** განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი**
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Higher Education Institution Authorisation Experts' Report
[International Teaching University of Management and Commmunication ,,ALTERBRIDGE "]

Expert Panel Members
Chair:
Linneweber, Volker, Saarland University, Saarbrücken, Germany
Members:
Dikhaminjia, Nana, School of Natural Sciences and Engineering, Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia
Jmukhadze, Nutsa, Tbilisi State University Faculty of Law, Tbilisi, Georgia (Student expert)
Kuchukhidze, Salome, Caucasus University, Tbilisi, Georgia
Zhizhilashvili, Nino, Caucasus School of Media, Tbilisi, Georgia (Labor market expert)

Tbilisi
2019

Authorization Report Resume

General information on the educational institution

International Teaching University of Management and Communication ALTERBRIDGE, founded in 2018 as spin off by educational Centre "PR Academy" which operated since 2012 on the local market of continued education offering courses in general management, strategic communication, organizational studies, human resources. HEI ALTERBRIDGE intends to offer three educational programs:
• Bachelor's Program in Law;
• Bachelor's Program in Public Relations;
• Master's Program in Strategic Communication.
The number of students to start with is 120 (fall 2020); the target number in 2024 is 400.
The major financial basis of the teaching university is tuition fee.
The legal form is Limited Liability Company.
The University building is located at 67, Tskneti Highway, Bagebi, Tbilisi, 0162, Georgia

Brief overview of the authorization site visit

The institution has been visited on October 16 and 17; following a preparatory meeting on October 15 in the National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement

During the visit, meetings have been conducted with:
- The representatives of Partners' Council;
- The Rector, Vice Rector and Chancellor;
- The Self-evaluation Team;
- The representatives of Academic Board and School Board;
- The representatives of the Quality Management Office;
- The representatives of Study Process Management Office and Entrants' and Student Service Unit;
- The Dean and Program Directors;
- The Academic Staff;
- The Invited Staff;
- The representatives of Legal Service, HR Management Office and Lifelong Learning and Career Development Centre;
- The representatives of Marketing and PR office and International Relations Office;
- The representatives of Research Activity Centre;
- The representatives of IT, Library Chancellery and Logistics;
- The representatives of Financial Service;
- Employers and other relevant stakeholders selected by the institution.

The site visit additionally included inspections of the building, its facilities, its surroundings, and its spatial expansion potential.

In preparation of the site visit, the expert panel has been provided with extensive material, most of it in Georgian as well as English. Some documents, particularly legal forms, were available only in Georgian. For the panel, this was not a problem.

Overview of the HEI's compliance with standards

Summary of Recommendations

1.2: Operationalization, elaboration of curricular elements (seminars, courses, lectures), measurements for learning outcomes, feedback on learning success and quality control of goal 1 (Creating awareness and trust in society) (Strategic development plan 2019-2026) With respect to goal 4 (promoting students' self-realization) ,we recommend to install a method and routine for recording the achievement of goal 3 (self-realization).

2.1: It is recommended that Rector's authority to be limited by at least 2/3 majority of Academic board decision-making, without changing the status of Academic board as advisory body.

3.2: Designing the curriculum of Master's Program in Strategic Communication in a way so that it is clear how the student develops his / her competences through the logical development of the required courses

4.1: Develop certain benchmarks for staff development and mechanisms to achieve the benchmarks

Summary of Suggestions

1.1: Paying attention (by adequate means) of the compatibility / correspondence of personal vs. professional self-realization as outcomes of the educational programs. Establishment of student-centred feedback activities concerning the fit between personal self-realization and development of professional skills.
Courses in intercultural skills in order to intensify the corresponding mission component.
Effort in differentiating PR-Academy and university in profiling and marketing.

1.2: Clarify further plans concerning the role of PR-Academy vs. Lifelong learning and Career Development Centre

2.1: It is also suggested number Academic Board members not to be dependent upon the composition of academic staff, but to be preliminary defined figure. This will enhance the efficacy of decision-making.

3.2: Including knowledge and skills in digital media in the learning outcomes of Master's Program in Strategic Communication

3.3: It is recommended to inform academic and invited personal of HEI about mechanism of learning outcomes assessment. Moreover, it is recommended to engage them in the creation process of those mechanisms.

7.1: Signing an eduroam agreement between the Georgian Research and Educational Networking Association (GRENA) and the ALTERBRIDGE.

7.2: Conclude cooperation agreements with university libraries close by (see objective H of the library; page self-report; p. 75)

7.4: Giving priority to establishing an effective system of accountability, financial management and control, introduction of internal and external audit system
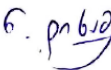
Summary of the Best Practices

1.1: Continuous monitoring of learning outcomes of HEIs.

Summary Table

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

Signature of expert panel members

1. Volker Linneweber (Chair)
2. Nana Dikhaminjia (Member)
3. Nutsa Jmukhadze (Member)
4. Salome Kuchukhidze (Member)
5. Nino Zhizhilashvili (Member)

Compliance of the Authorization Applicant HEI with the Authorization Standard Components

1. Mission and strategic development of HEI

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

1.1 Mission of HEI
Mission Statement of the HEI corresponds to Georgia's and European higher education goals, defines its role and place within higher education area and society, both locally and internationally.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements The initiative to establish a university based on the PR Academy (founded 2012) results from the assessment that educational programs established at the Georgian universities in the selected fields of study to be offered at the "International Teaching University of Management and Communication ALTERBRIDGE" are in need and in ability of improvement. Particularly the experiences of employers concerning competencies of employees in sophisticated positions – and hence important for the respective institution – could be met better if educational programs are closer oriented to the labour market. This judgement may be considered as the core element in ALTERBRIDGE's mission. Basics for this position are presented in the mission statement, in the presented material and in the site visit (interviews with employers and other relevant stakeholders): research document "Compliance of Higher Education Quality in Georgia with the Requirements of Local and International Labour Market" (2019), experiences collected in the PR Academy, experiences and opinions of alumni and employers. In the interviews, the consequences drawn from this general position, are formulated as "more than just education" and "building a European style university". The expert panel shares the assessment that closing or at least narrowing the gap between competencies elaborated in educational programs and requirements of positions in professional life is an important goal of the Bologna-Process. Consequently, it is crucial in the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). If "European style university" is meant as a goal to be achieved (and not a status quo evaluation), this image is plausible: Graduates are more competitive on the labour market when requirements meet competencies. This means for ALTERBRIDGE that its success in positioning the institution in competition with other HEIs in the region is inseparable with achieving the core goal, which in its mission is considered as unique selling point. The research document "Compliance of Higher Education Quality in Georgia with the

Requirements of Local and International Labour Market" (2019) indicates deficits, if ALTERBRIDGE is able to reduce these, a central component of its mission can be fulfilled.

Strategies for meeting further evaluation criteria are derived from this position or have to be coordinated with it. In the self-evaluation report, the term "self-realization" is used frequently. The criterion "facilitating students' personal development" corresponds to this mission component claimed by ALTERBRIDGE. Although a reflection concerning the compatibility of self-realization and preparation for requirements of professional life would be subject of scientific research, it may be sufficient for the present context that the educational programs of ALTERBRIDGE intend to combine these program goals. The expert panel suggests to spend attention to the question of the compatibility of these two educational goals (see suggestions below). Besides sensitivity related to educational programs (establishing more opportunities for self-realization and at the same time preparing students better for their professional life than traditional programs in Georgia do), this also applies for individual students. The expert panel suggests the extension of feedback activities according to Georgian standards by establishing explicit feedback activities with respect to academic performance as well as development of competences focussing the specific characteristics addressed by ALTERBRIDGE as its USP (see in section 1.2. goals 2 und 3).

With respect to the region-oriented authorization component definition of ALTERBRIDGEs role and place within higher education area and society locally it is self-evident, that an improvement of the HEI-landscape in Georgia is intended. Although possibly challenging and strengthening competitors, the intended alternative approach of ALTERBRIDGE (explicitly focussing personal and professional development of students, confronting students with requirements of future positions in professional life) can be expected as leaving traces in the HEI-sector. Since these traces can be expected as being compatible with the European Standards and Guidelines (1.1 "involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance"; 1.3 in general; particularly "respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths"). The direction of impulse should meet the expectations of Georgia's higher education goals (particiúlarly Article 3 1 c: "to realise personal potential, develop creative skills, train persons with competences relevant to present-day requirements, ensure competitiveness of persons with higher education in domestic as well as in international labour markets, and to offer to interested persons high quality higher education that meets the requirements of students and of the public as a whole;"). Insofar, the evaluation criterion 'definition of characteristics of HEI' is expected to be met when the institution takes up its work.

With respect to defining Georgia's higher education area and society internationally, the expert panel members consider the impact of ALTERBRIDGEs authorization positive as well: Institution will enhance their international profile by graduates with competences increasingly indispensable in international relations like communication and negotiation skills. It may also be possible to offer courses for the development of intercultural competences in order to additionally fulfil the criterion of international profile.

Also, educational programs with the institution-specific attributes offered here may attract international students. In order to approach this goal, the specific needs of international students have to be reflected by offering program elements in English as lingua franca. This can be introduced in various ways. Experiences of other HEIs introducing international programs are available (University of Helsinki, Finland; Tamagawa University, Japan)

The expert-panel realized a remarkable dissemination of the institution's spirit among (potential) employees as well as prospective employers of graduates.

With respect to the corporate identity of the institution, an expansion is intended: while the PR-Academy offers continued education courses, the "International Teaching University of Management and Communication ALTERBRIDGE" addresses study beginners. Competency-related goals that define

the identity of the institution are included in the basic curriculum. With respect to marketing, the expert-panel suggests to spend some effort in differentiating PR-Academy and university.

In the mission statement of ALTERBRIDGE, the requirement of taking into consideration the role of its educational programs in developing active members of the society, knowledge creation and dissemination and particularly ensuring the competitiveness of graduates on the labor market are clearly met in self-evaluation report, relevant enclosed documents and site visit.

Also, the frequent mentioning of the concept "(personal and professional) self-realization" in the documents feeds the expectation that explicit attention will be paid to facilitating students' personal development.

The self-evaluation report as well as various interviews leave the positive impression that ALTERBRIDGE's mission statement is fully shared by the institution. With respect to the community, relevant employers and stakeholders were interviewed indicating the same result.

Evidences/indicators Documents: Self evaluation report, research document of ALTERBRIDGE, strategic development plan 2019-2026, three years action plan and various documents on single aspects of strategic and action plans. Interviews during the site-visit: with the leadership, with employers and other relevant stakeholders
Recommendations: None
Suggestions: • Paying attention (by adequate means) of the compatibility / correspondence of personal vs. professional self-realization as outcomes of the educational programs. Establishment of student-centred feedback activities concerning the fit between personal self-realization and development of professional skills. Extending feedback activities according to Georgian standards by establishing further feedback activities with respect ALTERBRIDGE's USP • Courses in intercultural skills in order to intensify the corresponding mission component. With respect to the mission component "internationalization", the language topic has to be addressed. • Effort in differentiating PR-Academy and university in profiling and marketing.
Best Practices (if applicable): See recent publication on c ontinuous monitoring of learning outcomes of HEIs.: **Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia**, O., **Toepper**, M., **Pant**, H.A., **Lautenbach**, C., **Kuhn**, C. (Eds.) Assessment of Learning Outcomes in Higher Education. Cross-National Comparisons and Perspectives. Springer 2018 (ISBN 978-3-319-74338-7).

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

1.2 Strategic Development
o   HEI has a strategic development (7-year) and an action plans (3-year) in place.

| | o | HEI contributes to the development of the society, shares with the society the knowledge gathered in the institution, and facilitates lifelong learning |
| | o | HEI evaluates implementation of strategic and action plans, and duly acts on evaluation results. |

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

ALTERBRIDGEs self-report as well as attached materials strictly follow the requirements for HEI-authorization in Georgia. Consequently, an action plan as well as a strategic development are presented. The strategic planning methodology is documented in a separate document

The strategy, outlined for 2019-2026, addresses nine "directions" respectively "goals":

1) "Creating awareness and trust in society,
2) Development of higher educational programs tailored to the requirements of the local and international labour market,
3) Teaching students and promoting their self-realization,
4) Supporting research activities,
5) Quality assurance,
6) Promotion of internationalization,
7) Organizational Management and Human Resources Development,
8) Development of material-technical base,
9) Financial Sustainability." (Strategic development plan p. 3-4).

Particularly goal needs serious attention by operationalization, elaboration of curricular elements (seminars, courses, lectures), measurements for learning outcomes, feedback on learning success and quality control. "Creating awareness and trust in society" as educational goal maybe integrated in appropriate or can be addressed explicitly. If it is defined in prominent position (1st of nine goals), it is recommended to mirror this in the curricula.

Core elements of the planning strategy are SWOT and PESTEL analyses. The planning team, configured by permanent members (Rector, Vice-Rector, Chancellor, Head of Quality Management Office, School Dean, Heads of Financial service and HR Management Office) as well as temporary members (academic staff, employers, students) utilized both instruments in order to systematically analyse internal (SWOT) as well as external (PESTEL) factors relevant for elaborating a development strategy.

Since criteria for evaluating the institution within the process of applying for authorization were well known in the process of developing the strategic planning, a visible fit between criteria and planning components is not fortuitous. While occasionally planning documents of institutions are met which ex post have to be evaluated according to relevant criteria (ESG, national law), the planning strategy of ALTERBRIDGE utilizes the favor of the hour by strictly criteria-based planning::the planning documents are tightly elaborated along the ESG and the recently revised law of Georgia on higher education.

With respect to recent developments of HEIs in Europe, the authors of the planning documents present state-of-the-art materials for characterizing and planning ALTERBRIDGE. This concerns the medium term (7 years) as well as short-term planning (3 years).

The strategic plan is based on HEI goals and in case of realization of planning goals the achievement is ensured. Also, ALTERBRIDGE's mission and priorities are mirrored in the development plans. From the expert panel's perspective, the answer to the question of reachability however remains vague. The achievement of the clearly documented, time-bound and measurable goals 4,5 and 7-9 essentially depends on reaching the desired number of enrolled students as core component of the economic situation (see sector 7). With respect to goal 1, a recommendation is formulated above, Goals 2 and 3 are of central importance as USPs of ALTERBRIDGE and hence discussed in Section 1.1 including some suggestions there. Since goals have to measurable, in this section, the recommendation is formulated to install a method and routine for recording the achievement of goal 3 (self-realization).

the
The language topic has to be addressed If goals 6 is applied to attracting students, (see section 1.1).

While the written documents as well as interviews with leadership, employers and other relevant stakeholders indicate a remarkable confidence in reaching prospective students (in the context of internships, in schools, in institutions like the Georgian National Youth Palace). While sharing the assessment of ALTERBRIDGE's USP of educational programs, the expert panel however considers the competitive environment of other HEIs in Georgia as a serious challenge. This could increase when conventional educational programs at other HEIs with lower tuition fees will be modified closer to ALTERBRIDGE's USPs.

However, the expert panel can only indicate having discussed this classical risk of a private HEI. Economically, there is a prevention in case of not meeting the quantitative development goals (enrolment of students):
If there are insufficient financial inflows during this period, the partners providing an alternative source of funding for the teaching university will provide the necessary funds. Alternatively, the teaching university also has the opportunity to use the credit line (800,000 GEL) allocated by Pasha Bank. This agreement was concluded between Pasha Bank and the Teaching University. (see Business Continuity Plan p. 10). This will also be discussed in section 7.4

With respect to risk management concerning qualitative goals, analyses and further evaluation follow in section 2.2

ALTERBRIDGE's role with respect to the socio-economic development of the country has been discussed referring to the mission. With respect to further societal responsibility, engagement in the field of lifelong learning is committed in goals (self-report p. 6; p. 23), structure (self-report p. 10, p. 27), strategic development (self-report p. 25), national and international cooperation (self-report p. 63) and budget planning (self-report p. 81).

Although not discussed in the site visit, the expert panel assumes, that in case of authorization of ALTERBRIDGE, the present PR-Academy will continue its existence as Lifelong learning and Career Development Centre under the roof of the teaching university.

The integration of ALTERBRIDGE into relevant societal institutions and activities obviously is crucial for its existence. Details of this integration and hence significance in this context will be subject of further development. Due to the fact that networking with potential employees of gradates however is essential on the incoming (attracting students) as well as outgoing side (positioning graduates), plans for this engagement seem plausible so that this aspect of evaluation will be met.

According to the self-evaluation report (p. 24), ALTERBRIDGE conducts monitoring of the implementation of strategic development and action plans. The responsibility for this lies in the hands of the quality management office. The evaluation refers to quantitative as well as qualitative dimensions; the method is outlined in a five-step procedure: relevant structural units submit detailed reports which are related to target benchmarks. In case amendments are identified and interventions are obvious, recommendations are delivered to the rector in the annual report. It is the rector's responsibility to discuss necessary interventions with the structural units and/or to modify the existing strategic plan. Based on the presented documents, the expert panel assumes that significant changes in strategic and/or action plans would be subject to discussion with the planning team (see above) composed of permanent and temporary members.

As a private teaching university, ALTERBRIDGE is highly motivated to monitor developments in accordance with plans. The expert panel is convinced that announcement in various documents will be met not least for reasons of self-preservation.

Evidences/indicators

Documents (Folder 1):

strategic planning methodology, strategic development plan 2019-2026, three years action plan and various documents on single aspects of strategic and action plans.

Interviews during the site-visit:

with the leadership, with employers and other relevant stakeholders

Recommendations:

Operationalization, elaboration of curricular elements (seminars, courses, lectures), measurements for learning outcomes, feedback on learning success and quality control of goal 1 (Creating awareness and trust in society) (Strategic development plan 2019-2026)

With respect to goal 4 (promoting students' self-realization) ,we recommend to install a method and routine for recording the achievement of goal 3 (self-realization).

Suggestions:

Clarify further plans concerning the role of PR-Academy vs. Lifelong learning and Career Development Centre

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

2.   Organizational Structure and Management of HEI

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

2.1 Organizational Structure and Management
- Organizational structure of HEI ensures implementation of goals and activities described in its strategic plan   - Procedures for election/appointment of the management bodies of HEI are transparent, equitable, and in line with legislation   - HEI's Leadership/Management body ensures effective management of the activities of the institution   - Considering the mission and goals of HEI, leadership of the HEI supports international cooperation of the institution and the process of internationalization.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements   The organizational structure of the HEI is in line with the requirements of the Georgian Law on Entrepreneurs and the Higher Education in Georgia. It is in connection with the mission of the Teaching University and ensures timely fulfilment of the goals and objectives of the Teaching University's three-year Action Plan (2019-2022). Structural bodies and management units are interconnected by the principle of subordination and coordination. The functions assigned to each are clearly separated and tailored to the effective conduct of the HEI's activities. Given that the university is not fully operational at this stage, we do not find any practical evidence of the proper functioning of the organizational structure, although there is no such evidence in nature, and this is logical; Although given structure and functionality of the units provides the high probability its proper functioning without contradiction to standard's requirements. According to the University Charter, the Partner Meeting is the highest governing body of the University for the purposes of entrepreneurial activity. The Rector is responsible for the meeting of the Partners and the scope of his responsibilities is determined by the statute and the standards set forth in the Statute of the Teaching University. The Academic Board of the Teaching University of Education is the advisory, representative collegial body of the Rector, responsible for providing educational, academic and scientific work and developing strategies for the University; Chair of the Academic Board - Rector, Academic Board Members (Academic Staff of the University except Assistant) and Basic Educational Structural Unit (s) - One representative student from the school; Other persons may also be invited to the Academic Board meeting to decide specific issues. Members of the Academic Board are elected transparently. Academic Board is comprised with all academic personal, who themselves are appointed to the position through competition. Competition rules are transparent and fair and are provided for in Regulation for Conducting Competition for Academic Position, which in compliance with existing Georgian law. In relation to status of implementation of the mentioned regulation in practice – the relevant documents were presented during the visit of experts in HEI (documents certifying announced vacancies on the relevant academic positions and evaluations of relevant commissions). The competencies of the Academic Council of the University of Education include reviewing and submitting to the Rector the following: University mission, strategic development and action plans, provisions of the university structural units, and other internal normative acts; Educational programs; Coefficients for the Unified National Exams and the amount of student cohesion; The quality management

system in general and the rules for the evaluation of teaching and research work; The issue of the title of Honorary Doctor; Internationalization policy, key areas of cooperation with partner institutions, mobility mechanisms for academic / invited staff.

Taking the above structure and distribution of function is to be noted that, notwithstanding the explanations heard during the visit, the unlimited authority of decision-making by the rector can hardly securely serve the purposes of high education. In case of deviation of rector's and Academic Board positions Rector's authority prevails and this could pose threat to the sustainability of HEI.

Teaching University consists of the following structural units: Vice Rector, Chancellor; Quality Management Service; The main educational structural unit is the School of Strategic Communication and Law.

The Head of Quality Assurance is responsible for the proper functioning of the university's quality system in accordance with the detailed policies and procedures outlined in the quality assurance mechanisms. The most of the quality assurance mechanism are not yet applied in practice due to the simple reason that HEI is in the initial authorization stage, though quality assurance system are proper organized and are similar to that of other HEI relevant functional systems. This gives the sure perspective of proper result to be attained once the components of this system is applied in practice. Personal interviewed during the visit seems to be fully competent in the system details and are able to implement.

The school board is composed of the dean of the school, the school's academic staff. The school board makes decisions about the school's activities.

Other structural units of the HEI are: Research Activity Centre; Centre for Continuing Education and Career Development; Marketing and PR Services; International Relations Office; Student and Student Services; Library; Human Resources Management Service; office; Legal Service; Information Technology Service; Financial services; Logistics and Economic Services; Security Service; Medical Care Service.

The functions and responsibilities of the structural units are set out in the Statute of the Teaching University.

Academic, administrative and support staff recruitment and appointment are carried out transparently in accordance with pre-determined qualification requirements. During the visit, questions were raised on the different categories of contracts (this is the term of entry into force of the contract) with academic staff, administrative staff and support staff. Academic staff contracts are subject to a condition that HEI is authorized and programs accredited. They enter into force immediately after accreditation. As for the administrative and support staff agreements, they are already in force and in fact most of them are already acting due to contractual obligations.

The University has a HEI web site: https://alterbridge.ge; Corporate Email ------ @ .alterbridge.ge; The rules of use of the systems are defined by the information technology policy.

The ELMS is responsible for the administration of the system, which manages the integrated registry and communicates with the Higher Education Institutions Registry of the National Centre for EQE in accordance with the Georgian legislation and internal university rules.

The teaching university has a business continuity plan, which is designed to generally ensure smooth operation, training, avoiding deviations from normal processes, and / or minimize interruption factors.

The management of the university, according to its mission and goals, promotes international cooperation and internationalization of the educational institution. To these goals the Teaching University has developed an internationalization policy, the structural unit responsible for implementation of such kind

of policy is the Office of International Relations. The internationalization policy of the university takes various directions.

The head of the International Department has discussed this issue, one of the important goals is to develop joint educational programs with partner universities and to support the implementation.

HEI has the special document dedicate to internationalisation, which sacrifice that goals to be attained and stems to be taken to achieve them are properly set. It is further notable that Three-year Action Plan of the HEI sets in detail the actions in concrete to be carried out.

The teaching university has developed management effectiveness monitoring mechanisms and an evaluation system that implements the whole institution's self-assessment and reporting system and quality culture.

Evidences/indicators
Organizational structure;
• Regulation of the HEI
• Regulation of the structural units;
• Internal Regulation;
• Employment agreements and qualification requirements;
• Rule for record keeping;
• Strategic Development Plan;
• Three-year action plan;
• Business Continuity plan;
• Internationalization Policy;
• Quality Assurance Mechanisms
• Regulation for Conducting Competition for Academic Positions
• Information Technology Policy

Recommendations:
It is recommended that Rector's authority to be limited by at least 2/3 majority of Academic board decision-making, without changing the status of Academic board as advisory body.

Suggestions:
It is also suggested number Academic Board members not to be dependent upon the composition of academic staff, but to be preliminary defined figure. This will enhance the efficacy of decision-making.

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

As it is a newly established institution where students are not yet enrolled, it is difficult to draw any conclusions about the results of quality assurance mechanisms. However, I would like to address specific issues that are very clearly regulated at the documentary level at the teaching university. Lack of evidence on practical implementation shall not in itself lead to the result that hypothetically relevant implementation of good mechanism is not possible affecting the evaluation at the present stage. In contrary if relevant mechanisms are present and the human resources are showing the competence and readiness to implement them, there is higher probability of positive result.

The following issues and activities for the implementation / development of internal and external quality assurance mechanisms are outlined in the Strategic and Action Plans of the Teaching University: Development of International Cooperation and Internationalization Mechanisms and their Effectiveness Assessment System; Implementation / Development of Staff (Academic / Invited, Administrative / Assistant) Assessment System; Development of Quality Management Methodology, Implementation / Development of Student, Graduate, Employer Assessment System; Self-Assessment Implementation / Improvement of Rulebook; Improvement of Internal and External Assessment Mechanisms; Implementation of Quality Assurance Performance Assessment System; Assessment of Material and Information Resources, Use of Electronic Services System Implementation / Improvement.

The quality assurance of the teaching university is coordinated by the Quality Management Service, whose functions and responsibilities are defined by the regulation of the HEI.

As mentioned during the interview, quality management as a continuous process relies on strengthening the quality assurance function and establishing a quality culture.

The HEI has developed and approved internal quality assurance mechanisms, which include strategic and action plans, management effectiveness, international cooperation and internationalization, educational and research processes, material and information resources, human resources management, students, graduates, employers. Satisfaction etc. Planning and monitoring process evaluation.

The Quality Management Service of the Teaching University carries out evaluation of educational programs for which it has internal evaluation mechanisms. The Quality Management Service also provides external evaluation mechanisms for educational programs. The Quality Management Office provides program monitoring and periodic evaluation.

The Teaching University has developed a contingency planning mechanism for students and staff, which regulates the rule of calculating the number of student seats at the university through indicators set by the HEI. The detail information about number of students for this authorization is provided in „Student Contingent Planning Methodology and Rule for Ratio to Personnel". Above mention document contains all relevant Indicators which are: e.g. material and technical resources; Number of academic personnel; Administrative and support staff etc.

The quality assurance mechanism is fully documented at the university, and during the interviews the implementation process is clearly described by the staff.

In spite of the above, the university is not yet functioning and the results that have to be achieved through the implementation of the quality assurance mechanism cannot be physically presented.

Evidences/indicators
- Strategic and Action Plans of the Teaching University;
- Regulation of the HEI;
- Quality Assurance Mechanisms;
- Student and Personnel Contingent Planning Methodology.;

• Research Document of the Alterbridge.
Recommendations: None
Suggestions: None
Best Practices (if applicable):
Evaluation   ☒ Complies with requirements   ☐ Substantially complies with requirements   ☐ Partially complies with requirements   ☐ Does not comply with requirements

2.3. Observing Principles of Ethics and Integrity

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Teaching University has a Code of Ethics developed by the Academic Board The Code of Ethics sets out the concept of academic honesty and generally good ethical conduct, standards of action for academic, administrative, support staff, and students.

The document defines plagiarism and its manifestations as a form of unethical behavior. The Code of Ethics regulates disciplinary proceedings and special commission response mechanisms for cases of unethical conduct.

The Code of Ethics is available on the website of the University.

The teaching staff conducts their work with a high sense of integrity, honesty and responsibility. In its work, it is guided by the principles of culture, courtesy, dignity, mutual respect, tolerance, trust, impartiality, equality, justice and objectivity. It is evidenced by the fact that all academic personell prospectively involed in teaching process are acting professionals having rich experice in both teaching and research directions (details availabe in CVs). Teaching University staff are aware of the relevant values. The Code of Ethics is part of an individual agreement with them ensurring their perspective to carry out activities in full compliance with ethics and professional standards.

Academic Honesty is an important factor in scientific research, especially when pursuing a master's degree, and will benefit from a special program of plagiarism prevention and discovery Turnitin. Accordingly, a service contract shall be concluded with the right to use the authorization at a later stage. As HEI explains (as well as provides for proof of negotiations – e-mail exchange) during the interview preliminary negotiation to conclude the service contract for the usage on Trnitin is conducted and both sides are ready as soon as acquisition of status. Conclusion of contract despite the lack of status would entail irrelevant expences for HEI which could be more efficiently disposed for the purpose after it starts real operation. Code of Ethics indicated above provides for proper mechanism remeding plagiarism and other inethical behaviour.

As the teaching process at the Teaching University is not yet conducted, as was noted during the interview, for the purpose of introducing students to the Code of Ethics, the administration and staff of the HEI will hold informational meetings and conduct communication and cognitive activities.

The Code of Ethics describes the mechanisms for violating, preventing, as well as detecting and responding to the principles of academic integrity at the teaching university.

The University of Education adheres to the principles of intellectual property and aims to prevent the unlawful use and misappropriation of the work of others. The Code sets out the mechanisms for responding to plagiarism and the mechanisms for applying penalties and appeals. Failure to comply with the requirements of the Code of Ethics will result in formal disciplinary proceedings, which may result in the imposition of appropriate disciplinary liability.

Safeguarding academic freedom is one of the core values of the University of Education, which is reflected in the strategic development plan and programs to be implemented.

Evidences/indicators
Code of Ethics;
- Regulation for Master's;
- Internal Regulation;
- Rule for Incentives of Academic Activities;
- HEI's Activities and Documents Research Analysis;
- Rules and Regulations for Educational Process
- Strategic Development Plan
- Three-year Action Plan
- Regulation of the HEI
- Web-page: https://alterbridge.ge/
- https://alterbridge.ge/regulatory-documents/

Recommendations:
None

Suggestions:
None

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

3. Educational Programmes

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

3.1 Design and Development of Educational Programmes

HEI has a policy for planning, designing, implementing and developing educational programmes.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

International Teaching University of Management and Communication ALTERBRIDGE has procedures for planning, elaborating and developing of educational programs. The steps are clearly defined in the document including procedures of elaboration, development, modification and cancellation of programs. The basic principles, volume and structure of programs, templates of curriculum and syllabus, responsibilities of the programs' directors are also described in HEI's mentioned document. The site visit showed that the process was developed by the involvement of stakeholders as it is defined in the procedures.

Amendments if the program could be processed by Rector and the changes there may be made on the basis of an individual-legal act issued under the applicable rules.

According to the documents educational program can be cancelled: if none of the students are admitted to the relevant educational program for 3 years; if the educational program is no longer compatible with the requirements of the applicable legislation - in absence of financial or / or other necessary resources; or in any other case prescribed by law.7.2. In case of cancelling of educational program, the Teaching University is authorized to give students the opportunity to complete the current level.

According to the strategic plan of ALTERBRIDGE the HEI intends to offer three educational programs: two bachelor's programs - in Public Relations and in Law and one master's program in Strategic Communication. The implementation action plans for each educational program are presented in the HEI's package. The documents describe how ALTERBRIDGE plans to meet its strategic goals in three years period in case of each program. Documents show that research of labor and consumer market was applied during programs' designing process, including detailed comparison of Alterbridge's educational programs with those already existed on the market by other HEIs. Financial resources for implementation action plans of HEI indicated in the programs' budgets of 2019-2024.

The site visit showed that all the documents are prepared during the self-evaluation process by the well-prepared team of International Teaching University of Management and Communication ALTERBRIDGE.

Evidences/indicators
- Self-evaluation Report;
- Methodology of Planning, Elaborating and Developing Educational Programs;
- Implementation Action Plan for Bachelor's Program in Public Relations;
- Implementation Action Plan for Bachelor's Program in Law;
- Implementation Action Plan for Master's Program in Strategic Communication;
- Compliance of Higher Education Quality in Georgia with the Requirements of Local and International Labor Market;
- Benchmarking – Bachelor's Program in Public Relations;
- Benchmarking – Master's Program in Strategic Communication;
- Budgets of the Programs – 2019-2024;
- Interview Results.

Recommendations:
None

Suggestions:
None

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

3.2 Structure and Content of Educational Programmes

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

International Teaching University of Management and Communication ALTERBRIDGE plans to offer three educational programs:

- Bachelor's program in Law,
- Bachelor's program in Public Relations
- Master's program in Strategic Communications

All of three educational programs are elaborated in accordance with the requirements of the legislation. The volume of Bachelor's Degree Programs in Law and Public Relations equals to 240 ECTS credits, the volume of Master's program in Strategic Communications equals to 120 ECTS credits. The learning outcomes of all three educational programs are well stated, being in line with higher education level and qualification to be granted. Self-evaluating reports specially underlines that the study outcomes of BA Law Program are brought into compliance with the National Qualifications Frame and also with the Field Standard in Law in force envisaging six mandatory outcomes.

Despite the HEI's self-evaluating report says that "the structure and content of these educational programs provide logical interconnection of all components with the formulation of the prerequisites" the curriculum of MA program in Strategic Communication is structured in a way where there are nor any prerequisites indicated, neither logical progress of courses are showed. Besides, learning outcomes of mentioned educational program could include one of the visible contemporary challenges of the field - knowledge and skills in digital media. During the site visit those concerns were responded by the program director that the changes and improvement still are planned for the educational programs as the accreditation process is ahead.

In respect of individualized educational programs, the mechanism is clear and well-presented in the document about Methodology of Planning, Elaborating and Developing Educational Programs.

Evidences/indicators

- Academic Programs and syllabuses: Bachelor's program in Public Relations, Bachelor's program in Law, Master's program in Strategic Communications;
- Self-evaluation Report;
- Methodology of Planning, Elaborating and Developing Educational Programs;
- Interview Results.

Recommendations:
Designing the curriculum of Master's Program in Strategic Communication in a way so that it is clear how the student develops his / her competences through the logical development of the required courses

Suggestions:
Learning outcomes of MA program in Strategic Communication could include one of the contemporary challenges of the field - knowledge and skills in digital media

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

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

3.3 Assessment of Learning Outcomes

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

International Teaching University of Management and Communication ALTERBRIDGE has transparent and fair mechanism of learning outcomes assessment. The HEI presents detailed and clear description of learning outcomes for each educational program. At the same time the HEI has a document on quality Assurance Mechanisms describing mechanisms of management efficiency monitoring mechanism and assessment system. Mentioned documents are clear and their content is structured in accordance with law.

During the site visit academic and invited personal did not have information about the mechanisms mentioned above. So on the one hand the HEI has a good documents but on another hand, it seems, they are structured by the administration without involvement of those personal who are directly related with the process.

Evidences/indicators
- Self-evaluation Report;
- Mechanism for Assessing the Learning Outcomes of Educational Programs;
- Quality Assurance Mechanisms;
- Interview Results.

Recommendations:
- It is recommended to inform academic and invited personal of HEI about mechanism of learning outcomes assessment. Moreover, it is recommended to engage them in the creation process of those mechanisms.

Suggestions:
None

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

4. Staff of the HEI

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

4.1. Staff Management

- o HEI has staff management policy and procedures that ensure the implementation of educational process and other activities defined in its strategic plan.
- o HEI ensures the employment of qualified academic/scientific/invited/administrative/ support staff.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The Teaching University has elaborated a policy of personnel management and development. The documents define a transparent and objective procedures for hiring academic personnel. Qualifications of administrative and academic personnel are in line with HEI qualification requirements. However, most of the administrative staff is chosen from the existing staff of PR Academy. Also, the founder, the rector, head of financial services and advertising manager represent one family. This might create difficulties in sharing the responsibilities and reporting. However, interviews with the administration reveal that they are fully aware of the possible issues related to family involvement in the management and don't expect any problems in this direction due to established management structure and policy of the HEI administration.

The affiliation rules are clearly defined for academic personnel. For the next 4 years HEI does not plan to increase a number of affiliated personnel. HEI provides the appropriate workload of academic staff and their involvement in decision-making processes. HEI has defined principles of remuneration and procedures for integration of new employees into work environment. It collects and analyses an information regarding its employed staff. HEI has developed an assessment mechanism of educational-research and administrative activities, criteria and indicators of qualitative and quantitative research. HEI has mechanisms for staff encouragement, but it needs to elaborate certain benchmarks for staff development.

Evidences/indicators

- • Regulation for Conducting Competition for Academic Positions;
- • Rule for promoting academic activities;
- • The HEI regulation;
- • Personal histories of staff;
- • Competition documentation;
- • Samples of contracts concluded with personnel and annexes.
- • Interviews with HEI management, administrative and academic personnel

Recommendations:

Develop certain benchmarks for staff development and mechanisms to achieve the benchmarks

Suggestions:
None

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

4.2. Academic/Scientific and Invited Staff Workload

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

HEI has defined a workload for academic and invited staff. Maximum weekly lecture load of academic staff of the Teaching University is 15 hours and lecture load shall not exceed 12 hours a week if the employee holds an administrative position. It should be noted that most of the staff works is substantially involved with other universities, therefore HEI will need to ensure that their involvement with other universities will decrease after HEI authorization to fit the workload planned at Alterbridge. Research activities are encouraged through certain mechanisms and contract with the academic personnel. According to current agreements and conditional contracts with the staff, number and workload of academic and scientific staff of HEI ensures proper implementation of educational programs. To ensure program sustainability, HEI plans to increase number of invited personnel every year with the increase of student number. It is advised to plan for increase of affiliated academic staff for next years, that is not currently envisioned in the budget.

Evidences/indicators

- Regulation for Conducting Competition for Academic Positions;
- Rule for promoting academic activities;
- The HEI regulation;
- Personal histories of staff;
- Competition documentation;
- Samples of contracts concluded with personnel and annexes.
- Interviews with HEI management, administrative and academic personnel

Recommendations:

None

Suggestions:

To plan for increase of affiliated academic staff for next years

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

5. Students and Their Support Services

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

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

As plans indicate, ALTERBRIDGE is in full compliance with the relevant standards, also at this point. ALTERBRIDGE has adequate regulations in place for the assignment, suspension and termination of student status for each of the educational levels (Bachelor and Master). There are evidences that the university has prepared all the necessary mechanisms and instruments for students. Also, there is the contract drafts between ALTERBRIDGE and students which completely protects student rights and their lawful interests.

In addition to rules and regulations that steer and protect student interests it appears that students will have ample access to tutoring and advice. There clearly is planned to be low threshold and an open-door practice. Students will be freely able to bring their ideas to the attention of leadership.

In general, involvement of students is very likely to be strong. Their representation is provided in a formal way too.

As for the students with special educational needs the University creates and provides the opportunity to fully integrate into the society and provide professional or academic education. Rules of regulating the learning process determine the rules and conditions for students with special educational needs.

Evidences/indicators
Self-evaluation report. Regulations of the education process. Code of ethics and conduct. Interviews.

Recommendations:
None

Suggestions:
None

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

5.2 Student Support Services

- o HEI has student consulting services in order to plan educational process and improve academic performance
- o HEI has career support service, which provides students with appropriate counselling and support regarding employment and career development
- o HEI ensures students awareness and involvement in various university-level, local and international projects and events, and supports student initiatives

o   HEI has mechanisms, including financial mechanisms to support low SES students

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

As plans indicate, Students support activities are provided by the Entrepreneurs and Students Services and Career management Service.

For the students' professional development and future career, the university has already signed Memorandums of Cooperation with several organizations.

ALTERBRIDGE is already cooperating with potential employers, taking into consideration the requirements of the labour market in different directions.

Specifically, from the interviews and the documents presented by the university, it is confirmed that in the process of development and improvement of academic programs, ALTERBRIDGE has close relationships with potential employers and other stakeholders; In addition, the university plans to have permanent connection with graduates, have a database of their jobs, positions and career development dynamics; Except that, ALTERBIDGE will help students in the career planning and development process. For this purpose, the university is planning various activities for students; Potential employers have also been informed about programs in the university, about qualifications and skills of potential students.

During interview, employers talked that from their point of view, there are strong possibilities ALTERBRIDGE's graduates to be employed in their organizations;

Student (life) support is also on a high level. The environment and facilities are all complied with requirements.

Evidences/indicators
Self-evaluation report. Regulations of the education process. Interviews.

Recommendations:
None

Suggestions:
None

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

6. Research, development and/or other creative work

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

6.1 Research Activities

o   HEI, based on its type and specifics of its fields, carries out research/creative activities.
o   Ensuring the effectiveness of doctoral research supervision

○ HEI has public, transparent and fair procedures for the assessment and defence of dissertations which are relevant to the specifics of the field

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

HEI has developed a concept for research activities, that supports the integration of teaching and research. ALTERBRIDGE started cooperation with local and foreign institutions and private organizations to plan the future research activities. ALTERBRIDGE plans to apply for local and international funding and started some activities in this direction. To ensure the future research, HEI has established a Centre for Strategic Development and Research. Affiliated personnel of ALTERBRIDGE has sufficient experience to conduct the planned research and HEI has mechanisms to encourage the research activities of the personnel. In addition, ALTERBRIDGE plans to publish e-magazine that will highlight the mains research results achieved in HEI The action plan of ALTERBRIDGE envisions the involvement of students in research.

Evidences/indicators

- Concept of research activities;
- Three-year action plan;
- The concept of e-magazine «Challenges of Modern Science»;
- Magistrate's Regulations
- ALTERBRIDGE regulations
- Interviews with ALTERBRIDGE management, administrative and academic personnel

Recommendations:

None

Suggestions:

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

6.2. Research Support and Internationalization

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

ALTERBRIDGE has budget allocated every year for research activities. The Centre of Strategic Development and Research ensures the support necessary for academic personnel to conduct research, finding sources of funding, drafting grant proposals. ALTERBRIDGE has clearly defined areas of future research, such as Law and PR. The centre has already started searching for possible international and local grants, and establishing collaborations for these grants. ALTERBRIDGE plans to attract new staff in research activities. It plans to involve MA students into university's scientific and creative activities.

ALTERBRIDGE currently does not have any joint research with international partners, but plans to participate in international projects. It already has MOUs with a few foreign institutions. ALTERBRIDGE is a teaching university and does not plan implementation of PhD programs.

Evidences/indicators

- Concept of research activities;
- Three-year action plan;
- The concept of e-magazine «Challenges of Modern Science»;
- Magistrate's Regulations
- ALTERBRIDGE regulations
- Interviews with ALTERBRIDGE management, administrative and academic personnel

Recommendations:

None

Suggestions:

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

6.3. Evaluation of Research Activities

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The Teaching University has a system of evaluation and analysis of scientific product quality, scientific-research units and academic/affiliated staff. Quality Management Office has elaborated the quality assessment mechanisms and self-evaluation system of staff productivity, which will evaluate the results of the academic staff annually. At the end of each year, academic personnel will have scientific-research activities and research results will be used to develop future research activities. ALTERBRIDGE has elaborated mechanisms to use the results of the analyses for staff development and strategy assessment of ALTERBRIDGE.

Evidences/indicators

- University Research Strategy
- RFAP form evaluation form of academic personnel scientific-pedagogical activity
- Concept of Scientific Research Activities;
- Quality Assurance Mechanisms
- ALTERBRIDGE Regulations;
- Interviews with ALTERBRIDGE management, academic and administrative personnel

Recommendations:

None

Suggestions:

None

Best Practices (if applicable):
Evaluation ☒ Complies with requirements ☐ Substantially complies with requirements ☐ Partially complies with requirements ☐ Does not comply with requirements

7. Material, Information and Financial Resources

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

7.1 Material Resources

o The institution possesses or owns material resources (fixed and current assets) that are used for achieving goals stated in the mission statement, adequately responds to the requirements of educational programmes and research activities, and corresponds to the existing number of students and planned enrolment.

o HEI offers environment necessary for implementing educational activities: sanitary units, natural light possibilities, and central heating system.

o Health and safety of students and staff is protected within the institution.

o HEI has adapted environment for people with special needs

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

ALTERBRIDGE is located in 67 Tskneti highway, Bagebi, in driving distance of approximately 10 km from Freedom Square in the green urban outskirts of Tbilisi.

The location is attractive, the surroundings are nice.

The bus depot Bagebi is immediately adjacent. Presently, the building consists of five floors; the construction allows three more to be added in future. This possible expansion has been prepared already. The roof is utilized with photovoltaic equipment which will be reinstalled in case of expansion.

The land plot acquired is 1.141 m^2,
The total area available for the institution is approximately 2.000 m2; half of it for educational purposes, half of it as ancillary area: According to the lease agreement, the total area of the territory of "Innovations Center" is 2058,9 m^2 and the territory Alterbridge has from the building of "Innovations Center" is 991,2 m^2. The subject of the lease agreement consists of the main spaces – 619 m^2, auxiliary spaces – 372,2 m^2 and inventory.

Presently – this means before authorization of ALTERBRIDGE – two of four above-ground floors are leased to companies. As confirmed on the occasion of the site visit, the contracts can and will be cancelled in case of authorization in time.

Technically, the recently built structure is state-of-the-art. This includes layout for educational purposes, accessibility for disabled people, lightning, ventilation, outdoor areas, fire alarm systems, access control,

technical infrastructure, AC, central heating, (W-)LAN. There is a medical room for primary care including first aid equipment. Eduroam is not available currently.

Selected materials of the building, furniture, carpet, cafeteria equipment and toilet facilities indicate pronounced design, aesthetic and technical skills of the responsible planners. Both the interior design and the external environment indicate that awareness of the needs of employees and students was crucial to decision-making.

The site visit indicates that the technical equipment is state-of-the-art, too: computers, boards, desks are installed or installation is prepared (cables). The rooms will enable educational activities of various kinds as well as spending times between lectures. A cafeteria with indoor and outdoor premises is available, outdoor areas for various activities are established not only outside of the building but also in the floors. The rooms have different sizes serving different types of educational events.

With respect to the planned enrolment (48+48+24=120 Students), the size of the building is in accordance with the respective requisites. Moreover, there is significant additional space in case the number of students will be significantly higher (up to 400 as limit number and target benchmark in 2023).

According to the self-evaluation report, Details concerning the documentation of ownership, registration, accordance to norms concerning safety of the building (fire protection, security cameras) and receipts showing the payment of electricity, water and gas are available. This also concerns the lease agreements. Since during the site visit, the building as well as core component could be inspected, there was no need also to analyse the mentioned documents.

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

Recommendations:
None

Suggestions:
Signing an eduroam agreement between the Georgian Research and Educational Networking Association (GRENA) and the ALTERBRIDGE.

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

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

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

7.2. Library Resources

Library environment, resources and service support effective implementation of educational and research activities, and HEI constantly works for its improvement.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements
ALTERBRIDGE's library is located in the basement of the building. It provides an enjoyable environment with space for self-organized learning. The library personnel are present and ensures consulting services as well as organization and documentation of library inventory.
The library will be available for no less than 6 days a week, 60 hours.

The strategic planning of the library is integrated in goal #8 (Development of material-technical base; Self report page 22, 74 pp). A separate action plan covering the year 2019 is available.

For a Teaching University, the development of a library must be a core issue. Besides providing printed material, the access to electronic information Increasingly gains importance (see 7.1). The prepared material as well as the immediate evidence on the occasion of the site visit leaves the impression that ALTERBRIDGE library development is strategically planned and well prepared.
Presently, the library provides basic material to start with three educational programs according to the respective syllabi– obviously accumulated by the predecessor institution. For subsequent years, the budget is planned to develop: 5.500 (2020/21) – 6.600 (2021/22) – 7.800 (2022/23) – 9.000 (2023-24). Regulation of the HEI library and the rule for the library usage is formulated and available. It is planned to provide off-site access to electronic media for students and staff.

While in case of sufficient means, a library-equipment of written and electronic material according to syllabi appears simple to be reached, the evaluation criterium "facilitating effective implementation of research" is more complex. Research – particularly in sophisticated contexts – essentially demands having access to publications in immense quantities. While for ALTERBRIDGE this may be possible to be arranged for electronic media, it is impossible to be organized for a small university.
As indicated in the self-report concerning the library, ALTERBRIDGE has signed cooperation agreements with the local and International organizations. It is suggested to expand these in order to enable staff and students to use further comprehensive libraries at university sites close by.

Evidences/indicators
Self-evaluation report with various attachments
Site visit
https://library.alterbridge.ge/regulation

Recommendations:
None

Suggestions:
Conclude cooperation agreements with university libraries close by (see objective H of the library; page self-report; p. 75)

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation
⊠ Complies with requirements
□ Substantially complies with requirements
□ Partially complies with requirements
□ Does not comply with requirements

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

ALTERBRIDGE has created information technology infrastructure that ensures successful implementation of the business processes of the institution: internet is working in all the classrooms, wi-fi is accessible for students, learning management system and electronic services have necessary functionality.

Business Continuity plan of ALTERBRIDGE provides mechanisms for IT risk management and data protection. ALTERBRIDGE has qualified staff to manage IT infrastructure and development of ALTERBRIDGE information technology services. HEI has electronic services and learning management system that is currently under testing. ALTERBRIDGE plans to add more complex functionality to learning management system.

Official web page of ALTERBRIDGE gives all the necessary information on ALTERBRIDGE in Georgian and English languages.

Evidences/indicators

- Information Technology Policy
- Business plan
- Strategic Development Plan
- ALTERBRIDGE Web site:
- Interviews with IT department and ALTERBRIDGE management

Evaluation

☒ Fully complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

Recommendations:
None

Suggestions:
None

Best Practices (if applicable):

7.4 Financial Resources

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Financial resources (status quo and planning) is completely documented in the self-evaluation report. The documentation is state-of-the-art and corresponds to the business plan. In the long run, ALTERBRIDGES Income will primarily be based on tuition fee. The number of students is intended to rise from 120 (2020/21) to 388 (2023/24). Correspondingly, the income is anticipated to rise from 780.000 (≙ 55%; 2020/21) to 2.506.358 (≙ 91%; 2023/24). The delta between this major source of income and anticipated expenses will primarily be covered by contributions made by the founder to the authorized capital. The predecessor institution (Lifelong Learning and Career Development Centre) which expectedly will continue its existence after authorization of ALTERBRIDGE, contributes in a decreasing sum to the income (from 13% to 3%). At the same time, some of the expenses are planned for the centre. A small amount of the income results from grants received from international and local funds.

The core question, intensively discussed by the evaluation team on the occasion of the site visit, concerns the question whether the allocation of financial resources envisaged by the ALTERBRIDGE budget is economically achievable. As already discussed in 1.2 of this report (strategic development), the expert panel was impressed by the considerations the founders made as well as by their entrepreneurship. The risks of achieving an insufficient number of students is reduced by utilizing accesses via alumni of the Lifelong Learning and Career Development Centre as well as PR-strategies. Additionally, a significant sum of credit line (800,000 GEL) allocated by Pasha Bank would be available.

Concerning expenses, the profile of the Teaching University is reflected. Major part of planned increasing expenses concerns teaching personnel, hourly (increasing from 20% to 35% of the budget) and affiliated (decreasing from 8% to 4% of the budget; in absolute volume of 108.000 GEL however stable). Significant expenses are planned for administrative staff (357.136 GEL ≙ 61% in 2019/21 to 767.00 GEL ≙ 31% in 2023/24). IN 2023/24 a significant sum of 216.00 GEL has to be spent for leasing. This is 9% of the budget. This results from the fact, that in the lease agreement it is mentioned, that it is for ten years and ALTERBRIDGE starts payment for lease only after 2023, and 216 000 is the amount per year (18 000 per month).

The budget of the ALTERBRIDGE includes the financing of the development and development of scientific research and library (stable with 6% of the expenses but increasing from 74.200 to 145.040 GEL). The documents presented give the impression of a very serious and far-sighted planning. Strengths as well as weaknesses are identified. Concerning the latter, the expert panel developed the impression that available means will be spent in optimizing the financial side (income as well as expenses).

In the present context, the budget can only be evaluated with respect to plausibility. The structure of planned expenses is documented and corresponds to the action plan as well as to the medium-term strategic planning. With respect to both, the income side and the planned expenses, financial planning of ALTERBRIDGE is oriented on effective implementation of the basic activities of the institution. The financial condition of the ALTERBRIDGE provides fulfilment of activities in strategic development and action plans.

According to the self-evaluation report, establishing an effective system of accountability, financial management and control is planned in the course of the authorization period as well as the introduction of internal and external audit system.
Both should be done with priority an should be transparently incorporated into the organizational structure and management (see suggestion 2.1).
Since establishing an effective system of accountability, financial management and control in the ALTERBRIDGE is considered as a developmental goal and formulated in the self-evaluation report (p.85) already, the expert panel decides not to categorize this urgent concern as a recommendation but "only" as a suggestion. However, an advice with high priority and to be combined with the suggestions concerning the organizational structure and management (2.1).

Evidences/indicators
Self-evaluation report and attachments, site visit.

Recommendations:
None

Suggestions:
Giving priority to
- Establishing an effective system of accountability, financial management and control
- introduction of internal and external audit system

(p. 85 self-evaluation report)

Best Practices (if applicable):
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Evaluation
    ☒ Complies with requirements
    ☐ Substantially complies with requirements
    ☐ Partially complies with requirements
    ☐ Does not comply with requirements