interviews with ATSU colleagues and stakeholders

Recommendations:

- Focus on the measurable outcomes of the actions would enable more effective monitoring of the strategic plan
- Reflect and prioritise their activities for the best use of resources to augment their reputation to attract overseas collaborations and create critical mass for sustainability

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

2. Organisational Structure and Management of HEI

Organisational 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 Organisational structure and management and compliance with the standard component requirements are described across thirteen pages of the SER. The description includes some history of the development of the university, recent changes and developments which have yet to be evaluated and proposals to introduce actions which will support the achievement of the strategic plan. Overall, it's a rather rambling description in which the authorisation team found it hard to identify a clear focus and which enabled the university to claim that any outstanding issues would be addressed by planned future actions. For this reason, it is appropriate to review the progress of the plans in twelve months' time to gain a clearer understanding of how the planned changes have been implemented and how they have impacted on the delivery of the strategic plan. The team could summarise that there are changes underway in strategic direction with a more vigorous focus on internationalisation, restructuring of units, departments and functions which includes restructuring, amalgamation and decentralisation and infrastructure improvements to support contemporary delivery of teaching and learning. The team could see that changes were underway and were impressed that the planned changes will be underpinned by sound internal quality assurance arrangements (more comment on this in section 2.2). As it stands, the system is in a state of flux and it could not be concluded with certainty that the organisational structure will meet the goals and activities outlined in the strategic plan – although this may change as the system evolves and beds in. Certainly, it is unclear how functional units such as research will meet the goals (see section 6), whether the internationalisation strategy matches the regional mission of the university and is clearly enough defined and differentiated to provide particular areas of focus and growth (see section 1). The team considered the plans for greater decentralisation and autonomy but saw no evidence of the faculty specific plans which the team were told had been created following staff and students' surveys and also identified areas which lacked impetus in implementation (the Careers Service) and overlapping functions (student support). The university has used of external consultants to support changes and development in Human Resource Management, Quality and Marketing and this will continue to be beneficial in implementing change. Similarly, the clear identification of staff responsible for each activity that the university has produced will promote accountability for ensuring implementation. On one hand it could be seen that the planning was adequate but progress in implementation and monitoring needs attention. These mechanisms are in place but not yet implemented and the outcomes of this will demonstrate what progress has been made.

The university is a legal entity of public law - higher educational institution. The university functions in accordance with the university charter and the regulations approved by the representative council that is supervised by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. Most procedures for election and appointment are carried out in transparent and equitable manner and the elected bodies, such as the Academic Council, function well and provide forums for debate and discussion of key issues. The team had some concern regarding the involvement of students in elected bodies firstly in terms of the nature of their contributions which focused on housekeeping and practical issues rather than those issues of wider strategic concern which are often seen in European universities. In implementing a programme of change as outlined by the university, stakeholders, particularly students can play a major role if their voice is encouraged and heard. For example whilst it may not be compulsory by legislation to include student representation on the Academic Council, students could bring insights and impetus to the activities. There is a newly formed Student Self-Governance Group which has a Student Parliament – The Student Parliament elects student representation for the various Faculty Councils, however it was unclear as to the remit on these committees with little evidence to suggest whether their 'student voice

is heard' in their representative role. Furthermore, as the university grows its international student body, it should ensure that international students are represented in decision making bodies, as this is not the case at the moment (see section 5). The University provided a business continuity plan which considered possible and potential risks, for example in terms of financial planning the university undertook a risk assessment following an adverse cash flow situation last year and moved to a monthly budgeting model to mitigate further risk this year.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Associated documentation supplied by ATSU
- Interviews with ATSU colleagues and stakeholders

Recommendations:

- Ensure robust monitoring of strategic plans
- Involve international students in self governance
- Support of Alumni Work and put it in University Structure
- Involve student career service in management

Suggestions:

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

2.2 Internal quality assurance mechanisms

- 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.
- 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

The Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) processes are described as being in the process of introduction and development. The university has drawn on help from external evaluation (authorization, accreditation, expertise services, and other types of cooperation) and the support of various projects (Erasmus+, projects implemented by different funds, invited experts, various visits, and trainings). It is clear that internal quality assurance procedures are in place and that these inform the assessment and development of the university's activities and the distribution of resources and that the university leadership uses these to make decisions. It is also clear that there are IQA mechanisms in place to evaluate and improve educational programmes. This is demonstrated by the establishment and implementation of *inter alia* educational policies and regulatory documents related to procedures for approving new programmes, assessing and improving existing programmes. Several examples were given of these procedures and policies leading to changes in programme improvement, often related to labour market need as in the case of the transport programme. The new procedures also enables a mechanism for monitoring students' academic performance. The development of the procedure of current educational programs is used to evaluate academic and vocational educational programs, and to renew and develop the existing programs. For this purpose, the analysis of students' academic performance and the surveys of the main interested parties (student, teacher, employer, alumni) are applied. Monitoring and analysing students' academic performance is carried out by the relevant faculty administration.

Finally it is also clear that the process is in a period of introduction and development and that uptake and confidence in the system requires attention in many areas of the university. For example the outcomes of university wide surveys is not considered reliable by staff. The methodology is perceived to be flawed and/or the respondents who undertook the survey are believed not to be taking it seriously. Despite that the team were told that faculties had produced action plans based on these surveys, there was no evidence of this. Consequently attention needs to be paid to the methodology of surveys, closing the quality assurance loop and ensuring all relevant addressing the findings of surveys.

The university uses modern technologies to seek opinions from staff and students, and also uses Moodle as a means of communication, an e-Dean system to manage programmes, an internal mail system and an examination management system.

There has been significant progress in many areas. There is student representation on significant ATSU committees and councils and an established system for gaining student opinion via a questionnaire feedback system and focus groups. An electronic mechanism is used to communicate with students for close the feedback loops, which has been developed progressively since 2004 to allow a greater stakeholder focus, rather than simply a data-collecting process. The fact that ATSU listens to the student voice with respect to their experiences of study and personal needs, was acknowledged by Alumni interviewed. The Dean of the medical faculty discussed the different ways that they communicate with medical students on placement regarding their concerns about their clinical learning in the partner organizations. Likewise, the medical academics are conversant with the quality strategy and planning, the results of student and staff surveys. Some areas of pedagogic practice have been amended in response to student opinion, e.g. timetabling. The National Qualification Framework around transferable skills is acknowledged and adapted to be discipline-dependent. Likewise, the flexibility of programs for encouraging elective components of awards.

There are regular meetings of university colleagues with the employers (twice per year) and information is received by Academic Council and the academics stated that such evidence is used tailor programs to the needs of the population. There was evidence from the various administrative teams that peer observation of teaching had been introduced recently and considered to be helpful for enhancing the pedagogic skills of colleagues, and ultimately to enhance the student experience.

Overall, the SER, discussions with university leadership and examination of the strategic plan demonstrated that the university has good insights into its strengths and weaknesses across most of its areas of operation. It was noted that the leadership of the QA services has recently changed, and the team consider that support for the new leadership in terms of training and development is essential.

The university future vision is concerned with the development of planning student body system using the best practice and PDCA cycle. The university acknowledges in the SER that the mechanism for the student body planning should be improved and evaluated in accordance with PDCA cycle. The team agree with this particularly in light of the large numbers of students on suspension.

Monitoring and evaluation of the university strategy and action plans will be conducted based on the pre-determined procedures and there are elaborated plans for this but it has not yet commenced. As there are so many new policies, processes and procedures this is a critical activity for the university and the presence of a sound plan in the absence of evidence of implementation is reflected in many recommendations within this report.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Associated documentation supplied by ATSU
- Interviews with ATSU colleagues and stakeholders

Recommendations:

- Review the methodology for conducting university wide surveys
- Ensure that all relevant staff address the findings of IQA surveys/outcomes
- Ensure that the quality cycle is complete by ensuring the production and implementation of action plans at faculty/unit level
- Continue to support the development of IQA staff through management support and staff training
- Improve and evaluate the mechanism for student body planning

Suggestions:

Best Practices (if applicable):

Peer Attendance, considered to be helpful for enhancing the pedagogic skills of colleagues, and ultimately to enhance the student experience

Evaluation

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

2.3. Observing principles of ethics and integrity

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HEI has developed regulations and mechanisms that follow principles of ethics and integrity. Such regulations are publicly accessible. • Institution has implemented mechanisms for detecting plagiarism and its prevention. • HEI follows the principles of academic freedom.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements <p>The university has a code of ethics, it also has a code for academic conscientiousness. Activities within the university are regulated by quality assurance processes and there are policies, procedures and conventions which govern activity. These are publicly available on the web site. The ATSU has the expectations for professionalism in the medicine and allied health awards integrated into the university's code of ethics. However, it was not entirely clear as to the level of Faculty of Medicine representation as an adviser around judgement on the attitude and conduct of students studying on professional degrees. The issue of academic freedom is discussed with staff, for example the introduction of peer attendance stimulated a discussion regarding academic freedom and it was concluded that peers observing the lectures of others did not constitute a breach of this. An ethics committee is constituted, and some support would be useful as students don't have information about the work of committee. The university is aware of this and is planning such support.</p> <p>On the issue of plagiarism, the University has policies, procedures and ways of informing staff and students of the issue. It also holds seminars and discussions on the issue. It is unclear who is responsible for informing the PhD students about related policy? "probably supervisors" - is the answer of supervisors. This needs to be clarified. There are plans arising from an Erasmus+ funded project to introduce detection methods. In interviews it appeared to be problematic to provide an example on plagiarism issue, which gives reason to suppose, that detection mechanisms of plagiarism are not equally shared among the teaching staff.</p>
Evidences/indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Evaluation Report (SER) • Associated documentation supplied by ATSU • Interviews with ATSU colleagues and stakeholders
Recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That there is a defined and named clinical academic on committees related to the Code of Ethics and Integrity, to assure the professionalism of the medical and healthcare graduates of ATSU. • Increase the awareness of detection mechanisms of plagiarism cases • Increase the awareness of Ethic Committee work
Suggestions:
Best Practices (if applicable):
Evaluation <p>Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements </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

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

The renewal (“optimization and unification”) and development of the educational programmes in accordance with the demands of constantly changing environment (market demands, employment, internationalization) remains “the key challenge” of the university (SER p. 48). The team could see that the university is addressing this challenge through its own internal quality assurance processes.

Since 2016 ATSU has been establishing and developing a scheme for the evaluation of educational programmes. The scheme was based on the PDCA cycle, later it has been transformed into a full-scale Quality Assurance Policy comprising procedures of planning, assessing and developing the educational programmes. As a result, an optimisation of educational programmes took place (for instance many PhD programmes have been annulled). However, “the Quality Assurance Service of the university states that all the programs do not experience positive changes and development at the same pace. There are certain programs, which are very sensitive, and there are some programs, which seem less efficient at responding to the problems, while some even don’t follow all the procedures.” (SER p. 47)

Heads of programmes assert that all stakeholders and students are involved in the process of curriculum development. Examples were provided of the utilisation of feedback from students in developing programmes, engagement of alumni in seeking opinion on programmes and the use of employer feedback (and labour market analysis), for instance English Language courses have been extended and elective courses have been added to the existing curricula upon the feedback given by students and, the team heard from employers that soft/employability skills were added to some programmes following their feedback. Records of employment are maintained at faculty and sometimes programme level. Whilst it is apparent that programme planning is a participatory experience led by heads of the programmes who develop the curricula in cooperation with the Quality Assurance Service, the process could introduce more consistently systematic and demonstrably participative approaches across all programmes. Additionally, there may be some overlap between the work of the newly established alumni office and the collection of first destination employment figures at faculty level. The university may wish to consider combining responsibility for these activities within one functional unit.

In the Medicine programmes, there is a practice- and evidence-based approach to learning and teaching, albeit the pharmacy academics and students would like more practice-based learning. More attention may be given in skills training in medicine. The main reason for this is to ensure that all students are aware of and gain the knowledge, skills and professional attitudes required of a medical graduate, rather than believe that they can “develop skills themselves later” when they begin their first clinical post.

Introduction, amendment and annulment of educational programmes is approved by the Academic Board of ATSU, which is in line with the Article 21 1 b of the Law of Georgia on Higher Education. While annulling or amending the educational programmes ATSU provides students with relevant information on external and internal mobility (consultations, video) and grants them an opportunity to be transferred to a modified program thus enabling the completion of their studies. The aforementioned annulment of a number of PhD programmes followed this process, and although the team were assured that the process had been followed there was no paper based records of this. This issue is also raised in connection with student rights (section 5) and research activity (section 6). The team interpreted this event as an error in record keeping associated with the quality cycle and could see the underlying rationale and potential benefit for students. Similarly, a new medical program is introduced, but the old one is still in place - the reason is “we are comparing”, although the need of new program was defined by 88% of students saying the old program was not good enough. The team could not see any benefit or evidence why the older programme is retained.

Overall, the university has a methodology in place for planning designing and developing educational programmes, which is monitored by an internal quality assurance process. The process is effective in identifying issues but is relatively new and needs to be applied more consistently within all faculties and evidence of closing the PDCA cycle developed and retained.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Associated documentation supplied by ATSU
- Interviews with ATSU colleagues and stakeholders

Recommendations:

- Ensure that the modification and renewal process of education programmes is run at the same pace for all the programmes addressing “the key challenge” of the university, i.e. taking into consideration demands of constantly changing environment
- Ensure that the quality cycle is closed and evidenced by the maintenance of effective records, especially in areas concerning student rights

Suggestions:

- Consider combining responsibility for communicating with alumni within one functional unit

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

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

3.2 Structure and content of educational programmes

- Programme learning outcomes are clearly stated and are in line with higher education level and qualification to be granted
- 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

ATSU follows current legislations as well as ECTS guidelines while creating educational programmes, which can be observed in Curricula. However, the understanding of correlation between the number of ECTS credit points and the number of contact hours throughout the educational programmes are rigid. The majority of courses both on BA and MA level are 5 ECTS points and take up a workload of 45 (or even 60) hours (i.e. 3-4 hours per week), thus leaving only about 80 or 65 (i.e. 5 or 4 hours per week) hours for independent work. Such distribution of contact and independent hours might appear problematic for the employed students, whose number is increasing year after year, thus causing low attendance in the courses or even making the achievement of learning outcomes unachievable. At the same time the amount of hours allocated to independent work seems to be insufficient for the development of research skills which can be ensured by conducting desktop research and submitting papers (meaning not just voluntary student conference thesis or a MA thesis but rather a research paper demonstrating the research skills gained by students in a course attended).

Despite the expansion of the foreign language courses it is doubtful that those courses offered during 3 semesters (60 hours each) within BA programs could be enough to reach the communication skills benchmarks required in the National Qualification Framework (i.e. ability to communicate information to specialists in a foreign language). The lack of foreign language proficiency among the students could be noticed during the interviews as well. Notably, the deficient knowledge of a foreign language could be a significant obstacle while striving for internationalisation as one of the strategic goals of ATSU. Another soft skill that is mostly neglected or underrepresented in the outcomes of several BA programs (see for instance BA Biology, also MA Journalism) is "ability to creatively use modern information and communication technologies" (NQF). In some of the curricula the Information Technologies course is an elective (see BA History) thereby not assuring the development of required communications skills.

As a result of the random curriculum inspection it has been detected, that the volume of elective / optional components in most of the BA programmes never exceed 15, 20 or 35 ECTS (The same with MA programs), whereas other BA programmes consist of 240 ECTS (see BA Social Sciences or BA Applied Design) and leave no opportunity for the students to select a minor (in fact only 8 of them are in offer with no single student enrolled, cfr. SER p. 139), which contradicts with the principles of Academic Freedom shared by ATSU (SER p. 12) as well as the SER stating that "it is admissible to have a combination of a major (no less than 120 credits) and a minor (60 credits) based on the following principle: a) a major and free component; b) a major, a minor and free component; c) a major and two minors." (SER p. 49). Although several students find it rather comfortable to have a fixed timetable with obligatory courses throughout their study program and within some BA programs the modular system is supposed to ensure electivity, it is advisable that the non-compulsory components of the educational programs are expanded.

The literature listed in syllabuses is mostly outdated or restricted to Georgian publications. No (or very few) international bibliographic units could be identified, which is extremely problematic for the applied and permanently renewable fields like agronomy or engineering, but not less for all the other fields.

Lack of practical experience in connection with laboratories and labour equipment has been claimed with regard to some fields that require development of practical skills.

The educational programmes as well as course catalogues and other guidelines are to be found on ATSU's web site. The information provided on the web site is up to date, since there are different catalogues for each year available.

The University has well-constructed mechanisms for development of individualized educational programmes for the students with different needs and backgrounds.

In medicine programs, there are parallel programs currently in operation, (i) two traditional programs taught in Georgian and English respectively, (ii) the new program (in Georgian) which uses problem-based learning and integrates basic and clinical sciences, a feature which is valued by the students interviewed. Discussing the issue of revised standards for medicine by the accreditor, the Faculty of Medicine academics stated that they are nearly there, and on track for full compliance by the deadline of 2019. More attention and directed learning are needed in skills training in medicine, so that students and graduates are aware of the expectations at graduation for competence in key skills. This is an area for development which needs a proactive approach and directive from the ATSU. The Pharmacy program has workplace-based and practice-based skills integrated into the academic program.

The medicine programs have detailed national guidance around 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 by January 2019. The ATSU have assured the visiting team that they are on target to be compliant by this deadline.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Associated documentation supplied by ATSU
- Interviews with ATSU colleagues and stakeholders

Recommendations:

- The teaching of foreign languages and especially their volume and duration should be organised in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Taking into consideration the number of cumulative hours of study to reach the desired level (obviously B2, Independent User) the format and volume of foreign language courses as well as their duration must be increased

Suggestions:

- The educational programmes (excl. regulated programmes) may be designed in a way, that would allow the students to choose minor
- The number of minor programmes may be increased and offered in a way, that students feel encouraged to elect them
- It is advisable to expand the non-compulsory components of the education programs ensuring Academic Freedom of the students
- It is strongly suggested to decrease the amount of contact hours in order to ensure the development of research skills
- Increase the practical component in the programs that aim to instruct the specialists in applied fields

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

- ☐ Complies with requirements
- ☒ Substantially complies with requirements
- ☐ Partially complies with requirements
- ☐ 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

The ATSU written examinations are prepared by academics and delivered by the administration of the examination centre. Nature of examination formats are discipline-dependent, and the security of the process is assured through: (i) a unique coding system for respective students, (ii) a sophisticated computer-generated system for random order of questions. (iii) video observation of students being examined. These systems ensure equal and fair approaches.

The assessment system is described in curricula and syllabi which are available on the web-site or on e-dean's internal site, so students have access to information regarding the assessment system. Whilst compliant with the legal acts of Georgia, the assessment system is generally unified to an extent that most of the courses comprise the same assessment components (30% - Participation, 30% - Midterm exam, 40% - Final exam), which may not be in all cases compatible either with constructive alignment

of learning outcomes, learning methods and learning assessment. At the same time activities of the examination centre somewhat prohibit giving feedback to students making assessment system too formalised.

The issuing of grades to students following assessments are provided electronically to their individual corporate email. However, it would appear that feedback is only provided on request for the summative assessments. Although the overview of this feedback to students appears to be the responsibility of the faculty quality assurance, greater emphasis is required at all levels of the ATSU for training of academics in giving feedback and its timely delivery to students. Feedback on the assessment is one of many ways academics can support student learning by providing information on how students might improve and progress.

Regarding Medical program assessments, there are workplace-based assessments in practice which includes the evaluation of student professional behaviours and skills-acquisition, e.g. minor invasive procedures begins in the clinical skills laboratories, before they are performed on patients. From discussions with the Alumni, it would seem that the assessment of skills competence using 7-station Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCE; over 3 hours) is a recent innovation. This is worthy introduction to the medicine program, nonetheless for assessment reliability and validity, the OSCE examiner pool (which is very small) needs to be expanded in the short to medium term, and OSCE examiners trained to be competence in this type of assessment.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Associated documentation supplied by ATSU
- Interviews with ATSU colleagues and stakeholders

Recommendations:

- To revisit the ATSU learning and assessment policies, in order that all students are provided with written and /or verbal feedback on summative and formative assessments routinely, to aid their learning.

Suggestions:

- It is advisable to make sure that the assessment system becomes more pluralistic and manifold in accordance with individual needs of each course
- A recruitment drive is highly recommended for OSCE examiners to increase the numbers available. All OSCE examiners need to be trained in this type of assessment to assure the process is both reliable and valid
- Revisit how the medical students are assessed (skills, knowledge and professional conduct), to assure competence to practice at graduation

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

- ☐ 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.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

ATSU has staff management policy. ATSU developed a new Policy and Procedure for management of human resources. This was approved in 2017, consequently is not tested in practice to any extent. The regulations of university structural units, job descriptions, functions and duties were elaborated and introduced in 2017. Human resources policy has been created for the authorisation purpose by merging and revising the previously-existing documents. The university has already started implementation of this new HR Policy and has elaborated monitoring plan. Academic staff is involved in the decision-making via participation in academic and representative Boards.

Staff in the university are generally satisfied, according to a recent staff survey, and it is perceived as an attractive workplace, however there is a problematic to recruit qualified staff with academic degree.

In terms of selection and hiring, the university has qualification requirement for all positions, job descriptions, functions. The procedures for hiring staff are transparent. The procedures for election/appointment of administrative staff are stated in the university statute and Election Code of University. The procedures for the academic staff selection are described in the Rule of Appointment of Academic Staff (approved by the Decree #16(13/14) of Board of Representatives; 27.01.2014). The university disseminates information about competition on academic or administrative staff on the university web-site and University Newspaper. During 2011-2017 the total number of advertised job openings was 771, and total number of applications 943 (ratio1:1,2). The university is attractive for employment in this region, however it is a problematic to recruit qualified staff with academic degree.

Most of the academic staff members participating in surveys have >20 years of experience of working in ATSU. This is one rationale of the policy of attracting new academic staff. Up to 95% of staff members have never participated in international mobility programs. Although Erasmus+ schemes were noted, the actual number of students and academics with these opportunities was unclear - A pre-requisite was English language competence and it is available to medical students which was surprising given the fact that the regulators generally expect rigor in the knowledge and skills curriculum.

The selection of invited staff for teaching is based on decision of the head of the program without clear procedures. The requirement for invited staff and procedures of selection should be clearly followed, the information on employment criteria for invited staff position should be made public. The procedures for selection invited staff is initiated by heads of programmes, who themselves express clarity regarding proposals for appointments, which are agreed centrally however the criteria are not clearly defined and appear to be inconsistently applied and to this extent cannot be said to be transparent. The number of invited staff is very high. It is not perceived as a problem by the university, as administration sees a large number of invited staff as a factor that facilitates flexibility to accommodate continuously changing number of students. There are barely consultations offered for students by academic staff on academic issues (no concrete reasons and cases of taking advantage of this service could be named). No facilities (like offices and consultation hours) could be detected (although stated in SER and Syllabi), but certain auditoriums where professors "could" meet with students. Most of consultations seem to be given via email and phone. The relationship between high numbers of student suspensions, high numbers of invited staff and the management need for staffing flexibility needs consideration. The university should identify and address the reasons for and consequences of student status suspension and develop a means to track, analyse and reduce the number of status suspensions.

The university has procedures for adaptation/induction for new staff which is the responsibility of human resources, however this is not shared by staff within faculties, who see no need for such a programme at faculty level as new staff generally have an awareness of the university systems and procedures via previous employment as invited staff. In future the university is seeking to attract and employ staff from outside the region and country, it is suggested that the current adaptation programme is extended to include faculties.

In terms of staff evaluation there is an evaluation each semester, for administrative staff and a reporting system for academics, which includes, peer-observation, self-assessment and assessment of workload. However, there is no formal, systematic, procedure for measuring performance of academic personnel. The need of professional development of administrative staff representatives is determined by the heads of departments. This doesn't rule out the possibility of subjective approach to allocation of the resources. Awards are not incentivised, nor achievement based, a bonus is distributed to all staff twice annually.

The university has a staff development plan which draws on staff survey results. 3882 trained persons were trained in the Lifelong Learning Centre, with further training organised in teaching methodology by Quality Assurance Service. University has already identified the lack of English language proficiency and modern study methods and technologies as a weakness. Given the fact that internationalisation is seen as one of the main strategies, more emphasis has to be given to dealing with these issues. It is suggested to introduce a systematised, individualised approach which brings together performance evaluation and training needs. However, there are some needs, which are not revealed by staff survey, for example giving students effective feedback, supervising PhD students. Thus, in the planning staff development activities should be considered individualised needs and regular approach should be used. Within the Faculty of Medicine, there are opportunities for academic staff development through regular meetings held locally and across Georgia, and some examples of those attending international symposia. The academic freedom was acknowledged by these academics. Nonetheless there were differences of opinions which implied that greater access to training and language skills would be helpful (as would an increase in salary). The salaries for invited staff are based on contact hours, with these staff seeing their association with ATSU being kudos.

ATSU developed the rules for affiliation, (Decree #133 "On the Approval of Affiliation Rules"; 22 November 2017; Approved by the Board of Representatives). Terms and condition of affiliation are attractive, 466 staff from 478 (97,5%) is affiliated with ATSU.

ATSU sets benchmarks, however the target benchmarks in 2022 do not significantly improve some indicators, for example in case of Faculty of Medicine the percentage of invited staff will be again high.

Benchmarks	2018	2022
Academic staff/ Invited staff Ratio	0,36: 1	0,45: 1
Affiliated Academic staff/students ratio	0,02: 1	0,025: 1

The contracts of staff members are well structured and fair.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Associated documentation supplied by ATSU
- Interviews with ATSU colleagues and stakeholders

Recommendations:

- Develop a system (including facilities) of consulting for students on academic issues (presentations, papers, research plans, other issues)
- Disseminate information about staff competition (including information on employment criteria for invited staff position) not only on University web-site and newspaper, but as well of outside of University
- Reflect on the high numbers of invited staff and the rationale management need for staffing flexibility
- Enhance the System of rewarding and encouragement
- Enhance the strategy for staff development
- Develop a means to track, analyse and reduce the number of status suspensions
- Identify and address the reasons for and consequences of student status suspension

Suggestions:

Best Practices (if applicable):

- Peer attendance – observation of lectures and teaching sessions between colleagues designed to enhance teaching skills and learning methods

Evaluation

- ☐ 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

The university has elaborated a workload scheme which includes teaching (consisting of contact/methodic/organizational components) and scientific-methodic activities as well as other activities. The workload of the academic staff is 1500 hours per year, of which 250 hours are teaching contact hours and 1000 hours for scientific methodic activities. The workload of the invited staff is 1000h, of which 600 hours are for scientific methodic activities. The norms for workload are defined by the Decree #29 (17/18) of Academic Board approved on 5 December 2017 "On Approval, Determination, Registration and Performance Check Rules for Teaching and Scientific-methodic workload of ATSU Academic Personnel, Emeritus, Teachers, Invited Specialists through Employment Agreement and Hourly Paid Staff".

Both, teaching and scientific activity in the workload scheme include methodic component. Having methodic component in both type of activities may lead inaccuracy in the categorisation of performed works. For instance, currently preparation/updating of educational program, preparation of a syllabus, students' preparation for scientific conferences are included under scientific-methodic activities whereas it should be included under teaching-methodic activity.

The university has an elaborated methodology of defining the number of the staff (academic, scientific, invited). According SER there are 478 academic staff, 14 scientific staff (with contract) and 455 invited staff, administrative and supportive permanent 236 staff and 563 support staff with contract. Overall 50,5% of academic/scientific staff is invited. This elaborated methodology for defining the number of staff, ensures the sustainability of the programme. For example, at the Faculty of Medicine invited staff are perceived as a strength for the employability at ATSU, however as already mentioned (in Section 4.1) there is some concern about the impact that a high percentage of invited staff has, and the target benchmarks set for achievement in 2020.

<p>The age profile of the staff indicates that 150 academic staff (31,4%) is more than 65 years old. This is addressed within the strategic direction (1.1.5) in the Action Plan entitled “Elaborating, Introducing and developing a plan of recruiting qualified (including young) academic personnel”.</p> <p>The rules and conditions of awarding the status of emeritus at ATSU is proved by ATSU Academic Board (Decree #33(13/14) ; 12.02.2014). The number of Professor Emeritus is 30.</p> <p>Within the Faculty of Medicine, the number of Academic Staff is 32, The number of Affiliated academic Staff is 26 (81,3%). The number of invited staff-88 (73,3%). Academic staff/ Invited staff ratio is 32/88 (0,36:1). Academic and invited staff/students ratio is 120/1051 (0,11:1). Affiliated Academic staff/students ratio is 26/1051 (0,02:1). Age profile of the staff-20 academic staff (62,5%) is more than 60 years old. Academic staff retention rate is 100%. Workload of the staff is adjusted so that they can combine teaching and medical activities.</p> <p>With around 50% of academics being invited staff, some are practitioners in their field and perceive as a strength for the employability component of the programs, others are Ph.D. students whom they wish to nurture to be future. However, there was some concern about the high percentage of invited staff since their contracts require only one-months’ notice to the Rector when wishing to resign, so a risk to the smooth running of the ATSU programs.</p> <p>ATSU developed the rules for affiliation, (Decree #133 “On the Approval of Affiliation Rules”; 22 November 2017; Approved by the Board of Representatives). Terms and condition of affiliation are attractive, 466 staff from 478 (97,5%) is affiliated with ATSU.</p>
<p>Evidences/indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Evaluation Report (SER) • Associated documentation supplied by ATSU • Interviews with ATSU colleagues and stakeholders
<p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine the workload calculation to include all the time necessary for methodic activities. Total workload calculation also should include other jobs of professors at administrative or industry positions
<p>Suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the ratio academic staff/invited staff, especially at the Faculty of Medicine • Consider best international practice as potential benchmarks for target staff ratios
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input checked="" 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>

5. 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

<p>5.1. The Rule for obtaining and changing student status, the recognition of education, and student rights</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>Enrollment procedures for Georgian bachelor and master students are clear as they are defined by the Ministry of Education and applied correctly. Enrollment procedures for PhD students are well described, but they seem to be informal as in some cases candidates to be enrolled to certain programs are known before announcement of the place. Recommendation from the future supervisor is one of the required documents. This means there is very low probability for someone from outside the university to get</p>

involved in a PhD programme and suggests that the enrolment procedure is not as competitive as it could be.

Enrollment procedures for foreign students are clear from the web-page, but in fact most students communicate through the agencies or their friends, who had experience of studying at ATSU and not directly with university. The university reaches out to potential foreign students by agents and “word of mouth”. The minimal competencies of foreign students are obscured as they mostly deal with the agencies. The selection procedures used by the agencies are not clarified in the contracts - university does not request any level of qualification for enrollment. University states that only their English language proficiency gets checked. One of the foreign students at the interview session could hardly speak English, while being involved in medical studies for three years already. This approach cannot ensure sustained growth in foreign student number, which is one of the university’s proposed future strategies.

Students are satisfied with mobility procedures.

The Deans agreed that a significant challenge was acquiring fees paid by students. There is a system for paying their fees in instalments which may be initiated by students applying to the Dean and is particularly relevant for SES students (e.g. students from low income families, refugees, mature students with dependents). Stipends are also available for students to apply for. Nevertheless, there are high numbers of students with suspended status. Student fees are significant for the financial sustainability, and the visiting team was concerned about the relative numbers of students who have suspended their studies (with the exception of students on the teacher training program). Moreover, there appeared to be a discrepancy between the total number of students and the sum of the relative numbers of students on the different levels of award (see Appendix 1 below). The errors might suggest that a review of ATSU system for the audit of students’ status (registered and suspended) to ensure students are not ‘lost’, for this has financial implications for the university.

The reason for student status suspension are not properly tracked or analysed. The university doesn’t see it as its responsibility and there are no approaches undertaken to identify, what the university can do to guide the students better and address the reasons of status suspension. The impressions are based on assumptions. The panel members were told the reasons of suspension were tracked based on the student request forms, where exact reasons are indicated. On request the panel failed to receive summary or anyhow structured data, the examples of student’s requests were provided. In 2 out of 3 provided examples the reason of suspension was not indicated.

The rule of student body planning is in place but not known by some of responsible staff members. Still it needs revision as currently it disregards all students with suspended status. It can lead to extremely high numbers of students, which in case of returning to university studies cannot be accommodated.

The closure of a large number of PhD programs (28 out of 33) has left the PhD students from these programs with suspended status. Based on information from the interviewees the students had no objection (see section 3.1). But this fact does not correspond to the principle of student right protection.

Both the administration and students are satisfied with the level of student awareness regarding rights and obligations. Still not many students are aware of the content of code of ethics, knowing it can be found on web page. For some of the students the word “ombudsman” sounds absolutely new, which confirms neither is this institute introduced to the students. Although there is an induction for students no proper check about rights and responsibilities is provided.

The procedure of student appeal discussion for academic-related issues is in place, and some cases of such appeals have been demonstrated. The procedure of appeals regarding administrative issues seems to be rather informal - representatives of student support service, dean’s office, self-governance body claim to undertake such issues. Student has to decide where to go.

There is an ATSU Council guidance paper on the expected reasonable adjustments for students with a disability. Examples were given of how ATSU assists students with a physical disability, e.g. mobility, hearing.

Of note was the activities discussed with Student Self-Governance Group (sports, social, culture, scientific research) which may have been in place for some time. Having received recognition by the university comparatively recently, the ATSU has provided 50,000Laris for the student social needs. Student contracts are properly structured and protect lawful interests for students.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Associated documentation supplied by ATSU
- Interviews with ATSU colleagues and stakeholders
- Student survey results (Annex 13; Annex 20)
- Student contract samples (Annex 32)
- Student contract sample
- Code of ethics (Annex 15)
- Rule of student body planning (Annex 14)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic plan (Annex 1) • Examples of student requests for status suspension or termination (Requested documents) • Internationalization policy and related procedures (Annex 12) • Results of student academic achievement monitoring (Annex 21)
Recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure information about PhD positions and enrollment procedures is more publicly available to attract more candidates and create competition • Given the ambition to attract more international students, develop a structured approach to reach out them • Student status suspension level has to be recognized as a problem and it is recommended that a system is developed to track, analyse and reduce number of status suspensions • In cases of programme closure consideration of students' lawful interests should be undertaken and clearly evidenced
Suggestions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the ATSU system for the audit and tracing of students' status (registered and suspended) to ensure they are not 'lost' • Determine the structure, responsible for instructing students about all of their rights and obligations at university and monitor the work, as well as consequences of this intervention • Develop and implement a clear mechanism of addressing administrative issues and appeals raised by students
Best Practices (if applicable):
Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="radio"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements
5.2 Student support services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>Students are not supported in educational process planning, unless they ask the teaching staff for consultation. This is informal and not monitored. Educational process planning is not seen as a part of student support service unit's job. But still, students feel satisfied.</p> <p>Electronic system for academic records is not in place, students receive their marks per e-mail together with the marks of other group-mates. No one actually tracks the academic performance of the students. This needs to be addressed as it may be a step in dealing with the issue of too many students with suspended status. Student's academic performance should be monitored by the dean's office, but not all deans are aware of it. Some say it's the responsibility of program heads or QA office. This approach is not systematic, very informal and approaches depend on individual people rather than processes and procedures.</p> <p>Student support services have recently been revised. Students and even the support service representatives are not aware of their functions. Some functions are overlapping with other structural units. In the end most of the issues raised by the students seem to be addressed, but the system lacks structured approach and therefore effectiveness. For example, faculty consultation service, tutor service, self-government - all of them have stated identification of students' needs, assisting them with educational process planning as their duty. When student addresses the "service of communication with administrative and academic personnel" he receives response from the dean's office. "Student right</p>

protection" is claimed to be part of functions of most of the service units, including ombudsman and self-governance unit. The system is new and needs time to become embedded and its effectiveness is due to be monitored within the university scheme, so will be good to review after a year.

International students feel they get good assistance in official procedures (like documentation, etc.) from international affairs office. Student support services are efficient for assuring that documentations are available promptly for students to be able to renew their visas. However, the levels of support provided by the ATSU to assure socialization in the new country for their studies was not well-defined, however there is a well-developed system of peer support within the faculties for International students, both in socialisation and peer tutors for the Georgian language. ATSU provides financial support for these student-led activities. In the Faculty of Medicine, students are recruited from Nigeria, Iraq, India, Lebanon as well as Georgia. Students have language lessons in Georgian which helps with the language competence for communicating with patients. Students are chaperoned by tutors when in contact with patients, so they may also work as an interpreter if the patient does not speak English.

Students have their place in decision-making units, but they are mostly active at faculty-level, not the level of senate. In order to become a member of faculty council membership of self-governance is required - this approach needs to be revised. Student self-governance sees its functions in student support. The involvement in decision-making process to make the students' voice be heard is rather formal. There are some good examples of student initiatives being considered. However the role of student self-governance has to be revised and well understood as at the moment it is not representative, no foreign student representation is ensured, meetings are carried out in Georgian language and the role of mediation is not carried out. The reason for dissatisfaction of the students by self-governance organisation (reported in survey results) is seen to lie in too high expectations. These expectations need to be investigated and targeted.

Career support service in the university is also very new. It hasn't done a lot since a year and a half of its operation. There is not much experience to make a judgment about its current state, as students are not really being employed by means of this unit. As said, the database of potential employers is present. The feedback from students and alumni regarding their professional development hasn't been collected regularly, but first attempts are in place, which is a good step forwards a better understanding of student needs in terms of academic and professional assistance. There are some good cases of alumni being involved in educational process and program planning. The development of online network for alumni is a good initiative, which, if properly managed and promoted, can serve for fast, effective and comfortable interaction with them. Alumni report, that the cause of low employability is the fact that graduates do not want to work in the field of their studies, because it doesn't meet their expectations. It could be seen as an area for alumni to be involved in university life to help students understand the concept of the chosen programs, plan the study process according to their needs and interests. Students and Alumni advocated the development and signposting of skills for employability in order to facilitate their career development

As mention in Section 2.2, negative feedback in student surveys is not considered reliable by staff. The methodology is perceived to be flawed and/or the respondents who undertook the survey are believed not to be taking it seriously.

International mobility and project participation opportunities for students are restricted. Vast majority of the students (in some surveys up to 95%) report they have never participated in international events. This is recognized as a problem by HEI. Some cooperation with international institutions have been set up, university is involved in ERASMUS activities. However, the existing situation needs improving, especially taking into consideration the ambition of internationalization.

Extracurricular activities are in place. Most of the student we met participate in one or the other activity, although based on the survey results Most of the students are not participating in extracurricular activities. Some activities are planned with participation of schools, where the alumni are teaching.

Orientation week and procedures are well planned, documented and (according to student interviews) very effective;

Tutor institute is seen as a good practice by students and staff

The institution has well-developed mechanism to support student with low SES. Different groups are determined and assisted. Student interviews showed a number of examples of this approach. Very good experience of PhD student financing is in place (I think this has to be encouraged in Georgian reality). Still social background is referred to as the main reason of status suspension or termination.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Associated documentation supplied by ATSU
- Interviews with ATSU colleagues and stakeholders
- Student survey results (Annex 13; Annex 20)
- Alumni survey results (Annex 20)
- Database of potential employers (Requested documents)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online platform for alumni • Rule of supporting low SES students (Annex 35) • Planned and already fulfilled student projects (Annex 34) • Procedures related to student services (Annex 33) • Principles of PhD studies (Annex 40)
Recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All student support procedures need promotion and need to be pro-active • International student body needs to be involved in all aspects of university life, including decision-making units • Electronic system of study process management needs to be actively implemented and student academic achievements need to be monitored with reaction to the monitoring results • Student self-governance mission needs to be revised and understood by all stakeholders
Suggestions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop within the curriculum, and signpost in the learning outcomes, skills for employment to facilitate students in their career development • Generic 'soft skills' are included, i.e. around communication and professional attitudes and behaviours, for this can be preparation for life after graduation and employment • It would be beneficial to involve students in academic council • Alumni involvement in helping the students understand the duties and job descriptions of the graduates of each program at different jobs in order to facilitate their career planning
Best Practices (if applicable): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutorship - Senior students assist their young colleagues in all kinds of educational procedures -related issues, including professional orientation. All university bodies are satisfied. The tutors do not get paid, but they get privileged in other situations.
Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> x Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HEI, based on its type and specifics of its fields, carries out research/creative activities. • Ensuring the effectiveness of doctoral research supervision • 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 <p>The university has new regulations (since early 2018) governing their research development policy that aims at defining expectations and limited approaches of fundamental and applied research by academic personnel and students as well as assessing and improving the research quality. University administration has prepared a statute of a university scientific-research unit and the rules of its assessment, which makes it possible for the faculty to plan, realise, assess, and improve research activity. This proposed improvement is much needed because currently almost all research is visible only on a national level and only in the Georgian language (apart from Physics and Mathematics). The university is encouraged to monitor the development of this policy closely to ensure effective implementation.</p> <p>Currently, the university has 5 PhD programs. During the visit, the authorization expert's group met with Ph.D. students: The motivation for registering for a Ph.D. at ATSU was typical; the nature of the research, infrastructure, and expertise of university academics. Some Ph.D. students interviewed were ATSU Alumni.</p>

Each supervisor is allowed to supervise only three Ph.D. students. The frequency of face-to-face meetings between supervisors and students is variable, with significant points of contact happening electronically. The variability in the effectiveness of supervision was a significant reason for taking the decision to reduce the number of doctoral programs from 33 to 5 programmes. This is mentioned in section 3.1 above.

The levels of ATSU-funding for Ph.D. students were variable. Most students are self-funded or grant-funded (Rustaveli science foundation grants for PhD students). The students have a research methodology course with 5 credits (Modern teaching methods and technologies) in the first semester as preliminary training for their Ph.D. project. Some students have had the opportunity to spend time with international researchers, learning techniques relevant to the experiments for their projects but a number of students who are involved in foreign projects are few, because their English language skills are very low.

The minimum expected outputs for each student from June 2018 are to:

- Produce 3 research article for the duration of their doctoral studies,
- Make a verbal presentation of their work in the second semester of each academic year.

Previously the minimum required articles was one research article.

The University has to work on elaborating regulations with regards to the cancellation of number of doctoral programs. The University administration claims that the programs have been renewed and introduced again for accreditation. This requires time and the students of those programs will be obliged to pause their student's statuses for at least one semester, so the rights of active students are breached

There are public, transparent and fair procedures for the assessment and defence of dissertations which are relevant to the specifics of the field. The procedure was described in detail by relevant staff and PhD and students. One of the Ph.D. students we met had defended his thesis successfully on the previous day and confirmed the common format of the event: 5 ATSU examiners, 4 examiners (academics external to the university) and the whole defence was video-recorded and witnessed by friends and family.

A number of examples of research results being integrated into the teaching activities of the institution were provided, for instance, from the Faculty of Medicine, A social scientist academic (who is associated with the National Centre for Disease Control) is working with students on a research project around immunization, which is topical for it is acknowledged that Public Health and preventative medicine is an area for growth in Georgia.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Associated documentation supplied by ATSU
- Interviews with Ph.D. students and Ph.D. supervisors

Doc.<https://www.atsu.edu.ge/index.php/acad-council-separator/akad-sabcho-dadgenilebebi?task=document.viewdoc&id=608>

Recommendations:

- Monitor the research development policy closely to ensure effective implementation and ensure improvement on current situation
- Elaborate regulations with regards to the cancellation of number of doctoral programs
- Encourage academic personnel and the students of the Masters and doctoral studies to enhance foreign language skills, to be able to get engaged in international research and have an ability to publish work in foreign journals

Suggestions:

- It may be desirable to use Mendelys' program (<https://www.mendeley.com/>) , which is necessary for the PhD students and academic and research staff to perform well in various projects
- Greater clarity around the expectations for research, not just of the methodologies for the project, but more importantly training in: (a) the construction of a research question, (b) how the research question may be answered, (c) methodologies for competence in the analysis of data effectively

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

- ☐ Complies with requirements
- ☐ Substantially complies with requirements
- X 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

The university has a new system for supporting research. As it is new the results may only be seen after a reasonable period of implementation. The university research activities are supported by the University Structural Units, PhD Department, Office of International Relations and Strategic Development. The university has only 14 part-time researchers from other institutions from Georgia. (doc. from university). See section 6.1 above specifying the need to monitor implementation closely to ensure effective implementation.

The financial support of the research is provided from various sources, including from university budget approximately 7-9%, the budget of the faculty, funds allocated from various scientific funds for grant projects, NGO funds and funds of international organizations. The university payroll budget, which provides funds for individual scientific research; studies conducted within the Master and Doctoral Programs. 60% of academic staff and PhD students do not participate in international research projects, international scientific activities and mobility because of low English skills.

In the internationalisation process, within the framework of the ERASMUS + Program, the university will plan to increase the participation of young researchers and academic personnel in international mobility and other exchange research projects. The university has approximately 30 MoU with foreign partners (annex 41). As part of the recommendation mentioned in section 2.1 (Reflect and prioritise their activities for the best use of resources to augment their reputation to attract overseas collaborations and create critical mass for sustainability), the university should review its memoranda of understanding with overseas universities and focus on active partnerships rather than the volume of agreements, particularly with regard to research co-operation.

The Scientific Support Centre currently doesn't provide any assistance with project writing or reporting, however some PhD supervisors say, the centre is actively doing it, so they don't need to be actively involved.

The SER includes students surveys regarding international research activity and 95% of the students say, that they have not participated in an international project. 55% state, that they don't know and don't need international bases. Negative feedback in university wide surveys is not considered reliable by staff. The methodology is perceived to be flawed and/or the respondents who undertook the survey are believed not to be taking it seriously (See sections 2.2 and 5.2 for comment on university wide surveys).

Internationalisation is understood somewhat narrowly as participation in exchange programs like Erasmus+ does not take into consideration that internationalisation can be carried out on many different levels (like using international textbooks for teaching purposes or submitting articles in the international journals or applying the internationally established research methods). Above all it is concerning that the prevalent part of academic staff and students are not capable of foreign languages, thus not being able to take advantage of the access to the online data-bases provided by the university. As a result of this shortcoming they barely have publications in the internationally acknowledged scientific journals. The given situation has huge impact on the research conducted on PhD level. The absolute majority of the PhD thesis randomly inspected during the visit at the university revealed no methodological approach. Although the course in research methods is offered within the PhD programs, the interviews with the academic staff as well as PhD students confirmed a very low awareness of importance of recent research methods.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Associated documentation supplied by ATSU
- Interviews with ATSU colleagues and stakeholders, PhD students, Quality Assurance Office, representatives of the Foreign Affairs and Strategic Development Office, Heads of Programmes, Academic Staff, Scientific Research Centre representatives. Financial and Material Resource Office representatives
- Annex 13

Recommendations:

- University needs to implement its proposal to determine research directions
- Involve more academic and research staff, students in the development of research and to

<p>consider their interests in English language learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review its memoranda of understanding with overseas universities and focus on active partnerships rather than the volume of agreements, particularly with regard to research co-operation • University needs to establish the specific regulation regarding of research personnel evaluation; • University needs to establish the specific regulation regarding of involved young researchers and PhD students in scientific project and international mobility process • Develop language skills amongst research groups
<p>Suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The awareness of the recent research methods should be increased and implemented in research practice. The monitoring on the use of research methods might be very helpful in this regard • Therefore faculty development is need for researchers to develop their skills in constructing a research question, decisions on the most appropriate methodologies and experimental design to answer the research question, then the methods applied for data analysis
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p>X Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>
<p>6.3. Evaluation of Research Activities</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 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>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>ATSU Research Activity Assessment System is new and includes the assessment of academic personnel and assessment of research activities of scientific-research centres. Report on implemented scientific research projects in university we see in an annex 42 and annex 37(only for Georgian language).The university does not yet have independent research centres. They are involved in faculties' structure. (academic staff).</p> <p>In November-December 2017, the Marketing, Projects, and Events Management Service of ATSU conducted a study aimed at collecting information about "Job satisfaction and research engagement of ATSU academic staff". This is new regulation (2018) annex 11.</p> <p>268 respondents from nine faculties of the University participated in the survey. The university published a report on research outcomes. The results of the evaluation will be taken into consideration for further development of research / creative activities but during the visit, the authorization expert's group did not see this document. The authorization expert's group did not find this document in folders. The team could not see that an effective system for evaluating and analysing the quality of research/creative-arts activities, and the productivity of scientific-research units and academic/scientific staff, however it did note that a new approach was in place, together with proposals for such activity and as in sections 6.1 and 6.2 the university should Monitor the research development policy closely to ensure effective implementation and ensure improvement on current situation.</p>
<p>Evidences/indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Evaluation Report (SER) • Associated documentation supplied by ATSU • Interviews with ATSU colleagues and stakeholders • Interviews with the proposed Scientific Research Centre representatives
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>The University should develop a strategy that will soon (may be approximately 1-2 year) be able to the evaluation of Research Activities and Internationalisation of research activities</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p>

Best Practices (if applicable)

Evaluation

- ☐ Complies with requirements
- ☐ Substantially complies with requirements
- X 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

- 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.
- HEI offers environment necessary for implementing educational activities: sanitary units, natural light possibilities, and central heating system.
- Health and safety of students and staff is protected within the institution.
- HEI has adapted environment for people with special needs

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The university owns 22 buildings. 16 buildings are used to carry out the educational process, the others are applied for non-educational purposes: for the dormitory, sports facilities, clubs, warehouses, inventory placement, etc. The real estate is registered in the database of LEPL Public Registry. There was opportunity to visit some of the different campuses and partner organisations who are involved in the education of ATSU students. The university has medical staff and staff trained in first aid.

The university owns material resources that correspond to the mission statement and requirements for implementing educational programmes. The campus buildings contains foyer, recreation spaces, classrooms, administrative offices, space for group work, library, computer laboratories, student and staff canteens, gym, stadium. Safety regulations are observed in the building, ATSU has fire alarms, fire extinguishers and evacuation plan at every necessary point of the building. Buildings have proper sanitary units, some of them adapted for special needs. All, except for four buildings, have central heating and in areas without central heating have other forms of heating. The university has as a priority the installation of central heating system in all buildings All buildings have electrical power and lighting. Infrastructure needs further improvement as there are not projectors for all class rooms. Not all buildings are adapted for students with disabilities, although reasonable adjustments can be made for students with special needs. The team noted that if needed the university could give lessons to students with special needs individually on the first floor, but it was unclear how this could be managed as much specialised equipment in laboratories was housed above the first floor and it would be problematic to move all the equipment for a student with special needs. Consideration should be given to enabling access to all areas for students with special needs. Many teaching rooms had inadequate ventilation.

The Faculty of Medicine Building housed well-equipped clinical skills laboratories with seminar rooms juxtaposed for learning and feedback on skills, and a simulated pharmacy facility for training in the 'soft skills of communication. We saw various offices and classrooms, including a computer suite which was funded by a successful grant application. The biosciences laboratories were variable, some were well equipped with sealed floors and benches, but others were not as modern. A reading room has been configured in response to student feedback, and an elevator is being installed this year for assisting students with a disability. Although there was air conditioning, the ventilation and lighting was open to speculation. We visited a clinic, and the state-of-the-art Oncology centre which is well-equipped for teaching including teleconference and seminar rooms for teaching the clinical students. The ATSU has invested in clinical skills laboratories for simulated practice in advance of practice learning in the clinical setting.

Overall there are sufficient facilities for the university to deliver its mission and fulfil its activities but there could be further improvements as identified by the university. The university has improved and

invested in material resources during the past four years and plans to continue to do so to bring all material-technical resources in accordance with modern standards.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Associated documentation supplied by ATSU
- Interviews with ATSU colleagues and stakeholders
- Site visit

Recommendations:

- Ensure continuing investment in material resources
- Consideration should be given to enabling access to all areas for students with special needs
- Ensure that University buildings are sufficiently ventilated

Suggestions:

Best Practices (if applicable):

- Investment in clinical skills laboratories and affiliated tutors for students within the Faculty of Medicine to acquire skills in simulated practice in advance of practice-based learning in the clinical setting

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

7.2. 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

ATSU Library has 11 reading hall and book archive in different buildings. In 2017 a new building was built for new working zones and with modern book repository. Library has electronic catalogue.

ATSU Library fund includes books and el. Resources, international library el. database (EBSCO, JSTORE, Science direct, Cambridge University Press). According SER (p.7) usage of international scientific databases is 8 394; only data from EBSCO; by 31.01.2018, however during the interview was mentioned than usage of el. database is low.

Reading hall are equipped with computers, in library computers are connected to internet and there is Wi-Fi connection. Students have possibility to make photocopies or scanned of needed literature.

Library staff provides regularly training and workshops for students and staff.

Regulation and instructions for using library are available on ATSU web-site in Georgian, regulation of library and el. catalogue is in English language as well. Guide for using el. catalogue and el library is in Georgian. Library resources are constantly updated from the University Budget. The library of ATSU is open from Monday through Saturday from 9:00 to 19:00. ATSU Library is open for public.

Based on the survey results not many of the students use electronic databases neither do they feel the need of them. Library has the free access to the EBSCO, Cambridge Publishing, BioOne, ScienceDirect and Scopus databases through the university's unified computer network; and in case of research4life electronic databases (HINARI, AGORA, OARE, and ARDI), using the password. There are readings halls as well as computer hall with the wired and wireless network connected to the internet and the space for individual or group work.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Associated documentation supplied by ATSU
- Interviews with ATSU colleagues and stakeholders
- Visit to library facilities

Recommendations:**Suggestions:****Best Practices (if applicable):****Evaluation**

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

7.3 Information Resources

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

There are several auditoriums equipped with new computers, financed mainly by grants. There are more auditoriums with neither beamers nor computers. The university shows eagerness to improve its IT infrastructure (having 900 units of computer equipment for now instead of 500 units by 2011), but due to the lack of finances it seems to be achievable rather in a long-term perspective.

There is a renewable cable network available in entire university providing internet connection (100 MB/sec) in 24/7 mode. An Internet Lab "Free Attendance" equipped with 50 computers is freely accessible for students and staff members. However, this facility cannot be sufficient for a high school with over 8000 students. So there is an urgent need in more computer rooms where students could have access to internet and other software, which is already acknowledged by the university and picked up into its plan for 2018 (SER p. 111). There are several electronic services and electronic management systems (e-learning portal on the Moodle platform, the e-Dean system, a special program for examination purposes, the university corporate mail services, an electronic system of document turnover, Electronic Catalogue and Electronic Library) that have been implemented in the recent years. However barely 20% courses take advantage of the e-learning portal (SER p. 112) and it is mainly used for testing. The Electronic Dean's office is a very handy tool developed by the university staff member who is caring about the improvements. This system is implemented for I and II year students of all faculties except medical faculty. The program is available in Georgian language only as the main area of foreign student involvement is the medical faculty, for which the system still needs to be adjusted (taking into consideration specific curricula in medical field).

Discussions with the IT leadership indicated their awareness of the issues around internet security. The computers on campus are equipped with an antivirus software, whose bases are being permanently updated. Furthermore, the IT Support Service of ATSU makes sure the security of information by creating back-up copies and keeping them in a repository. The university servers are supplied with energy-saving devices and business continuity at the relevant structural units of university is ensured by generators.

ATSU has a functional web-page in Georgian and English languages. However, some shortcomings could be attested. No annual reports of administrative staff (rector, deans etc.) could be found on the web-site.

Neither the statistical information about university is available on the web site.

Evidences/indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Evaluation Report (SER) • Associated documentation supplied by ATSU • Interviews with ATSU colleagues and stakeholders • Tour of facilities • Web-site of the university
Evaluation <p><input type="checkbox"/> Fully complies with requirements</p> <p>X Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>
Recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The number of facilities with computer equipment should be increased providing more students with free access to information resources ○ ATSU should ensure the transparency of its policy by making the annual reports of structural units available on the web-site
Suggestions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The e-learning portal should become a general tool of teaching and assessment involving not just 20% of courses and not being used for just testing ○ The web-site should be made useful for the international students providing more information in English
Best Practices (if applicable):
7.4 Financial resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allocation of financial resources described in the budget of HEI is economically achievable ○ Financial standing of HEI ensures performance of activities described in strategic and mid-term action plans ○ HEI financial resources are focused on effective implementation of core activities of the institution ○ HEI budget provides funding for scientific research and library functioning and development ○ HEI has an effective system of accountability, financial management and control
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements <p>The main sources of funding for ATSU are from student fees and State grants, with other sources of funding arising from commercial activities, including, The Publishing House, FabLab – the modern technologies laboratory and rental of buildings.</p> <p>The gross budget is top-sliced to pay for the salaries, infrastructure and insurance, then the residue is allocated to faculties. The budget is set by Senate according to the ATSU priorities. Faculties provide details to the financial departments of their priorities for the academic year. Based on this information, faculty budget allocations are made and ratified by Senate. The Faculties budgets are decided using a formula, based on the buoyancy of student recruitment (Georgian and International) and the number of academic staff. Final decisions are made by the Head of Administration and ratified by Senate. Full details of the formula regarding how financial resources are allocated and the high numbers of students with suspended status introduce uncertainty however within these parameters. The in the budget of ATSU is (economically achievable, and effective in being able to implement the core activities of the institution as laid out in the strategic plans. Similarly costs for implementation of the strategic plan have been budgeted for.</p> <p>With respect to research and library resources, it was unclear as to the communication between the resource allocation for library resources and directives for purchase of books, journals and databases for use by academics and students. However, all staff expressed satisfaction with library resources and students expressed satisfaction with the library.</p> <p>There is some lack of clarity around the level of funding allocated to research.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) One group suggested 7- 9% of gross budget is allocated to research b) One group suggested 15 - 18% of budget is allocated to research c) One group suggested 1millionLari is allocated to research

Thus the lack of transparency around nature of information around resources would suggest that the system of accountability, financial management and control could be more effective.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Associated documentation supplied by ATSU
- Interviews with ATSU colleagues and stakeholders

Recommendations:

- That the ATSU implements a financial analysis system, for the allocation revenues and expenses to profit and cost centres respectively
- To perform profitability analysis for demonstrating transparency in financial management and reporting, for effective decision-making

Suggestions:

- Greater autonomy to Deans is needed for budgeting and activities

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

Appendixes

Table 1: Relative Numbers of Students with Suspended Studies Status

*Variation in data supplied note (see lines 1 and 10) for 353 students are 'lost' in the ATSU system
Data supplied in the ATSU SER in black – Information calculated from the ATSU data in Blue*

Line	Category	Number of Active Students [A]	Number of Suspended Students [B]	Total Number of Students [A + B]	% Students Suspended Status [B] ÷ [A+B]x100
1	Total Number of Students given by ATSU	8149	4155	12,304	33.8%
2	Bachelor	6574	3435	10,009	34.3%
3	Master	647	461	1108	41.6%
4	One Cycle	714	155	869	17.8%
5	Doctoral	138	104	242	43%
6	Teacher Training Program	76	0	76	0%
7	Georgian Language Preparation	0	0	0	0%
8	International Students	267	73	340	21.5%
9	Students with Special Educational Needs	11	2	13	15.4%
10	Numbers of Students (Lines 2-9)	8427	4230	12,657	33.4%
11	Difference between Totals Line 1 and Line 10	278	75	353	~3% students lost in system