Accreditation Expert Group FINAL Report on Higher Education Programme

Higher Education Programme Name
Business Administration
Doctor of Business Administration
HEI's Name
Sokhumi State University

Date(s) of Evaluation
October 10, 2018

Report Submission Date
29 November 2018

Tbilisi
2018

HEI's Information Profile

Name of Institution Indicating its Organizational Legal Form	Sokhumi State University
HEI's Identification Code	203851028
Type of Institution	State University

Higher Education Programme Information Profile

Name of the Programme	Business Administration
Level of Education	Doctoral
Qualification Granted Indicating Qualification Code	Doctor of Business Administration
Language of Instruction	Georgian
Number of Credits	180
Programme Status (Authorized/ Accredited/New)	New (accredited on February 12, 2013 with resolution #39 for a 5-year period)

Expert Panel Members

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Accreditation Report Executive Summary

- **General information on the education programme**

The Business Administration doctoral program at Sokhumi State University is offered by the Scholl of Economics and Business, which offers academic programmes in all 3 cycles of higher education. The School is divided in the Economics and Business Administration divisions, with 4 subdivisions of Accounting, Marketing, Management and Finances in the latter. The programme was first accredited on February 12, 2013, for a period of five years. During the first accreditation cycle, 8 doctoral students were awarded Ph.D. degree, while 12 students are currently pursuing doctoral studies being at different stages of the programme.

A uniqueness of the University is its strong commitment and support of activities towards the peace building process. Based on the fact, that Sokhumi State University's main goals are set in compliance with the concept of "University Diplomacy", which bolsters active involvement of the University in conflict resolution process with Abkhazia, this particular PhD program is designed as a sectoral program, which will support economic integration of Abkhazia within the economic sector of Georgia. Being focused on developing modern innovations, technologies and practical skills in business administration, program can accelerate peaceful regulation of Georgian-Abkhazian conflict in regional context.

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

The accreditation visit took place on Tuesday, October 9. Before the visit, the experts' panel received a Self-Evaluation Report (SER), the Programme Description document accompanied by detailed syllabi of all programme components (in English) and documents regarding University Services, CVs and documentation regarding the academic staff, etc. (in Georgian). The Expert Team would like to point out and comment the University for having available a lot of information publicly at the University's website in English.

During the visit, the panel had the chance to meet and interview representatives of the University administration, the programme management team, the SER work team, teaching staff (both affiliated members and invited teachers), doctoral dissertation supervisors, students and PhD graduates of the program, as well as social partners. 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 objective of the doctoral programme in Business Administration is to prepare highly qualified specialists, who possess an in-depth theoretical and practical knowledge in areas of Business Administration. Students are expected to develop research thinking and skills to address problems in entrepreneurial activity with respect to their specialization and be competent in comprehending complexity, developing new knowledge, preparing scientific proposals and formulating

recommendations. Programme objectives are aligned with the mission of the University "*to train specialists of different educational levels who have a university education corresponding to the world's modern standards based on the main value of humanity - the latest scientific ideas, ... for integration in a global society*" and its 2018-2025 strategy.

The programme has so far produced 8 doctoral graduates and has currently 12 doctoral students. Evidence from employment of programme alumni, mainly in academia and/or specialized scientists in agencies, shows that the programme fulfils its objectives. Some of the programme outputs have had significant contribution in formation of national economic and financial policies and regulations.

The programme maintains closed ties with society. Multifold involvement of employers includes programme development, student employment, participation in dissertation defense etc. and shows their genuine interest in supporting the continuous development of the programme.

Programme Learning Outcomes (LOs), are compatible with programme aims and objectives and are described according to NQF clearly describe the profile of a PhD holder. Programme Learning Outcomes are reviewed based on input received by students and staff. Recent reviews resulted in significant changes to the process of determining dissertation topics and the strengthening of the scientific part of the programme because of weak achievement of expected LOs with regard to the research skills. However, attention should be given that all programme aims are reflected to specific LOs.

A rigorous but fair and transparent admission process requires that candidates are holders of a Master level degree, have good knowledge of English, present a dissertation research outline (1000 to 1400 words), pass a preliminary interview with the sectoral commission and obtain consent of a proposed To facilitate interested applicants, the programme offers pre-admission consultation to interested applicants.

The programme is compatible with Higher Educations standards in Georgia and includes workload of 180 ECTS distributed in a period of at least 3 years. The structure of the programme includes a learning component of 46 ECTS (1st year of study) and a scientific component of 134 ECTS (2nd and 3rd year of study). After a programme review with internal and external stakeholders, it was decided to strengthen the research part of the programme, by minimizing learning activities that focus in various areas in a fragmented way. The learning component of the programme aims in: a) development teaching, academic writing and research methodology and data analysis skills. During the doctoral seminar, students work under the assistance and advice of the supervisor to explores the field and produce a literature review paper, which is assessed by a field committee. Passing the seminar is a prerequisite for continuing with the dissertation, however, there is no formal requirement for the format of the paper, or its presentation at a conference. No formal intermediate requirements (e.g. colloquiums) exist, so student's progress is monitored mainly by their supervisors. Students must also produce at least 3 scientific papers, at least one of them being in international conference / journal, but no additional specifications exists in the programme description regarding this requirement. The Expert Team suggests that progress milestones should be added as control points during the period of two+ years of dissertation preparation. Most of interviewed students and alumni had no publications in English language. Since the competitiveness of the Ph.D. holders is usually measured by their contribution in the development, application and transfer of new knowledge, it is vital that the program sets standards for publication of the candidates' scientific work.

The Expert Team believes that the sequence of the programme components is rational, academically rigorous, and compatible with international standards. For each course, a very detailed well-organized subject descriptor (Syllabus) has been developed. However, consideration should be given so that subject LOs represent outcomes of the learning process that are measurable and reflect only higher-order cognitive behavior. More attention is needed to include clear and significant associations in the summary "Map of Learning Outcomes".

Although the programme should be praised for its strong emphasis in building analytical skills, same level support should be provided to students who would need to use other qualitative research methodologies in their dissertations.

The teaching methods used in the program are indicated clearly in the relevant syllabus/concept of every component. The method were chosen considering the requirements of the level, the content of the course and the learning outcomes. The entire learning process is very well monitored on a weekly base, though specific assignments, group-work, practicals, etc.

The doctoral students' evaluation system considers active participation of students in the learning process and it is based on the principle of continuous evaluation of the acquired knowledge.

Grading scheme complies with the regulation of Higher Education in Georgia; however, a doctoral programme that requires students to be devoted to excellence, more demanding requirements could be set by the university, at higher level of achievement than the minimum established by general regulations.

The Expert Panel on the basis information collected through programme Self-evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and the Site Visit discovered that all necessary students support services are in place. Doctoral student benefit from a person-to-person approach, have qualified supervisors and if necessary, depending on the topic, an external co-supervisor.

The programme is fully supported by affiliated academic staff made up of 5 Professors and 10 Associate Professors with long and strong academic and professional experience in their fields of expertise and are active in research, although most of the published work is in Georgian. The Expert Team opinion is that staff the University / Faculty pays attention to academic staff development, and actions in that area should be intensified. As published work in English language is rather low, one of the high priority areas for staff development is to strengthen skills in scientific writing in English and provide incentives for staff to publish in English and to work on attracting research funds.

The University aspiration is to offer staff and students a new educational and working environment and a project is under way – initial results look very promising - to modernize the rather outdated premises and create a pleasant environment for staff and students. A relevant material-technical base supports all of students' scientific work envisaged in the curriculum. The educational process of the doctoral programme is provided with the necessary educational-methodical materials: A relevant library inventory (print and digital), on its own e-library web site, includes an extensive collection of e-books, monographs, articles, bibliographies, scientific database and other information materials accesses in Georgian , English and Russian language that provide the necessary educational-methodical materials that support the doctoral programme. Students do have off-campus access to all electronic materials.

The financial resources of the programme (and the University as a whole) come from state funds, mostly from the ministry of education, while the University attracts significant state funds in order to improve the premises and the research environment (e.g. library, international office, etc.). The

program offers financial subsidies to socially vulnerable PhD students from conflict region of Abkhazia.

QA services at the University are at a stage of development, they are leaded by competent individuals and emphasis should be given to integrate and embed them within programme management and operations.

- **Summary of Recommendations**

Misalignments of LOs and programme aims should be reviewed and adjusted accordingly. Programme Learning outcomes should be aligned to reflect the skills that the programme does develop in graduates to prepare them for careers as academic staff, while the programme should be strengthened in the area of communication in a foreign language, especially in scientific matters.

Review and revise the "*Research Methods*" subject to focus on the essence and peculiarity of PhD research, emphasizing on the problem in a systematic approach on solving issues through the various steps. The course should provide students with skills regarding a wide range of research methods and tools based on the latest achievements in the field in order to enable students to create the appropriate design of the research and also develop new knowledge and ideas, taking into account the specificity of the problem (research elements, types of research design, determining the issue and the objectives of the research, establish research hypothesis, etc.).

Review subject LOS to reflect the level of the programme and to refer to outcomes the achievement of which can be assessed.

Update the Map of Learning Outcomes scheme to turn it into an effective tool for monitoring and controlling programme LOs at programme review stages.

Assessment methodologies should be reviewed to ensure that they are linked with the Learning Objectives of each subject.

Upgrade requirements regarding the publishing the work of Ph.D. students to include publishing in English language and establish a list of journals and conferences of high scientific impact for publication of Ph.D. work.

Increase the amount of academic staff published research work in relevant international journals in English language to obtain increased international recognition for the programme and for the staff.

Work towards transforming the Internal Evaluation from a report generation process to an "Internal Accreditation" and Quality Enhancement process embedded in the management and operation of the programme.

- **Summary of Suggestions**

As the programme awaits accreditation, information should be available on the web site of the university (perhaps with the indication "under accreditation")

In programme description, it should be made clear that practical skills acquired by doctoral students do not refer to ordinary business operations (i.e. "and to develop practical skills in business administration") but in addressing complex problems in these areas.

Consider setting formal progress milestones with intermediate goals to monitor the progress of students during the period of two+ years of dissertation preparation. This would also give students the opportunity to develop presentation skills and also get multiple feedback regarding their work..

Continue and intensify efforts to deliver experience that is more practical to students during their research activities, through various instruments but avoid the temptation to shift emphasis on projects rather than research. The latter will not increase the value of the PhD programme.

The University should consider raising the standards of academic performance for doctoral candidates above those that are set be national regulations as the later reflect minimum acceptable performance in general, while doctoral students should be devoted to excellence.

Enhance the support for the involvement of academic personnel in international conferences, events and research activities.

Establish a system of planning and monitoring academic staff activities in teaching, research, programme development, professional development through annual activity reports and plans of future work with allocation of time for various activities. Exploit the opportunities for obtaining funding from various EU or other international programmes that support education and research in the cultural field. Increased internationalization will help in partnerships. Develop a plan that includes specific targeted activities for actions that can generate additional funding for the programme (participation in EU funded programmes.

Continue fund-raising in order to create some free of charge study quotas for PhD program students beside the socially vulnerable students.

Implementation of improvement actions recommended by an external evaluation should be implemented as soon as possible, so that outcomes are evaluated on time and corrective actions are take.

Device a mechanism to monitor and analyze the research output of the graduates of the programme. This can also be a significant input to the periodic review process.

Make programme benchmarking a periodic more formal (benchmarking report) process.

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

The commitment of the university to accelerate peaceful regulation of Georgian-Abkhazian conflict in regional context through the development of the business field, in accordance to its principle of University Diplomacy.

PhD students actively participate in elaboration different state strategies, laws and policies in the field of Business Administration.

- **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 objective of the doctoral programme in Business Administration is to prepare highly qualified specialists, who possess an in-depth theoretical and practical knowledge in areas of Business Administration. According to its level, doctoral programme students are expected to develop research thinking and skills to address problems in entrepreneurial activity with respect to their specialization in the field of Business Administration and be competent in comprehending complexity, developing new knowledge, preparing scientific proposals and formulating recommendations. Programme objectives are aligned with the mission of the University *"to train specialists of different educational levels who have a university education corresponding to the world's modern standards based on the main value of humanity - the latest scientific ideas, the receipt and dissemination of education, which will have a high sense of civic responsibility for integration in a global society.* The University has developed a Strategy 2018-2025 as well as Action Plan 2018-2020 that reflects in detail how outputs/outcomes can be achieved, which is the responsible body and indicators to measure results. In accordance to the university mission, the programme maintains closed ties with society. Evidence from interviewed "employers" showed that the programme has selected employer representative with the right profile for the level of the programme, who have a great respect for it. Currently, employers cooperate with the programme in many areas (i.e. defining the direction of the programme, employing students, participating in doctoral defense committees, etc.). Discussions with employers revealed their genuine interest in supporting the continuous development of the programme and their continuous cooperation with it. Evidence from employment of programme alumni, mainly in academia and/or specialized scientists in agencies, shows that the programme fulfils its objectives. Programme outputs have also had significant impact in national policies. For example, results of doctoral research in areas relating to reformation of business in Georgia, such as Accounting & Auditing Standards, Double Taxation were taken into consideration in relative legislation. Because of historical reasons, the programme under review exhibits a special uniqueness. Given that, the Sokhumi University's main goals are set in compliance with the concept of "University Diplomacy", which bolsters active involvement of the University in conflict resolution process with Abkhazia, this particular PhD program is designed as a sectoral program, which will support economic integration of Abkhazia within the economic sector of Georgia. Being focused on developing modern innovations, technologies and practical skills in business administration, program can accelerate peaceful regulation of Georgian-Abkhazian conflict in regional context.

The programme has produced 8 doctoral graduates and currently has 12 doctoral students. Students and alumni feel that the research topics are more relevant at this University (some have transferred from other universities), the university provide a congenial social environment, that facilitates easier communication with qualified academic staff, and that there is more emphasis on the scientific part of the programme

Overall, the programme aims and objectives are clear and the programme can contribute to the development of the field and the society. Information about the programme is publicly available, but was recently removed from the University web site because the accreditation period ended.

Evidences/indicators

- *University Mission statement*
- *Program description document,*
- *Self-Evaluation Report (SER)*
- *Interview with University Administration*
- *Interview with the SER team*
- *Interview with the programme director*
- *Interviews with employer representatives*
- *Interview with alumni*

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

- As the programme awaits accreditation, information should be available on the web site of the university (perhaps with the indication "under accreditation")
- In programme description, it should be made clear that practical skills acquired by doctoral students do not refer to ordinary business operations (i.e. "and to develop practical skills in business administration") but in addressing complex problems in these areas.

Best Practices (if applicable):

- The commitment of the university to accelerate peaceful regulation of Georgian-Abkhazian conflict in regional context through the development of the business field, in accordance to its principle of University Diplomacy.

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

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

Programme Learning Outcomes (LOs), are compatible with programme aims and objectives and are clearly described according to NQF in terms of Knowledge, Abilities, Making Judgment, Communications Skills, Learning ability and Values. Programme LOs clearly describe the profile of a PhD holder.

Attention should be given that all programme aims are reflected to specific LOs. For example, in Communications skills, corresponding LOs demand, and rightfully so, that graduates *"can give a reasonable and accurate presentation of new knowledge in the field of business administration, access thematic competences with opponents, colleagues and a wide range of scientific public discussions in disputed issues in native and foreign languages, and prepare publications for referencing magazines"*. However, publishing research work in foreign language is not required in the programme and student communications skills in English was limited. On the other hand, while the programme prepares doctoral students for teaching, this programme aim does not show explicitly in programme LOs.

Programme Learning Outcomes are reviewed based on input received by students and staff. Discussion with programme management, QA team, students and alumni confirmed that LOs are evaluated periodically and certain changes were implemented based on these reviews. Most significant, are the recent changes made to the process of determining dissertation topics of doctoral students and the strengthening of the scientific part of the programme because of weak achievement of expected LOs with regard to the research skills, which are described in detail in sections 2.1 and 2.2 of this report.

Evidences/indicators

- o *Program description document,*
- o *Self-Evaluation Report (SER)*
- o *Programme syllabi*
- o *QA regulations*
- o *Results of stakeholder surveys*
- o *Interview with the SER team*
- o *Interview with the programme head*
- o *Interviews with students and alumni*
- o *Interview with employers*

Recommendations:
o   Some misalignments of LOs and programme aims should be reviewed and adjusted accordingly. Programme Learning outcomes should be aligned to reflect the skills that the programme does develop in graduates to prepare them for careers as academic staff, while the programme should be strengthened in the area of communication in a foreign language, especially in scientific matters.
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
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

One of the major changes in the programme since its last accreditations relates to the admission process. Applicants to the programme were enrolled without being required to present a well-formed idea of their research interests. As a result, most of the first year of the programme was consumed in an effort to formulate an initial proposal of their dissertation thesis. This resulted in high failure rates (dropouts in certain years exceeded 50%) either after the first year or in subsequent years.

Following discussions with the academic staff, input from students and contribution by employers, a decision was made to move into a more rigorous process for admitting doctoral students.

Admission criteria are clear. Admission to the programme requires that candidates are holders of a Master level degree. Applicants are required to have knowledge of English language at least at B2 level or pass University examinations.

Applicants to the Doctoral programme must present a dissertation research outline (1000 to 1400 words), pass a preliminary interview with the sectoral commission and obtain consent of a proposed supervisor. To facilitate interested applicants, the programme offers pre-admission consultation (meetings with potential supervisors) during the months prior to submission of applications.

The admission to the programme is performed based on a point system reflecting the result of the candidate's interview with the sectoral commission.

According to QA surveys, confirmed by statistics on the progress of doctoral students, the addition of the requirement for dissertation research outline and the more rigorous interview process where applicants who do not show definite competencies are rejected does make a difference in the quality of the students being admitted in the programme.

Program admission preconditions are fair, transparent, public and accessible on the web page of the University.

Evidences/indicators

- *Program description document,*
- *Self-Evaluation Report (SER)*
- *Interview with the SER team*
- *Interview with the programme head*
- *Interviews with students and 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

2.2 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 programme was designed based on Sokhumi University regulations for planning developing and improving educational programmes that specify the planning, designing and developing process taking into consideration admission preconditions, programme Learning Outcomes, system of evaluating student's knowledge, teaching plan, ECTS workloads.

The programme is compatible with Higher Educations standards in Georgia and includes workload of 180 ECTS distributed in a period of at least 3 years. The structure of the programme includes a *learning component* of 46 ECTS (1st year of study) and a *scientific component* of 134 ECTS (2nd and 3rd year of study).

After a programme review with the participation of academic staff, dissertation supervisors, employers and input from students, it was decided to shift focus in strengthening the research part of the programme, by minimizing learning activities that focus in various areas in a fragmented way, which were evaluated as not so significant by the students who asked for more concentration on research activities. The research orientation of the programme was enhanced by extending the workload of the scientific part from 120 to 134 ECTS credits, increasing the load of the doctoral seminar to 8 ECTS credits and also strengthening the research methodology modules by offering 3 courses in that area. The changes are welcomed by students, as they make their studies focus more to their research tasks rather than exploiting various management areas in search of determining a dissertation topic. Overall, Program components ensure the gradual building of knowledge and skills so students reach the research stage of their Ph.D. studies well prepared.

The learning component of the programme includes general courses that aim in: a) development teaching skills and being prepared to work in academic positions in Higher Education by assisting academic staff in teaching, b) development of Academic Writing skills and c) developing Research Methodology and Data Analysis skills. Significant part of the learning component is the doctoral seminar, where for the student works under the assistance and advice of the supervisor, explores the field in order to produce a literature review paper, which is assessed by a field committee. Passing the seminar is a prerequisite for continuing with the dissertation. However, there is no formal requirement for the format of the paper, neither for a presentation of a scientific paper summarizing the original work at a conference.

The scientific supervisor and the doctoral student develop an individual plan, according to which the research will take place. Dissertation supervisors are members of affiliated staff, while and external co-supervisor can be assigned depending on the dissertation topic.

No formal intermediate requirements (e.g. colloquiums) exist, so student's progress is monitored mainly by their supervisors. Students must also produce at least 3 scientific papers, at least one of them being in international conference / journal, but no additional specifications exists in the programme description regarding this requirement. Although this loose structure gives more flexibility to students and relieves them from additional burden, some formal progress milestones should be added as control points during the period of two+ years of dissertation preparation. Besides monitoring and assuring smooth progress of students, this will work to the benefit of the students in improving their presentation skills and more importantly in more opportunities to expose their work to a wider audience and get multiple feedback regarding the progress in their research.

Most of interviewed students and alumni had no publications in English language. The competitiveness of the graduates of a doctoral program, the aim of which is to generate new researchers, is usually measured by their contribution in the development, application and transfer of new knowledge in the field. In this sense, it is vital that the program sets standards for publication of the candidates' scientific work during the scientific module of the program. Indicative actions that can be taken in this direction include requirements that some of the published work produced by Ph.D. students to be in English and the establishment of a list of specific scientific journal and conferences, which the programme considers as having high impact, where students publish their work, etc.

The Expert Team believes that the sequence of the programme components is rational, academically rigorous, and compatible with international standards. Lack of electives is compensated by the doctoral seminar and the increased length of the scientific part, which are tailored to students' interests. However, improvements can made to assure the smooth progression of students and achievement of learning outcomes.

Evidences/indicators

- *Program description document,*
- *Self-Evaluation Report (SER)*
- *Regulations "Instruction and procedure for approval of Bachelor's Master's and Doctoral programmes"*
- *Regulations "Scientific component of Doctoral programme scheduled research plan"*
- *Interview with the SER team*
- *Interview with the programme head*
- *Interviews with dissertation supervisors*
- *Interviews with students and alumni*

Recommendations:

- The programme must require that some of the published work of candidates to be in English, and establish a list of international scientific journals with high scientific impact where students publish their work.

Suggestions for programme development:

- Consider setting formal progress milestones with intermediate goals to monitor the progress of students during the period of two+ years of dissertation preparation. This would also give students the opportunity to develop presentation skills and also get multiple feedback regarding their 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

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.

Course Learning Outcomes (LOs) are stated explicitly and clearly in the corresponding syllabus in accordance to the six criteria of the Georgian NQF. However, consideration should be given so that subject LOs represent **outcomes** of the learning process that are measurable (i.e. their achievement can be evaluated) at the subject level. In certain cases, LOs describe content, e.g. *"The PhD student received in-depth knowledge"* , *"the proper transformation of the economic character is possible to use statistical models relevant to normal, almost normal or asymptomatic normal population"*, etc. denote not learning outcomes but inputs (what the lecturer teaches). In other cases outcome are clear but their level is confusing, e.g. *"The student is familiar with and has deep understanding"*. Doctoral level programme LOs should reflect only higher-order cognitive behavior (i.e. *analyze, synthesize, criticize, distinguish, model, formulate, appraise, defend*, etc.), words like *know, understanding, is familiar* characterize lower level LOs. Nevertheless, stating LOs properly is a long learning process and the present status sets a sound starting point and opportunities to share good practices among the teaching staff.

Furthermore, a summary "Map of Learning Outcomes" 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). For the Map, to become a useful tool for checking the extent to which programme LOs are supported from the curriculum, more attention is needed to include clear and significant associations. In the current map, there are case where LOs not supported by specific courses are shown on the map (e.g. Learning Skills and Values LOs in Contemporary teaching

method), while others, that due to their nature (e.g. Professor Assistant) do not contribute significantly in LOS related to Knowledge and Understanding or Making Judgement.

The Expert Team would like to point out one issue related to the subject of "*Research Methods*". The Learning Outcomes in the course are exactly the same *(they only differ in one word in the first of the 8 bullet points)* with the LOs of the subject *"Empirical Data Analysis"*. This is a result of the strong orientation of Research Method to Quantitative Methodologies as it occurs from the content and the mandatory literature, which relates to specific area in statistical methodologies. Although the programme should be praised for its strong emphasis in building analytical skills (three subjects are compulsory for all students), and certain Ph.D. dissertations included a high level of analytics, at the same time, support should be provided to students who would need to use other research methodologies (e.g. interviews, focus groups, etc.) in their dissertations. Evidence from discussion with current students showed that several of them would need to follow qualitative methodologies and skills regarding the approach they should follow and tools they can use. The programme administration is advised to review the learning outcomes, content and literature in the subject of Research Methodologies so that it covers adequately both Quantitative and Qualitative research methodologies and tools.

The literature listed in the syllabi is well organized and presented. It includes required textbooks, additional reading materials including books, scientific articles, web based materials, while for each lecture references to specific chapters, and other sources is given. Mandatory literature is up to date, in few cases, some of the additional is old and needs to be updated.

Evidences/indicators

- *Program description document,*
- *Self-Evaluation Report (SER)*
- *Course syllabi*
- *Interview with the programme head*
- *Interview with the Academic Staff*
- *Interviews with students and alumni*

Recommendations:

- Review and revise the "*Research Methods"* subject to focus on the essence and peculiarity of PhD research, emphasizing on the problem in a systematic approach on solving issues through the various steps. The course should provide students with skills regarding a wide range of research methods and tools based on the latest achievements in the field in order to enable students to create the appropriate design of the research and also develop new knowledge and ideas, taking into account the specificity of the problem (research elements, types of research design, determining the issue and the objectives of the research, establish research hypothesis, etc.).
- Review subject LOS to reflect the level of the programme and to refer to outcomes the achievement of which can be assessed.
- Update the Map of Learning Outcomes scheme to turn it into an effective tool for monitoring and controlling programme LOs at programme review stages.

Suggestions for programme development:

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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

Students' involvement in research is mainly within the framework of their PhD dissertation. The Expert Team had an opportunity during the site visit to look at some of the recent dissertations of past students. Although, an in-depth examination is impossible within the time frame of the visit, dissertations are compatible with international standards and some of them include very advanced analytics.

The faculty of Economics and Business of Sokhumi State University with the support and organization of student self-government is very active in organizing and participating in scientific events that allow students to share their research work, get into scientific discussions, exchange of ideas and views and develop contacts with the local and international scientific community. Many such examples were presented to the Expert Team that include International Scientific conferences (2015, 2016, 2017), Meetings with teams for foreign universities, Visits of scientific experts (Web of science), Lectures from foreign academics, etc.

The University is actively promoting the research work of its students by providing financial support to students for presenting their work at scientific conferences in Georgia or abroad.

Practical skills development is mainly oriented towards future employment of graduates as academic staff, analysts, consultants, scientific experts or advisers in cultural organizations and include the development of Knowledge transfer skills, Pedagogical skills, and Communication and Presentation skills.

Students of the programme had the opportunity to work along with academic staff in preparing material, based on their Ph.D. work, in the process of reforming the *Accounting and Auditing* regulations in Georgia. Similar work with students' involvement took place with regard to establishment of framework for *Double Taxation*. Stakeholders praised the quality of the work of students in those projects.

The research topics of the interviewed students focused on Applied Research, several of them related to students' interests arising from their current line of work and some with addressing issues of general importance (e.g. Social responsibility in direction of people with special needs, Regulation and Self-regulation in Auditing, Challenges of Georgian Economy in view of EU ascension, etc.

The university has memorandums with organizations willing to employ graduates, participate in programme development activities, and delivering thematic seminars on issues that are interesting to them.

Evidences/indicators

- *Program description document,*
- *Self-Evaluation Report (SER)*
- *Agreements / Memorandums with Social Partners*
- *Interview with the University administration*
- *Interview with the programme head*
- *Interviews with students and alumni*
- *List of potential research areas / topics of the programme*

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

- Continue and intensify efforts to deliver more practical experience to students during their research activities, through various instruments but avoiding the temptation to shift emphasis on projects rather than research. The latter will not increase the value of the PhD programme.

Best Practices (if applicable):

- PhD students actively participate in elaboration different state strategies, laws and policies in the field of Business Administration.

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 methods used in the program are indicated clearly in the relevant syllabus/concept of every component. The method were chosen considering the requirements of the level, the content of the course and the learning outcomes.

As expected for a doctoral programme, priority is given to intensive seminar teaching and practice-assistantship. Seminar based teaching is based mainly on analysis methods that is used for solving particular tasks, and explanatory method for thinking around issues, a detailed review of a particular example within the frames of a given topic. During the process of assistantship, the Doctoral student is given an opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge in practice using action-oriented teaching.

A deductive approach is used in subjects where the Doctoral student acquires new, in-depth knowledge in a particular direction like Analytics. Due to small number of students, teamwork and joint task are limited.

The entire learning process is very well monitored on a weekly base, though specific assignments, group-work, practicals, etc.

Evidences/indicators

- o *Course syllabi*
- o *Regulation on coordinating the academic process*
- o *Interview with the programme head*
- o *Interview with the Academic staff*
- o *Interviews with students and 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

The doctoral students' evaluation system considers active participation of students in the learning process and it is based on the principle of continuous evaluation of the acquired knowledge.

With regard to the learning component of the programme, students are evaluated based on their in-class attendance and performance during the semester, several interim assignments (not in all courses) and grades of their midterm and final evaluation. Interim assessment accounts for 60% of the total grade (30% midterm exam and 30% in-class performance and assignments), while final exam 40%.

Overall 70% of the total grade is accumulated by written exams (midterm and final) that include, according to the syllabi, testing of knowledge on *"theoretical topics"*. This approach raises certain questions as to how achievement of LOs that refer to ability to apply knowledge are assessed.

Grading scheme follows the regulation of Higher Education in Georgia were students pass if they accumulate more than 50% of the total point across all methods of assessment. In addition the University requires to students to achieve 15 (out of 60) points at interim assessment to be allowed to participate in the final exam and achieve a score of at least 50% at the final examination (20 out of 40). Students whose overall grade is in the range 41-50, fail the course but they are given one more attempt to pass, while if a grade is 40 or below the student must repeat the course.

The above scheme takes into consideration the overall performance of students, it is transparent - specifics are explained in detail in every course syllabus, and it complies with Higher Education regulations in Georgia. However, for a doctoral programme, which, by its nature, requires students to be devoted to excellence, requirements could be set by the university at somehow higher than those established by general regulations that set minimum levels of achievement. For example, higher threshold for interim evaluation, restriction on the total number of exam retakes (FX), maintaining an average grade of at least "Good" or perhaps "Very good", would indicate to candidates and stakeholders that the programme strives for excellence.

The scientific component is evaluated during the defense of the dissertation thesis. Before the defense of their dissertation, students may have published 3 papers in International Journals, not necessary in another language. Considering the fact that most of the state in the art in the field of Business Administration is published in English language, the university should consider upgrading the requirements and ask that some of those papers to be published in English. Along with this consideration should be given to establish a list of high impact international scientific journals and conferences, where Ph.D. publish their work.

The defense committee includes external reviewers, funding for whom has been included in the programme budget. The teacher of the Academic Writing course is also member of the defense committee. Depending on the topic, social partners are also included in the defense committee.

Overall, the evaluation process for both learning and scientific component is fully transparent.

Evidences/indicators

- *Course syllabi*
- *Programme description*
- *Self-Evaluation Report*
- *Interview with the programme head*
- *Interview with the Academic staff*
- *Interviews with students and alumni*

Recommendations:

- o   Assessment methodologies should be reviewed to ensure that they are linked with the Learning Objectives of each subject.
- o   Upgrade requirements regarding the publishing the work of Ph.D. students to include publishing in English language and establish a list of journals and conferences of high scientific impact for publication of Ph.D. work.

Suggestions for programme development:

- o   The University should consider raising the standards of academic performance for doctoral candidates above those that are set be national regulations as the later reflect minimum acceptable performance in general, while doctoral students should be devoted to excellence.

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 The Expert Panel on the basis information collected through programme Self-evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and the Site Visit discovered that all necessary students support services are in place. Students receive appropriate consultations and support regarding the planning of learning process, improvement of academic achievement, employment and professional development. The relevant department of the Faculty of Economics and Business carries out students' academic support: Dean of the faculty, deputy dean, student registration service, study process management service, secretary. As well as SSU student's practical and career management service; Sport, Culture and Youth Organizations Relationship Service. In the framework of the Programme, students have an opportunity to participate in different projects, events, conferences and research fellowships; they can also participate in international exchange programmes. Students receive relevant information about various local and international projects and events. The workload of faculty members includes hours for student advising. Syllabus of each component includes consultation hours and specific office hour. Interviewed students and alumni confirmed that supervisors were readily available for consultation and supportive. All supportive electronic databases are in place as well. Tight cooperation with employers, gives additional opportunities this particular program to be more flexible towards labor market requirements and define program-learning outcomes in compliance with existed challenges.
Evidences/indicators   *Interviews during site visit with different stakeholders*   *Self-evaluation report*   *Provision of Student Practice and Career Services*   *Results of students and employers surveys*
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

Every doctoral student benefits from person-to-person approach, has a qualified supervisor and if necessary, depending on the topic, an external co-supervisor who has scientific-research experience relevant to the topic of the thesis.

Students, propose their supervisor, after the pre-enrollment period, when they discuss the dissertation proposal that must finally have the consent of the proposed supervisor. Because of the pre enrollment phase the programme accepts dissertation research proposals that fall within its scientific capacity. In special cases supervision may be assigned to an external academic staff (e.g. partner university). Supervisors are affiliated academic staff members, have a strong academic background as well as professional experience in Business Administration, having been active in the field for long time. Supervision of doctoral dissertation is limited to a maximum of 3 per supervisor at any time, while the current practice is supervision of 1 or 2 thesis. Students can request change of supervisors, which is examined by the faculty board.

Supervisors actively impel their students to be involved in international conferences and other scientific events in their field, and are happy with the students' positive attitude in doing so. Students on their part seemed very satisfied by the attention and guidance they receive from their supervisors.

Interviews with Dissertation Supervisors, doctoral students, alumni along with review of relevant documents (CVs and University regulations) provided evidence that the Programme meets the accreditation standards in this regard.

Evidences/indicators

- o *Interviews during site visit with different stakeholders;*
- o *Self-evaluation report;*
- o *Learning table and the schedule of individual consultations;*
- o *Results of the Doctoral students' surveys;*
- o *SSU doctorates' minimal standards;*
- o *Academic Staffs' CVs.*

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
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 programme is fully supported by affiliated academic staff made up of 5 Professors and 10 Associate Professors. Contribution of invited staff is not required; in special cases, external academics are called as co-supervisors in dissertations (never exceeded 1 person per year). The teaching team has been stable over the last 5 years with addition of 1 new person in 2016, and 2017, which is certainly an advantage for the programme in terms of staff bonding and common sharing of goals and programme ownership.

Academic staff is characterized by a well-balanced mixture of experience and dynamism. Certain members of the staff have a significant volume of published work, well respected in the academic community.

Overall, the teaching staff has long and strong – in some cases remarkable - academic and professional experience in their fields of expertise. Generally, members of academic staff are active in publishing their research work in journals and conference proceedings, although most of the published work is in Georgian and attention should be given increase publication in international journals in English language as this will result in more visibility towards the programme, and more opportunities for networking with international partners in education and research activities.

Academic staff is also involved in other scientific activities, indicatively: fundamental research scientific grant acquisition, publishing monographs, textbooks, reviewers of proposed legislation, reviewers in scientific journals, organization of scientific conferences, teaching in international exchange programmes, international staff training programmes, etc.

Academic staff workload is regulated by the SSU Academic Council decision and provides that each member of academic staff will offer the same number of consultation hours as the number of teaching hours.

Programme leadership is provided by the Dean of the Faculty and the Programme director, professors at the Faculty of Business and Economics, with strong background in teaching, research and managerial experience in academia.

Based on the interview with students the Experts Team acknowledges that Programme students are provided with adequate administrative and support staff such as Programme supervisor, Faculty Dean and Deputy Dean, Study Process Management Service, Student Registration Officers, Faculty secretary.

Evidences/indicators

- o *Self-evaluation report*
- o *Interviews during site visit with different stakeholders*
- o *Personal files of the academic staff with relevant qualification, Head of Programme*
- o *List of publications of the academic staff and the matrix of staff workload*
- o *Results of the Doctoral students' surveys*
- o *Learning table and the schedule of individual consultations*

Recommendations:

- o Increase the amount of academic staff published research work in relevant international journals in English language to obtain increased international recognition for the programme and for the staff.

Suggestions for programme development:

- o Invite foreign scholars to deliver international knowledge and experience to PhD Students. Exploit EU funding opportunities for staff exchanges.

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

The evaluation of the academic and research work of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the programme is performed by means of regular surveys conducted by the Quality Assurance Department and by means of presenting individual reports of the scientific work. The outcomes are utilized for the professional development of the staff.

The Faculty organizes annual conferences and round tables for academic personnel to familiarize them with the latest methodology for preparing academic personnel publications.

Academic staff is financially supported (partially or entirely) to cover fees and expenses for participating in conferences to present relevant research work.

Staff development activities were also provided through several European projects in areas like *"Assessment Tools for new learning environments in higher education institutions", "Developing Programs for Access of Disadvantaged Groups of People and Regions to Higher Education", "Creation of the Graduate Curricula in Peace Studies in Georgia"* during the 2015-18 timeframe, while the University participated in similar programmes in earlier years as well.

During the discussions with Academic staff, it was confirmed that they are aware of the opportunities to participate in exchange visits to international universities under the Erasmus+ or other bilateral schemes. The University does have an extensive list of international cooperation agreements with over 50 universities in Europe and a strong ERASMUS+ programme with 10 other universities in EU.

Academic staff can take a 6-month sabbatical every five years to be used for their further professional and scientific development.

The Expert Team opinion is that staff the University / Faculty pays attention to academic staff development, and actions in that area should be intensified. As published work in English language is rather low, one of

the high priority areas for staff development is to strengthen skills in scientific writing in English and provide incentives for staff to publish in English and to work on attracting research funds.

Evidences/indicators

- *Interviews during site visit with University administration, programme management, academic staff and QA teams*
- *Self-evaluation report*
- *International conferencing materials*
- *University budget*
- *Business-trip documents*
- *Academic personnel's annual report*
- *The University web-page*
- *Scientific collections*
- *International memorandums*

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

- Enhance the support for the involvement of academic personnel in international conferences, events and research activities.
- Establish a system of planning and monitoring academic staff activities in teaching, research, programme development, professional development through annual activity reports and plans of future work with allocation of time for various activities.

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

4.3. 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

The doctoral program is ensured with all necessary infrastructure and technical equipment, needed for achieving learning outcomes envisioned by the educational program. The premises of the University are rather outdated but a renovation process is currently taking place to modernize the place and create a pleasant environment for staff and students. The University should be commended for their aspiration to offer staff and students a new educational and working environment. The first results of the renovation project (almost two floors were completed, new library space has been created) are very promising.

The university possesses a relevant material-technical base (computer classes, audit fund and other resources) that supports all the practical, theoretical and interdisciplinary training and students' scientific work envisaged in the curriculum.

The educational process of the doctoral programme is provided with the necessary educational-methodical materials: Relevant library inventory (print and digital) on its own e-library web site that includes: An extensive collection of e-books, monographs, articles on business administration, bibliographies, scientific database and other information materials accesses in Georgian , English and Russian language. Students do have off-campus access to all electronic materials.

Overall, the services are adequate for delivering the Ph.D. programme.

Evidences/indicators

- o *Interviews during site visit with Management, academic staff, students and alumni*
- o *Self-evaluation report*
- o *Visit of the facilities*
- o *Library resources*
- o *Results of the material resources surveys*

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

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

The financial resources of the programme (and the University as a whole) come from state funds, mostly from the ministry of education, while the University attracts significant state funds in order to improve the premises and the research environment (e.g. library, international office, etc.).

During the Site-visit, interviews with relevant staff the Expert Panel identified that the program offers financial subsidies to socially vulnerable PhD students from conflict region of Abkhazia.

Evidences/indicators

- o   *Interviews during site visit with Management, academic staff, students and alumni*
- o   *Self-evaluation report*
- o   *Budget of Sokhumi State University*

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

- o   Exploit the opportunities for obtaining funding from various EU or other international programmes that support education and research in the cultural field. Increased internationalization will help in partnerships. Develop a plan that includes specific targeted activities for actions that can generate additional funding for the programme (participation in EU funded programmes.
- o   Continue fund-raising in order to create some free of charge study quotas for PhD program students beside the socially vulnerable students.

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

☒ 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, 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

The Quality Assurance Service (QAS) at Sokhumi State University was established in accordance with the Law of Georgia on "Higher Education", with the purpose of *improving training and scientific research activities, increase personnel qualification, evaluate quality systematically".*

Faculty QAS participate in the creation and approval of new programmes and carry QA functions at faculty level.
- Quality Assurance Service of Sokhumi State University uses the following tools for internal evaluation for quality assurance at the Faculty of Economics and Business:
- Prepares self-assessment report for the programme annually, evaluating the program in accordance with predefined criteria, and develops recommendations for improvement, modification and renewal of the project;
- Provides an annual assessment and monitoring (internal assessment) of the academic process (implementation of the educational program) and the hired staff (educational programmers);
- Preparation and monitoring of the academic staff's annual scientific-pedagogical accounts;
- Prepare a questionnaire for student inquiry and conduct a survey year.
- Introduction of modern teaching methods, organization of their university conferences and studying foreign practices.

According to the evidence collected by the Expert Team, all these processes are in place and performed regularly. At the same time, several weaknesses were observed regarding the Self Evaluation Report,

In most part, SER is just descriptive; it does not provide enough justification of actions that were taken, goals that were achieved or not achieved and reason why, critical view of weaknesses and reasons for their existence. Overall, it gives the impression of work done in a rush (certain appendices in the programme description, carry names of other universities) just for submitting the report for the accreditation process.

Although, this is a usual practice among HEIs, the Expert Team would like to emphasize the importance of the Self Evaluation Report and the Internal procedures in improving the quality of programmes. Essentially, the internal quality process is the main tool that drives improvements, and should be seen by all programme stakeholders as an "Internal Accreditation Process". Following this mindset, the Self Evaluation Report should be publicly available and become a basis of discussion and debate among all programme stakeholders for defining specific improvement actions.

Based on the above, the Expert Team believes that QA services at SSU are at a stage of development, they are leaded by competent individuals and emphasis should be given to integrate and embed them within programme management and operations. The current status provides a firm base towards this goal.

Evidences/indicators

- o *Interview with the QA staff at University and Faculty level*
- o *Interview with programme director, academic staff, students and alumni*
- o *Surveys and Outcomes*
- o *Relevant QA regulations*

Recommendations:

- o Work towards transforming the Internal Evaluation from a report generation process to an "Internal Accreditation" and Quality Enhancement process embedded in the management and operation of the programme.

Suggestions for programme development:

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

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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 programme was last accredited in February of 2013. The accreditation outcomes, the recommendations of the experts as well as the Accreditation Board were considered for further development of the programme. Specifically:

- Preliminary outline of the dissertation research within 1000-1500 words; interview with sectoral commission; consent of the supposed supervisor;
- Introduction of specific evaluation criteria for evaluation of candidates (Topic of the Subject / Problem; Topic of the Study Theme / Problem; Study Question / Questions or Hypothesis; Expected Results of the Research), Average mathematical indicator for written and oral (verbal) interview assessments.
- The academic component of the programme has been strengthened with modern research methodology and data analysis courses (training courses are available in Georgian and English languages);
- ·The size of the seminar has been increased to 8 credits, which means the choice of business sector choices - accounting, marketing, management, finances, which provides the ability to create new knowledge around the problem of study;
- The Scientific-research component has increased from 120 credits to 134 credits.

The Team of experts welcomes the conformance of the programme to the recommendations of the previous accreditation, even though these changes were implemented in 2017 4 years after the previous accreditation.

Evidences/indicators

- o *Interviews with the SER team and the programme director*
- o *Programme description*
- o *Various protocols of amendment review and approval*

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

- o Implementation of improvement actions recommended by an external evaluation should be implemented as soon as possible, so that outcomes are evaluated on time and corrective actions are take.

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

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

Program 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 analyzing information.

The programme is also periodically benchmarked against similar programmes in other international universities, although no specific information on outcomes or actions derived from benchmarking studies are available. However, this is an excellent practice and it should be continued in a more systematic way. As stated in the SER, *the academic performance of students is the most important result of the study process and, therefore, its most widely recognized indicator.* This is even more important for doctoral programme as the performance of a doctoral student shows to a large extend after graduation in terms of continuing being active in research, publications of their outputs and recognition of the scientific community in the field.

The Expert Team acknowledges the systematic effort put by the QA service in implementing a periodic monitoring and review process that includes input from all stakeholders, which has resulted in programme improvements (details in sections 2.1 & 2.2). Since this is a doctoral programme, the quantity and quality (high impact journals, number of citations, et.) of research publications of its graduates will reflect the quality of the programme. Thus, it is strongly suggested that systematic recording of the research output of the students and graduates of the programme should be part of periodic reviews.

Evidences/indicators

- *Interview with QA team*
- *Surveys and their analysis*
- *Evaluations of the Quality Assurance Department of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Media and Management and the outcomes (according to years).*
- *Orders on the approval of the announcement of competitions for taking the academic positions and outcomes*

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:
 	
      o   Device a mechanism to monitor and analyse the research output of the graduates of the programme. This can also be a significant input to the periodic review process.
      o   Make programme benchmarking a periodic more formal (benchmarking report) process.

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: Sokhumi State University

Higher Education Programme Name: Doctor of Business Administration

Number of Pages of the Report: 35

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'

Natia Daghelishvili

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