განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Final Report on Shota Meshkia State Teaching University of Zugdidi Authorization

Expert Panel Members

Chair: Milan Pol, Masaryk University, Czech Republic

Members:

Salome Dzagnidze, Student Expert, Akaki Tsereteli State University, Georgia

Natia Chitashvili, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia

Murtaz Kvirkvaia, Labour Market Expert, Grigol Robakidze University, Georgia

Levan Tsagareli, Ilia State University, Georgia

Tbilisi

2018

Authorization Report Resume

General information on the educational institution

The higher education institution under review was established by the decree of July 13, 2007. It was a result of a merger of three different education institutions (Samegrelo Region – Zugdidi Branch of Ivane Javakhshivili Tbilisi State University, LEPL Zugdidi Professional Lyceum, and LEPL Senaki Agrarian-Economy College). The current Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi (ZSSU) was given to this institution in 2009.

At the moment, more than 500 active students are mainly studying in three master and eight bachelor programmes. The university also provides teacher training courses, Georgian language courses, 28 vocational programmes and 28 short term training/retraining courses.

Recent reorganisation led to a merger of three faculties into the only one: Faculty of Social Sciences and Health.

A total number of staff is 132, among them 40 academic staff, 43 other staff involved in the educational process, and 49 administrative and support staff.

Brief overview of the authorization site visit

The expert panel team on behalf of the NCEQE, met and had very helpful discussions with many different colleagues within the ZSSU. Areas of the university's work were appraised to ascertain compliance with the seven standards required by the NCEQE. The expert panel team met with the following members:

- ▪ Senior officers of ZSSU (rector, Head of administration)
- ▪ Members of Academic Council
- ▪ Members of Representative Council
- ▪ Group that wrote the Self-evaluation report
- ▪ Quality assurance department representatives
- ▪ Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Health
- ▪ Learning process co-ordination
- ▪ Heads of the programmes
- ▪ Faculty council
- ▪ Academic staff
- ▪ Invited staff
- ▪ Students of bachelor and master programmes
- ▪ Scientific and analytical centre representatives
- ▪ Lifelong learning centre representatives
- ▪ Human resource department and legal office representatives
- ▪ Examination centre, Foreign language centre representatives
- ▪ Alumni
- ▪ Employers
- ▪ Financial department representatives
- ▪ IT centre and Material resource management centre representatives

The expert panel team was given the opportunity to visit the various facilities of ZSSU, i.e. the learning resources and infrastructure, including the social spaces. In addition, the reviewer team was provided with a selection of theses and relevant contracts.

Throughout the whole process the expert panel team was provided with a very helpful support by NCEQE representative, Ms Sophio Vasadze, and during the visit also by her colleague, Ms Tamar Shengelia.

Overview of the HEI's compliance with standards

In general, the panel considers ZSSU as the university that is solid in many aspects of its operation. In our report, we have tried to point at positive sides as well as the sides that deserve attention. Most importantly, it needs to be said that the panel found that at the ZSSU some significant and relevant changes have already taken place recently, such as development of material basis of the university or moves towards more intensive internationalisation, for instance. Some other changes are "just in the process", for instance improvements of some programmes. And yet some issues deserve the attention for the near future, such as more emphasis on the research. This all by all gave the panel in overall a positive impression of the university, its management and its development. The panel´s evaluation of standards is as follows:

Standard 1 Mission and strategic development of HEI: Complies with requirements

Standard 2 Organizational structure and management of HEI: Substantially complies with requirements

Standard 3 Educational Programmes: Substantially complies with requirements

Standard 4 Staff of the HEI: Complies with requirements

Standard 5 Students and their support services: Complies with requirements

Standard 6 Research, development and/or other creative work: Substantially complies with requirements

Standard 7 Material, information and financial resources: Substantially complies with requirements

Summary of Recommendations

- For effective monitoring of the implementation of the three years' action plan, distinguish separately the financial resources necessary for the implementation of all specific tasks and activities in the three years' action plan.
- Clearly divide the functions of administrative bodies, in order to avoid overlaps, especially with regard to Quality Assurance and International Relations as well as Quality Assurance and Internal Audit, also Learning Process Management, Student Services and Life Long Learning.
- Make sure, that there is a Head of QAS at the Faculty level.
- Keep the exam papers stored for three years.
- Enhance the internal quality assurance mechanisms by hiring/employing the professional personnel (preferably with academic degree in social or educational sciences and/or an appropriate experience in sociological research) who would be in charge of continuous monitoring and evaluation of HEI's activities and performance.

- The surveys conducted by the QAS should be more specific, focusing on the problems and challenges of ZSSU and including more concrete recommendations about enhancement of educational quality and the performance of administrative and academic staff.
- It is advisable to develop educational programmes in applied fields addressing recent needs of the region.
- Introduce courses in research methods on the graduate (MA) level in order to ensure validity of results of research conducted by MA students. ZSSU should also provide opportunity for its teaching personnel to get acquainted with the recent research methods.
- Ensure using of recent data in teaching and research by encouraging its teaching staff to take advantage of recent scientific publications available online in international databases that are already made accessible for them on campus.
- Promote the election of non-compulsory components of its educational programmes (advisably by taking advantage of recently introduced LMS).
- Provide trainings in modern teaching methodology for its academic and invited staff in order to ensure, that every educational programme uses teaching and learning methods appropriate for its specifics.
- Take into consideration specifics of the field whenever elaborating assessment system (components, criteria etc.) for an educational programme.
- Have an assessment appellation system in place.

- Make sure, that the assessment system is used in order to give students feedback about goals achieved, gaps, and ways of improvement.

- Improve the foreign language literacy among the existing academic and administrative staff by providing gradual, stepwise training courses conducted on continuous basis.
- Increase the mechanisms of research skills development, skills and methodology of student research supervision, support sustainable and regular training opportunities for staff professional development, especially with regards to modern teaching methodology and foreign language proficiency.
- Consider the level of English language knowledge while recruiting the staff (both administrative and academic).
- Ensure the transparency of elective procedures for employment of subsidiary structural units.
- Reflect on student satisfaction etc. surveys in detail, focus on the problematic areas and create formal procedures to:
  - Conduct surveys;
  - reflect on the feedback (e.g solve problematic areas, in this case, create mechanism to decrease the number of students being not aware of apellation procedures);
  - Communicate carried out activities in response to identified challenges (to increase student satisfaction and make them feel valued).
- For the sake of convenience, establish Student Service Center or Student Counseling Center to accumulate student support services in one space and avoid confusion as well as function overlapping among the offices.

- It is recommended to enlarge the number of staff at Career Development Center, as considering the functions of this unit, only one person will not manage to deal with all the duties and responsibilities efficiently.
- Actively promote the use of best practices of research collaboration on national and international level.

- Stimulate the growth of research activities through increasing research funding and attracting relevant research grant projects, improvement of research infrastructure, level of research materials, number of scientific scholarships oriented on specific research directions.
- Attract young researchers and assign them to scientific research priorities to ensure long term development.
- Improve research supervision skills of academics.
- Ensure that funds allocated for research are adequate for supporting prioritized directions of the research fields, including motivating young scholars and attracting new academics.
- Deepen and develop new institutional collaboration with scientific centers, seek granting possibilities to obtain external funding.
- Increase and diversify research activities, train academics in research skills and contemporary research methodology on continuous and systematic basis.
- Ensure comprehensive implementation of the newly created research evaluation mechanisms and disseminate the criteria appropriately among academics.
- Ensure that functions of research support and management and research evaluation are properly distributed between scientific research and QA departments.
- Use research evaluation system for identification of future scientific needs, scientific research priorities and fields for improvement
- Library should be better prepared in terms of foreign as well as Georgian scientific literature to serve researchers, students and staff, support integration research and teaching and internationalization of research in general.
- E-library resources should be used more intensively and library administration should enhance advertising possibilities and provide continuous monitoring on the use of scientific databases and other e-library resources.
- Increase financial resources allocated to research support.

Summary of Suggestions
- Ensure that a candidate's vision and plans are presented and discussed prior to his/her election/appointment by the ZSSU community including administrative and academic staff as well as students and other stakeholders.
- Ensure that the students of all BA and MA programmes available at ZSSU are encouraged and able to participate in international projects and exchange programmes.
- It is advisable to revise the functions of the Examination Center considering the importance of giving feedback to students upon their exam papers.
- It is advisable that ZSSU encourages its teaching staff to introduce such assessment components (written tasks like academic papers, essays etc.) that would make the application of plagiarism detection tools and methods indispensable.
- The surveys conducted by the QAS should be more specific, focusing on the problems and challenges of ZSSU and including more concrete recommendations about enhancement of educational quality and the performance of administrative and academic staff.
- Revise the workload (amount of contact hours) of courses in such a way that students have more time for independent work (desktop research etc.), which would be more appropriate considering their employment rate on the one hand and the integration of study and research as one of the declared strategic goals of ZSSU on the other hand.
- Make sure, that the assessment system is used in order to give students feedback about goals achieved, gaps, and ways of improvement.

- Revisit the personnel (administrative and academic staff) evaluation system and use it as an useful tool for quality enhancement; Evaluation system should be based on identification of needs and impact evaluation, providing adequate financial resources for investment.
- Disseminate appropriately staff evaluation review system among university society for full efficiency of the mechanisms.
- Increase of the number of affiliated staff may serve as a mechanism for enhancement of research component of the professor in her/his workload.
- Appropriately maintain policy of flexibility of workload distribution to support young researchers willing to implement research scholarships and research projects abroad.
- Reduce the relative portion of teaching done by invited staff to increase the role and responsibility of academic staff. This may be advisable to the extent and rational possibilities of the university taking its territorial and geographical location into consideration.
- Reduce the relative portion of teaching done by invited staff to increase the role and responsibility of academic staff.
- Strengthen Student Discussion Board – "Satatbiro" via turning it into student assemblies where they decide what position should council member and self-government students have on draft decisions (what to vote for) of Faculty Councils and Representative Councils.
- Consider possibilities to effectively monitor and support alumni career development.
- Make the use of LMS (Learning Management System) obligatory to the lecturers.
- Increase availability of foreign scientific resources and databases and increase awareness of academic staff.
- Support and utilize institutional facilities, research infrastructure to develop prioritized fields of research to accommodate regional context to greater extent.
- Involve academics and researchers in self-evaluation of research, reporting on academic success and in this manner increase effectiveness of evaluation mechanisms for quality enhancements.
- Improve the conditioning system in Teaching University.
- Prepare and implement training of the staff (and students) to help them use appropriately IT platforms supporting directly learning and teaching.
- Continue in the development of adaptive environment for persons with special needs.
- Deepen cooperation with the business sector to provide additional financing sources.

Summary of the Best Practices

- Activities of the Career Development Centre: organizing one month carrier management-courses and professional orientation events for school pupils (memorandums with schools), inviting members of various enterprises to hold information meetings for ZSSU students, informing students about vacancies (also via website).
- Student Discussion Board – "Satatbiro".
- University dormitory.
- Rooms for kids.
- Video lectures.
- Public transport funding.
- ZSSU supports publication of student research papers. If this tradition will be enhanced and quality ensured, this would be good way to demonstrate that students are encouraged to be

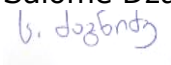active in research and HEI follows the policy to bring up young generation as future successful researchers.

Summary Table

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

Signature of expert panel members

Prof. PhDr. Milan Pol, CSc.

Digitálně podepsal prof. PhDr. Milan Pol, CSc.
Datum: 2018.10.23 16:24:08+02'00'

1. Milan Pol (Chair)
2. Salome Dzagnidze (Member)
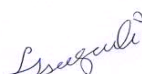
3. Natia Chitashvili (Member)

4. Murtaz Kvirkvaia (Member)

5. Levan Tsagareli (Member)

Compliance of the Authorization Applicant HEI with the Authorization Standard Components

1. Mission and strategic development of HEI

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

1.1 Mission of HEI
Mission Statement of the HEI corresponds to Georgia's and European higher education goals, defines its role and place within higher education area and society, both locally and internationally.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements
The mission of ZSSU is written clearly and in an acceptable way. It is comes out of the critical analysis of previous mission statement and the perceived needs, and it clearly formulates the role and ambitions of ZSSU for both regional, national as well as international contexts. It can be said that the mission of ZSSU corresponds to Georgia´s and European higher education goals, defines the role and place of ZSSU within higher education area and society.

The mission is balanced in its focus, it is built with a reference to democratic and humanistic ideals, and it emphasises educational tasks of the ZSSU but relates them also with the research, internationalisation, ensuring students' competitiveness on the labour market, and also management processes at the university.

The procedure of elaboration of the mission can be appreciated. It seems the mission is a result of a broad discussion process conducted within the ZSSU and beyond. The draft was elaborated by specially established working group with specific tasks assigned to each of the group member, the draft was made public with a possibility to comment on it. This ways, structural units of the university, faculty boards, academics, researchers as well as students were invited to discuss the draft. Also, alumni and employers reported their access to the mission development process. The final version was later elaborated with regard to these discussions. This seemed to be open and transparent process.

The mission is shared by the community of the institution and it is linked with other strategic development materials of ZSSU.

During the interviews the ZSSU representatives across the university have demonstrated that they are open to change and best practice in higher education.

Evidences/indicators
- The mission posted on the website of ZSSU.
- Decision N. 39 of the Academic council of ZSSU on Dec 26, 2016, on approval of Strategic Planning Methodology of Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi
- Decision N. 38 of Academic council of ZSSU as of Sept. 4, 2017, on establishing a permanent co-ordination group to meet requirements of HEIs renewed authorisation standards
- Order N. 01/24 of the ZSSU rector on Creation of working groups and distribution of tasks to meet the requirements of renewed authorisation standards of HEIs.
- Self-evaluation report
- Interviews

Recommendations:
N/A

Suggestions:
N/A

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

      ☒ Complies with requirements

      ☐ Substantially complies with requirements

      ☐ Partially complies with requirements

	☐ Does not comply with requirements

1.2 Strategic Development

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi has developed and approved strategic planning methodology, under which strategic planning is a participatory process. The Rector of the ZSSU coordinates the development of a strategic plan and effective implementation of the action plan.

In accordance with strategic planning methodology, ZSSU has developed a strategic development plan for 2018-2024. Strategic Development Plan is defined by 7 strategic goals (Contribution to the development of the society on the regional and national level through sharing the knowledge; Development of organizational structure and management system through effective use of quality assurance mechanisms in the management process. Developing internal quality assurance mechanisms; Developing Educational programs/ Implementing new educational programs (Academic and Vocational); Continuous Improvement of Management policy and procedures focused on university staff; Improving student support services and regulations of the educational process; Supporting Research activities; Developing material, information and financial resources of ZSSU for the sustainable, stable, effective and efficient functioning of the ZSSU).

The strategic goals are in line with the ZSSU's mission and based on the SWOT analysis carried out, mirrors the objectives and priorities of ZSSU, the history of the ZSSU and so on.
Along with the seven-year action plan, the university has worked out a three-year action plan. The three-year Action plan describes the tasks, activities, implementation deadlines, implementing structures, performance indicators for achievement of the goals.

University's 7 year strategic development plan and three year action plan covers Important aspects of functioning ZSSU: human resources; quality assurance, student services, educational programs, research activities, infrastructure and material resources,, etc.

For the purpose of financial support of the three-year action plan, the ZSSU has developed the document "The Budget of Activities planned within the three-year Action Plan under Strategic Development Plan". 2018-2020's forecast expenditures are as follows: Labor remuneration (Administrative) funding; Labor remuneration (academic) funding; Labor remuneration (invited personal) funding; Labor remuneration (Professional programs teacher) funding; Research financing; Financing of repair and rehabilitation expenses; Literature financing and so on. Also, in the forecast budget (2018-2020), the estimated sources of income are provided, but expenses are not defined by individual tasks and activities. Therefore, for effective monitoring of the implementation of the three years action plan, the financial resources necessary for the implementation of all specific tasks and activities in the three years action plan should be determined separately.

ZSSU has developed internal regulations and procedures for monitoring the implementation of the strategic development plan and the action plan. For the purpose of monitoring the implementation of the Strategic Plan of the Teaching University, there is a working group. The group consists of: Head of Quality Assurance Service, Head of Internal Audit Service and Head of Legal Service. Among the

presented documents is an annual report on the implementation of the Action Plan (2017). There are also reports of various activities carried out in the university in previous years.

From the presented documents and interviews it is clear that Teaching University is carrying out and in the future plans to contribute to the development of the society. Also, the ZSSU promotes the implementation of the principle of lifelong learning.

From an interview with stakeholders, it is clear that they were participating in the development of the University Mission and Development Plans. In addition, they share strategic goals defined by the strategic development plan.

Evidences/indicators

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

- Strategic development (7-year) plan of Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi.
- Action (3-year) plan Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi.
- Strategic planning methodology of Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi.
- "Methodology for the monitoring of effective management and assessment system of Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi", approved under the decision #43 (December 26, 2016)
- Rector's order №01-01/36 (October 27, 2017)) on, the establishment of working groups for the purpose of monitoring implementation of the strategic development plan of Teaching University.
- Decision N54 (December 21, 2017) of Academic Council of Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi on "approval of the annual report of the Action Plan of Teaching University (2017)".

Recommendations:

- For effective monitoring of the implementation of the three years' action plan, distinguish separately the financial resources necessary for the implementation of all specific tasks and activities in the three years' action plan.

Suggestions:

N/A

Best Practices (if applicable):

N/A

Evaluation

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

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

---

2. Organizational Structure and Management of HEI

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

2.1 Organizational Structure and Management

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Organizational structure of ZSSU has gone through several changes during the last years in order to achieve goals defined in its strategic plan as support of "the accessibility of education based on the lifelong learning and internationalization of educational programmes" (SER p. 21). With this purpose a Lifelong Learning Centre (2015), a Foreign Language Learning Centre (2013-2016) and a Career Development Centre (2012-2014) came into being predominantly as the results of international cooperation in framework of various TEMPUS-programmes. Another change in ZSSU's organizational structure took place in February 2018 implying a merger of three faculties (Business and Law, Humanities, Health) into one unit that is Faculty of Social Sciences and Health. As explained by the members of ZSSU administration, this reorganization had been caused by financial reasons and has to be seen as an optimal solution for maintenance of the educations programmes with decreasing number of students. Furthermore, Internal Audit Office was established "in order to improve the system of financial management and control" (SER p. 27). As the representatives of ZSSU claimed, the former system was based on annual reporting, whereas the enhancement of internal audit mechanisms made the management process better controlled by introducing quarterly reporting. However, the actual need of the Internal Audit Office could not be evidenced.

Although functions and responsibilities of ZSSU's structural units seem to be clearly defined in terms of provided documentation (provisions and regulations of structural units), some overlaps in functions of different units could be detected during the visit. For instance, the difference in functions of the Quality Assurance Service and those of the Office of Internal Audit are not sufficiently clear. Through the interviews it could be found out, that "the QAS leads the process, whereas the Internal Audit controls things / works rather practically" focusing mainly on the control of material resources. Another peculiarity of the organizational structure of ZSSU is that its QAS directs not only the quality assurance process but also the internationalization policy, "because the QAS has to share and implement international experience". While there are no regulations prohibiting the QAS of a HEI to fulfil both functions, still it is highly doubtable that a management body consisting of three members (head of QAS, a staff member in charge of the academic programmes, and another one responsible for the vocational programmes) could at the same time coordinate international projects in an efficient manner.

During the visit ZSSU's administration representatives informed the panel members that the elections of the Head of Quality Assurance Service had been just a few days earlier as required by the Law on Higher Education.

One more thing to be considered about the organization structure of ZSSU is the functional profile of the Lifelong Learning Centre of ZSSU. Alongside serving the public by offering free training courses (in frame of UNO funding) the LLLC deals with spreading information about LMS (Learning Management System) among students or coordination between university departments, which exceeds the scope of functions that a LLLC could fulfil and overlaps with the functions of the Learning Process Management Service as well as those of a Student Services Centre (not available at ZSSU as an extra structural unit). Similarly, the benefits of the ZSSU Examination Centre remained somehow unconvincing. Although eliminating biased assessment through securing anonymity of students, the

operation of the Examination Centre leaves barely any opportunity for teaching staff to give feedback to students. What is more, the Examination Centre does not retain the exam papers longer than a month, which contradicts the law, demanding that the exam papers have to be kept stored for three years.

The management bodies of ZSSU are elected in accordance with predefined requirements, which are approved by the Academic Board and in line with legislation. However, no convincing evidences of the fact that a candidate's vision and plans are always presented and discussed prior to her/his appointment/election could be provided.

The decisions of the management body are registered in the Chancellery of ZSSU. The document processing is regulated by the statute of ZSSU Chancellery and corresponds to the established legislation. ZSSU has recently launched an electronic document processing system ("e-flow") purchased by the Ministry of Education. ZSSU has also a plan of the business processes continuity that contains regulations about risk management.

ZSSU has elaborated internationalization policy and supports international mobility of students and staff, which can be evidenced by the number of international educational projects, that ZSSU has participated in since 2012: EMINENCE I and II, EMBER, EFFORT, HERMES, CASEDE, PICASA, NISPACEE, DARE, STAR, INTEGRITY – each of them having impact on organizational structure and educational quality of ZSSU. ZSSU's leadership shows awareness of the importance of foreign languages skills for effective internationalization by offering free English courses for a few of its staff members every semester. Still only two of BA programmes were selected for Internationalization purposes (Business Administration, Public Governance) (SER p. 30), since only the students of the mentioned programmes were expected to demonstrate the appropriate readiness and potential.

Evidences/indicators
- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Associated documentation supplied by ZSSU
- Interviews with ZSSU colleagues and stakeholders

Recommendations:
- Clearly divide the functions of administrative bodies, in order to avoid overlaps, especially with regard to Quality Assurance and International Relations as well as Quality Assurance and Internal Audit, also Learning Process Management, Student Services and Life Long Learning.
- Make sure, that there is a Head of QAS at the Faculty level.
- Keep the exam papers stored for three years.

Suggestions:
- Ensure that a candidate's vision and plans are presented and discussed prior to his/her election/appointment by the ZSSU community including administrative and academic staff as well as students and other stakeholders.
- Ensure that the students of all BA and MA programmes available at ZSSU are encouraged and able to participate in international projects and exchange programmes.
- It's advisable to revise the functions of the Examination Center considering the importance of giving feedback to students upon their exam papers

-

Best Practices (if applicable):
- Activities of the Career Development Centre: organizing one month carrier management-courses and professional orientation events for school pupils (memorandums with schools), inviting members of various enterprises to hold information meetings for ZSSU students, informing students about vacancies (also via website).

Evaluation

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

☐ Complies with requirements
☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements
o   ☐ Does not comply with requirements

2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms

o   Institution effectively implements internal quality assurance mechanisms. Leadership of the institution constantly works to strengthen quality assurance function and promotes establishment of quality culture in the institution.
o   HEI has a mechanism for planning student body, which will give each student an opportunity to get a high quality education.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The administration of ZSSU provided the results of survey conducted during the last year. Most of them are general satisfaction surveys of students and members of administrative staff. Some of the results of students' surveys have been used in order to modify and improve academic programmes. There is also a performance evaluation system for the academic staff in place. However it is restricted to a rather statistical picture of their workload distribution not indicating any problems and challenges to be addressed in order "to increase the productivity of affiliated academic staff" (SER p. 28), i.e. to encourage the academic staff to conduct a high quality research resulting in scientific papers. An extra salary has been mentioned in the interviews with ZSSU's administration members as the only measure to be taken in case of exceeding the average workload by an academic.

The evidence of monitoring for students' academic performance was provided as well, however no strategy of utilization of the monitoring results could be detected. More importantly, the conclusions found in all the survey results provided by ZSSU seem to be somehow superficial and freely interpreted to an extent that it causes certain doubts about appropriateness of survey methods and instruments and thus the professionalism of the survey team in general.

ZSSU plans student body taking into consideration its financial and other resources. A document describing the methodology of determining the marginal number of students was provided and seems to be the main methodological manual for planning student body.

When planning the student body ZSSU's administration takes into account mainly the material-technical base and the human resources; the methodology seems to be relevant and appropriate.

Evidences/indicators

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

Recommendations:

- Enhance the internal quality assurance mechanisms by hiring/employing the professional personnel (preferably with academic degree in social or educational sciences and/or an appropriate experience in sociological research) who would be in charge of continuous monitoring and evaluation of HEI's activities and performance.
- The surveys conducted by the QAS should be more specific, focusing on the problems and challenges of ZSSU and including more concrete recommendations about enhancement of educational quality and the performance of administrative and academic staff.

Suggestions:
N/A

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

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

2.3. Observing Principles of Ethics and Integrity

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

ZSSU has a code of ethics that, according to the interviews, is made familiar to the most of teaching and administrative staff by the dean and the heads of educational programmes. The code of ethics is also supposed to be attached to contracts signed prior to employment. The Code of Ethics is available on the web-site of ZSSU. (http://www.zssu.ge/zssu2/node/36)

Only one recent case of the violation of the codes of ethics could be recalled. It was solved with a very little mediation of administrative bodies between the student and the professor themselves. Furthermore, a member of academic staff is reported to have been discharged several years ago because of violation of contract conditions (absence from a lecture).

ZSSU prevents plagiarism by organizing trainings and information meetings with students informing them about the rules of plagiarism prevention. In an interview it was pointed out to some plagiarism cases that were detected in BA thesis. Usually they are handled as mistakes, upon which students are requested to correct their papers. Recently a digital tool (Turnitin) has been purchased in terms of a TEMPUS project that will serve to detection of plagiarism cases. So the mechanism of plagiarism prevention is at a launching stage (cf. SER p 35).

As to principles of academic freedom, new staff seems to get informed about them by the members of HR Office. Academic freedom is apparently applied in terms of defining the assessment components, deciding on ECTS number for courses as well as electing teaching sources to be utilized in a course.

Evidences/indicators
- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Associated documentation supplied by ZSSU
- Interviews with ZSSU colleagues and stakeholders

Recommnendations
N/A

Suggestions:

It is advisable that ZSSU encourages its teaching staff to introduce such assessment components (written tasks like academic papers, essays etc.) that would make the application of plagiarism detection tools and methods indispensable.
Best Practices (if applicable):   N/A
Evaluation   Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard   ☒ Complies with requirements   ☐ Substantially complies with requirements   ☐ Partially complies with requirements   ☐ Does not comply with requirements

3. Educational Programmes

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

3.1 Design and Development of Educational Programmes
HEI has a policy for planning, designing, implementing and developing educational programmes.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements   ZSSU has a methodology for planning and development of educational programmes involving the QAS, academic and invited staff, students and employers. Development of a curriculum is usually initiated by the Rector who gathers a working team consisting of academic staff professors and invited lecturers of the related field especially for this purpose. The working team is coordinated by the head of a programme, who divides the functions between the members of the team. Together they develop a curriculum in collaboration with the QAS taking into consideration the Regional Development Strategy, the results of surveys and demands of local employers. After that the programme is sent to the Academic Board for approval.   Amendments of a curriculum are carried out based on surveys conducted by the QAS. As a result of such a survey, for instance, the practical component has been expanded (from 5 to 10 ECTS) and a SPSS component has been added to some of the programmes. No annulments of any educational programmes with enrolled students have taken place so far. Nevertheless ZSSU's administration shows readiness and flexibility concerning the preparation of individual educational programmes if needed.   In the course of interviews it became evident, that several educational programmes of ZSSU (like those in Law, Public Governance and Elementary Education) have been developed in order to meet the needs identified by regional and local authorities. More importantly, these programmes might be seen as an opportunity for local students, who lack financial support sufficient for moving to other university towns, to get access to higher education on the spot, thus preventing young people from leaving the region.   It is worth mentioning, that some of the educational programmes at ZSSU as those in Georgian Philology and History appear to have political significance, since there are several students from the neighbouring conflict region (Abkhazia) enrolled on these programmes. The mentioned programmes convey an alternative and less biased view on Georgian history and culture and contribute to the maintenance of Georgian language in the region.

ZSSU has a regulation about developing and annulling the programmes (Appendix 29). However this very document does not ensure the completion of a programme by a student in case of its annulling. So it would be indeed advisable that in case of annulling of educational programmes ZSSU grants the students opportunity to smoothly complete their studies.

Evidences/indicators

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

Recommendations:

- It is advisable to develop educational programmes in applied fields addressing recent needs of the region.
- It is advisable that ZSSU encourages its teaching staff to introduce such assessment components (written tasks like academic papers, essays etc.) that would make the application of plagiarism detection tools and methods indispensable.
-

Suggestions:

N/A

Best Practices (if applicable):

N/A

Evaluation

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

☐ Complies with requirements
☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

3.2 **Structure and Content of Educational Programmes**

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

ZSSU follows current legislation and ECTS guidelines while developing educational programmes. Moreover ZSSU demonstrates certain flexibility in terms of defining the number of ECTS points to be allocated to each course, thus ensuring the correspondence of actual workload of courses with number of ECTS points. However a vast majority of courses offered at ZSSU have a workload of 49 hours per semester, which undoubtedly can cause certain inconvenience considering the fact that many students are employed already during studying at the university. Consequently, very low attendance could be attested according to a survey provided by the ZSSU during the site visit (answering the question if teaching staff miss a lecture, more than 70% of respondents said, that they do not know).

While learning outcomes of the educational programmes at ZSSU are mostly in line with the corresponding level of higher education and National Qualification Framework (including Elementary

Pedagogy as a field regulated by state), there are certain concerns to be expressed with regard to a number of skills and abilities to be developed on the graduate level:

1. Teaching of research methods. Neither a course in research methods was found in MA programmes in History and Georgian Philology, nor could relevant competence be attested among the MA students of ZSSU during the interviews. Consequently, the MA thesis written in the mentioned fields lack any reference to or reflexion on the research methodology, thus making the results of the research invalid.

2. Using the recent data. According to National Qualification Framework, the students of graduate level are expected to develop ability to synthesize information innovatively based on recent data, which is usually covered by a special course in Academic Writing (for MA students) as well as other courses. However, no such course could be found in the graduate programmes of ZSSU.

3. Although claiming that the abilities in question "are developed within the courses" by utilizing digital media for slide shows, online communication and research ("providing links to online-sources"), the staff involved in teaching on the graduate level does not seem to be aware enough of importance of the retrieval of recent data, resulting in the fact, that barely any international sources are used in the research papers (thesis, articles) produced at ZSSU.

4. Communication skills in a foreign language. Since the knowledge of English language on the B2 level is a prerequisite for admission to graduate studies, ZSSU does not offer any language courses for its graduate students. However, as interviews revealed, the foreign language skills of MA students are in fact insufficient for academic purposes.

On the undergraduate level certain restrictions in terms of opportunities to elect non-compulsory components of an educational programme could be detected. Strikingly, very few students elect minor programmes due to some restrictions set by the faculty administration. For years there was no other mechanism of registration for an elective course but with help of faculty administration. Hopefully the given situation will change after introducing LMS.

Teaching and learning methods indicated in the programmes are somehow homogenous not reflecting specifics of the field. Still ZSSU's administration showed awareness of the fact, that training in teaching methodology for the academic staff members is needed.

The up-to-date information on educational programmes including course catalogues is available on the web-site of ZSSU.

ZSSU attaches great importance to students with IDP background, students from Abkhazian region and employed students creating for them individualized education programmes. However there are no students with special need at ZSSU yet. The catalogue of the programmes is published on the web-page of the teaching university.

Evidences/indicators

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

Recommendations:

- Introduce courses in research methods on the graduate (MA) level in order to ensure validity of results of research conducted by MA students. ZSSU should also provide opportunity for its teaching personnel to get acquainted with the recent research methods.
- Ensure using of recent data in teaching and research by encouraging its teaching staff to take advantage of recent scientific publications available online in international databases that are already made accessible for them on campus.

- Promote the election of non-compulsory components of its educational programmes (advisably by taking advantage of recently introduced LMS).
- Provide trainings in modern teaching methodology for its academic and invited staff in order to ensure, that every educational programme uses teaching and learning methods appropriate for its specifics.

Suggestions:

- Revise the workload (amount of contact hours) of courses in such a way that students have more time for independent work (desktop research etc.), which would be more appropriate considering their employment rate on the one hand and the integration of study and research as one of the declared strategic goals of ZSSU on the other hand.
-

Best Practices (if applicable):

N/A

Evaluation

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

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

3.3 Assessment of Learning Outcomes

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Assessment components in the majority of syllabi are somewhat homogenous, which can be explained by non-reflected utilization of a template provided by the faculty administration.

The students of ZSSU are informed about assessment system in the first lecture and via LMS in addition to syllabus that contains information about the assessment system as well.

Giving of feedback upon assessment of written tasks seems to be somehow hindered because of the intervention of the Examination Centre. The assessment criteria seem to be transparent.

Complaints regarding assessment (if any) are discussed and solved rather privately so that no appeals occur. Hence the effectiveness of assessment appellation system could not be evaluated.

Evidences/indicators

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

Recommendations:

- Take into consideration specifics of the field whenever elaborating assessment system (components, criteria etc.) for an educational programme.
- Have an assessment appellation system in place.
- Make sure, that the assessment system is used in order to give students feedback about goals achieved, gaps, and ways of improvement.

Suggestions:
N/A

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

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

4. **Staff of the HEI**

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

4.1. Staff Management
o   HEI has staff management policy and procedures that ensure the implementation of educational process and other activities defined in its strategic plan.   o   HEI ensures the employment of qualified academic/scientific/invited/administrative/support staff.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements In terms of fair, equitable and transparent process, ZSSU has adequate regulations and procedures in place for managing human resources. ZSSU has adopted independent acts determining staff management policy, employment, remuneration and labor conditions of academic, invited staff and subsidiary structural units' employees, staff performance efficiency evaluation. Hence, most of the regulations have been adopted recently, it should be noted that HEI stands in the way of considerable changes and progressive development. Presented ratios between academic and invited staff; academics and students; administrative staff and students; administrative and academic staff, also benchmarks established are reasonable to ensure effective functioning of academic programs, implementation of goals determined in strategic plan. Recruitment in general and selection for academic and administrative positions in particular are governed by transparent, equitable and fair university-wide procedures. SER indicates that recruitment and selection procedures of personal is based on the principles of transparency and publicity. Though, during the interviews it was identified by representatives of HEI that recruitment of subsidiary administrative units' personnel is not a public and transparent process. Job openings and information about vacancies for subsidiary administrative units' working positions are not publicly announced on the website of the university. This contradicts information indicated in SER and the law on Higher Education of Georgia (Art. 3, part 2 („o")) envisaging publicity and transparency of competitions and recruitment procedures. Job openings for subsidiary administrative units' personnel should be widely announced, be real and in line with legislation.

Despite the fact that HEI has system and corresponding regulations of evaluation of staff work performance, efficiency of evaluation system still requires careful consideration. During the interview representatives of administrative bodies could not recall the latest recommendation they had received from QA department as a form of performance improvement. Inefficiency of evaluation system is also caused by inappropriate distribution of functions between managerial bodies. QA department is granted wide, general and sometimes immeasurable functions, including internationalization and coordinating international projects. QA department was not formed on the faculty level (until September 3, 2018) which contradicts the law on High Education and Charter of the University. International scientific projects are guided by QA department and it questionable how this function interacts with the functions of scientific department. What is the interaction between functions of scientific department and QA department in the process of identifying scientific research priorities and forming international scientific relations and selecting institutional partners abroad is vague. Duplication of the functions and overlap between responsibilities inherently determines the inefficiency of staff evaluation performance. Three persons are employed in QA department and together with all-encompassing functions they are also responsible for continuous monitoring, assessment, reporting and providing recommendations for administrative and academic staff performance. According to the charter of the QA department this structural unit ensures publicity of renewed, objective and impartial information (art.18). HEI should provide more accessibility of evaluation of staff performance, results and improvements achieved. QA should delegate important functions to corresponding managing bodies that will ensure efficiency of staff management mechanisms, QA should ensure quality rather than forming the quality itself.

HEI's academic staff is not comprised with assistant professors. Representatives of HEI stressed the importance and its institutional readiness to attract PhD students and support their academic growth in order to link them to the university institutional success. University has the system of remuneration encouragement for research achievements that will essentially serve the goal of research support. This policy should be enhanced and promoted. As HEI has very few research projects with participation of young researchers (one of the projects has just submitted for obtaining funding from Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation), university should enhance the mechanisms of academic growth and professional development for its affiliated and academic staff, as well as new academics.

Evaluation system of staff performance efficiency should include clear criteria for evaluation of research, teaching and supervising skills. Master and Bachelor theses submitted to the panel members revealed considerable lack of research supervision in terms of compliance with academic standards (established by the university) and appropriate research methodology.

Scientific Research department should implement research support functions more effectively in terms of training academic staff in drafting research projects, grant applications (narrative/financial), obtaining scientific scholarships (at least nationwide). HEI should support academic staff by increasing portion of international research materials, foreign teaching and research literature available at the library. In this way innovative research and internationalization of teaching and research should be institutionally enhanced and promoted.

During interviews HEI representatives have shown their readiness for enhancement research support function of the university with regard to insuring indexation of research publications of academics in google scholar, in national or international peer-reviewed journals/databases, citing of foreign professional literature in research works, indicating foreign literature in syllabi (at least as a source of additional literature). HEI representatives stressed that this kind of academic success will become a strong mechanism of evaluation of research and teaching succession. Academics stressed during

interviews that the university has just begun training its staff in using scientific databases. Information given in SER that HEI supports integration of staff scientific publications in Elsevier databases is not verified.

HEI should provide more efficient peer review procedure of faculty publications in terms of compliance with academic standards and usage of foreign scientific resources and latest research achievements in research/teaching process.

Functions of Scientific research department are vague in terms of identification of scientific research priorities, assignment of young researchers to them and selecting target national or international institutional partners according to these priorities.

HEI is implementing projects supporting modern teaching methodology, integration of plagiarism detection program and academic honesty through quality learning and teaching (Academic Integrity for Quality Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Institutions in Georgia (INTEGRITY) and Sustainable Learner-Centered Teaching _ Advanced Resource for Georgia and China (STAR). Several courses have been integrated within educational programs due to participation in above stated programs. But skills of modern teaching, research and supervision methodology (for MA and BA research works) still need improvement through continuous trainings. Enhancement of such kind of skills has already been planned by the university together with the projects already being implemented. Practical courses, internships in educational programs sometimes introduce teaching methods and assessment system that is incompatible with learning outcomes. For instance, multiple choice questions and written exam in theory cannot be regarded as appropriate assessment method of professional skills development through internships. Teaching methods and assessment forms are identical in most of the syllabi that verifies that academic staff still needs continuous trainings in modern teaching methodology. Successful implementation of existing projects will lead academic staff to identify how individual needs and learning outcomes of the course impact on diversification of teaching and assessment methods.

Number of academic staff slightly exceeds the portion of academic personal. Supporting young academics and attracting young researchers will enable HEI to cover at least mandatory courses of educational programs by academic staff members. Supporting young generation professional development through involving in research projects, scientific academic networks, granting scientific and teaching mobility scholarships will enable HEI to increase affiliated staffs level and ensure that their intellectual resources are allocated to the university academic development and more profound supervision ensured for research work and academic success of the students.

HEI should attract young staff for specific research projects (at least available on the national level) and also in identified prioritized fields of the research (construction, education, and agrarian) to form solid foundation of research development for the university. E.g. Projects that have been submitted by the university for obtaining funding from Rustaveli National Science Foundation included young researchers, PhD students within the project research staff. HEI should increase number of such kind of projects with participating of young scientists. Through this way HEI should enhance effective

research and teaching support mechanisms that will enable academic staff to provide up to date and relevant knowledge through educational courses based on latest achievements of the science.

In line with its institutional mission, emphasis on enhancement of research and internationalization, the university has planned English language gradual trainings which is verified by the orders of Rector (issued in October 2017 and April 2018, SER). University structural unit Foreign Language Center was founded in 2014. During the interview its representative indicated that 10 persons have been trained since October 2017 through 6-month training course. The university should provide English language training courses more on regular bases and for wider spectrum of academics and staff members.

Lack of foreign language proficiency both of academic and administrative staff which was also proved during interviews (mostly conducted in Georgian), will be considerable obstacle to administrative staff in participating staff mobility programs and giving proper service. Lack of foreign language literacy will not allow academic staff to provide contemporary research development, access to international resources, participate in research projects and obtain international scholarships, provide effective supervision of students in obtaining and usage of foreign literature in teaching, particularly, in research process.

Evidences/indicators
- Self-evaluation report
- Interviews

Recommendations:
- Improve the foreign language literacy among the existing academic and administrative staff by providing gradual, stepwise training courses conducted on continuous basis.
- Consider the level of English language knowledge while recruiting the staff (both administrative and academic);
- Increase the mechanisms of research skills development, skills and methodology of student research supervision, support sustainable and regular training opportunities for staff professional development, especially with regards to modern teaching methodology and foreign language proficiency.
- Ensure the transparency of elective procedures for employment of subsidiary structural units

Suggestions:
- Revisit the personnel (administrative and academic staff) evaluation system and use it as an useful tool for quality enhancement; Evaluation system should be based on identification of needs and impact evaluation, providing adequate financial resources for investment.
- Disseminate appropriately staff evaluation review system among university society for full efficiency of the mechanisms.

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

Evaluation

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

  ☐ Complies with requirements
  ☒ Substantially complies with requirements

  ☐ Partially complies with requirements
  ☐ Does not comply with requirements

4.2. Academic/Scientific and Invited Staff Workload

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The student/staff ratio on average is quite satisfactory and workload is quite adequate. It would, however, be advisable to reduce the portion of teaching done by invited staff to increase the role and responsibility of academic staff and its institutional devotedness to ZSSU´s institutional success.

Due to it revised institutional mission, HEI is oriented and ambitious to enhance research development. For abovementioned purpose, its advisable for the university to increase the number the affiliated staff to enhance research component in workload. Hence, quantitative interaction of affiliated staff towards academic and invited staff (23/83) at this moment is reasonable and provides rational basis for future improvement.

ZSSU should support participation of young researchers in scientific research scholarships and research grant projects that may be administered in other HEIs of Georgia or abroad. Accordingly, ZSSU should support flexible distribution of the workload for young researchers to release them from mandatory teaching hours in case of participation in research projects or conducting research in scientific centers abroad.

HEI has prominent academics in the list of invited staff, but besides their competence and qualification it is of utmost important to consider, academics' overall workload in other HEIs. This criterion should be taken into account from the stage of recruitment process.

Evidences/indicators
- Self-evaluation report
- Interviews

Recommendations:
- N/A

Suggestions:
- Increase of the number of affiliated staff may serve as a mechanism for enhancement of research component of the professor in her/his workload.
- Appropriately maintain policy of flexibility of workload distribution to support young researchers willing to implement research scholarships and research projects abroad.
- Reduce the relative portion of teaching done by invited staff to increase the role and responsibility of academic staff. This may be advisable to the extent and rational possibilities of the university taking its territorial and geographical location into consideration.

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

Evaluation

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

5. Students and Their Support Services

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

5.1. The Rule for Obtaining and Changing Student Status, the Recognition of Education, and Student Rights

- o For each of the educational levels, HEI has developed regulations for assignment, suspension and termination of student status, mobility, qualification granting, issuing educational documents as well as recognition of education received during the learning period.
- o HEI ensures the protection of student rights and lawful interests.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The expert panel has identified that Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi has developed regulations for assignment, suspension and termination student status, mobility, qualification granting and recognition of mobility, which was confirmed by the contract samples, Rule for Regulating Study Process, SER, and interview with the students. Information regarding the abovementioned is publicly available on the website.

For creating student-friendly environment, the university has elaborated a manual (which can be found on the website as well) for students, which covers all the information that newly enrolled student might need. During the interviews, it was assumed that the students are mostly aware of all the procedures related to student life. However, there are still some issues for further development such as availability and transparency of appellation procedures. Despite the fact that the university has a rule on Conduction and Appellation of Examinations (annex 45) in place, depending on the research conducted by the university on the program Business Administration, 62.5% of the students who participated in the survey did not know about appellation procedures (annex 25, p. 35). On the other hand, during the interviews with the students it appeared the students could not formulate exact steps of appellation procedures, but they said that in case of having complaints about exam results or having issues with the lecturer, they would approach to the Dean and discuss this topic with her.

At the beginning of each academic year, freshmen students have different meetings with various offices of the university. They are provided with the information about career center, lifelong learning center, student self-government, Dean's office etc. The students are informed about their rights and obligations included in the contracts.

Students confirmed that their engagement in university life was satisfying for them. They have representation at the Faculty Council as well as the Representative council. The members of these councils are elected by the university student self-government and the students elect the members of the self-government.

The university has created a Student Discussion Board – "Satatbiro" (SER/GE, 60). The aim of this opportunity is to increase student involvement in the university management process. The board involves vocational students, BA and MA students, members of student self-government. During the interviews, the students confirmed participation in this body and mentioned that they had a chance to discuss different topical issues existed at the university. It was also emphasized that this was a way to involve vocational program students in HEI life. It would be welcome if the students strengthened this body, do regular meetings, and use these meetings as a tool for self-government representatives and council members to agree on students' position on the draft decisions to be made at Faculty and Representative councils. This could increase trust between the students and their representatives, create mutual understanding and eliminate gaps between their visions. The students would feel that their voice is truly heard by the university authorities and the representatives are medium of communication, not decision makers on their behalf.

Evidences/indicators
- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Associated Documentation supplied by ZSSU
- University web site (http://www.zssu.ge)
- Interviews with ZSSU stakeholders

Recommendations:
- Reflect on student satisfaction etc. surveys in detail, focus on the problematic areas and create <u>formal procedures</u> to:
  - Conduct surveys;
  - reflect on the feedback (e.g solve problematic areas, in this case, create mechanism to decrease the number of students being not aware of apellation procedures);
  - Communicate carried out activities in response to identified challenges (to increase student satisfaction and make them feel valued).

Suggestions:
- Strengthen Student Discussion Board - Satatbiro via turning it into student assemblies where they decide what position should council member and self-government students have on draft decisions (what to vote for) of Faculty Councils and Representative Councils.

Best Practices (if applicable):
- Student Discussion Board - Satatbiro

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

     ☐ Complies with requirements
     ☒ Substantially complies with requirements

     ☐ Partially complies with requirements
     ☐ Does not comply with requirements

5.2 Student Support Services
- 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

ZSSU does not have a separate Student Counseling Office/Student Service Center. However, student-consulting services are provided by different offices.

Study process management coordinator at the faculty level is responsible for conduction the process of student individual consultation. Consultation hours are publicly available on the university webpage. Consultation schedules are grouped according to the educational programs, where a student can find a course, name of the lecturer, day, time and room number where she/he can approach the lecturer for consultation (http://www.zssu.ge/zssu2/node/1418). The students confirmed that they were provided with individual consultation service and the information was available on the web page, which was also confirmed by the academic and invited staff.

One of the responsibilities of Lifelong Learning Center is to provide the students with assistance in case they experience some technical or content-related problems with LMS (Learning Management System).

Distribution of different student services to various offices can be a bit confusing to a student and it was a case during the interview, when one of the students named lifelong learning center as an office where she/he could address in case of having financial issues, and the Dean's office was mentioned as a place where one can ask about mobility procedures. It would be more convenient if ZSSU had Student Service Center or Student Counseling Center to accumulate student support services in one space and avoid confusion.

The university has established a Career Development Center, which aims at providing the students/alumni with career services to acquire necessary skills for employment, helping them with building close relationships with the employers and increasing employment opportunities. While interviewing the students, it was obvious that they were aware of this office as the activities conducted by career center were mentioned (seminars, workshops, CV writing trainings, job interview etc.).

It is worth mentioning that Career Development Center consists of one full-time person who conduct all kinds of activities/trainings (and invited experts from different enterprises "share their experiences with the students" from time to time), for instance they provide specific courses and other services. Career center could still benefit if strengthened at the university by equipping it with more responsibilities and accountability to efficiently trace alumni career development, give personal careers advice, do annual report on conducted activities and study effectiveness.

During the site visit, employers confirmed the fact that university facilitates: 1. employers' involvement in the creation and implementation of educational programs (the university and employers gave recommendations to create some more MA and vocational Programs, employers meet the students and share profession related expertise, Young Lawyers Association recommended the university to create imitation court hall); 2. implementation of internship and practice (employers named specific numbers of students doing internship at different institutions including Young Lawyers Association, Samegrelo Regional Archive, GPC pharmaceutical chain, private pharmaceutical company, local government etc.).

QA service of the university conducts information sessions in order to increase students' awareness about Erasmus exchange programs, places the information on the website, creates booklets, leaflets, carries out individual consultations (SER/GE, 64). Students named exchange programs and they knew the students who had opportunity to study abroad. However, the number of students participating in international exchange programs is very low (2013 - 2017 only seven students) (appendix 25, p.27).

ZSSU has Learning management system and Moodle platform. Both of them are newly established and are still in the process of development. LMS is already being utilized and Moodle platform will be opened just before the beginning of the academic year. During the interview with the students, it was identified that the students are aware of LMS specifications, what kind of information they can get,

about the feedback feature of the system etc. The system is equipped with all the necessary features that learning management system is supposed to have. LMS link is available on the university web site. During the interview with the academic and invited staff, it was mentioned that the students are informed about their exam results either from the lecturer or at the Dean's office. This implies to the fact that the work with LMS system needs to be encouraged among the lecturers to manage shift from traditional to modern way of communication.

ZSSU students are encouraged to participate in various sports, arts and educational activities (conference, intellectual games) (annex 47) organized by the university and student self-government. The university has "A Rule for Funding the Students Participating in University Extra-curricular Activities" (annex 48). During the interviews the students named the extra-curricular activities they had participated in.

Students stated that ZSSU considers their socio-economic conditions by offering them flexible tuition fee payment mechanisms – 5 options (annex 44). On top of that, the students mentioned that the university did not suspend their status after failure to pay for one year and distributed the amount over the rest years of studies.

ZSSU made an agreement with Zugdidi municipality local government that ZSSU students will be exempt from public transportation fee.

The university has fully furnished dormitory for the students from Abkhazia. It is free for the students and those intended for short stay. There is a room for kids in the dormitory as well as in university main building to support the availability of education for young families.

Evidences/indicators
- Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- Associated Documentation supplied by ZSSU
- Site visit to university facilities.
- Interviews with ZSSU stakeholders
- University web site (http://www.zssu.ge)

Recommendations:
- For the sake of convenience, establish Student Service Center or Student Counseling Center to accumulate student support services in one space and avoid confusion as well as function overlapping among the offices.

- It is recommended to enlarge the number of staff at Career Development Center, as considering the functions of this unit, only one person will not manage to deal with all the duties and responsibilities efficiently.

Suggestions:
- Consider possibilities to effectively monitor and support alumni career development.
- Make the use of LMS (Learning Management System) obligatory to the lecturers.

Best Practices (if applicable):
- University dormitory.
- Rooms for kids.
- Video lectures.
- Public transport funding.

6. Research, development and/or other creative work

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

6.1 Research Activities

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

In line with its mission ZSSU has made research and innovative activities its important strategic direction, aiming at the promotion of research activities, international collaborations and publications, high quality standards, integration research and teaching. Despite the fact that the HEI shows research potential and considerable strengths, limited funding stand in the way of a full academic success and full efficiency. Lack of adequate research infrastructure, restricted accessibility to foreign research materials and books at the library, few grant projects and lack of external research scholarships in many cases is felt to be a most pressing problem.

Annual university conferences, publication of conference materials, established academic and citation standards for scholarly works, can be regarded as considerable step taken and already achieved outcome by the university in the direction of research development. University has begun implementation of the plagiarism detection long-term program, due to progress in this direction university has renewed publication of conference materials temporarily suspended for the reasons of plagiarism instances. The fact that university renewed scientific publication series certify that HEI has achieved considerable progress with regard to academic integrity of research activities. This progress and research development policy guarantees research quality throughout the institution.

Due to modification its institutional mission HEI is oriented to enhance research component not only on Master but also on Bachelor level. To accomplish this mission university should enhance academic staff's supervision skills for student research.

Evaluation of bachelor and master theses of the students revealed that supervision of the student research should be conducted in much appropriate manner in order to ensure research papers' compliance with academic and citation standards, research methodology and secure risks of plagiarism. Bachelor/Master theses, defended successfully by the students, often reveal lack of uniformity of citation standards. Peer review process of the university latest publications (conference materials etc.) has improved significantly compared with last years' research publications. University research policy is oriented to ensure that modern research achievements are integrated in paper works. Conference papers as well as student research papers reveal lack of foreign literature and usage of international scientific databases. This shortcoming has already been identified by the university in SER. Accordingly, university acknowledges the utmost importance to increase the level of citation of modern research literature in scholarly works in order to guarantee that contemporary research achievements are reflected in scholarly

publications. Representatives of the university and academics indicated during interviews that training of academic staff as well as students in using available scientific databases has become essentially intensive in last several months and full awareness of the staff in this regard will be soon achieved

For integration of research and teaching, scholarly works of the institution should be available not only in the library, but also accessible online in electronic databases of the universities. Syllabi should contain latest publications of academic staff as mandatory literature and stipulation of foreign resources as auxiliary literature to promote integration of modern research tendencies and contemporary knowledge in educational process.

Academic standards for drafting master theses established on the faculty should contain detailed evaluation criteria for public defense procedure before the defense committee and these standards should be strictly observed and ensured by the master thesis supervisors. The written and narrative evaluation of bachelor/master theses submitted by the supervisor should be specific, detailed, contain reference to established academic standards of evaluation, reveal corresponding incompliance with citation rules etc. in order to develop and support students' research skills and improvement of his research methodology skills.

HEI should identify and target institutional partners nationwide and on international level according to scientific research priorities in education, agrarian and construction field. HEI should improve evaluation system of research efficiency (participation in international conferences, integration of publication in international or national peer-reviewed journals, participation in specific research grant projects, involvement in national scientific activities requiring less financial recourses, participation in scientific scholarships and exchange programs, can be used as effective criteria for appropriate evaluation) and use it as an effective tool of research quality improvement.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-evaluation report
- Strategic plan
- Interviews
- Documents provided by ZSSU during the site visit, such as master/bachelor theses, evaluation standards of scholarly works, supervisors written evaluations of student research papers.

Recommendations:

- Actively promote the use of best practices of research collaboration on national and international level.
- Stimulate the growth of research activities through increasing research funding and attracting relevant research grant projects, improvement of research infrastructure, level of research materials, number of scientific scholarships oriented on specific research directions.
- Attract young researchers and assign them to scientific research priorities to ensure long term development.
- Improve research supervision skills of academics.

Suggestions:

- Increase availability of foreign scientific resources and databases and increase awareness of academic staff.
- Support and utilize institutional facilities, research infrastructure to develop prioritized fields of research to accommodate regional context to greater extent.

Best Practices (if applicable):

N/A

Evaluation

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

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

6.2. Research Support and Internationalization

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The review panel members see that HEI has a strong ambition derived from its modified institutional mission to improve conditions for research and enhancing its attractiveness for national and international young researchers. ZSSU expressed readiness that university will accommodate all relevant internal and external funding to link young researchers to new directions of research and integrate national and international scholars in joint research programs. For that purpose university policy is oriented to accumulate and develop all research support mechanisms in terms of fostering international collaboration, grant seeking, providing adequate infrastructure, improvement of research support function of the university

Panel believes that research support function, existing within the competence of scientific research department, should be enhance to accommodate institutional interests and individual needs of academic staff. During the interviews, it was stressed by the representatives of HEI that in case of demand and request of academic staff university will finance corresponding scientific activities of the staff members and financial and institutional support of the research should be priority of the university finance policy Panel believes that HEI should itself support and promote not only formation of institutional possibilities, but also attraction of external sources of funding by formation appropriate institutional relations.

HEI should support/ train university academics, young researchers in drafting scientific research grant projects, promote their participation in national and international conferences, research and teaching mobility programs, timely on continuous basis disseminate information and raise awareness of available grant and scholarship possibilities. The panel has found this not yet to be the case.

University needs to improve internal funding allocation for research and increase external funding opportunities. These opportunities may be acquired not only on international level, but also by using national funding opportunities (e.g. Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation).
 HEI should take measures to publicize the research achievements and integrate them in teaching process. HEI should support not only university conferences but also, participation of academic staff in at least national conferences and their involvement in national scientific network which may be more realistic requiring minimum financial expenditures and burden for ZSSU.

Improvement of research methodology, identification of research priorities considering regional context will increase attractiveness of ZSSU for young and new researchers who will dedicate their intellectual resources to the university, develop specific applied field of research and deliver notable, credible and innovative research.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-evaluation report
- Documents supplied by ZSSU during the site visit
- Interviews

Recommendations:
- Ensure that funds allocated for research are adequate for supporting prioritized directions of the research fields, including motivating young scholars and attracting new academics.
- Deepen and develop new institutional collaboration with scientific centers, seek granting possibilities to obtain external funding.
- Increase and diversify research activities, train academics in research skills and contemporary research methodology on continuous and systematic basis.

Suggestions:

N/A

Best Practices (if applicable):
- ZSSU supports publication of student research papers. If this tradition will be enhanced and quality ensured, this would be good way to demonstrate that students are encouraged to be active in research and HEI follows the policy to bring up young generation as future successful researchers.

Evaluation

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

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

6.3. Evaluation of Research Activities

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

ZSSU has adopted research evaluation mechanisms, evaluation indicators and corresponding regulations for appraisal of research activity of academic and invited personnel. According to the SER, these regulations have been adopted recently, that underlines that university is oriented to enhance and analyze the quality of research and other research-related activities in terms of effectiveness and efficiency, as it was also confirmed from the meetings of the panel members during the site visit. Since evaluation system has been adopted recently, this system needs to be implemented in an appropriate and integrated manner and properly disseminated among the academic society of the university.

University has identified in its SER that research evaluation methodology and corresponding appraisal criteria are the areas that still need to be improved by the HEI. The efficiency of evaluation system will be essentially determined how the personnel will be informed about and acknowledged with the benchmarks and research efficiency criteria. Also, research efficiency will be ensured if the academics and researchers will themselves be involved in research evaluation process, continuously report on

implementation of research activities and analyze their academic progression. In this manner, evaluation function of research efficiency will not be left solely to QA department. Effective implementation of research evaluation system will enable the HEI to identify future needs and priorities of prospective research development

Evidences/indicators

- SER
- Regulations on workload of academic personnel
- Rules adopted for evaluation of research efficiency
- Interviews during the site visit

Recommendations:

- Ensure comprehensive implementation of the newly created research evaluation mechanisms and disseminate the criteria appropriately among academics.

- Ensure that functions of research support and management and research evaluation are properly distributed between scientific research and QA departments.

- Use research evaluation system for identification of future scientific needs, scientific research priorities and fields for improvement

.

Suggestions:

- Involve academics and researchers in self-evaluation of research, reporting on academic success and in this manner increase effectiveness of evaluation mechanisms for quality enhancements.

Best Practices (if applicable):

N/A

Evaluation

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

☐ Complies with requirements
☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements
☐ Does not comply with requirements

7. Material, Information and Financial Resources

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

7.1 Material Resources

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi has a material resources (fixed and current assets) in Zugdidi and in Senaki. The ZSSU uses its material resources in Senaki to carry out vocational programs, The resources available in the city of Zugdidi are used for both Master's and Bachelor's academic programs, and vocational programs. There are 30 auditoriums in the city of Zugdidi to carry out educational programs (master, bachelor's and vocational), with total area of 1874.0 sq.m. In Zugdidi base, including the special spaces allocated for vocational programs, the study area is 2436.0 sq.m.

During the visit to the university, the team of experts implemented the tour of facilities, according to pre-designed site-visit plan. As a result of the survey, the panel found out that the ZSSU has a continuous water supply system, central heating system, educational audiences equipped with relevant inventory, information-technology equipments, space for group work, sanitary nodes, library , conference rooms, archive and other necessary spaces. Continuous electricity supply system is provided on the basis of an individual contract. The ZSSU has medical cabinet with first aid equipment. Teaching University have hire medical staff. HEI have security staff and security video recording facilities.

The lecture halls/rooms of ZSSU have both natural and artificial lighting. Sanitary nodes are arranged and separated. The heating and ventilation system works properly and the technical condition of the system is satisfactory. (LTD Zugdid "Expertise" – expertise acts). Expertise acts and other documents confirm that buildings suitable for exploitation. The fire safety requirements of the building are also protected. It should be noted here that in some of classrooms there was no conditioning system.

The examination of ZSSU by the experts confirms that the university has an adaptive environment for people with special needs (Ramps; Specially arranged sanitary node; The parking space from which it is possible to reach the building; Methodology for the development of individualized educational programs and so on). The construction of the elevator is not yet completed. According to the information from representatives of ZSSU, the installation of lift will be completed in the near future. The experts requested documentation confirming of the lift installation process, which was presented by ZSSUas a contract with LLC "Art Building". The subject of the contract is procurement of lift arrangement in the building of ZSSU.

The interview with staff and students revealed that the ZSSU provides adequate training and working environment. Based on the experience of previous years, the interviewers noted that the ZSSU takes account their demands and opinions regarding material resources.

Evidences/indicators

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

- Interviews with staff and students
- Tour of Facilities
- Extracts from Public Registry
- Regulations of the Material Resources Management
- Inventory of materials
- Instruction of the fire safety security
- Regulation rules of the doctor.
- State Procurement Agreement # 66
- Expertise Acts - LTD Firm Zugdidi "expertise"
- The rule of ensuring safe working environment

Recommendations:

Suggestions:
• Improve the conditioning system in Teaching University.
• Continue in the development of adaptive environment for persons with special needs.

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

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

ZSSU owns library resources that meet the needs of educational process of HEI. Library offers a range of services to teaching, learning and research activities, including access to international digital databases.

The correlation between syllabus references and library stock is quite high. Literature listed in the syllabi is available in the book stocks which are constantly updated by the demand of academic staff, students and scientific research department. The panel members had possibility to evaluate documents of HEI where academic staff demands became the basis for purchase of the literature. The panel members reviewed syllabi of newly established courses (e.g. Mediation) and revealed the demand of academic staff to accommodate the course with relevant new literature. Among relevant documents were the books donated to the university library. The panel finds it remarkable that library lacks foreign research literature for accommodating increased and broadened research interests of staff and students. This is determined by the fact that corresponding foreign language literature and some cases latest relevant Georgian publications are not indicated in the syllabi of educational programs. HEI allocates funds for enriching library resources based upon review of the syllabi and demand from the academic staff members, students. Almost all representatives of target groups of professors and students underlined university's increased efforts (organized informational meetings, trainings) in preparing staff and the student body for wider usage of electronic library resources. Library personnel underlined that they had already enhanced corresponding trainings and provided technical instructions for usage of scientific databases available in the computer system of reading halls. In case of increase of demand of foreign scientific literature and latest editions from academic personal HEI has allocated financial resources to meet that demand.

The library is the member of consortium organized by National Science library which provides requested literature to the university per its request.

Training students and staff on how to fully use e-library resources so far only serves rather low numbers. HEI representatives, academic staff and students underlined that ZSSU has just began active informative trainings and dissemination of possibilities to use scientific databases throughout the university. Students during the interviews found it difficult to recall scientific articles last obtained by

the use of scientific databases. Better advertising the possibilities and continuous supervising from the library staff may help to attract more users and to improve service.

Book archive, reading hall, library staff office space, meeting and group workspace, IT equipment space is satisfactory to great extent, except for lacking conditioning system in the reading hall of the library. Reading hall is equipped with appropriate inventory, including:

● Computers connected to internet, and possibilities for using printer, copy machines, and scanners.

● Library resources, both paper-based and electronic is constantly updated based on recommendations of scientific and quality insurance developments, considering educational program learning outcomes and referenced bibliography. Access to scientific databases is basically insured. Insignificant technical errors should not be taken into account for overall assessment of accessibility of resources.

● Budget allocation for library is satisfactory and HEI should increase the portion of foreign research publications and latest editions of professional literature in particular fields of education.

Evidences/indicators
- Self-evaluation report
- Strategic Plan
- Action Plan
- Interviews with relevant staff and students

Recommendations:
- Library be better prepared in terms of foreign as well as Georgian scientific literature to serve researchers, students and staff, support integration research and teaching and internationalization of research in general.
- E-library resources should be used more intensively and library administration should enhance advertising possibilities and provide continuous monitoring on the use of scientific databases and other e-library resources.

Suggestions:
Non-binding suggestions for further development

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

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

☐ Complies with requirements
☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements
☐ Does not comply with requirements

7.3 Information Resources
- 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

ZSSU has created the infrastructure for information technologies to support learning/teaching process and some other relevant processes at the university. These infrastructures are administered by IT center and the rules for the functioning of this center as well as of the infrastructures are accessible and were approved at the university.

There seems to be sufficient support of learning/teaching process by computers and other relevant technologies (15 data projectors, 5 interactive boards etc.) at ZSSU at the moment. Wi-Fi facilities are also in place.

Some IT platforms are also gradually being introduced in the management of the university life (unified email system and more) and this relates to student services and some other activities of the university, too.

The IT platforms to directly support learning and teaching are, however, relatively or even brand new for the ZSSU practice (such as LMS, Moodle). The team administering these platforms seems to be well prepared. This will need a special attention to make teaching staff and consequently students acquainted with these facilities and their potential so that they will use them appropriately – some training could be beneficial in this respect.

IT support of the library can also be seen as well sufficient.

The ZSSU website provides necessary information in Georgian language and very basic information in English.

Evidences/indicators
- Self-evaluation report
- Strategic plan
- Interviews
- Website of ZSSU

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

☒ Fully complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements
☐ Does not comply with requirements

Recommendations:

N/A

Suggestions:
- Prepare and implement training of the staff (and students) to help them use appropriately IT platforms supporting directly learning and teaching.

Best Practices (if applicable):

Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions

7.4 Financial Resources

o   Allocation of financial resources described in the budget of HEI is economically achievable

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi has the rule of creating and approving of the budget, defining income sources and allocation of expenses. ZSSU´s budget is approved by the Representative council after its submission by the head of administration. ZSSU´s budget, dynamics of funding, budgeting and spending rule are accessible on the university website.

The revenues of ZSSU budget in the year 2018 are 3,535,652.0 GEL. The main sources of revenue are: Goods and service realization (tuition fee); Funding received from the state budget (State scholarships for students, Targeted software financing); Grants received from international organizations (UN); Grants received from international organizations-Star, Erasmus; Grants from the Central Budget (Infrastructure) and etc. The budget includes the following expenses: Salaries; Goods and services; conferences/professor's training (10 000 GEL); public lectures (6000 GEL); scientific expenses (research, publishing) (10 000 GEL); expenses of studying material (90 000 GEL); State scholarships for students (30 000 GEL) etc. ZSSU financial resources are focused on implementation of core activities of the institution. Funds available to ZSSU are sufficient to effectively perform activities described in the development plan and they ensure the business continuity within the institution.

The university has developed internal financial management and control system. In addition, the ZSSU has signed a contract with Audit Company Ltd "PULSI-XXI" to receive audit services. ZSSU has presented audit reports prepared by the audit firm (in previous years) on financial reporting inspections.

According to ZSSU´s Self-evaluation report (p. 81) and submitted financial statements, ZSSU is also funding the research (Teaching University prints/publishes annual scientific works, monographs, the thesis of international and local conferences, books/supporting books, and organizes international and internal conferences.) From 2016 the funding of research is increased, and its amount in 2018 and in 2019 is 10000 GEL. Despite some trends of growth, ZSSU should increase financial resources allocated to research support.

From interviews with students and staff, it is clear that they are informed about scholarships, financial benefits, and bonus systems at ZSSU. According to them, the existence of these benefits is transparent and they are available to everyone (in case of criteria are met).

„Evidences/indicators

- Self-evaluation report
- Interview results
- Financial reports of 2017
- "Rule of Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi about creating/ approving of the budget, defining income sources and allocation of expenses"
- Provision of Procurement Service
- Dynamics of the last 5 years of financing, financial accounts
- "Rule for establishing the system of financial management and control"
- Regulations of the Office of Internal Audit
- The budget of the Teaching University of 2018
- Provision of Financial Service

Recommendations:
• Increase financial resources allocated to research support.

Suggestions:
• Deepen cooperation with the business sector to provide additional financing sources.

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

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