განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Accreditation Expert Group Report on Higher Education Programme

PhD in Economics
Caucasus University

Date(s) of Evaluation 13./14.11.2018

Report Submission Date 03.12.2018

Tbilisi 2018

HEI's Information Profile

Name of Institution Indicating its Organizational Legal Form	Caucasus University LLC
HEI's Identification Code	205050567
Type of Institution	Private University

Higher Education Programme Information Profile

Name of the Programme	PhD
Level of Education	Doctorate
Qualification Granted Indicating Qualification Code	PhD in Economics
Language of Instruction	English
Number of Credits	180
Programme Status (Authorized/ Accredited/New)	New

Expert Panel Members

Chair (Name, Surname, University/organization/Country)	Prof. em. Dr. Hans-Georg Petersen Potsdam University, Tax and Transfer Research Group Berlin, Germany
Member (Name, Surname, University/organization/Country)	Prof. Dr. Gocha Tutberidze European University, Georgia
Member (Name, Surname, University/organization/Country)	Mr. Tsotne Zhghenti PhD-Student, Tbilisi State University
Member (Name, Surname, University/organization/Country)	
Member (Name, Surname, University/organization/Country)	

Accreditation Report Executive Summary

- **General information on the education programme**

The program to be assessed is a program designed to enable students to acquire a PhD in Economics. It will be taught in English language and the dissertation has also to be written in English. The focus of this program should be on macroeconomics, which is a very broad focus and not very specifically related to the most recent developments in the subject. However, it seems to meet the interest of some local employers in Georgia (universities, research institutions and consulting firms) despite of the fact that real Georgian peculiarities are not taken into closer considerations. In total the program might be helpful in alleviating the lack of highly qualified manpower in the economic field.

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

The site-visit has taken place on November 14, 2018 at the main building of the Caucasus University in Tbilisi. In the first session the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Material Resources took place, giving a broad view on the developments within the CU. In the 2nd meeting with the Self-Evaluation Team the discussions concentrated on the Dean of the Doctoral School (CDS), while the Dean of the School of Economics did not participate – which made the further information on the basic study programs in economics very difficult. In the focus of the discussions has been the critical staff situation in the initial phase of the PhD program. The 3rd meeting with the heads of the program has shed some light on the qualifications as well as the plans of both staff members, being the only economists in the PhD program working on a part-time contract in the CU. In the 4th meeting in addition to the heads two invited lecturers described their tasks within the PhD program. The meeting with the PhD supervisors in the early afternoon has been canceled by the university so that the expert group has just met two economists who will surely act as supervisors in this program.

After lunch the dean of the CDS made a tour of the university rooms with us; this tour impressively demonstrated the excellent infrastructure and the high standards within the university administration. In the 5th meeting the expert group has interviewed the director of quality assurance and got the impression that he really has the capacities and abilities to secure the necessary standards for the future development. The 6th meeting with three PhD students (one did not show up) became a proof that macroeconomics should be reconsidered again, because all three students focused on subjects being more or less outside macroeconomics, dependent on their jobs in professional practice. The key findings of the site-visit were presented by the chair of the expert group in the last session, in which only the Dean of the CDS took part.

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

Regarding the program objectives (1.) the proposed PhD program "Substantially Complies with Requirements". This limitation in the ranking was caused by some poor descriptions and definitions within the program objectives and learning outcomes (both ranked with substantial compliance) especially within the SER and curriculum.

Teaching methodology etc. (2.) has been ranked with fully complies; in this part from 6 existing components, only component 4 was devaluated to "substantially complies", whereas the remaining 5 components all fully comply with the standards.

With regard to the student's achievements and individual work with them the 1st component (3.1.) fully complies with the standards. The 2nd component (3.2.) suffers from the shortcomings regarding the staff situation within the PhD program so that a slight downgrading of the ranking to "substantially complies" was inevitable. Therefore, the total ranking of this standard resulted in "fully complies".

The standard on providing teaching resources has not convinced the expert group. The personal staff is much to small to assure an adequate support for 5 to 10 PhD students even in the initial phase of the program. Therefore, components (4.1.) and (4.2.) could only be evaluated with "partially complies with the requirements", just to avoid the fully negative ranking. The components (4.3.) with "complies …." and (4.4.) with "substantially complies …." are better rated but cannot avoid that **standard (4.) is the most critical (evaluated with "partially complies ….") of the whole proposal.**

Regarding the teaching quality enhancement opportunities (5.) all components have been evaluated with the best rank so that also the total ranking fully complies with all the given standards.

- **Summary of Recommendations**

    1.1.: Development of a broader program perspective where the PhD program is less isolated in the CU and more integrated with the other existing programs in the CDS. That also improves the interdisciplinarity as well as social responsibility of the single subjects and increases the potential number of supervisors.

    1.2.: The formulations in the SER as well as in the curriculum are regarding to the problems mentioned above almost identical. Therefore, a very careful revision especially of the curriculum is of utmost relevance for the future success of such a program because from the curriculum the students get the first comprehensive information about the details of the whole program.

    2.4.: Clarify the teaching obligations in detail as well as the participation of students in scientific activities and international conferences especially within the curriculum.

3.2.: The expert group strongly recommends to increase the number of staff and/or supervisors. **The main evaluation is done in part 4 below!**

4.1.: **Development of a strategic personal plan to overcome the personal gap within the initial and mid-term perspective.**

4.2.: The same as to 4.1.

4.4.: Improve the situation of staff as well as of the number of supervisors.

- **Summary of Suggestions**

    1.1.:

    (1) Development of more focused specializations in modern economics (applied or empirical, public economics and public choice, environmental economics, behavioral economics, evolutionary economics, etc.) which all can be macro-oriented. But already the interview of the doctoral students (however, belonging to the old PhD program, has given the expert group a clear proof that their interests are much beyond the tight macro-orientation presented in this proposal.
    (2) Assurance of the ethical guidelines and conduct within the proposed course program or via the introduction of another syllabus.

    1.2.: Curriculum which encompasses concise information about prerequisites, course program, learning and teaching obligations as well the examination procedures, the form of dissertation, the process of evaluation including the number of referees, kind of oral examination or thesis defense. Additionally, hints on the specific legal regulations are to be added and all have to be published via the homepage.

    2.2.: The expert group very strongly suggests to increase the number of elective courses from the very beginning.

    2.3.: See recommendation to 1.1. Program Objectives above.

    2.5.: The expert group suggests the introduction of a mentoring program for the students as well as the implementation of in-class-room-controls for teaching capability.

    2.6.: The rules for the dissertation as well as the oral examination should be clarified in the curriculum.

    4.1.:

(1) Involvement of more colleagues from the economics department, business school or social sciences in the PhD program even if they do not teach in English, especially to improve the support for the Georgian language students.

(2)   An international comparison (related to the US, UK and Continental Europe) yields in two different constructions: either separate departments (Fachbereiche) in economics do exist, in the US often integrated in the colleges of letter and science, in Europe often in the business schools; or economics and business are part of a faculty for economics and social sciences. In both models the minimum number of colleagues in economics is in between 15 to 20 collaborators (about 5 full professors, 2 associate professors, 10 to 13 teaching and research assistants and additionally invited staff), while all the professors are working on a full-time and life-long contract base.

4.2. the same as to 4.1.

5.1.: In the future re-accreditation processes the SER should be taken as the most serious information base for the expert group. Just to point the experts to facts which are written in the large paper work of such a proposal is not a very helpful behavior! All components have to be concisely and clearly formulated within the SER. Additionally such report should use the principals of effective SWOT-Analyses!

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

- **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

o Describe, analyze and evaluate programme's compliance <u>with the standard component requirements</u> based on the information collected through programme Self-evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and Site Visit; the analysis has to reflect problematic issues (if applicable)

(1) The program objectives are just mentioned in a rather general form on one page of the Self-Evaluation Report (p. 9 SER). A precise list with clearly defined objectives is not given. Here is also described that the specialization of the program shall be macroeconomics which is a broad field of the whole art and not very focused. During the site visit it became much clearer that there seems to be a local demand for qualified alumni from enterprises being involved in consulting activities and the Georgian universities are badly needing well educated young academics for their further development of teaching and research personal and programs.

(2) The special relevance of the program for the further development of the ethical conduct of young academics as well as the development of the Georgian society towards an improvement of values in the process of liberal democracy is briefly mentioned but not really integrated into the proposed course program (see syllabi).

(3) The brief description of the program (pp. 6 – 7 SER) mentions the existing PhD program as well as the doctoral school (CDS); in the following report possible relations in between the former program and the CDS are not taken into consideration so that the new program is more or less isolated from the other subjects taught at the CU. This causes serious problems regarding the potential staff situation within the new program as described below and neglects the important interdisciplinary approaches within modern economics, too.

(4) Regarding the strategic plans especially directed to the staff situation and its future development most of the critical questions of the expert group have been left unanswered.

(5) The description of the objectives is more precise in the curriculum but also remains on a relatively general level; however, it is meeting the standards in a satisfactorily way.

(6) The long-term goal of the program is orientated not only to Georgia but also the countries in the region to attract students from neighboring countries.

Evidences/indicators

Component evidences/indicators including relevant documents and interview results

Self-Evaluation Report (SER): pp. 6 - 9
Curriculum
Syllabi
Interviews during the site visit

Recommendations:

o Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards

Development of a broader program perspective where the PhD program is less isolated in the CU and more integrated with the other existing programs in the CDS. That also improves the interdisciplinarity as well as social responsibility of the single subjects and increases the potential number of supervisors.

Suggestions for programme development:

o Non-binding suggestions for programme development

(1) Development of more focused specializations in modern economics (applied or empirical, public economics and public choice, environmental economics, behavioral economics, evolutionary economics, etc.) which all can be macro-oriented. But already the interview of the doctoral students has given the expert group a clear proof that their interests are much beyond the tight macro-orientation presented in this proposal.

(2) Assurance of the ethical guidelines and conduct within the proposed course program or via the introduction of another syllabus.

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress
o Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)

Evaluation
o Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the programmes compliance with this specific component of the standard ☐ Complies with requirements X 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
o Describe, analyze and evaluate programme's compliance with the standard component requirements based on the information collected through programme Self-evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and Site Visit; the analysis has to reflect problematic issues (if applicable) (1) The proposed program components are clearly defined within the given syllabi, which all are convincing and in accordance with the standard requirements. The only critical point is that in some syllabi the number of learning outcomes is obviously very large, which crates doubts if that is really controllable and measurable. All the standards of ECTS and connected criteria are met. (2) While the syllabi are all fulfilling the standard requirements, the quality of the SER and the curriculum is suffering from numerous shortcomings and renders a careful revision at least of the curriculum.

(3) A map for program objectives and learning outcomes is given but in the SER at least partly with poorly explanations:

The skills are very generally formulated; partly more or less empty formulas are used. The foreign language ability mentioned under point 5 (SER p. 10) is less a skill to be learned in the program but functions as program prerequisite. The knowledge transfer regarding values (point 7) as well as professional integrity, but many other statements, respectively, challenge the question, how and by which courses such learning outcomes are to be expected and controllable as well as measurable.

(4) In addition to the multifold ambiguities in the list of learning outcomes one objective as well as learning outcome is totally missing: **teaching skills**. And that is especially surprising because perhaps the largest local and regional demand is to be expected for qualified teachers in higher education which also became very clear in the discussions during the site visit.

(5) The remaining text - even for the expert group – is not really understandable. How learning outcomes will be assessed and evaluated in the dissertation remains totally unclear.

(6) Beside these problems in the whole paper it remains open, what is the purpose of a dissertation and which form of dissertation is required? Possible forms are the book form (with concrete standards regarding the minimum length) or the cumulative form (writing three to four research papers). The publication rules are also not mentioned in the SER as well as in the curriculum.

(7) The program learning outcomes are in accordance with the local market demand, with the restrictions made above. A local market analyses conducted for this program shows that there is a demand for highly qualified economists specialized in one or more fields of macroeconomics.

(8) The program has detailed learning outcome evaluation mechanisms as well as a learning outcomes map.

(9) The program learning outcomes have been assessed by surveys and meetings with interested students, potential employers and lecturers, who all will be involved in improving them in the future.

Evidences/indicators
Component evidences/indicators including relevant documents and interview results
SER and the curriculum in the PhD program proposal.
Repeated discussions in almost all interview groups.
Results of local market analyses and employers survey done by the CU.
Learning outcome evaluation mechanism for PhD program in economics.

Recommendations:
Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards
The formulations in the SER as well as in the curriculum are with regard to the problems mentioned above almost identical. Therefore, a very careful revision especially of the curriculum is of utmost relevance for the future success of such a program because from the curriculum the students get the first comprehensive information about the details of the whole program.

Suggestions for programme development:
Non-binding suggestions for programme development
Curriculum which encompasses concise information about prerequisites, course program, learning and teaching obligations as well the examination procedures, the form of dissertation, the process of evaluation including the number of referees, kind of oral examination or thesis defense. Additionally, hints on the specific legal regulations are to be added and all have to be published via the homepage.

Best Practices (if applicable):
o   Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education programmes

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress
o   Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)

Evaluation	
o Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the programmes compliance with this specific component of the standard ☐ Complies with requirements X 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		X		

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
Describe, analyze and evaluate programme's compliance with the standard component requirements based on the information collected through programme Self-evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and Site Visit; the analysis has to reflect problematic issues (if applicable) Caucasus University has determined relevant, transparent, fair, public and accessible program admission preconditions. In particular, the PhD student can become a

person who has a Master's degree or equivalent degree. The applicant must confirm the knowledge of English at B2 level, pass math test of Caucasus Doctoral School, submit a motivation letter in English, which identifies scientific interests. Admission preconditions comply with Georgian legislation and are connected to the program objectives. The prerequisites for accessing the program are quite strict.

Evidences/indicators

- o The Statute of the Doctoral School
- o The Curriculum of PhD program in Economics
- o Interviews

Recommendations:

Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards

None

Suggestions for programme development:

Non-binding suggestions for programme development

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

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

- o Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)

Evaluation

o Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the programmes compliance with this specific component of the standard

X Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

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

Describe, analyze and evaluate programme's compliance with the standard component requirements based on the information collected through programme Self-evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and Site Visit; the analysis has to reflect problematic issues (if applicable)

Doctoral educational programme is mainly worked out on the basis of planning, working and development of methodology of educational programs running at higher education institution (HEI). Namely, educational programme working out, its ratification, making changes, cancellation rules and procedures that include programme working out and planning main principles and all the processes connected to it. The programme is also based on the doctoral educational programme standard worked out at the university. Optimal duration of the program is 3 years. Maximum duration is 4 years. PhD in Economics program consists of 180 ECTS credits. PhD in Economics program consists of teaching component (60 ECTS credits) and research component (120 ECTS credits). Program`s teaching component includes mandatory seminars and methodological courses (34 ECTS credits), optional seminar (6 ECTS credits) and teaching and assistantship (20 ECTS credits).

According to the educational program, 6 credits are allotted to optional learning courses. Student can choose courses except Monetary Theory and Policy and Labor Economics. Though, business administration doctoral students do not have a wide variety of choice. Program design corresponds to the HEI's methodology; it also complies with legal Georgian standards and the international as well. However, the elective components (two in total) are just meeting the absolute minimum standards.

Evidences/indicators

Component evidences/indicators including relevant documents and interview results

Educational program Syllabi Curriculum Interviews

Recommendations: Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards None

Suggestions for programme development: Non-binding suggestions for programme development The expert group suggests very strongly to increase the number of elective courses from the very beginning.

Best Practices (if applicable): o   Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education programmes

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress o   Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)

Evaluation o Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the programmes compliance with this specific component of the standard X Complies with requirements ☐ Substantially complies with requirements ☐ Partially complies with requirements ☐ Does not comply with requirements

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

Describe, analyze and evaluate programme's compliance with the standard component requirements based on the information collected through programme Self-evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and Site Visit; the analysis has to reflect problematic issues (if applicable)

Every course LOs coincide with the study programme LOs. The content and number of credits of every academic course, coincide with the academic course LOs.

The program educational courses are arranged consistently and follow the curriculum map. The contents, teaching-learning methods and the grading system are tailored to the learning outcomes of the course and its peculiarities. The educational courses use learning materials based on the latest achievements.

The course contents are in line with learning outcomes and represented correctly in a map. They are partly very similar to courses taught at many US universities and, therefore, meet national as well as international standards. We just repeat that in two courses (6111 and 6121) the learning outcomes are extremely numerous.

Evidences/indicators

Component evidences/indicators including relevant documents and interview results

Syllabi
Interviews

Recommendations:

Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards

None

Suggestions for programme development:

Non-binding suggestions for programme development

See recommendation to 1.1. Program Objectives above.

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

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

o   Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)

Evaluation

o Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the programmes compliance with this specific component of the standard

X Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

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   Describe, analyze and evaluate programme's compliance <u>with the standard component requirements</u> based on the information collected through programme Self-evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and Site Visit; the analysis has to reflect problematic issues (if applicable)   Doctoral programme is focused on development of doctoral student scientific/research/practical skills. The skills are considered to develop with the help of specific project/task fulfilment and with carrying out research while working on the doctoral thesis. It should be noted, that in the framework of the program, the PhD student shall participate in a scientific conference before defending his/her dissertation on the topic of his/her dissertation (shall present the paper in person). During assisting, doctoral students develop practical skills of teaching, assessment and research work supervising.

There is a lack of information about the teaching components and the distribution in between teaching and research regarding both, SER and curriculum. The meaning of the different kinds of teaching etc. (p. 14 SER) is not clear.

Evidences/indicators

Component evidences/indicators including relevant documents and interview results

SER
Curriculum
Interviews with dean of CDS and heads of program
Interviews with PhD students

Recommendations:

Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards

Clarify the teaching obligations in detail as well as the participation of students in scientific activities and international conferences especially within the curriculum.

Suggestions for programme development:

Non-binding suggestions for programme development

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

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

o   Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)

Evaluation

o Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the programmes compliance with this specific component of the standard

☐ Complies with requirements

X 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

Describe, analyze and evaluate programme's compliance with the standard component requirements based on the information collected through programme Self-evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and Site Visit; the analysis has to reflect problematic issues (if applicable)

Relevant teaching-learning methods are selected for each learning component of the programme. They coincide with the academic course content, aims and make the course study LOs reachable. Besides, academic courses use assessment methods, components and criteria that correspond to the LOs or competence of learning. Namely, written and verbal methods, discussions/debates, co-operative learning, induction, deduction, analysis and synthesis, case study, e-learning. Different study methods are used in every component of the programme in the corresponding syllabuses/conception documents.

The course program as well as the teaching and assistantship is in accordance with national as well as international standards.

Evidences/indicators

Component evidences/indicators including relevant documents and interview results

Syllabi
Guidelines for teaching
Interviews with PhD students

Recommendations:

Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards

None

Suggestions for programme development:

The expert group suggests the introduction of a mentoring program for the students as well as the implementation of in-class-room-controls of teaching capability.

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

Evaluation

X 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

During registration on courses with the help of study process electronic management system, doctoral student can get to know with syllabi and assessment main components and criteria. Students are assessed by the predetermined procedures that are clear and correspond to legislation. Namely, the assessment system involves mid-term and final

assessment that helps doctoral student to check own knowledge and skills periodically and reach LOs determined by the course. Besides, learning component evaluation system is determined according to the specific content, aim of the component and in some cases doctoral student research subject and includes component relevant assessment methods and clear criteria. In the grading system there are established minimal score limits of midterm and final grades. At each step of the studying process student has the right to retake the final exam if his/her minimal midterm grade is 41. Research component is graded with 100 points, following the rule of unitary evaluation principal. The grading system of the learning components is presented in details in the curriculum and the syllabi. The grading system of the dissertation component is detailed in the PhD (Doctoral) Board Statute.

Rules are transparent and clear and in accordance with national as well as international standards.

Evidences/indicators

Component evidences/indicators including relevant documents and interview results

- o Curriculum of the PhD Program in Economics
- o Syllabi
- o The Statute of the dissertation (Doctoral) Board
- o The Statute on conducting examinations

Recommendations:

Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards

None

Suggestions for programme development:

Non-binding suggestions for programme development

The rules for the dissertation as well as the oral examination should be clarified in the curriculum.

Best Practices (if applicable):

o Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education programmes	
In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress	
o Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)	
Evaluation	
o Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the programmes compliance with this specific component of the standard X Complies with requirements ☐ Substantially complies with requirements ☐ Partially complies with requirements ☐ Does not comply with requirements	

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	X			

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
Describe, analyze and evaluate programme's compliance with the standard component requirements based on the information collected through programme Self-evaluation Report,

The general rules for consultations and support of students are in accordance with standards.

The students receive support regarding information about employment possibilities and career development opportunities. The CU is usually carrying out employer's survey and has initiated two studies for this PhD program (about employer's demand and local labor market, both only in Georgian language).Additionally, there is a special administrative unit for the cooperation with potential employers, providing information on job vacancies ("CU Career").

There are not specific expenditures for participation in academic activities in the program budget but the CU provides internal grants for funding research projects for all students.

The CU has some partner universities abroad but only one in Western Europe (ISCTE); opportunities for academic mobility are given but the program description does not include any detailed information what students can really expect.

Consulting hours with lecturers are flexible and this obligation is included in the agreements with the academic staff (at least 5 hours of consultation for one group in one term).

Evidences/indicators

Component evidences/indicators including relevant documents and interview results

Interviews with the PhD students
Interviews with the potential employers
Interview with dean of CDS and quality assurance officer
Additional information on the web
Agreements with invited academics and partner universities

Recommendations:

Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards

None

Suggestions for programme development:

Non-binding suggestions for programme development

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

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

o Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)

Evaluation

o Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the programmes compliance with this specific component of the standard

X Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

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

Describe, analyze and evaluate programme's compliance with the standard component requirements based on the information collected through programme Self-evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and Site Visit; the analysis has to reflect problematic issues (if applicable)

Preliminary note:

The individual work with the students is heavily dependent on the staff situation within a PhD program. Hence, it depends of the number of students enrolled and the available supervisors. To avoid an exaggerated negative evaluation of the whole program, in part

3 of this report only the principal rules are evaluated whereas the capacity problems are mention in part 4!

The general rules and regulations are in accordance with the standards. The quality of student's supervision is heavily dependent on the staff situation which is described under 4 in detail. Especially in the interviews the expert group has won the impression that the number of potential supervisors is currently very limited.

The rights and obligations of the supervisors are described in detail in the Doctoral School Statute and Doctoral (dissertation) Council Statute, both only in Georgian language.

Evidences/indicators

Component evidences/indicators including relevant documents and interview results

Staff description in SER and curriculum
Contract details of head and co-head as well as invited lecturers
Other supervisors were not available at the site visit
Information of the interviews with all stakeholders
Doctoral Council Statute
Doctoral School Statute

Recommendations:

Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards

The expert group strongly recomends to incrase the number of staff and/or supervisors. **The main evaluation is done in part 4 below!**

Suggestions for programme development:

Non-binding suggestions for programme development

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress
o Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)
Evaluation o Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the programmes compliance with this specific component of the standard ☐ Complies with requirements X 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	X			

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

Describe, analyze and evaluate programme's compliance <u>with the standard component requirements</u> based on the information collected through programme Self-evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and Site Visit; the analysis has to reflect problematic issues (if applicable)

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

o Describe, analyze and evaluate programme's compliance <u>with the standard component requirements</u> based on the information collected through programme Self-evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and Site Visit; the analysis has to reflect problematic issues (if applicable)

(1) Extensive discussions have been made on the staff numbers being personally involved in the program. The head and the co-head of the program are the only two persons in the field of economics, guaranteeing the sustainability of the program, and that only on part-time base, whatever the legal construction in Georgia might be. They remain in their job positions outside the university so that the work load in the university itself is naturally limited. The expert group is not convinced that this program input in the economic field is adequate, even if it is supported by one academic in linguistics (academic writing) from the CU, another English language expert as invited staff (research design and teaching) as well as another invited staff economist in microeconomics and labor economics (just one subject of the two existing elective subjects). For the 5 to 10 doctoral students planned for the first period of this project, an adequate supervision and support for the students remains highly questionable.

(2) The expert group has tried within the site visit in various meetings and interviews to clarify the critical staff situation, which perhaps might by in accordance with the requested minimum standards in the Georgian legislation. But the group has not got any clear hints with which staff and whose additional supervisors the supposed gap in the PhD program could be filled.

(3) In addition to the tight staff situation within the planned program, the qualifications of the head and co-head critically have to be analyzed. Although the expert group is totally convinced regarding the intellectual capacities of both persons and the teaching and research qualities, the job experience of both (see both CVs and publication list) is obviously limited. The head has finished his PhD at the Catholic University of Milan-Bicocca (Italy) in April 2016, so that he now has gone through a post-doctoral period of just 2.5 years. The co-head completed her dissertation in 2017 so that she is at best now in the second year of her post-doctoral period. Compared to the international standards being prerequisites for the appointment of professors, a second academic degree like a habilitation is demanded in many EU countries or more recently as substitute a 6 years career as assistant professor is a binding prerequisite for an appointment of an associate or full professor at the university level. The period of 6 years might be shortened by one or two, if excellency in research is proofed by publications in leading international journals having a high impact factor. Both publication lists of the two candidates do not show such publication outcomes.

(4) The specific and critical academic staff situation in Georgia for sure is to be taken into consideration and might justify the involvement even of less experienced staff who have earned PhD degrees from highly reputable international universities. But the CU as employer should be careful in overburdening such staff because the young academics do have the additional obligation in their research fields to obtain international publications with high impacts for their future career. Otherwise the threat might get an increasing relevance that without an improved research output and highly reputable publications they might fail in the coming re-accreditation processes.

(5) A staff which is much too tight also creates problems regarding control mechanism and quality assurance in the dissertation process as well as the connected oral examinations: a very small number of persons is than deciding in a wide field of research outputs as well as on a comparatively large number of doctoral candidates, which clearly increases the threat of misuse of personal influence and power.

(6) Just to rely exclusively on invited staff from other Georgian universities is to be very critically evaluated because that subtracts teaching or especially research activities from these other universities without increasing the total number of qualified researchers in Georgia. Instead of full-time jobs by one employer that creates precarious part-time jobs by two or even more employers und creates an excess burden in form of frictional costs for the employees as well as the employers, too.

The expert group has got the impression that perhaps legal Georgian minimum standards might be fulfilled but that the staff situation does not comply with international standards.

Evidences/indicators
Component evidences/indicators including relevant documents and interview results SER Curriculum CVs All interviews during the site visit Workloads in relation to the existing multifold work contracts

Recommendations:
Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards **Development of a strategic personal plan to overcome the personal gap within the initial and mid-term perspective.**

Suggestions for programme development:
Non-binding suggestions for programme development (1) Involvement of more colleagues from the economics department, business school or social sciences in the PhD program even if they do not teach in English, especially to improve the support for the Georgian language students. (2) An international comparison (related to the US, UK and Continental Europe) yields in two different constructions: either separate departments (Fachbereiche) in economics do exist, in the US often integrated in the colleges of letter and science, in Europe often in the business schools; or economics and business are part of a faculty for economics and social sciences. In both models the minimum number of colleagues in economics is in between 15 to 20 collaborators (about 5 full professors, 2 associate professors, 10 to 13 teaching and research assistants and additionally invited staff), while all the professors are working on a full-time and life-long contract base.

Best Practices (if applicable):
o Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education programmes

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress
o   Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)

Evaluation
o Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the programmes compliance with this specific component of the standard ☐ Complies with requirements ☐ Substantially complies with requirements X 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
Describe, analyze and evaluate programme's compliance with the standard component requirements based on the information collected through programme Self-evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and Site Visit; the analysis has to reflect problematic issues (if applicable) As mentioned before, a strategy for a mid- to long-term planning for staff development is missing, which also has become obvious in the interviews during the site visit. The threat exists that the currently named staff members will be overburdened by the tasks they will have to fulfill. That creates friction especially for their research output so that their qualifications might be downgraded. How the CU will provide the necessary preconditions for the own and invited staff could not be clarified by the expert group. Naturally, this is a guess which is well founded because of the high working load within a PhD program.

The CU regularly will use several surveys for students to evaluate the lecturer's performance in the courses.

For the promotion of the professional development of the own academics as well as the invited staff, the program budget includes costs for funding two conferences and research projects.

Evidences/indicators

Component evidences/indicators including relevant documents and interview results

Statistical data on staff in SER and curriculum
Staff evaluation by CV's
Staff publications
Interview results
Program budget (only in Georgian language)

Recommendations:

Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards

The same as to 4.1.

Suggestions for programme development:

Non-binding suggestions for programme development

The same as to 4.1.

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

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

o   Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)

Evaluation

o Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the programmes compliance with this specific component of the standard

☐ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

X 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

Describe, analyze and evaluate programme's compliance with the standard component requirements based on the information collected through programme Self-evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and Site Visit; the analysis has to reflect problematic issues (if applicable)

Room conditions, administrative support, library staff and its support are excellent and meet all standards, too.

All the infrastructure and material resources are provided in an excellent way.

Students have access to all necessary IT devices which are necessary to perform modern research.

They also have a separate working room equipped with all technical devices.

Evidences/indicators

Component evidences/indicators including relevant documents and interview results

SER
Convincing presentations of administrative staff members
Tour through buildings and facilities
Talks with the dean

Recommendations:

Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards

None

Suggestions for programme development:

Non-binding suggestions for programme development

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

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

o Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)

Evaluation

o Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the programmes compliance with this specific component of the standard

X Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

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

Describe, analyze and evaluate programme's compliance with the standard component requirements based on the information collected through programme Self-evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and Site Visit; the analysis has to reflect problematic issues (if applicable)

Regarding the budgetary situation only available in Georgian language the expert group has got the impression that the infrastructural and administrative budget are more than satisfactory. Problems are just connected with the means directed to the personal staff. If additional means are

available depends on a budgetary decision of the university board. A positive decision for an increased personal budget is the conditio sine qua non for the future progress of this PhD program. Beside that problem, the program has a budget being calculated for the needs of 10 PhD students. In addition the CU has a reserve fund which will guarantee for the long-term sustainability of the program.

Evidences/indicators

Component evidences/indicators including relevant documents and interview results

SER
Budgetary information in Georgian language
Interviews
Discussions in the expert group

Recommendations:

Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards

Improve the situation of staff as well as the number of supervisors

Suggestions for programme development:

Non-binding suggestions for programme development

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

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

o   Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)

Evaluation

o Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the programmes compliance with this specific component of the standard

☐ Complies with requirements

X 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			X	

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, analysed 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 analysing assessment results. Programme staff utilizes quality assurance results for programme improvement.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements Describe, analyze and evaluate programme's compliance with the standard component requirements based on the information collected through programme Self-evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and Site Visit; the analysis has to reflect problematic issues (if applicable) All stakeholders have contributed to the development of the SER; in spite of many inaccurate formulations, the process itself has had an important impact of the motivation of the connected staff. Especially the quality assurance of the CU has obviously played a convincing rule and will support the necessary adaptations in the examination of the dissertation and its oral defense. Students evaluate courses and lecturers for each semester. For the general quality purposes, student's satisfaction annual survey is used by the Quality Assurance Department.
Evidences/indicators

Recommendations:

None

Suggestions for programme development:

In the future re-accreditation processes the SER should be taken as the most serious information base for the expert group. Just to point the experts to facts which are written elsewhere in the large paper work of such a proposal is not a very helpful behavior! All components have to be concisely and clearly formulated within the SER. Additionally such a report should use the principals of effective SWOT-analyses!

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

Evaluation

o Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the programmes compliance with this specific component of the standard

X Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

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 Describe, analyze and evaluate programme's compliance with the standard component requirements based on the information collected through programme Self-evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and Site Visit; the analysis has to reflect problematic issues (if applicable) The programme utilizes the results of its monitoring. During the program accreditation and re-accreditation the Quality Assuarance Department generalizes expert recommendations and introduces them to the Schools. With the view of bringing educational programs closer to the accreditation standards, appropriate measures to be taken are planned. In addition, the results of the program's developmental review are taken into account; recommendations are issued; the University ensures they are realized and monitors their implementation. As a result, the School Board discusses the issue of changes to be made to the educational programs and the programs are revised and renewed in accordance with the internal regulations. The expert group assumes that a regular external evaluation will be carried out.
Evidences/indicators Component evidences/indicators including relevant documents and interview results **Evaluation standards for higher education programs**
Recommendations: Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards None
Suggestions for programme development: Non-binding suggestions for programme development None

Best Practices (if applicable):
o   Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education programmes

In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress
o   Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)

Evaluation

o Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the programmes compliance with this specific component of the standard
 	
     X Complies with requirements
 	
     ☐ Substantially complies with requirements
 	
     ☐ Partially complies with requirements
 	
     ☐ Does not comply with requirements

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
Describe, analyze and evaluate programme's compliance with the standard component requirements based on the information collected through programme Self-evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and Site Visit; the analysis has to reflect problematic issues (if applicable) The programme is monitored and periodically reviewed with the involvement of academic, administrative staff, students, graduates, employers and other stakeholders. As the result of it the programme is modified/adapted based on the analysis of assessment results in order to ensure its modernization. The feedback is collected from alumni which is a great benefit for program development. The University has a practice of assessing comparability of its academic programs with similar programs on the local and global markets. The educational process monitoring is carried out by sitting in the classes and conducting anonymous surveys of the individuals involved in the process.

The expert group expects that these components will be evaluated in coming re-accreditation procedures.

Evidences/indicators

Component evidences/indicators including relevant documents and interview results

Evaluation standards for higher education programs

Recommendations:

Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standards

None

Suggestions for programme development:

Non-binding suggestions for programme development

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

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

o Significant accomplishment and/or progress made by the programme after previous accreditation (If Applicable)

Evaluation

o Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the programmes compliance with this specific component of the standard

X Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

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	X			

Enclosed Documentation (If Applicable)

HEI's Name: Caucasus University

Higher Education Programme Name: PhD in Economics

Number of Pages of the Report: 41

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		X		
2. Teaching methodology and organization, adequate evaluation of programme mastering	X			
3. Student achievements and individual work with them	X			
4. Providing teaching resources			X	
5. Teaching quality enhancement opportunities	X			

Expert Panel Chair's

Prof. em. Dr. Hans-Georg Petersen

Expert Panel Members'

Prof. Dr. Gocha Tutberidze

Mr. Tsotne Zhghenti, PhD Student

41