განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Accreditation Expert Group Final Report on Higher Education Programme

Higher Education Programme Name
Business Administration (MA)
HEI's Name
Ilia State University

Date(s) of Evaluation
July 11, 2018
Report Submission Date

Tbilisi

HEI's Information Profile

Name of Institution Indicating its Organizational Legal Form	Ilia State University Legal Entity of Public Law
HEI's Identification Code	204861970
Type of Institution	204861970

Higher Education Programme Information Profile

Name of the Programme	Business Administration
Level of Education	Master's Program
Qualification Granted Indicating Qualification Code	1. Master of Business Administration (Ilia State University) 2. Master of Arts in International Business (Burgenland University of Applied Sciences)[1]
Language of Instruction	English
Number of Credits	120
Programme Status (Authorized/ Accredited/New)	Accredited

Expert Panel Members

Chair (Name, Surname, University/organization/Country)	Prof. Pandelis Ipsilandis TEI of Thessaly, Greece
Member (Name, Surname, University/organization/Country)	Prof. NiNo Zarnadze Caucasus International University, Georgia
Member (Name, Surname, University/organization/Country)	Doc. Nino Dgvepadze, Brandor Consulting, Employer Expert
Member (Name, Surname, University/organization/Country)	Ms. Mariam Grdzelishvili, Student Expert

---

[1]Only for exchange students, who satisfy the additional qualification requirements of the program of Burgenland University of Applied Sciences.

Accreditation Report Executive Summary

- **General information on the education programme**

The Master's program of the Faculty of Business of Ilia State University: "Business Administration" was granted the accreditation in 2011 and has been accepting Master's students to the program continuously ever since. In 2017, the program added an exchange direction in collaboration with Burgenland University of Applied Sciences (Austria). The Master's students, participating in the mentioned exchange direction, will be awarded a dual qualification - both from the Ilia State University and the Burgenland University of Applied Sciences, in the case of fully meeting all the program requirements. The program, which is delivered in English, is well accepted in the education market with enrolments of around 50 students per year, with acceptance rate of about 1 out of 3 applicants. Since 2017, the program admits foreign students as well.

- **Brief overview of the accreditation site-visit**

The accreditation visit took place on Wednesday, July 11. Before the visit, the experts' panel received a Self-Evaluation Report (SER), the Programme Description document accompanied by detailed syllabi of all programme components, documents regarding University Services, The Business School Strategy document and relevant Action Plan, Academic Regulations including QA, Admissions, etc., Agreements with International partners and statistics on mobility, CVs and documentation regarding the academic staff, and other relevant documentation.

During the visit, the panel had the chance to meet and interview representatives of the University administration, the programme management team, the SER work group, teaching staff (both affiliated members and invited teachers), students and graduates of the program, and representatives of employers and internship supervisors. All participants were very cooperative and willing to participate in discussion in an open and frankly way. Requests from the panel regarding the provision of additional information were handled professionally and efficiently during the visit.

The experts' panel would like to express sincere thanks for the cooperation of all participants and their participation in fruitful discussions during the visit.

- **Summary of education programme's compliance with the standards**

The objectives of the Master in Business Administration programme aim in preparing future high qualified managers by providing in-depth theoretical and practical knowledge, application capabilities combined with effective managerial skills that will enable them to operate effectively and efficiently in the rapidly changing business environment in Georgia and internationally. The programme upgraded its international character by introducing a dual degree options for exchange students who study one semester at the partner institution, University of Applied Sciences in Austria, and opening admission to foreign students.

The programme appears to meet its objectives as it is well accepted by candidates, mainly people who are already employed professionally and are interested in deepening their knowledge in the area of Business Administration and acquiring the necessary skills for developing their career path. The School administration believes that a target of foreign students reaching 25% of total admissions is achievable. The target market are mainly the eastern ex-soviet countries, Middle East and the Gulf countries. The international department promotes the programme in fairs and in other ways; however the development of specific marketing plan is currently missing.

Stakeholders have been engaged in the development of the programme mainly through systematically and periodically collection and analysis of their feedback recorded in various periodic surveys. An excellent initiative that was recently taken by the Administration of the Business School and the Programme to establish a Board of Advisers that is made up by selected employer representatives of large employers, who expressed an interest in contributing to programme development, is expected to have a substantial contribution in the development of the programme.

The delivery in English language, the internationalization (double degree opportunities and international students) of the programme, the quality of teaching as reported by graduates, good quality and some very interesting lecturers - as spread by word of mouth, as well as the fact that it

is offered by a state university are considered the strong elements of the programme.

Programme LOs should be articulated coherently, combining partial ones to overarching LOs that emphasize the strong points of the programme. The Board of Advisers, along with curriculum experts – another innovative good practice of the university - can play an instrumental role in the development of LOs by identifying areas that need to be enhanced.

The University is very keen in maintaining admissions standards at this high level in order to ensure high caliber students and is successful in achieving this objective. Admission criteria are transparent and well understood by applicants and are publicly available.

Discussion with the programme management, academic staff, and employer's representatives showed that the content of the programme could be further enhanced in certain areas. Further development of the programme should consider developing additional subjects, enriching / revising content of existing subjects, reconsidering compulsory / elective courses, etc.). The need of course integration pointed out by students as well in proposing actions that could improve the program.

Course Learning Outcomes (LOs) are generally stated explicitly and clearly in the corresponding syllabus in accordance to the six criteria of the Georgian NQF, although variations do exist among subjects. Review of course LOs and continuous development with the support of QA curriculum experts will help sharing good practices.

Teaching and Learning approaches ensure the development of student's practical skills through group projects and assignments in various courses. Students and graduates find the practical assignments and projects extremely interesting and adding value to the programme. More field / practical work and visits to companies would be welcomed by students.

Research Methods, Academic writing courses along with the Master Thesis provide the basis for the development of scientific and research skills. The University does recognize the importance of students developing Academic Writing skills and initiated specific action by establishing an Academic Writing Center, which supports students by providing training seminars in small groups of students on demand.

Current practice for Master Theses is that it is based on teamwork of 2 to 3 students who are supervised by a staff member. Although group working on master's thesis helps students in developing important skills, such as: group working, management of tasks, consolidating of work done by individuals, managing ambiguity, managing complexity and etc., still master's thesis should be done individually by students, because it should underline the fact that individual has ability of writing academic work. It should be the work of individual interest. Students should develop skills that will help them with their PHD, they should learn how to deal with complexity alone, they should take the lead of their individual own thesis.

Lectures are delivered to the whole cohort of students, while for seminars and other teaching activities students are divided in smaller groups. The teaching and learning methods chosen for every

course are in line with the contents of the course, its objectives and enables the achievement of the course learning outcomes. Assessment of students is based on their performance during the whole course period. The overall evaluation comprises two parts, midterm and final evaluation. Each of the parts includes different assessment elements, according to intended learning outcomes. The assessment criteria for each part are stated very clearly and transparently in the syllabus of each course. Students are well informed as to how their performance in element is evaluated and graded. Overall, the programme follows a rigorous academic approach in teaching and assessing students. All teaching and learning activities and assessments are done in English language. Curriculum experts in the QA office should keep working closely with academic staff in developing links of LOs with proper assessment methods.

Students receive consultation and support from multiple sources. Academic support is mainly provided by the program administrators and academic staff. Interviewed students and alumni praised the support they received in planning their individual study program, choosing courses or even postponing their studies when needed. Several administrative units at School or University level such as, Students Relations Service, Students Service Center, Student Affairs Department, Foreign Relations Office, International Relations Office, Employer Relations and Career Planning Service, provide support and consultation for academic and extracurricular activities as well as employment and career planning.

The program is delivered by a cohort of 17 members of teaching staff, the majority of whom are affiliated academic staff (1 professor, 10 associate and 3 assistant) and 3 invited academics. The mixture of affiliated academic personnel and invited personnel yields a set of expertise and competences necessary to support the learning outcomes of the program ensuring a balance between sustainability due to the large percentage of affiliated staff and adaptability infused by invited staff. The workload of the teaching staff is compatible to international standards and provides allowance for Master Thesis supervision.

Current practices for Master Thesis supervision are academically rigorous. Students are supervised by a staff member who, for the last 5 years, has been actively involved in subject-related scientific researchers and has published scientific works relevant to the general topic/concentration of the Master's Thesis. The Master Project Thesis document provides details of the process. Causes for deviations in academic writing skills among students should be addressed to ensure that all students receive proper training in Academic writing skills before starting their Master Thesis project. Additional qualified thesis supervisors will certainly be needed to support individual work on Master Thesis.

The University supports the development of the staff both in their scientific field and in pedagogy. Support includes full or partial subsidy for participation in conferences, Erasmus exchanges and support for their research activities. The latter is expected to be enhanced as a Business Research Center was established in 2017, the role of which is to support the engagement of the academic personnel in the scientific/research activity. In terms of pedagogy, a professional training module related to the evaluation methods and teaching and learning using Erasmus + resources was created. Other support includes the preparation and publishing by the university library of subjects "Readers" -reading materials in printed or electronic format - created by academic staff.

Overall, individuals involved in program delivery are academically and professionally very competent; what seems to missing is team coherence among staff. As evidenced during interviews with academic staff, they do care a lot about their subjects, they work closely together at study field level but awareness, and involvement at program level needs to be strengthened.

Ilia State University is a full functioning Higher education institute having appropriate infrastructure and technical equipment for learning and teaching activities, which are comparable to those of established university internationally.

The University Library is an excellent information resource center, which makes information resources easily accessible through a variety of services and thus contributes to the enhancement of quality of academic processes, the implementation of modern approaches to teaching and generates new knowledge.

The Quality Assurance Office (QAO) is one of the main administrative bodies of Ilia State University working under the highest administrative body of the university - the Academic Council chaired by the Rector. The QAO has a clearly defined statute stating the main principles and terms of reference, which is based on the "plan-do-check-act" cycle.

- ▪ **Summary of Recommendations**

Programme Learning Outcomes should be reviewed to become more coherent and express overarching learning objectives for the programme. International best practices can be used. Programme Learning outcomes should be strengthened in the areas of Information Technology and Systems. Review of course LOs and continue development with the support of QA curriculum experts.

Strengthen the content of the program in the areas of Data Science, IT Support Systems in business operations and strategy. Develop and include subjects of Project management and Risk Management in the programme.

Master Thesis projects should be done on an individual basis. Interviewed employers are willing to contribute to the Master Thesis projects by providing data and problem areas, where student research can also have an impact.

Ensure that all students receive proper training in Academic writing skills before starting their Master Thesis projects. In addition Master Thesis regulations should state explicitly bibliography requirements (e.g. avoiding as much internet references, using mostly scientific references, recent books, etc.) and specific reference style guidelines (if Ilia State University Academic style citation rules should be followed, repeat within the thesis regulation document since disparities in references styles were also noted).

Prepare additional qualified thesis supervisors that will be needed to support individual Master thesis projects.

Establishment of a mechanism that ensures that assessment methods are at the right level for a master's program.

Enhance teamwork among and between academic staff and invited staff making the focus more on the entire program rather than their individual subjects. A sense of program ownership among teaching staff is important for the development of the program.

- ▪ **Summary of Suggestions**

Develop a sound marketing strategy for the programme. Pay more attention to the publicity of the programme. Keep the Website updated.

Consider relevant publications regarding the development of programme LOs. Indicatively: - EU-The programme Learning Outcomes: http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/learning-outcomes_en.htm

The detailed description of the candidate's evaluation scheme should be publicly available on the web site.

Consider revising the Managerial Economics course into CEE Economics to reflect more on the local economic environment. Reconsider the existence of Social Media marketing and Digital Marketing as separate courses.

Consider inviting professionals from industry and business as guests within the framework of specific courses to deliver specific topics and cases from their experience so that real life situations from Georgian (and perhaps international) business and economic life are brought into the classroom.

Exploit employer's interest in contributing to Master Thesis project. Consider establishment of Best Master Thesis awards (employers can help in that) to provide incentives for students. Bring Master Thesis supervisors and employers in contact to define areas for Master thesis projects.

Consider asking students to develop a 5-6 pages scientific paper based on their Master thesis that is in a form presentable at a conference.

Promote more and made students aware of the services of the Academic Writing Center. It can contribute a lot in enhancing the quality of the master thesis and possible publication of the research results.

Consider introducing a moderation process for the assessment elements of each course based on peer review.
Establish a process of sharing good teaching practices among teaching staff. Use student feedback to identify best practices.

As technology is affecting more and more the educational process, the university should consider upgrading their platforms to support the production and of-line access (video streaming) to videoed lectures. Some students proposed it during the interview session, and as means like MOOCS become popular, conventional programs should exploit aspects of the technology as a service to their students.

It is advised to conduct all the periodic researches on time in order to ensure consistency, collect longitudinal data, monitor dynamic and determine development trends provided by the systemic research.

As the Board of Advisers is also involved in the most demanded competences and skills identification and is actively involved in the program alignment to labor market requirements, it is advised to revise the Employer Focus Groups (FG)/Interview guide provided in the document "Employers' research" and focus to better identify the gaps in the MBA program graduate competences and relevant skills. The findings of the comparative analyses can be further used for the program quality enhancement. In addition, it is advised to shorten the period of employers' research from 3 years to 2 years as measuring and evaluation of the graduate's competences and skills is one of the main concerns of external quality assurance.

In order to further, develop teaching quality in the programme academic and invited personnel it is advised to start utilizing pre-determined classroom observation template that can be conducted by peers from the same programme or from the different programme but the same higher education institution, or by peers invited from a different HEI.

- **Summary of best practices (If Applicable)**

Establishment of the Board of Advisers in the School of Business ensures active involvement of employers in the program development and supports exploring avenues of further cooperation with the University and business sector.

Establishing positions of Curriculum Experts that support academic staff and invited personnel to develop course syllabuses and orient the program to Learning Outcome cycle approach.

The establishment of the Academic Writing Center.

Exploitation of the results of Erasmus+ multinational projects to develop a professional training module for staff.

The operation of the library as information resource center, with multiple roles and extended services (e.g. trainings, internal publications,) integrated in the educational process

- **In case of accredited programme, summary of significant accomplishments and/or progress (If Applicable)**

Compliance of the Programme with Accreditation Standards

1. Educational programme objectives, learning outcomes and their compliance with the programme

A programme has clearly established objectives and learning outcomes, which are logically connected to each other. Programme objectives are consistent with the mission, objectives and strategic plan of the institution. Programme learning outcomes are assessed on a regular basis in order to improve the programme.

1.1 Programme Objectives
Programme objectives define the set of knowledge, skills and competences the programme aims to develop in graduate students. They also illustrate the contribution to the development of the field and the society.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

The mission of Ilia State University (IliaUni), as publicly stated is to "*generate, disseminate and apply knowledge to advance science and contribute to the society both at local and international levels*". The objectives of the Master in Business Administration programme fit well the mission of the University and aim in preparing future high qualified managers by providing in-depth theoretical and practical knowledge, application capabilities combined with effective managerial skills that will enable them to operate effectively and efficiently in the rapidly changing business environment in Georgia and internationally.

The programme, which started in 2011, has been continuously developing. Affiliated professors increased from 2 to 13, the programme is delivered in English language, Quantitative and Research design areas were enhanced, pilot work in introducing Project management took place, and collaboration with industrial partners increased. Last year (2017) marks a milestone in programme development. The programme upgraded its international character by a) Introducing a dual degree options for exchange students who study one semester at the partner institution, University of Applied Sciences in Austria, under a bilateral agreement (students form Burgenland are awarded the MBA by studying one semester at IliaUni, and b) opening the admission to foreign students. Both developments were well accepted (student exchanges are currently taking place in both directions, while 66 applications were received from candidates of other countries (due to strict admission requirements and the restrictions in the number of positions offered only 11 were admitted). The Management field in Georgia and potential employers are expected to benefit significantly from those developments that give a real international profile to the programme and its graduates who will be competent to function in an international environment.

The programme appears to meet its objectives as it is well accepted by candidates, mainly people who are already employed professionally and are interested in deepening their knowledge in the area of Business Administration and acquiring the necessary skills for developing their career path. The demand for the programme tends to increase (Georgian candidates almost doubled last year). Students and alumni stated their overall satisfaction, some of them very enthusiastically on how the programme filled their expectations.

Main reason for students who choose this program is the double degree opportunity, for some students it was friends' suggestions, for some - interesting lecturers were main drivers for the choice. Expectations were high and if we do not count some of the feedback that students have, most likely they got them fulfilled.

Stakeholders have been engaged in the development of the programme mainly through systematically and periodically collection and analysis of their feedback recorded in student surveys at course and programme level, exit surveys, graduates' surveys, alumni employment surveys and recommendations by the academic and invited personnel engaged in the implementation of the program.

The Expert Team commends a recent initiative taken by the Administration of the Business School and the Programme to establish a Board of Advisers made up by selected employer representatives of large employers, who expressed an interest in contributing to programme development. The Expert Team had the opportunity to meet members of the Board of Advisers and believes that they could have a substantial contribution in the development of the programme (e.g. specific ideas regarding trends in required skills of graduates, willingness to contribute to the master thesis of students in making more reflective of current business problems, development of cases that are more suitable to Georgian economic and business environment etc.).

The delivery in English language, the internationalization (double degree opportunities and international students) of the programme, the quality of teaching as reported by graduates, good quality and some very interesting lecturers - as spread by word of mouth, as well as the fact that it is offered by a state university are considered the strong elements of the programme. Foreign students praised the responsiveness of the university and the provision of sufficient information regarding procedures and study process. Student and alumni expectations were high and for the majority of interviewed students they got them fulfilled.

The School administration believes that a target of foreign students reaching 25% of total admissions is achievable. The target market are mainly the eastern ex-soviet countries, Middle east and the Gulf countries. The international department promotes the programme in fairs and in other ways but no specific marketing plan seems to exist. More attention should be given in making information more easily accessible to interested persons. For example, the "dual award" option, which is considered a strong feature of the programme, does not appear anywhere distinctively and is only found in the programme description document.

Evidences/indicators

- o *Programme description*
- o *Ilia State University Mission Statements*
- o *Strategic Development Plan of the School of Business;*
- o *Memorandum of cooperation concluded with Burgenland University of Applied Sciences*
- o *Results of various surveys*
- o *Interview with Programme administration team*
- o *Interviews with students and graduates*
- o *Interview with Affiliated Academic Staff and Invited Academic Staff*
- o *Interview with representatives of Employees*

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

- o Develop a sound marketing strategy for the programme.
- o Pay more attention to the publicity of the programme. Keep the Website updated.

Best Practices (if applicable):

- o The establishment of the Board of Advisers.

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

- o The internationalization of the programme has been strengthened significantly.

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

1.2. Programme Learning Outcomes

- ➢ Programme learning outcomes describe knowledge, skills, and/or the sense of responsibility and autonomy, students gain upon completion of the programme;
- ➢ Programme learning outcomes assessment cycle consists of defining, collecting and analysing data;
- ➢ Programme learning outcomes assessment results are utilized for the improvement of the programme.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

An extensive list (24 all together) of programme Learning Outcomes (LOs) that support the programme aims, classified according to the NQF categories, are presented in the programme description document. Although the intention is to highlight all aspects of the programme, the enormous amount of LOs may lead in a blurring effect.

Some LOs are overelaborated referring to specific areas or subjects of management. For example under *Knowledge and Understanding,* no references to specific topics are needed. Instead, emphasis should be given to integrated knowledge. For example a LO like "*ability to assess the capabilities of an organization, understand linkage among functional and support areas, evaluate an organizations' current strategic position in the context of its internal and external environment, and recommend strategic alternatives*" can cover more of the bullets points in this area. After all, it is a master's programme and the focus is not in basic understanding of various management functions but rather in deepening and integration of knowledge.

A similar approach can be followed in the other areas as well.

Programme LOs should be articulated coherently, combining partial ones to **overarching LOs**, avoiding repetitions, and details that are proper for subject level LOs. Although, there are no rules to indicate the proper number of programme LOs accumulated experience at EU and also USA Universities show that in most cases they do not exceed 10 - 12 (1-2 in each area).

LOs should also emphasize the strong points of the programme. For example, while students acquire abilities and skills to communicate efficiently in written and oral form in English, and can assume managerial responsibilities in international business environment, this is not shown clearly and distinctively in the LOs.

In certain areas, LOS should be enhanced. For example, current LOs limit the role of IT at the level of communications resource and do not emphasize the role of Information Technology and Systems as a strategic driver of today's businesses.

A Learning Outcomes map scheme shows the link of the compulsory courses to the programme LOs. Master Thesis should be included in that scheme as well as it is a vital component for achieving programme LOs.

Feedback is collected systematically and periodically through student surveys at course and programme level, exit surveys, graduates' surveys, alumni employment surveys and recommendations by the academic staff are taken into consideration in revising LOs. Academic staff synergies exist mostly at field

(thematic) level were students' results are analyzed and the achievement of LOS are evaluated. While this approach works efficiently at subject level LOs, more synergies among staff is needed to collectively focus on defining LOs at programme level.

The Board of Advisers can also play an instrumental role in the development of LOs by identifying areas that need to be enhanced.

It should be noted however that the University is aware of the importance and the role of the LO cycle in a student centered education and has established positions of "*Curriculum Experts*" within the QA administration, the role of whom is to work together with academics and provide consultation and support in the LO development process.

Evidences/indicators

- o *Programme description*
- o *Interview with Programme administration team*
- o *Interview with representatives of Employees*

Recommendations:

- o Programme Learning Outcomes should be reviewed to become more coherent and express overarching learning objectives for the programme. International best practices can be used.
- o Programme Learning outcomes should be strengthened in the areas of Information Technology and Systems.

Suggestions for programme development:

- o Consider relevant publications regarding the development of programme LOs. Indicatively:
  - EU-The programme Learning Outcomes: http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/learning-outcomes_en.htm
  - Montana University Guide to Developing Program Learning Outcomes
  https://www.montana.edu/provost/documents/
  assessment/002%20Developing%20Program%20Learning%20Outcomes.pdf
  - Center for University Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, University of West Florida
  https://uwf.edu/media/university-of-west-florida/offices/cutla/documents/Writing-Graduate-Level-Learning-Outcomes(2018).pdf

Best Practices (if applicable):

- o Establishing positions of Curriculum Experts for supporting the process of program development and on a Learning Outcome cycle approach.

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

Evaluation

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

☐ Partially complies with requirements

	☐ Does not comply with requirements

Programme's Compliance with Standard

Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
Educational programme objectives, learning outcomes and their compliance with the programme	☒			

2. Teaching methodology and organization, adequate evaluation of programme mastering

Programme admission preconditions, programme structure, content, teaching and learning methods, and student assessment ensure the achievement of programme objectives and intended learning outcomes.

2.1. Programme Admission Preconditions
Higher education institution has relevant, transparent, fair, public and accessible programme admission preconditions.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements The programme follows academically rigorous criteria for student admissions. Candidates are evaluated in 3 parts each one carrying specific weight for the overall ranking of candidates: - General Graduate Examination (passing grade) (35%) - CV of the candidate accompanied by Contact information of employer company/organization or direct supervisor and a letter of employment status and working experience from the workplace and any official documents confirming participation in the exchange program, educational training, seminar, conference and/or internship (Education elements – 24.5%, Working Experience – 10,5%). Specific well defined sub criteria exist for Education and Working experience evaluation - Passing University admission exam (applicant is required to analyze a case regarding business administration) and Demonstrate proficiency in English Language (35%). Specific sub criteria exist for the two components. During the visit, it became evident that admission criteria are transparent and well understood by applicants. The University is very keen in maintaining admissions standards at this high level in order to ensure high caliber students and is successful in achieving this objective. It is worth noticing that during the first year of admission of foreign students, the programme has accepted only 10 out of the 66 foreign applicants because the proficiency in English language requirement was not satisfied at the required level for the rest. General description of the admission procedures are publicly available at the web site of the university, along with a step-by-step guide of the application process for international students who can apply on-line.

Evidences/indicators
○ *Entry Requirements and Evaluation System*   ○ *Interview with Programme administration team*   ○ *Interview with students and graduates*

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

Best Practices (if applicable):

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

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

2.2 Educational Programme Structure and Content

Programme is designed according to HEI's methodology for planning, designing and developing of educational programmes. Programme content takes programme admission preconditions and programme learning outcomes into account. Programme structure is consistent and logical. Programme content and structure ensure the achievement of programme learning outcomes. Qualification to be granted is consistent with programme content and learning outcomes.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

 The program is structured according to the standard for Master's educational programs, developed in the university and it is aligned with the requirements determined by the national qualification framework for the Master's level. The total student workload of 120 credits is made up from 90 credits of taught courses, and 30 credits that correspond to the Master Thesis project. The allocation of student workload is well balanced between the semesters and within each semester. Taught components account for 6 credits each and include 9 compulsory courses and 6 elective ones, chosen from a list of 11 elective subjects.

 In order to be eligible for the MA in International Business at Fachhochschule Burgenland (Austria) exchange students from Ilia State University are required to accumulate 130 ECTS and take 2 additional international communication courses: one from Fachhochschule Burgenland curriculum and one equivalent extracurricular course at Ilia State University that will be counted towards their MA in International Business (total 140 credits). A clear and transparent equivalence-mapping scheme between courses at the two Universities that are offered to exchange students is included in the programme

description.

Discussion with the programme management, academic staff, and employer's representatives showed that the content of the programme could be further enhanced in certain areas. Indicatively:

- Data science including big data analysis, business analytics, etc., which are very important in today's businesses for marketing strategies, managing risk, financial operations, etc. is underrepresented in the content of the programme. The only reference is a small part in the course of digital marketing, while Quantitative Methods course focus on conventional statistics (regression and time series models).
- The role of the Technology (especially IT) in both new and established firms and its influence in shaping firm strategy, operation capabilities and industry competition is a challenge that today's businesses face and should be addressed in the content of the program.
- Project Management is an area that is especially important to the economies of developing countries, since the flow of development funds from various sources is done through the funding of specific programmes and projects. Business strategy is also materialized through portfolios of projects. The course, which had been offered on a pilot basis in the past, should be considered again from a managerial prospective. Currently only the topic of project scheduling is addressed in the Operations Management course.
- Risk management is equally important area for business planning that has to be addressed as well.

Other considerations concerning the content of the program include:

- The existing of two courses Digital Marketing and Social Media Marketing that are both offered as electives. As the social media is an integral part of Digital Marketing, it seems that The *Social Media Marketing* course can be integrated with *Digital Marketing*. Since both courses are electives, students still will have an option in taking a course in this area, while courses in other subjects (see above) could be offered as electives.
- The possibility of making course more focused to specific economic environment. For example, *CEE Economics* offered at FH Burgenland, as equivalent to *Managerial Economics* seems more focused on regional economy, while Managerial Economics is a basic course in Micro Economics (as shown in corresponding LOs). As Managerial Economics is not a precondition for other course in the program, this change will not affect the rest of the programme.

Of course, different ways and approaches can be followed for further development of the programme (i.e. developing additional subjects, enriching / revising content of existing subjects, reconsidering compulsory / elective courses, etc.).

The need of course integration pointed out by students as well when they were asked to propose action that could improve the program.

Constraints imposed from the dual programme provisions should be respected. The Expert Team considers indispensable the active involvement and interaction between affiliated and invited academic staff and employers representatives in this process. Students suggestion *integrate subjects* and *Emphasis on creativity and innovation*

Evidences/indicators

- ○ *Program description*
- ○ *Program Syllabi*
- ○ *Mapping of LOs*
- ○ *Memorandum of cooperation concluded with Burgenland University of Applied Sciences;*
- ○ *Rule and procedures for the development of, approval of, amending and suspension of the Ilia State University educational program*
- ○ *Master's educational program standards*
- ○ *Interviews with programme coordinator, academic staff, employer's representatives*

Recommendations:

- ○ Strengthen the content of the program in the areas of Data Science, IT Support Systems in business

operations and strategy.

- o Develop and include subjects of Project management and Risk Management in the programme.

Suggestions for programme development:

- o Reconsider the existence of Social Media marketing and Digital Marketing as separate courses.
- o Consider revising the Managerial Economics course into CEE Economics to reflect more on the local economic environment.

Best Practices (if applicable):

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

Evaluation

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

2.3 Course

- ➢ Student learning outcomes of each compulsory course are in line with programme learning outcomes; Moreover, each course content and number of credits correspond to course learning outcomes;
- ➢ Teaching materials listed in syllabi are based on the core achievements in the field and ensure the achievement of intended programme learning outcomes.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

For each course, a very detailed well-organized subject descriptor (Syllabus) has been developed. Each descriptor contains: Course objectives, intended learning outcomes, teaching methods used to achieve learning outcomes, detailed description of weekly content, corresponding literatures, and individual work, assessment methods for each component of assessment work, as well as clear criteria linking student achievement to grades, and suggested literature. The programme management team and the academic staff should be commended for producing such detailed and well-organized syllabus.

Course Learning Outcomes (LOs) are stated explicitly and clearly in the corresponding syllabus in accordance to the six criteria of the Georgian NQF. Furthermore, a summary "Competences Mapping" indicates which courses or programme components contribute to each of the six types of, programme LOs (knowledge and understanding, applying knowledge, making judgments, communication skills, learning skills, values).

Overall subject LOs are expressed more concisely and coherently than programme LOs. However, variations do exist among subjects.

Consideration should be given so that subject LOs represent outcomes of the learning process that are measurable. As this course is at master's level emphasis is given more to knowledge application and

making judgments than basic knowledge. Attention should be given to avoid words like "understand", "appreciate", "know about", "aware" and use words such as: define, list, recognize, describe, explain, identify, locate, recognize, sort, implement, perform, categorize, compare, differentiate, formulate, organize, analyze, synthesize etc.

Attention should be given that LOs are specific and measurable (e.g. • *Utilize field specific mathematical and statistical methods to make effective managerial decisions*, does specify something, the achievement of which can be assessed and does not represent an outcome of the specific course.

In addition, LOs should be at the right level for a Master course (e.g. LOs from the same course: *Estimate equilibrium price and quantity* is a very elementary calculation, while *Develop cost-efficient strategies in the production process in order to generate maximum profits* is at the right level.

Since there are course syllabuses, were LOs are defined properly, the programme management team should facilitate sharing of knowledge among teaching staff. It is expected that curriculum experts in the QA office will keep working closely with academic staff in the continuous development of LOs.

The ratio between the contact and independent hours is adequate for master level courses and considers the specificity of the course and the achievement of the learning outcomes determined by the course. In the view of the contents and learning outcomes, relevant teaching and learning methods are determined in the courses as explained in detail in section 2.5.

The literature listed in the syllabi includes required textbooks, additional reading materials including books, scientific articles, web based materials, while for each lecture references to specific chapters, articles etc. is given. Overall, the recommended teaching materials reflect the latest achievements in the field and the international business environment

---

Evidences/indicators

- ○ *Program description*
- ○ *Program Syllabi*
- ○ *Mapping of LOs*
- ○ *Interviews with Programme and Faculty management team*
- ○ *Interview with affiliated and invited academic staff*

Recommendations:

- ○ Review of course LOs and continue development with the support of QA curriculum experts.

Suggestions for programme development:

Best Practices (if applicable):

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

---

Evaluation

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

Teaching and Learning approaches ensure the development of student's practical skills through group projects and assignments in various courses. Indicative examples of projects/assignments within the framework of different subjects include:

-Develop a marketing plan for a company of their choice (Consumer behaviour and marketing),
-Choose a company, conduct interviews and observations, to identify problems, analyze those problems and provide recommendations for effective solutions (Effective management),
-Analyze selected (local or international) company, identify operational problems and evaluate company's current operations (activities), capacity and inventory planning and control process in short, medium, and long-term perspectives (Operations management),
-Identify a brand, access various brand's marketing/PR materials and some of the brand's customers for conducting a brand audit and identify the brand's aspiration identity (Branding),
-Elaborate a business plan about an innovation-driven company covering steps undertaken for defining primary market and market segments, defining customer value proposition and value, calculating Customer acquisition cost (CAC) and Loan-to-Value(LTV) ratio, defining unique selling point and distribution plan (Innovation based Entrepreneurship).

Students and graduates find the practical assignments and projects extremely interesting and adding value to the programme. They praised the contribution of academic staff especially young invited academic staff who bring into the class their current business experience and expressed their interest in having guest lectures that can give examples of real cases in the Georgian business environment. They also suggested that more field / practical work and visits to companies would be welcomed.

The courses of Research Methods, Academic writing along with the Master Thesis provide the basis for the development of scientific and research skills. Current practice for Master Theses is that it is based on team work of 2 to 3 students who are supervised by a staff member who, for the last 5 years, has been actively involved in subject-related scientific researchers and has published scientific works relevant to the general topic/concentration of the Master's Thesis.

Students can select their projects at partner organizations having specific agreements with the Business School, form their own teams and propose a supervisor. Each supervisor can supervise at maximum 4 Thesis projects and is obliged to provide at least 30 hours of consultations to each team.

Although the final output (Master Thesis) is a team product, assessment is partially on an individual basis based on the performance of each student (assessed by the supervisor) and the defense (assessed by the defense committee) and partially team based (assessed by the referee). The *Turnitin* software is used to check for plagiarism.

The *Master Project Thesis* document lays out all relevant provisions and regulations regarding the process.

The Expert Team discussed with programme management and Master thesis supervisors the issue of team based thesis projects vs. individual thesis projects. Building teamwork skills is the basic argument for the team-based approach. However, students are given many opportunities to work on team projects at individual subjects during the first 3 semesters of their study. The Final Thesis is that element of the study process where students demonstrate their ability to systematically integrate deeper knowledge, learn how to deal with complexity, contribute to research and development work by applying their skills and abilities to solve a substantial problem and arrive at conclusions. It is a reflection of their entire

learning process. In this sense, as it is common practice in almost all master level programmes, it should be an individual endeavor. Nevertheless, the current learning outcomes of the Master Thesis Project state that "*A student is able to **independently** conduct an applied research to identify and study a complex problem in a business context*" and "*A student has effective time-management skills and ability to **independently master new knowledge** and skills to perform as an **autonomous learner**".* In case of large thesis projects, a common practice is for students to work as a team in collection of data and then work individually on different aspects of the project. Another factor that should also be considered is that students that select the dual award option must do and individual Master Thesis project and having two different standards for students is not the best practice.

During the visit, the Expert Team had an opportunity to look at a small sample of Master Thesis and noted differences in styles, and references. In most pieces the number and the quality of references in the bibliography were appropriate for a master's level thesis (mostly from scientific journals), but there was one case that included an extremely small number of references (about 12) the majority of which web resources and books and only one or two scientific resources. Given that the University provides access to a wide database of scientific journals, case like this should be considered as not qualifying master thesis requirements.

The University does recognize the importance of students developing Academic Writing skills and initiated specific action by establishing an *Academic Writing Center*, which supports students by providing training seminars in small groups of students on demand. The center is staffed by 14 individuals with proper skills and students can access and register for a course through the web site. This service should be promoted more, as interviewed students were not so much aware of it.

Evidences/indicators

- *Master Project Thesis Regulations*
- *Memorandums of cooperation with various organizations*
- *Interview with Programme administration team*
- *Interview with academic staff and Master Thesis Supervisors*
- *Interview with students and alumni*
- *Interview with representatives of employers*
- *Sample of Master Theses*

Recommendations:

- Master Thesis projects should be done on an individual basis. Interviewed employers are willing to contribute to the Master Thesis projects by providing data and problem areas, where student research can also have an impact.
- Master Thesis regulations should state explicitly bibliography requirements (e.g. avoiding internet references, using mostly scientific references, recent books, etc.) and specific reference style guidelines (if it is Ilia State University Academic style citation rules, repeat within the document).

Suggestions for programme development:

- Consider inviting professionals from industry and business as guests within the framework of specific courses to deliver specific topics and cases from their experience so that real life situations from Georgian (and perhaps international) business and economic life are brought into the classroom.
- Exploit employer's interest in contributing to Master Thesis project. Consider establishment of Best Master Thesis awards (employers can help in that) to provide incentives for students. Bring Master Thesis supervisors and employers in contact to define areas for Master thesis projects.
- Consider asking students to develop a 5-6 pages scientific paper based on their Master thesis that is in a form presentable at a conference.

o Promote more and made students aware of the services of the Academic Writing Center. It can contribute a lot in enhancing the quality of the master thesis and possible publication of the research results.

Best Practices (if applicable): o The establishment of the Academic Writing Center.

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

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

2.5 Teaching and learning methods

Program is implemented using student centered teaching and learning (SCL) methods. Teaching and learning methods correspond to the level of education, course content, student-learning outcomes and ensure their achievement.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements The teaching method used in the program are indicated clearly in the relevant syllabus/concept of every component. Attendance is not mandatory, but as evidenced by students and academic staff, the teaching methods used require the active participation of students in teaching activities since their assessment and evaluation is partially based on of their performance during teaching activities that take place throughout the semester. Teaching methods that are used in the program include Interactive lectures and seminars / Problem-based teaching / Demonstrations / Case analysis / Individual and group Projects / Discussion/debates / Brainstorming, reflection / Role-playing and situational games/simulations / Laboratory works / Practical work assignments. Lectures are delivered to the whole cohort of students, while for seminars and other teaching activities students are divided in smaller groups. The teaching and learning methods chosen for every course are in line with the contents of the course, its objectives and enables the achievement of the course learning outcomes. Video recording of lectures and their on-line accessibility by students was proposed by students and it is worth by university as it could help students to review the presented material after class hours (see suggestion in section 4.3).

Evidences/indicators

o *Course syllabi*
      o *Interview with academic staff*
      o *Interview with students*
      o *Interview with alumni*

Recommendations:
Suggestions for programme development:
Best Practices (if applicable):
In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

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

2.6. Student Evaluation

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

Assessment of students is based on their performance during the whole course period. The overall evaluation comprises two parts, midterm and final evaluation. Each of the parts includes different assessment elements, according to intended learning outcomes such as written tasks, tests, case studies, teamwork, projects, written or oral exams, etc. The weight of the parts varies according to the subject; in general, the evaluation during the term consists of more elements and carry higher weight.

The assessment criteria for each part are stated very clearly and transparently in the syllabus of each course. Students are well informed as to how their performance in element is evaluated and graded.

The programme follows a rigorous academic approach in assessing students:
Only those who marginal failed (41-50 grade) are given a chance to sit an additional examination after independent work, the rest must study the subject again.
Students must achieve the minimum passable grade (threshold) for both the midterm and final parts of evaluation to pass the course.

Statistical data regarding the students' progress through the programme stages show a large number of students who suspended their studies. According to the School and the Program management teams, the main reasons are lack financial difficulties and military obligations for male students.

Students expressed their satisfaction regarding the transparency of the assessment process but indicated that at specific instances (mainly exams) questions did not reflect the level of the programme. For example, they considered and rightfully so, that the question "*What is Marketing*" is perhaps OK for a bachelor's degree course not for a master's level course. In other instances (e.g. *Sales Management*) for the final examination it is stated that *«The test is composed of 50 multiple-choice (each with a maximum score of 0,5) and 5 open-ended(each with a maximum score of 1) questions.».* Having the largest part of the final exam based on multiple-choice questions is not adequate for this level of a program.

More attention should be made on consistency of assessment components and methods. The level of the exams varies and sometimes are not adequate to the level of the programme. Assessment methods should be connected to the course LOs and should aim in testing the achievement of LOs. The whole process needs to be more controlled. As the experience of teaching staff regarding the LO cycle varies, emphasis should be given in more training in this area. Curriculum experts in the QA office should keep working closely with academic staff in developing links of LOs with proper assessment methods. At the same time, the programme could consider the practice of "moderation" where assessment methods and mainly exams are also reviewed by a second person, with respect to being at the appropriate level, feasible to be answered within the available time and covering the intended learning outcomes.

Evidences/indicators

- o *Course syllabi*
- o *Interview with academic staff*
- o *Interview with students*
- o *Interview with alumni*

Recommendations:

- o Establishment of a mechanism that ensures that assessment methods are at the right level for a master's program.

Suggestions for programme development:

- o Consider introducing a moderation process for the assessment elements of each course based on peer review.

Best Practices (if applicable):

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

---

Evaluation

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

Programme's Compliance with Standard

Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
Teaching methodology and organization, adequate evaluation of programme mastering		☒		

3. Student achievements and individual work with them

HEI creates student-centered environment by providing students with relevant services; programme staff ensures students' familiarity with the named services, organizes various events and fosters students' involvement in local and/or international projects.

3.1. Student support services
Students receive appropriate consultations and support regarding the planning of learning process, improvement of academic achievement, employment and professional development.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

Students receive consultation and support from multiple sources. Academic support is mainly provide by the program administrators and academic staff. Interview students and alumni praised the support they received in planning their individual study program, choosing courses or even postponing their studies when needed.

To enhance the service related to the planning of the student's individual study process the School of Business established a Students Relations Service, which advises the students on the study process planning and progress, provides relevant recommendations, and advises. In addition, students' consulting is provided by the School Quality Assurance Department specialists - curriculum experts who, if necessary, define the individual educational plans for students and support each of them to achieve the learning outcomes of the program.

Overall, within the framework of academic regulations, the administration is flexible and supportive to students. Foreign students were extremely satisfied with the completeness and clarity of the information they received before coming and for planning their studies, mentioning this factor as one of the main reasons for selecting the specific program for their studies.

Communication with academic staff is taking place both personally during consultation hours – the schedule of which is publicly accessible – by informal meetings and communicating through the electronic learning platform ARGUS.

Evidence from student and alumni interviews confirmed the processes are very clear for the students, they understood the timeline of programs well from the beginning, and they had consultations of what programs should there be done locally in order to get a chance for double degree program. Besides, they had chance of choosing optional subjects to fit their daily attendance schedule and the administrative staff is really working with student consultations.

Additionally, several services exist at university or school level for supporting students. Specifically:

The Students Service Center disseminates information to students regarding employment, maintains database of employment opportunities/vacancies and career development, organizes annual employment

forems, and other events aiming in enhancing students'professional experience. Furthermore, a new administrative unit was established in the School of Business: Employer Relations and Career Planning Service, which constantly ensures the individual consultations with students.

Student Affairs Department also supports the involvement of students in the university and current projects and activities countrywide. The departments promotes and coordinates students' projects and initiatives in sports, social actions, open lectures public discussions, summer schools, etc. The department, within its budget, offers financial support to students to implement projects and / or to participate in international projects.

The Foreign Relations Office supervises international exchange programs (e.g. Erasmus +) and ensures the establishment of international mobility for the students of the university.

The International Relations Office provides students accessibility to information on international opportunities (summer schools, international scholarships, conferences, other training, etc.), and also, delivers information and consults students about the exchange direction of the Master's program.

Students and alumni were aware of the services available to students and several examples of being supported in Erasmus Exchanges, planning individual study program, finding employment were reported.

Evidences/indicators

- o *Self-Evaluation Report*
- o *Interview with University Administration*
- o *Interview with the SER Team*
- o *Interview with students*
- o *Interview with alumni*

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

Best Practices (if applicable):

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

Evaluation

☒ **Complies with requirements**

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

3.2. Master's and Doctoral Student supervision

Master's and Doctoral students have qualified thesis supervisors.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

As stated in section 2.4 the Expert Team strongly recommends The Master Thesis project is pursued on an individual basis for the reasons explained in detail in that section. This implies that more thesis supervisors are needed, since the maximum number of supervised theses (currently 4) should stay at that level (4-5) according to international standards.

Current practices for Master Thesis supervision are academically rigorous. Students are supervised by a staff member who, for the last 5 years, has been actively involved in subject-related scientific researchers and has published scientific works relevant to the general topic/concentration of the Master's Thesis. The *Master Project Thesis* document provides details of the process.

As it was brought up by students, they were receiving enough feedback they wanted during the meetings held with their supervisors, and mentioned that in rare cases some of students ended up having not so "*interested*" supervisors and they experienced hard time writing the thesis. The Expert Team had an opportunity to discuss matters of handling student complaints during meeting with the administration and QA services and was pleased to hear that proper processes were in place to review student complains and take proper actions (supervisor change).

Students seem somehow confused regarding the necessity of Academic Writing skills. Many thought that Academic writing class should not be mandatory, because the supervisor and the center of Academic Writing helps them do their thesis in a right way. However, during the visit, the Expert Team had an opportunity to look at a small sample of Master Thesis and noted differences in styles, and references. In most pieces the quantity and the quality of references in the bibliography were appropriate for a master's level thesis (mostly from scientific journals), but some others lacked the rigor academic profile of a Master Thesis. One extreme case included an extremely small number of references (about 12) the majority of which were web resources and books and only one or two scientific resources (journals). Given that the University provides access to an extended database of scientific journals, cases like this one should be considered for submission, as they do not qualify master thesis requirements. The program administration should deal with this problem by issuing specific regulations defining appropriate sources for the Master Thesis project. A good practice is also to ask students to submit, along with their thesis an article in scientific format (5-6 pages) summarizing their thesis work.

Evidences/indicators

- o *Interview with SER Team*
- o *Interviews with Affiliated staff and Invited staff*
- o *Academic staff CVs*
- o *Sample of Master thesis*

Recommendations:

- o Ensure that all students receive proper training in Academic writing skills before starting their Master Thesis projects. Master Thesis regulations should state explicitly bibliography requirements (e.g. avoiding as much internet references, using mostly scientific references, recent books, etc.) and specific reference style guidelines (if Ilia State University Academic style citation rules should be followed, repeat within the thesis regulation document since disparities in references styles were also noted).
- o Prepare additional qualified thesis supervisors that will be needed to support individual Master thesis projects.

Suggestions for programme development:

- o Consider asking master students along with their thesis an article in scientific format (5-6 pages) summarizing their thesis work.

Best Practices (if applicable):	
In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress	
Evaluation ☐ Complies with requirements ☒ **Substantially complies with requirements** ☐ Partially complies with requirements ☐ Does not comply with requirements	

Programme's Compliance with Standard

Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
Student achievements and individual work with them	☒			

4. Providing teaching resources

Programme human, material, information and financial resources ensure programme sustainability, its effective and efficient functioning, and achievement of intended objectives.

4.1 Human Resources
➢ Programme staff consists of qualified people who have necessary competences in order to help students achieve programme learning outcomes;   ➢ The number and workload of programme academic/scientific and invited staff ensures the sustainable running of the educational process and also, proper execution of their research/creative/performance activities and other assigned duties. Balance between academic and invited staff ensures programme sustainability;   ➢ The Head of the Programme possesses necessary knowledge and experience required for programme elaboration. He/she is personally involved in programme implementation;   ➢ Programme students are provided with an adequate number of administrative and support staff of appropriate competence.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements
The program is delivered by a cohort of 17 members of teaching staff, the majority of whom are affiliated academic staff (1 professor, 10 associate and 3 assistant) and 3 invited academics. The academic staff is active in research as shown by the number of scientific articles in journals and conferences over the last 5 years. Evidence form interviews with teaching staff shows that academic staff are recently involved in several interesting research and development projects (e.g. Tempus funded in Development of academic writing, Erasmus+ Integrity project that involve 13 local and 4 EU universities, National funded project in Evaluating impact of funding to small businesses, etc.) while efforts for pursuing research projects funded by the Rustaveli National Science Foundation are in progress.   The mixture of affiliated academic personnel and invited personnel yields a set of expertise and competences necessary to support the learning outcomes of the program ensuring a balance between sustainability due to the large percentage of affiliated staff and adaptability infused by invited staff.   Besides their teaching and research activity, the academic staff is engaged in program development and its improvement, in student consulting and their support are also carry other functions and responsibilities as determined by the university regulations (establishment and development of the program, evaluation of program implementation, and program evaluation criteria) and academic personnel employment agreements. The workload of the teaching staff is compatible to international standards and provides allowance for Master Thesis supervision.   The program is managed by the Dean of the Business School and the Program Head, two very competent individuals, with strong academic and industry experience who are directly involved in the implementation of the program. Quality Assurance Service, Experts of Curriculum, Student Coordination Service and Business Relations and Career Planning Center support the implementation of the program.   Although all individuals involved in program delivery are academically and professionally very competent, what seems to missing is team coherence among staff. As evidenced during interviews with academic staff, they do care a lot about their subjects, they work closely together at study field level but awareness, and involvement at program level needs to be strengthened.   Students pointed out *"lecturers get together and share ideas on teaching"*. As it happens at any university, teaching styles differ, but institutionalizing the sharing of good practices could improve the quality of teaching.   Invited lecturer asked for *"more interactions with the rest of the staff"*. The management team should seriously consider developing actions that build a team approach to program development and a sense of program ownership among teachers.

Evidences/indicators
Self-Evaluation Report   *Teaching Staff CVs*   *Interview with University administration*   *Interviews with academic and invited staff*   *Interview with students*   *Employment Regulations and Staff Contracts.*
Recommendations:
Enhance teamwork among and between academic staff and invited staff making the focus more on the entire program rather than their individual subjects. A sense of program ownership among teaching staff is important for the development of the program.
Suggestions for programme development:
Establish a process of sharing good teaching practices among teaching staff. Use student feedback to identify best practices.
Best Practices (if applicable):
In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress
Evaluation ☐ Complies with requirements ☒ **Substantially complies with requirements** ☐ Partially complies with requirements ☐ Does not comply with requirements

4.2 Professional development of academic, scientific and invited staff

➢ HEI conducts the evaluation of programme academic, scientific and invited staff and analysis evaluation results on a regular basis; ➢ HEI fosters professional development of the academic, scientific and invited staff. Moreover, it fosters their scientific and research work.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements Affiliated and Invited staff is evaluated annually. The process of evaluation considers activities related to the research and teaching in the case of academic personnel, whereas in the case of invited personnel - the evaluation of teaching. Staff submits a three-year personal plan that is attached as appendix to their work contracts. The evaluation results are used for the professional development of personnel, for their motivation and promotion. The University supports the development of the staff both in their scientific field and in pedagogy.

Support includes full or partial subsidy for participation in conferences, Erasmus exchanges and support for their research activities. The latter is expected to be enhance as a Business Research Center was established in 2017, the role of which is to support the engagement of the academic personnel in the scientific/research activity. In terms of pedagogy, a professional training module related to the evaluation methods and teaching and learning using Erasmus + resources was created including courses such as: *"Academic integrity for quality teaching and learning in the Georgian higher educational institutions"*, *"Assessment mechanisms to establish a novel learning environment in higher education institutions"*, *"Change in Classroom"*.

Other support includes the preparation and publishing of reading materials in printed or electronic format by the university library in so-called "Readers", on Professors' request. "Readers" are processed according to the library rules and are available through the online catalog search of the library.

Evidences/indicators

- *Self-Evaluation Report*
- *Interview with University administration*
- *Interview with the SER team*
- *Interview with affiliated and invited staff*
- *Visit to the library.*

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

Best Practices (if applicable):

- Exploitation of the results of Erasmus+ multinational projects to develop a professional training module.

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

---

Evaluation

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

4.3. Material Resources

Programme is provided by necessary infrastructure and technical equipment required for achieving programme learning outcomes.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

Ilia State University is a full functioning Higher education institute having appropriate infrastructure and technical equipment for learning and teaching activities, which are comparable to those of established university internationally. In particular, comfortable building, working rooms for academic personnel, teaching rooms with appropriate facilities, conference halls equipped with appropriate inventory, electronic portal "ARGUS" which supports the educational process by enabling students to plan their studies and register for selected courses, access all course information and e-learning material and interact with professors and teachers.

The University Library is an information resource center, which makes information resources easily accessible through a variety of services and thus contributes to the enhancement of quality of academic processes, the implementation of modern approaches to teaching and generates new knowledge. The library premises are equipped with cable internet and WiFi access in open access mode and include various Halls (Reading, Group work, Access to multimedia resources, Meetings and training events, etc.), and Computer Resource Centers available for open access.

The University Library provides students with relevant printed and electronic textbooks, and access to rich electronic content that includes an extended list of academic databases, individual journals, e-books and libraries. It is worth mentioning that the list of over 25 electronic resources includes all major electronically available academic resources.

Based on close cooperation among the university schools and faculties, identification of literature included in academic syllabuses the Library's stock is continuously updated. Information on new books regularly posted on the website and social network, so that users informed about the availability of new resources.

The library also prepares reading material "Reader" both in printed and an online form, on requests made by professors, or course supervisors in full compliance with copyright rules, which are are processed according to the library rules and are available as the rest of the library materials through the online catalog search of the library.

Additionally, the material and technical resources of Burgenland University of Applied Sciences (Austria) are fully available for the students of exchange direction of the Master's program, which is necessary for the achievement of the learning outcomes considered by the program.

Among services offered by the library, training has an important part. The library offers specific training regarding the use of library resources as well as other training sessions with the participation of partner organizations and international experts on topics concerning awareness and skills enhancement on matters related to academic processes.

Evidences/indicators

- o *Self-Evaluation Report*
- o *The material-technical base of the university*
- o *University budget*
- o *Interview with university administration*
- o *Interview with program heads*
- o *Interview with academic and invited staff*
- o *Visual survey, discussions with library director and administrative staff.*

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

- o As technology is affecting more and more the educational process, the university should consider upgrading their platforms to support the production and of-line access (video streaming) to

videoed lectures. Some students proposed it during the interview session, and as means like MOOCS become popular, conventional programs should exploit aspects of the technology as a service to their students.

Best Practices (if applicable):

- o The operation of the library as information resource center, with multiple roles and extended services (e.g. trainings, internal publications,) integrated in the educational process

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

Evaluation

☒ **Complies with requirements**

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

4.4.Programme/faculty/school budget and programme financial sustainability

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

Financial resources necessary for the program support are considered by the unified university budget in a manner that corresponds to the program needs and is economically feasible. Based on the program budget submitted to the Expert Team, the program is financially sustainable. Its budget covers the operational expenses for its development, funding of adequate resources needed, cost of personnel, and conducting other activities related to the operation of the program.

Evidences/indicators

- o *Program Budget*

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

Best Practices (if applicable):

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

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

Programme's Compliance with Standard

Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
Providing teaching resources	☒			

5. Teaching quality enhancement opportunities

In order to enhance teaching quality, programme utilizes internal and external quality assurance services and also periodically conducts programme monitoring and programme review. Relevant data is collected, analyzed and utilized for informed decision-making and programme development on a regular basis.

5.1 Internal quality
Programme staff collaborates with internal quality assurance service(s) available at the higher education institution when planning the process of programme quality assurance, creating assessment instruments, and analyzing assessment results. Programme staff utilizes quality assurance results for programme improvement.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements The Quality Assurance Office (QAO) is one of the main administrative bodies of Ilia State University working under the highest administrative body of the university - the Academic Council chaired by the Rector. The QAO has a clearly defined statute stating the main principles and terms of reference, which is based on the "plan-do-check-act" cycle. The QAO plays a key role in planning, designing and conducting secondary research as well as creating assessment instruments and analyzing main findings concerning education quality at the university and its compliance with its mission. The QAO is utilizing both qualitative and quantitative research methods. In addition, the basic functions of the QAO include coordination and support for quality assurance at all levels of the university, and guidance of the university and program accreditation processes and contents. The QA department has several chief specialists as well as Curriculum Experts working under the head of the department. In addition, the Department has Quality Assurance Specialists in each School that oversee the quality assurance processes.

The self-evaluation team of ILIAUNI MBA program was represented by administrative (Dean, Head of Quality Management Office, Curriculum Experts) and academic (Head of Programs, Heads of Thematic Blocks of Educational Components) personnel. The QAO performed evaluation of the MBA program by engaging the program administrative, academic and invited personnel as well as other stakeholders (students, employers through the Board of Advisers). The course satisfaction surveys of students are conducted electronically at the end of each semester through ARGUS system. As for the program satisfaction survey by students, it is conducted at the end of 4th semester on MBA level. The academic and inviting personnel's satisfaction level regarding the program is measured periodically. After review of the submitted documentation, it appeared that graduates' satisfaction survey reports were available for the years of 2014, 2015, 2016, while for 2017 the survey had been under way. The interview with the program administration revealed that the university is planning to launch a new appraisal system for academic staff that will incorporate academic as well as scientific performance criteria. The QAO together with the program staff is involved in periodic student employment, mobility, academic result and other relevant data analyses for the program further improvement.

Before programme self-evaluation report submission the changes were made in the structure, contents of the components and resources of the program, based on the internal research findings evaluation as well as recommendations of working group of heads of the programs and thematic blocks. The School of Business, in accordance with the requirement of the renewed accreditation standard, has developed an evaluation plan of the programme learning outcomes/competences and a preferable margin benchmark for each of the competency.

Thus, internal quality assurance procedures of ILIAUNI's School of Business MBA program are adequate and as study visit confirmed, are actually carried out.

Evidences/indicators

- *Quality Assurance Department Statute – downloaded on July 15, 2018*
  https://iliauni.edu.ge/ge/ajax/downloadFile/35919/QA_debuleba.pdf
- *Programme evaluation mechanizms*
- *Internal quality assurance concept*
- *Programme evaluation criteria, forms and instructions*
- *Course satisfaction survey results*
- *Programme satisfaction survey results*
- *Students satisfaction survey with services*
- *Graduates' satisfaction evaluation mechanism*
- *Evaluation plan of Program outcomes and target benchmarks*
- *Interview with administrative staff, students, academic and invited personnel and graduates.*

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

- It is advised to conduct all the periodic researches on time in order to ensure consistency, collect longitudinal data, monitor dynamic and determine development trends provided by the systemic research.

Best Practices (if applicable):

- The university QAO has assigned Curriculum Experts that support academic staff and invited personnel to develop course syllabuses.

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

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

5.2 External quality

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

The School of Business together with QEO utilizes the results of external quality assurance on a regular basis. The programme staff perform analyses of expert recommendations and advises submitted after the accreditation and authorization procedures and work to modify the program accordingly.

In the process of synchronization of the program with the recent trends and requirements of the labor market, the institute of the Board of Advisers was formed at the School of Business and started to function. The Board of Advisers engage several leading employers of the country that work on a personal social responsibility bases to support the improvement of the higher education system enhancement process and develop high quality programs for ILIAUNI School of Business. The members of the Board of Advisers were involved in the MBA program components' renewal to increase the alignment of the program with the requirements of the employment market. During the interview, the Board members showed great motivation to take active part to support the program development. The members of the Board of Advisers and the ULIAUNI School of Business is working to find mutually beneficial partnership terms and deepen cooperation between the business and the university through Master project/Theses subject bank creation and the business side involvement.

In the document "employers' research", the QAO has defined the mechanism of program evaluation by the employer. According to the document, the program heads and program personnel are responsible to conduct in-depth interviews or Focus Groups (FG) with the employers every 3 years in case of master's program. It is stated that the employers are mostly identified after the graduate student survey. FG/interview guide provided is more set to identify the most demanded competences and skills in the labor market, nevertheless only partially deals with the program graduate competence and skill evaluation.

It should be highlighted that as the mechanism of external quality evaluation, adding the exchange direction with Burgenland University of Applied Sciences and determining the equivalence of the program learning outcomes and educational components played an important role in further development of the program. Engagement of Burgenland University program staff supported the process of program renewal and evaluation of the learning outcomes and the program structure. This practice can be considered as the evidence of engagement of the field international experts in the program evaluation and development.

Evidences/indicators

- o *A memorandum of cooperation concluded with Burgenland University of Applied Sciences*
- o *Statute of the Boards of Advisers*

o *Document named "Employers' research"*
o *Interview with the administrative and academic personnel*
o *Interview with the members of the Advisory Board*

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:
o As the Board of Advisers is also involved in the most demanded competences and skills identification and is actively involved in the program alignment to labor market requirements, it is advised to revise the Employer FG/interview guide provided in the document "Employers' research" and focus to better identify the gaps in the MBA program graduate competences and relevant skills. The findings of the comparative analyses can be further used for the program quality enhancement. In addition, it is advised to shorten the period of employers' research from 3 years to 2 years as measuring and evaluation of the graduate's competences and skills is one of the main concerns of external quality assurance.

Best Practices (if applicable):
o Establishment of the Board of Advisers in the School of Business ensures active involvement of employers in the program development and supports exploring avenues of further cooperation with the University and business sector.

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

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

5.3. Programme monitoring and periodic review
Programme monitoring and periodic review is conducted with the involvement of academic, scientific, invited, administrative staff, students, graduates, employers and other stakeholders through systematically collecting and analysing information. Assessment results are utilized for programme improvement.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements
MBA Programme monitoring and periodic review is conducted with the involvement of academic, invited, administrative staff, students, graduates and potential employers through periodically collecting and analysing data. Systematic and demand-based studies are carried out by qualitative, quantitative and integrated approaches. Systematic review is conducted by monitoring mobility, student admission results, etc. An internal quality concept developed by the University, considers the participation of internal and external actors in the evaluation. Existing internal and external evaluation mechanisms support the

university to utilize the evaluation results by the structural units and the program personnel for the program quality enhancement and development activities.

During the interview with the program students, they mentioned unequal teaching skills of the lecturers and suggested to work on improvement of teaching quality through knowledge and method sharing. At present, QAO uses only course evaluation survey to identify the course satisfaction level and plan further improvements. Nevertheless, the university does not use academic as well as invited staff teaching evaluation by pre-determined classroom observation template that can be conducted by peers from the same programme or from the different programme but the same higher education institution, or by peers invited from a different HEI.

Evidences/indicators

- o *Program evaluation mechanizms*
- o *Concept, forms and instruments of program evaluation*
- o *Concept of internal quality assurance*
- o *Interview with the administrative and academic personnel;*
- o *Interview with programme students*

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

- o In order to further develop teaching quality in the programme academic and invited personnel it is advised to start utilizing pre-determined classroom observation template that can be conducted by peers from the same programme or from the different programme but the same higher education institution, or by peers invited from a different University.

Best Practices (if applicable):

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

---

Evaluation

☒ **Complies with requirements**

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

Programme's Compliance with Standard

Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements

Teaching quality enhancement opportunities	☒			

Enclosed Documentation (If Applicable)

HEI's Name: Ilia State University

Higher Education Programme Name: Business Administration (MA)

Number of Pages of the Report: 38

Programme's Compliance with the Standard

Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
1. Programme objectives are clearly defined and achievable; they are consistent with the mission of the HEI and take into consideration labour market demands	☒			
2. Teaching methodology and organization, adequate evaluation of programme mastering		☒		
3. Student achievements and individual work with them	☒			
4. Providing teaching resources	☒			
5. Teaching quality enhancement opportunities	☒			

Expert Panel Chair's

Pandelis Ipsilandis

Expert Panel Members'

Name, last name, signature

Name, last name, signature

Name, last name, signature

Name, last name, signature

Name, last name, signature