



განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

## **Final Report on Samtskhe-Javakheti State University Authorization**

### **Expert Panel Members**

**Chair:** Pandelis Ipsilandis, Professor Emeritus, University of Thessaly, Greece

**Members:**

Dimitry Gegenava, Professor, Vice-Rector, Sulkhan Saba Orbeliani Teaching University, Georgia

Diana Mtchedlishvili, Director of QA Department, Assoc. Professor, Caucasus University, Georgia

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Tbilisi  
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## Authorization Report Resume

### General information on the educational institution

The current form of *LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University (SJSU)* is a result of continuous evolution since the establishment of *Akhaltzikhe Branch of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University*, the first Higher Education Institution (HEI) founded in Samtskhe-Javakheti region in 1990. In 2002, it was named as *Meskhethi Branch of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University* and in 2007 was established and accredited as independent HEI – *LEPL Akhaltsikhe Institute*, which in 2009 received the status of Teaching University. The merge in 2012, with the *Akhalkalaki Higher Educational Institution* formed the *Samtskhe-Javakheti State Teaching University*, which in 2014 was accredited to its current form of a full University. The development of the University reflects the needs arising from ongoing processes at the region such as economic and social development, lack of opportunities for the youth, and the demographic imbalance that has emerged in this part of Georgia over the past two centuries.

SJSU is an autonomous state higher education institution located in the towns of Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki. Transportation of teaching staff and administration between the facilities is offered free of charge. In addition, the University subsidises transportation cost for teaching staff travelling from other areas as well as free accommodation in a common house building in accommodation Akhaltsikhe. Students are provided free dormitories at a common house building in Akhalkalaki.

Currently, SJSU comprises four Faculties: Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, Business Administration, Law, Engineering, Agrarian and Natural Sciences and offers 24 accredited educational programmes; 10 at Bachelor level, 9 Master level, 3 Doctoral level. The University also offers two short cycle (60 credits) programmes (Georgian language preparation, and Teacher training). The language of instruction at the university is Georgian. Current number of students is 1,877. Academic activities are supported by 64 members of academic staff and 73 invited staff, while administrative personnel amounts to 85 persons. The University has been extremely successful in teaching Georgian as a second language and in development of teacher education with special attention to multicultural education. The State realized and generalized the successful experience of SJSU.

As the University grows, the challenge for the future is to implement its strategy to continue providing quality education – continuously upgrading and adopting educational programmes to new developments in the field and labor market demands, become stronger in research, increase internationalization, and incorporate development of vocational programmes that fit the regional needs.

The University's contributions in promoting social, cultural and economic well-being in the society is well recognized by the social partners and employers in the region. Public expectations and trust of multi-ethnic population residing in the region towards the University are high.

### Brief overview of the authorization site visit

The panel of Experts visited the University three consecutive days from Tuesday, December 17<sup>th</sup> to Thursday, December 19<sup>th</sup>. Before the visit, the panel received a Self-Evaluation Report (SER), and sufficient supporting documents for all standards. Although, several minor discrepancies were noted in the SER, the panel would like to express its gratitude for receiving a very detailed report including identification of strengths and weaknesses in each area, but at the same time to advise avoiding repetition of information and emphasize on critical issue avoiding procedural details. The University's WEB site was another significant source of information.

During the visit, the panel had the chance to meet and interview the administration team (Rector and Deputy rectors, Chancellor, Academic board and Representative board) the Self Evaluation Team, Faculty Deans, the QA team, representatives of the Faculty Boards, representatives of Program Heads, Affiliated and Invited Academic Staff, Scientific staff, Students (Georgians and Foreigners), Alumni, Social partners and representatives of administrative unites. All participants were very cooperative and willing to participate in discussion in an open and frankly way. The panel also visited the facilities at Akhalkalaki

(17/12) and Akhaltsikhe (18, 19/12). 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 and especially the Head of the administrative services for ensuring the smooth operation and provision of all additional information that was requested during the visit.

## Overview of the HEI's compliance with standards

The program is:

- **Compliant** with the first standard: *Mission and strategic development of HEI*

SJSU has a clear mission that defines the role of the University as a main contributor to the development of regional economy and society through the provision of quality education, vocational training, lifelong learning, as well as promoting research. The mission of the University is shared by all academic community and the social partners who recognize SJSU as an agent of change in the region, having synergies with the University. The university's strategy focus on integration with the European Higher Education Area. The seven-year strategic plan is in the right direction and analysed in specific short, medium and long term actions. Linking actions with budget and other resource requirements, indicators to specific target will facilitate more effective monitoring and prioritization of actions. Intensifying involvement of Faculties and sharing ownership and responsibilities could also be beneficial.

- **Substantially compliant** with the second standard: *Organizational structure and management of HEI*

The structure of SJSU is in correspondence with the requirements set by Georgian Law on Higher Education. Functions and responsibilities of governing bodies and other structural units are clearly defined, and ensure effective implementation HEI's strategic development and action plans. Separate structural units, directly responsible for developing university strategy and Internationalization will facilitate achievement of the goals. HEI plans to establish Doctoral school that will be responsible for development and enhancement of research elements and delivering PhD programmes. The panel suggests that it would be more effective to establish School of Postgraduate Studies, so that involvement of Master and PhD students in research activities, grant proposals, etc. will be promoted.

SJSU's election/appointment rules to the management bodies are in line with Georgian Law on Higher Education, taking into consideration candidates' qualification, experience, vision and development plans. Decisions of the management body related to academic, scientific and administrative issues are made timely in collaboration with relevant staff members and taking into consideration students' interests. Institution maintains registry of educational institutions, as described in current legislation. However, the registry for academic and invited staff is not provided with accurate data and needs improvement.

The QA office of SJSU functions according to the principles of the Georgian Law on Higher Education, Authorization and Accreditation Standards, and relevant University regulations. QA activities are directed to effective implementation of internal quality assurance mechanisms and HEI strategic goals and mission. Structural units of HEI recognize the importance of quality assurance and quality culture in their work and recognize the need for a continuous quality improvement. QA system is implemented at faculty levels as well. However, the faculty QA service has no Head and activities are performed by specialists. SJSU's quality assurance system supports the continuous improvement and operates based on the principles of PDCA cycle. Procedures of evaluation and improvement of educational programmes are developed, however not all educational programmes are updated in line with accreditation standards, ensuring the relevant assessment of Learning Outcomes as well. HEI has developed monitoring mechanisms for students' academic performance, the results of which are used for the improvement of the teaching process. The mechanism for planning student body, takes into consideration HEI's resources, and relevant indicators and benchmarks such as student enrolment and mobility dynamics, graduates' employment, appropriate human and material resources, market research results, staff to students ratio, etc. However, during the interview it was revealed that the marginal number of students requested by the HEI was not changed and special calculation was not conducted.

The HEI has developed code of ethics for students and staff, which considers procedures for responding to the violation of the determined regulations. The code of ethics is publicly available for any interested persons. The principles of ethics promote discipline, support rights and freedom of staff and students, ensure fair remuneration, safe and healthy working environment for staff, promote healthy relations between university and staff, and university and students, and protect ethical norms at the workplace. The types of responsibility for violating the norms are provided by the University's Internal Regulations and Norms of Disciplinary Responsibilities. The HEI has been implementing plagiarism detection, prevention and response mechanisms since 2017 to promote academic integrity and honesty in the university environment.

- **Substantially Compliant** with the third standard: *Educational Programmes*

The process of planning and development Educational programmes is regulated by specific guidelines that consider labor market demands / university research priorities / consultations with external partners / field specific issues / best local and international practices. Interviews with Deans of Faculty, Academic council, Quality Assurance Office, Academic Staff, and Social partners confirmed that the procedures regarding program planning are followed.

Program structure and content are, in large, constructed based on logical connection and consequence between the components. Overall, the content of the programmes are aligned with programme goals, and the structure allows the smooth progress of students through the programme. The University is in process of updating the programmes to the new standards but certain programmes need major revisions to reflect changes in the corresponding fields.

Variations have been observed in following a Program Learning Outcomes (LOs) approach in programme design. Although, certain programs do have very clearly stated LOs, in line with the higher education level and qualification to be granted, according to either new or older standards, there are still some programmes where stated LOs do not fit the relevant guidelines of the University's QA Office that are set according to European Higher Education Area (EHEA) practices.

The learning outcomes assessment system implemented in HEI takes into consideration specifics of the field and enables identifying whether students have achieved learning outcomes defined by specific educational programme or study course. Student can observe their assessment results through the electronic process management system. However, not all students are familiar with this electronic platform and the university needs to train them and ensure that the system is more informative and supportive.

A special regulation for assessment of the learning outcomes of educational programs is elaborated. The program coordinator creates a monitoring team along with Faculty Quality Assurance specialists and academic staff members, which evaluates learning outcomes and compare benchmarks. The methodology was initially elaborated for the 300-credit bachelor-master's teacher training program. The HEI needs to reflect the approach in all educational programmes.

- **Substantially Compliant** with the fourth standard: *Staff of the HEI*

The basic rules of staff management are regulated by the legislation. Staff development is supported by the University. Professors' initiatives are welcomed by the administration. Many books, trainings, conferences and participation in international events were funded by the University. Most of these decisions are made by the rector and head of administration, some of activities, which needs substantial financial support, are discussed on the Representative Council (Senate). However, there is no exact clear procedure and rule how to get finances and how to report to the administration and get feedbacks on their activities. Within the new strategic plan it is important that staff development is provide in an organized way planned, monitored and controlled by an upgraded HR department jointly with academic units and other administrative units.

The mixture of academic and invited staff provides a good balance of experiences and backgrounds. By developing new Ph.D. programs and research activities, the University aims to involve new researchers and lecturers. It is important that HEI should develop and implement strategy for involvement new generation of academics.

Teaching workload, for professors, associate professors and assistant professor are different, but work for academic research or other services is not calculated in hours but by a point systems, which makes

the whole scheme too complicated. No restrictions exists for professors to teach at other universities, but no monitoring mechanism to supervise the workload effectively exists in general.

- **Substantially Compliant** with the fifth standard: ***Students and their support services***

Regulations for student admission, suspension and termination of student status, mobility, qualification granting, and recognition of education are unified under the document named “Regulatory Rules of the Learning Process”. All relevant information is available to students and prospective students in the University’s “Study Guide”, which is available on the SJSU website. Foreign students enrolled in the program in accordance with terms and conditions defined by the legislation of Georgia.

Information regarding the terms and conditions for tuition fees defined by agreement are available for the students before the beginning of registration for United National Examinations and these terms and conditions shall be deemed as an integral part of the agreement. Rules for internal and external mobility and credit recognition are clear. Interviewed students were aware of the procedures related to their studies including complaint handling.

In the current structure of SJSU, Student services, Career growth and development are part of the public relations office. A new Center of Student services, Career growth and development is envisioned as part of the strategic goal regarding the upgrade of the university structure. Currently most of the information / consultation services are provided on a daily basis by the faculty. As for the academic consultations, the students are provided with individual consultation hours, the schedule of which is available in the syllabi and on information board of faculty. The learning platform (Moodle) can play a significant role in supporting the learning process, however it seems that its capabilities are not fully exploited by faculty and therefore by students yet.

Preparatory Courses in Georgian language are offered to non-Georgian speaking students. The panel strongly believes that strengthening the skills of Georgia language will be significant help for foreign students both in their academic pursue but also in social life and integration with the university and local community.

A certainly good practise is “Rector's Hour” initiated by the Rector on monthly basis, in the form of free format meeting, that any student can attend, ask questions and discuss issues. The Public relations department informs students about various opportunities and partly assumes duties of career office. Still, the need for an organized Career Office is imminent.

Information about opportunities for exchanges are provided, but international exchange activity is very low because the lack of English language skills is a barrier. Other opportunities for students engaging in sports, cultural events, and social activities are provided by the University and the Students Self-Governance.

SJSU is fully aware of the socio economic conditions of the region and tries to make education financially feasible for the local residents. Several scholarship programmes are available to support vulnerable students with good academic performance. In addition, benefits for socially vulnerable students also include arrangements for individual schedule of tuition fee payment, and tuition exemption for students in severe social and/or economic conditions.

- **Substantially Compliant** with the sixth standard: ***Research, development and/or other creative work***

Integration of research and teaching and internationalization are defined as institutional priorities in SJSU’s strategic development plan. SJSU views interdisciplinary research in humanities as an essential activity to address existing challenges facing the region, while the practical significance of agriculture and economics are considered target research areas. The panel observed that local and regional economic agents and other economic actors could definitely play a more significant role in advancing institution’s present research strategy. The panel acknowledges the institution’s aspiration towards enhancement of doctoral training. Alignment of research interests between a doctoral student and a potential supervisor is considered of utmost importance for successful completion of the doctoral studies. Doctoral students have an option to choose the supervisor either from SJSU or from another institution or to be assigned a co-supervisor from another Georgian or foreign University. Enhancing the structure of doctoral

supervision is apparent for monitoring the progress of candidates, especially during periods of suspending their studies.

There is clearly an impetus, enthusiasm and understanding of where SJSU is headed in terms of research support and internationalization. However, the corresponding efforts need more organization, frequency, consolidation and an institution-wide approach. Action plan and Strategic plan both detail specific activities too, but from the documentation provided by the institution, it is not quite clear how SJSU plans to achieve these goals. University relies heavily on government support, student fees and a support from Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation (NSF). While NSF may be a great national source in funding prioritized research, there are many more channels internationally to provide for the ample support required for research support and internationalization, which is not exploited sufficiently. Adding Research Unit to the institutional structure and staffing it with qualified research support personnel will be of immense value to garner this support. Given that there are no specific units responsible for research support and internationalization, it is hard to imagine how realistic the action plan may look for the next three years. Funding research was not a common practice at SJSU before the establishment of doctoral programs. After introduction of Doctoral programs in 2014 it showed on SJSU's research agenda. About 3 % of the annual budget is allocated for funding research and an internal completion for university research grants is offered annually.

The QA Department is responsible for evaluating research activities conducted at SJSU, including evaluation of the research activities of the academic and scientific staff. Institutional data is collected effectively beginning in year 2018. Overall, institutional practice suggests that reports are produced annually by individual units/ or responsible persons. These reports are largely descriptive, providing some, yet helpful analysis and recommendations.

- **Substantially Compliant** with the seventh standard: ***Material, information and financial resources***

The three building facilities currently in operation are properly equipped to support the delivery of education programs, and other academic and administrative operations. All areas are well kept and provided with continuous natural and artificial lighting systems, central heating system and sanitation facilities that comply with sanitary-hygienic norms. The University plans to improve all building facilities with respect to providing persons with disabilities access to all floors, and conformance of evacuation routes to safety standards.

Comfortable common housing building for academic personnel is located in Akhaltsikhe, while a fully rehabilitated common housing building that can host up to 200 student in two and three bedroom apartments with private sanitation facilities and showers, , including kitchen, common use area and laundry on all four floors is located in Akhalkalaki. Living in common housing building is free of charge for students

Approval for a 2.5M GEL plan to renovate another building in Akhalkalaki to create proper infrastructure for the delivery of the Vocational Education programmes is at the final stages of negotiation with the Ministry of Education.

University library operates in all buildings and, facilities, equipment and services are those one expects to find at a university library. Library is open 6 days a week for a total for 60 hours and is open to the community. The stock of the library includes basic and auxiliary literature in Georgian and foreign languages necessary for the implementation of university education curricula. However, during the site-visit, the panel was not able to locate certain books drawn from the syllabi bibliography. The University Library is a member of the Library Association of Georgia and member of the Elsevier Consortium through the support of the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation and has access to main scientific databases and journal publishers. The library maintains the statistics regarding registration and use of online library databases and submits relevant information to administration. According to current statistics, scientific journal access is relatively low, given the number of MA and Doctoral programmes at the University.

Information technology infrastructure created within the HEI is compliant with business processes of the institution and ensures their successful implementation. All teaching areas are provided with enough number of technical equipment, the libraries and professor's working space are also provided with computers and printers. Wireless network access and internet services is available through all

areas. Electronic services and management systems for teaching, learning and administration include Electronic learning platform (Moodle), Learning Process Management system, E-system of document flow, Library E-catalogue. Training of teaching staff and students is necessary to fully exploit the capabilities of the learning platform. Information on the web-page is updated regularly; the main points of the educational programmes need to be uploaded in English language as well to help attracting foreign students and strengthen the international cooperation.

Allocation of financial resources described in the budget of HEI for 2019 is economically achievable; sources of funding are diversified ensuring adequate and effective risk management. The panel suggests that the budget should provide clear and transparent information of the funds allocated to fulfilment of specific strategic goals, conducting research activities, development of human resources, library and infrastructure.

## **Summary of Recommendations**

- All elements of the Action Plan should be linked to specific budget amounts, human resources, and material requirement in order to facilitate decision-making in the monitoring, prioritization of actions, and future amendments.
- Indicators should be linked to targets (benchmarks) where appropriate
- Faculties should be more linked-in to the strategic plan and take ownership of the parts that concern their development.
- As the university considers restructuring of administrative units it should make provisions to establish separate administrative units for International relations and Strategic development as those two areas relate to strategic priorities of the University. The functions of these two units are different in nature and require different skills. The current plan of establishing one Office of International Relations, Strategic development and Public relations may not serve the goals of the University.
- Start selecting invited staff and doctoral students who have fluency in English to increase chances of cooperation with foreign universities and participation in international scientific-research projects.
- Ensure that the registry for academic and invited staff is provided with accurate data.
- Ensure that procedures of evaluation and improvement of educational programmes are followed for all functioning programmes.
- Ensure that QA system is implemented more effectively at faculty level.
- Ensure that calculation of the marginal number of students is clear and transparent, and takes into consideration the indicators and benchmarks approved by the institution.
- Programmes should be continuously monitored regardless of the timing of accreditation to keep up to date with the development in corresponding fields.
- Establish preconditions for BA Internship, Group projects, MA Practice as these activities refer to application of prior learning
- Update the structure of Master level and Doctoral programmes, where necessary, so that students develop appropriate level skills relating to Scientific Writing and Research Methodology
- Restructure LOs in certain programmes so that they describe overarching outcomes of the programme as a whole, the achievement of which can be verified.
- Communication in English language is imperative for future Ph.D. holders as they are expected to be the new generation of University teachers and researchers. Ensure that this programme Learning Outcomes is achieved.
- Ensure that students are trained in using the electronic process management system and make the system more informative, and supportive in enhancing learning and providing feedback to students.
- Ensure that all educational programmes' learning outcomes are achievable, realistic and measurable.
- Implement the methodology of evaluating of learning outcomes in all educational programmes.

- The University must develop strict system of responsibility and implement it – responsibility should be checked by the collegial organs, such as academic council (not only by the rector and head of administration); Academic staff has to be evaluated based on their academic performance, every internal grant competition must include accountability and be evaluated by the University.
- The University must develop plan for involving new generation of academics in study and research process, also encourage them to be part of academic staff and ensure that SJSU will have enough academics to be in charge after retirement of some professors.
- The University must develop special staff mobility and exchange programs for administrative and academic staff, encourage them to take part in it.
- The University must create adequate mechanism of workload of academic staff, determine exact hours for auditory, research and other activities. Workload should include concrete obligations and measurable obligations that have to fulfil by the staff.
- Provide proper training to the academic and invited staff in use of the learning platform Moodle so it is used to its full capacity as an effective support mechanism in the learning process and communication with students.
- A fully functioning Career office separate from Public relations must be established to act as a liaison between employers and the University, to organize training in required skills for job seekers, and relative events Career Days, Employers forums, etc.
- Consider increasing the preparation cycle for the preparatory programme in Georgian language, by either extending its length or continuing in parallel (non-credit) during the first semester / year of regular studies. That will facilitate assimilation and integration to the academic and social life.
- Formalize regulations for doctoral supervision and ensure that doctoral thesis supervisors at all Faculties follow them.
- Formalize regulations regarding joint supervision or supervision by foreign supervisors, facilitate the process and ensure that doctoral students achieve the level of English language skills that will help them to communicate effectively in scientific fora.
- Develop a systematic and formalized approach to research internationalisation.
- Create key structural units responsible for each, such as Research Unit and Office of International Relations. Attract and train human resources for Research Support Unit and International Relations Office.
- Assign individuals to each Faculty/ Academic Department to assist academic staff, doctoral students and researchers in developing research proposals for national and international research agencies.
- Enhance cooperation between the Research Unit, International Relations office and Faculties to induce involvement of young researchers in EU scientific-research programs.
- Increase funding for research in the University budget.
- Systematize data collection and strengthen data analysis; involve Research Support Unit, Quality Assurance Department and Faculties.
- Re-assess workload scheme and clarify for the staff what is being evaluated.
- Develop a mechanism for assessment of productivity of Research Support Unit.
- Utilize evaluation results for further development of the quality of scientific-research work.
- Make necessary rectifications so that evacuation exits and routes at Akhaltsikhe campus conform to safety standards.
- Complete the installation of necessary equipment so that persons with disabilities have access to all floors and areas in all University buildings.
- Renovate Building 3 at Akhalkalaki campus to bring to the same standards as the buildings at Akhaltsikhe campus
- Verify and ensure that all textbooks listed in programmes' syllabi are available in library stock. Process should be monitored annually.
- Increase trainings of students and staff in the use of electronic databases and journals. Cooperation between MA and Doctoral programmes directors and academic staff teaching Scientific writing skills is essential.



- Increase trainings of students and staff in the use of electronic databases and journals. Cooperation between MA and Doctoral programmes directors and academic staff teaching Scientific Writing skills is essential.
- Explore and check the satisfaction of students regarding electronic learning platform and meet their expectations in order to motivate them to use it.
- Ensure that the main content of educational programmes are uploaded in English language as well.
- Ensure that the budget gives the clear and transparent information about the expenses needed for the fulfilment of HEI strategic goals, conducting research activities, development of human resources, library and infrastructure.
- Increase the budget allocated for research and scientific activities.

## **Summary of Suggestions**

- Consideration should be given to establishment of a University Advisory Board according to international practices, which could provide input in strategic planning issues.
- Support alumni to form an Alumni Association which can organize activities within the University (e.g. involved in development planning, guiding and consultation to students) or externally (e.g. University promotion events)
- Contingency planning should be part of Strategic planning to provide strategies and actions that will mitigate threats and risks identified in SWOT analysis.
- The University should consider introducing student internship in more programmes as appropriate.
- Continue and intensify academic staff development in teaching – learning methodologies.
- Enhance the role of the HR department in coordination and monitoring staff development.
- Implement a peer review systems among academic and invited staff. It could be mandatory for newly hired academic and invited staff.
- Establish a mechanism to examine appeals related to the work of administrative bodies. Involvement of the Center of Student Services, the Legal Office, and Students Self-Governance body is suggested. Eventually, the University should consider the establishment of an “Ombudsman” office.
- Establish a plan to increase student mobility beyond the neighbouring countries.
- SJSU could further benefit from extending cooperation with European universities on one hand and strengthening existing cooperation with local employer network on the other hand, with a goal to exploit all possible resources available in Samtskhe-Javakheti region.
- Establish formal regulations to monitor the smooth progress of doctoral students who suspend their studies and ensure that the relevance of the research topic remains valid.
- Mobilize local community and social partners to ensure the government grant for the rehabilitation/reconstruction of the building that will function as Center for Vocational Education and Training.

## **Summary of the Best Practices**

- A solid policy according to the mission of the University to provide local students of other ethnic minorities as well Georgian ethnic students living abroad preparation courses in Georgian language.
- Strong involvement in regional affairs and provision of free services to the local communities.
- Rector's monthly face-to-face meetings with students, ensuring that students' opinion is listened and respected.
- Monthly held “Rector’s Hour”, agenda-free meeting, open for all students to provide answers and discuss problems or issues they raise.
- Option for co-supervision either by local and Tbilisi based Georgian professor, or a local and a foreign-based professor
- Provision for additional remuneration for supervision
- University internal competition for research project grants.
- Provision of free accommodation for students at Akhalkalaki campus

- Provision of free transportations and accommodation to professor that do not live in the area.

## Summary Table

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

### Signature of expert panel members

1. Pandelis Ipsilandis (Chair)
2. Dimitry Gegenava (Co-chair)
3. Diana Mchedlishvili (Member)
4. Lela Iosava (Member)Irma
5. Makharadze (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 University Mission Statement was formed through deliberations with the academic community and contributions from the local community in which Samtskhe-Javakheti State University (SJSU) operates. Its mission has a strong emphasis in the University's role in regional development. Contribution to the development of society is achieved through the provision of high quality university-level and vocational education and lifelong learning, as well as promoting research based on traditional and innovative methods and integration with the European Higher Education Area in Teaching and Research activities. One of the axis of the strategic plan aims in strengthening internationalization, which is currently focused mostly in cooperation with neighbouring countries to European stage. In parallel with its academic perspective, the mission of SJSU focuses on the development priorities of Samtskhe-Javakheti region and especially in supporting integration of non-Georgian ethnic population into the Georgian society. Samtskhe-Javakheti State University has an ambition to be a leader in teaching Georgian as a second language and is achieving this goal. The SJSU model, which offers ethnic minorities one-year preparation programme in Georgian language, which was developed and implemented at SJSU was adopted by the State and implemented in other Universities. Overall, the University aims in raising high-minded generations inspired by democratic and humane values that lead to the continuity of the development of language, culture and intellect.

The mission of the University is realistic and fits its vision to establish itself as a powerful educational-research center that serves regional needs, thus becoming an agent of reforms, fostering development in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region and occupy an important place in the Georgian education area.

It is the panel's clear impression that the University indeed fulfils its mission. In the course of the site visit, the panel became aware that the academic community of the University shares this mission, students realize the value that the University provides to local citizens, and local social partners consider its presence as a strong influence in the development of the region.

Interviewed students and graduates expressed their full contentment, some of them stating emphatically that if it were not for the presence of SJSU, they would not be able to get university education otherwise, because it would not be financially feasible to study away from home. Students from other regions selected to study at the University because of the lower fees compared to other similar universities.

According to local employers, representatives from industry, civic organizations, schools, regional court of justice, SJSU is a major provider of qualified professional staff in the region. According to their statements, graduates of SJSU constitute a major part of their employed staff. Some of the interviewed stakeholders are graduates of the University and prominent members of the community (for example, Mayor who hold prominent employment position in the region, Heads of regional development organizations, state and regional agencies, Museum director, School principal, Chief Judge etc.). Stakeholders praised the role of the University as a major source of competent teachers in the regions

and its effort to teach Georgian in the non-Georgian speaking part of the population (major part of the local population), thus facilitating their access to higher education and integration to community and social life. The panel was impressed with the interest of stakeholders in the development of the University that was shown through their participation in various types of actions such as involvement in programme development, offering internship, establishing joint extension programme, proposals for new vocational and educational programmes, etc. The University should exploit the active interest of social partners to a maximum extent, and consider formalizing the interaction with social partners. Same consideration should be given to promote the establishment of an Alumni Association.

During the interviews, the panel was also made aware about the involvement and the support that the University provides to local communities and its contribution in the development of the region. Indicative actions include organization and participation in various community events, public talks, presentations, conferences, working closely with local schools, library access to the local population, consultation services to local farmers and public services like legal consultation is planned for the immediate future.

The University tries to attract foreign students of Georgian descent, as well as minority students (mainly Armenians) among the local population to study at the University. SJSU has an ambition to be a leader in teaching Georgian as a second language to minority students. Currently, there is a strong State language teaching school at SJSU supported by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. The model developed at SJSU, which offers ethnic minorities one-year preparation programme in Georgian language before enrolment in a Higher Education specialty, was recognized and generalized by the State as a successful good practice.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- Mission and Strategic Plan of SJSU
- Self-Evaluation Report
- Interviews with the Academic Council, Academic and Scientific Staff, Students, Alumni, and Social Partners

#### **Recommendations:**

#### **Suggestions:**

- Consideration should be given to establishment of a University Advisory Board according to international practices, which could provide input in strategic planning issues.
- Support alumni to form an Alumni Association which can organize activities within the University (e.g. involved in development planning, guiding and consultation to students) or externally (e.g. University promotion events).

#### **Best Practices (if applicable):**

- A solid policy according to the mission of the University to provide local students of other ethnic minorities as well Georgian ethnic students living abroad preparation courses in Georgian language.
- Strong involvement in regional affairs and provision of free services to the local communities.

#### **Evaluation**

##### ☒ **Complies with requirements**

- ☐ Substantially complies with requirements
- ☐ Partially complies with requirements
- ☐ Does not comply with requirements

#### **1.2 Strategic Development**

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

- HEI contributes to the development of the society, shares with the society the knowledge gathered in the institution, and facilitates lifelong learning
- 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**

A new 7-years strategic plan (2019-2016) the development of which started at the end of 2016 replaced the previous one (2014-2019). The plan is based on a SWOT analysis and according to the SER its development followed a bottom – up approach involving faculties, academic staff, students, alumni and social partners.

The main priorities in the development strategy of the University is: i) Integration of research and teaching and learning, and ii) Expanding communication. Five strategic direction are defined: Research, Teaching and Learning, Resources, Management System and Internationalization and Relations, that are further analysed into Strategic Aims, Objectives, and Actions.

Within this framework, a very detailed 3-year Action Plan has been established where specific activities are connected to an implementation schedule of immediate action (1 year), short term (3 years) or longer term (7 years). The action plan follows a hierarchical structure based on the identified Strategic Directions (5), which are analysed into Strategic Aims (12), Objectives (29) and finally Actions (100). Measuring indicators, responsibility of implementation and monitoring mechanisms are defined for each specific Action. Overall, the strategic plan and action plan are fully aligned with the mission and the goals of the University and focus on improvements in vital areas of University activity such as teaching and learning, research, internationalization. Furthermore, it establishes a coherent approach by providing actions related to resources in terms of infrastructures, managerial structures or human skills. Indicative examples include: Introduction of vocational programmes (associated with improvements in premises in Akhalkalaki, and establishment of a new administrative structure); Enhancement of research (associated with new human resource policies for academic staff); Internationalization (associated with a new administrative structure), etc.

The panel acknowledges the great effort put in accomplishing this project, which definitely sets a road map towards the achievement of the strategic goals. The implementation of the 3-year action plan is currently at the first stages of implementation. Evidence from the site visit and the interviews showed that actions planned for the first year are in progress and no significant drawbacks were noted. Still, to make its management, in the long run, more effective and ensure achievability, the Action Plan should be linked to specific budget allocations, along with human and material resources requirements. This enhancement will certainly facilitate prioritization and decision making during implementation. At the same time, quantitative targets should be set for indicators when appropriate (e.g. increasing the share of electronic resources in teaching, developing and implementing joint programs, Increasing students' involvement, etc.).

During the site visit, the panel noted no so strong links between faculty and action plan. For examples in several case the Deans or Faculty board members referred to action that are not specifically included in the plan (e.g. planning for new programmes, community actions, etc.). Faculties should be more actively involved and assume ownership and responsibility for actions related to their development. For the remaining part of the implementation period, Action Plan should be structured not only by Strategic priorities by also by actions related to each of the four Faculty and those that are related to the University.

A " Monitoring mechanism for the implementation of strategic development and action plans", is established which included Quarterly and semi-annual meetings, while at the end of the year Quality Assurance Office prepares an action plan report. At the time of the visit, all activities that were supposed to be at implementation phase were on schedule. The implementation of the Action Plan is at a very

early stage, and conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the monitoring mechanism cannot be made yet. As the strategic plan itself provides for the establishment of a Strategic Development unit, it is expected that the strategic plan monitoring function will be assigned to it. Furthermore, the panel would like to suggest that the functions related to Strategic developments not to be combined with International relations, and PR, since they are very different in nature and skills requirements.

One of the panel's main concerns is the absence of a contingency planning. According to the SWOT analysis done as part of strategic planning, "*Demographic problems and therefore lack of new students*" is identified as a threat, (certain programmes have closed already because of lack of students). On the other hand, members of the Senate had contradictory views. Although there is nothing wrong with the existence of different views – quite the opposite they are welcomed – no plans have been seen to address this issue in either proactive or reactive way.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- Strategic Development Plan (seven years) and Action Plan
- Methodology of Strategic Planning ( Protocol No. 1, Resolution No. 3 12/2/2019)
- Mission and Strategic Planning document (also available on University website - <http://www.sjuni.edu.ge>)
- Interviews with University Administration, Senate, Faculty Deans and Faculty board members.
- Interviews with Quality Assurance Office and Financial and Accounting Office

#### **Recommendations:**

- All elements of the Action Plan should be linked to specific budget amounts, human resources, and material requirement in order to facilitate decision-making in monitoring, prioritization of actions, and future amendments.
- Indicators should be linked to targets (benchmarks) where appropriate.
- Faculties should be more linked-in to the strategic plan and take ownership of the parts that concern their development.

#### **Suggestions:**

- Contingency planning should be part of Strategic planning to provide strategies and actions that will mitigate threats and risks identified in SWOT analysis.

#### **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**

SJSU's organizational structure was renewed in 2016. The structure of SJSU is in correspondence with the requirements set by Georgian Law on Higher Education. The governing bodies are: Academic Board, Representative Board, Rector, Head of Administration and Quality Assurance Service. The governing bodies ensure effective and continuous development of the institution and work for strengthening the institution's standing as leading regional HEI striving for enhancing collaboration between Georgian and ethnic minorities of the region, serving as an educational centre and providing the local market with qualified graduates.

The functions and responsibilities of governing bodies and other structural units are clearly defined, do not overlap and meet law requirements. They ensure effective implementation of activities defined in HEI's strategic development and action plans, and achievement of institution's goals. However, there is no separate structural unit, directly responsible for developing university strategy and implementing and realizing university strategic goals as starting from 2016 the specially established working group is responsible for these activities. The same holds true for internationalization activities.

During the interview, it was mentioned that HEI plans to establish Doctoral school that will be responsible for development and enhancement of research elements and delivering PhD programmes. The assessment team suggests that it would be more effective to establish School of Postgraduate Studies, under which both Master's and Doctoral level programmes will be conducted. This structural unit will promote the involvement of Master and PhD students in research activities, grant proposals, etc. as administrative support is vital for further enhancement of research output of new generation.

SJSU's election/appointment rules to the management bodies are in line with Georgian Law on Higher Education and the process is conducted in accordance to predefined requirements, that considers candidates' qualification, experience, vision and development plans. The procedures for election/appointment of the management bodies of HEI are approved by Rector's order; they are transparent, equitable, and in line with legislation.

Decisions of the management body related to academic, scientific and administrative issues are made timely in collaboration with relevant staff members and students, based on their satisfaction survey results and round-table meetings. Rector has monthly meetings with students promoting frank discussion of problematic issues.

The HEI uses e-Flow document processing system that corresponds to the legislation, is flexible and time-consuming. In the document processing rule, there are described the procedures of document registration and follow-up actions, the rules for maintaining the Archive.

Institution maintains registry of educational institutions, as described in current legislation. However, the registry for academic and invited staff is not provided with accurate data and needs improvement.

To ensure the business continuity of all major processes taking place at the institution, SJSU elaborated a plan, which ensures continuity of all major business processes taking place at the institution. The plan takes into consideration all possible risks, mechanism for their prevention and in case the prevention is not possible, HEI has a strategy for risk mitigation. The plan considers concrete information about risk evaluation, prevention activities and responsible people.



The HEI has elaborated internalization policy that supports international mobility of students and staff, implementation of joint programmes, participation in international educational and scientific projects, etc. Internationalization is the one of main priorities for the institution. Currently SJSU has 32 agreements with universities in 11 EU as well as other mainly neighboring countries. The copies of memorandums were submitted to the expert panel during the site visit. SJSU is involved as a partner in 3 ERASMUS projects, another one just started, while four more TEMPUS projects were completed in 2012-2016 period. Starting from 2013, 11 students have participated in exchange programs; e.g. through ERASMUS+ project in 2015 one professor and two students participated in exchange program in Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania; in 2020 spring semester two professors and one student are going to the University of Social Sciences in Lodz, Poland, and the Catholic University of Ruzomberok, Slovakia. Besides ERASMUS mobilities the University has bilateral agreements for teacher and student mobility under which over 50 students did a training period (summer / winter schools) in Turkey, and Sweden. Professors and administrative personnel participates in different projects (Javakheti Historical-Cultural Heritage Research Project in Istanbul, Turkey), congresses (e.g. organized by Caucasus Universities' Association in Baku and Ankara) and international conferences; winter and summer schools were organized 4 times with Erevan State University, 6 times with Atatürk University in Erzurum, etc., with participation of over 50 students from SJSU during the period 2015-2019. Professor mobility is expected to increase – five applications were made for visits to European Universities this year. To exploit more opportunities and improve the capacity for internationalization, English language seems as a barrier.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- Statute of LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University
- Structure of the HEI
- Provisions for structural units
- Procedures for Election/Appointment to Governing Bodies - Election Regulations
- Rule of keeping the register of educational institutions
- Management effectiveness monitoring mechanisms and evaluation system
- Business Processes Continuity Plan
- Management policy
- Internationalization policy
- Interview results.

#### **Recommendations:**

- As the university considers restructuring of administrative units it should make provisions to establish separate administrative units for International relations and Strategic development as those two areas relate to strategic priorities of the University. The functions of these two units are different in nature and require different skills. The current plan of establishing one Office of International Relations, Strategic development and Public relations may not serve the goals of the University.
- Start selecting invited staff and doctoral students who have fluency in English to increase chances of cooperation with foreign universities and participation in international scientific-research projects.
- Ensure that the registry for academic and invited staff is provided with accurate data.

#### **Suggestions:**

- Establish School of Postgraduate Studies, under which both Master's and Doctoral level programmes will be conducted.

#### **Best Practices (if applicable):**

- Rector's monthly face-to-face meetings with students, ensuring that students' opinion is listened and respected.

**Evaluation**

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

**2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms**

- 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.
- HEI has a mechanism for planning student body, which will give each student an opportunity to get a high quality education.

**Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements**

The QA office of SJSU functions based on the principles of the Georgian Law on Higher Education, Authorization and Accreditation Standards, University Statute, University and Office Regulations, and other relevant normative documents. The office activities are directed to effective implementation of internal quality assurance mechanisms and HEI strategic goals and mission. Structural units of HEI recognize the importance of quality assurance and quality culture in their work and recognize the need for a continuous quality improvement. SJSU's quality assurance system supports the continuous improvement and operates based on the principles of PDCA cycle. ~~At the first phase of the PDCA cycle, the activities are planned and particular evaluating unit is chosen. At the second stage, the planned evaluation is carried out according to the pre-determined criteria and timeline. The next stage involves analysing and formulating results based on the collected data and information. Further actions are planned to identify improvement ways and develop appropriate recommendations to eliminate detected problems.~~

The main priority areas for QA service are: Quality Assurance of educational programmes; Evaluation of scientific activities; Management effectiveness evaluation system.

The office periodically evaluates the quality of:

- Educational programmes;
- Study process;
- Performance of Academic and Administrative staff;
- Student Services and Library;
- Fulfilment of strategic plan.

Procedures of evaluation and improvement of educational programmes are developed, however not all educational programmes are updated in line with accreditation standards, ensuring the relevant assessment of Learning Outcomes as well.

With the purpose of implementation of internal quality assurance mechanisms, QA system is implemented at faculty levels as well. However, the faculty QA service has no Head and activities are performed by specialists. The assessment team suggests that coordination of QA activities and implementation of QA mechanisms will become more effective if the QA system will become stronger at faculty level.

Quality Assurance service strives to ensure development of institution's activities and its resources, conducts surveys on student and staff satisfaction, evaluates scientific performance of its academic staff, elaborates recommendations for further improvement of HEI performance. QA office has developed evaluation system for all staff (academic, scientific, invited, and administrative). Students and other external stakeholders (employers, alumni) are involved in further development of educational programmes.

HEI has developed monitoring mechanisms for students' academic performance, and uses its results for the improvement of the teaching process. Faculty Quality Assurance Specialists monitor academic

performance of students at the end of each semester, as the students' academic performance is the main outcome of the academic process and, therefore its most recognized indicator. Based on the analysis of students' academic performance, the quality of educational programmes and individual courses is evaluated, as well as adequacy of the assessment methods and performance of academic staff. . Students' academic performance monitoring results are discussed at the faculty boards, the lecturers with low students' performance are informed about the situation and provided with improvement ways and methods (the Minutes of the faculty of Engineering, Agrarian and Natural Sciences, №27/02/01, 25.02.2019; the faculty of Law, №13, 23.07.2019, the faculty of Business Administration, №12, 18.02.2019; the faculty of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, №6, 05.06.2019).

Based on evidence from submitted documents, and interviews the panel ascertains that the leadership of the university considers the results of quality assurance surveys in making decisions, and that the evaluation results are used for further development of its activities. For example, during the site visit the university provided experts' panel with the survey results of freshmen students and feedback activities from the university management, where is given the detailed information about the main findings, recommendations from QA office and reaction from the administration side.

In the University QA office report for the spring semester of 2018-2019 study year, it is stated that QA office actively participates in the development and monitoring processes of the university strategic development and action plans. In the report, it is described which activities are conducted regarding the main strategic priorities, aims and objectives; and 11 recommendations are elaborated in order to achieve these objectives.

HEI has a mechanism for planning student body, which is carried out according to the methodology that takes into consideration HEI's resources, and relevant indicators and benchmarks approved by the institution in 2019, such as student enrollment and mobility dynamics, employment rate of its graduates, appropriate human and material resources, market research results, ratio of the academic, scientific, invited staff to the number of students, etc. However, during the interview it was revealed that the marginal number of students requested by the HEI was not changed and special calculation was not conducted.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- Quality Assurance Mechanisms - A Guideline;
- QA Office Regulation;
- University survey results;
- Rules for determining the number of academic and invited staff at LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University;
- Student contingent planning methodology;
- Interview results.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Ensure that procedures of evaluation and improvement of educational programmes are followed for all functioning programmes.
- Ensure that QA system is implemented more effectively at faculty level.
- Ensure that calculation of the marginal number of students is clear and transparent, and takes into consideration the indicators and benchmarks approved by the institution.

#### **Suggestions:**

<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Substantially complies with requirements</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>
<b>2.3. Observing Principles of Ethics and Integrity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEI has developed regulations and mechanisms that follow principles of ethics and integrity. Such regulations are publicly accessible.</li> <li>○ Institution has implemented mechanisms for detecting plagiarism and its prevention.</li> <li>○ HEI follows the principles of academic freedom.</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b>
<p>The HEI has developed code of ethics for students and staff, which considers procedures for responding to the violation of the determined regulations. The code of ethics is publicly available for any interested persons. The Code of Ethics for Staff and Student is approved by Senate of Samtskhe-Javakheti State University. The principles of ethics are also described in the Internal Regulation of HEI, which promote discipline, support rights and freedom of staff and students, ensure fair remuneration, safe and healthy working environment for staff, promote healthy relations between university and staff, and university and students, protect ethical norms at the workplace. The types of responsibility for violating the norms are provided by the University's Internal Regulations and Norms of Disciplinary Responsibilities.</p> <p>The University itself is obliged to protect the rights of staff and students in accordance with the laws of Georgia, University Statute, Code of Ethics for Staff and Student, Regulations of Study Process, and other legal acts of the University.</p> <p>SJSU participates in the EU-funded project Erasmus+ <i>INTEGRITY – ACADEMIC INTEGRITY FOR QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN GEORGIA</i> Project number: 585841 EPP-1-2017-1-GE-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP.). In the framework of this project, the plagiarism detection software TURNITIN was purchased. Quality Assurance Office held several informative meetings for all faculties' staff and students about the plagiarism prevention and importance of using TURNITIN program while writing essays and theses. Accordingly, corresponding changes were made to the bachelor's/master's and doctoral thesis preparation guidelines, where the obligation of checking theses is one of the criteria set for defense. Interviewed Master and doctoral students were aware of its existence and role. The usage of TURNITIN program is highly encouraged in Academic writing courses. Special trainings were held for lecturers to ensure relevant implementation of the program. Numbers of courses and users of Turnitin and Moodle platforms, feedback and response of the staff is provided to the management. The data is obtained from web and lecturers respectively, collected by the SJSU arm of INTEGRITY management and disseminated among stakeholders as needed.</p> <p>The HEI has been implementing plagiarism detection, prevention and response mechanisms since 2017 to promote academic integrity and honesty in the university environment. Accordingly, the University Academic Council approved the "Rules of operation of the plagiarism commission at LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University", which defines the rules, principles, objectives, tasks, authority and decision-making process of the plagiarism commission. The Samtskhe-Javakheti State University Academic Integrity Policy Document was developed based on the experience of the Universities of Dublin (Ireland), Vienna (Austria), Uppsala (Sweden) and Roehampton (England) and their statutory documents.</p>
<b>Evidences/indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Statute of LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University;</li> <li>● Code of Ethics for Staff and Student;</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rules of operation of the plagiarism detection commission at LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University;</li> <li>• Interview results.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations:</b>
<b>Suggestions:</b>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Complies with requirements</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>

### 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

<b>3.1 Design and Development of Educational Programmes</b>
HEI has a policy for planning, designing, implementing and developing educational programmes.
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b> <p>A “Rule for Planning, Developing and Elaboration of Educational Programmes” is in place at Samtskhe-Javakheti State University. The rule conforms to the “Regulation on Authorization of Educational Institutions” and “Order of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia No. 69/ N of 2019”. The document elaborates in detail the processes of planning, designing and developing educational programmes in a collaborative process involving all stakeholders: academic / invited / administrative staff, students, graduates, employers.</p> <p>The process is coordinated by the Programme manager and includes consideration of labor market demand, market demands / university research priorities / consultations with external partners / field specific issues / best local and international practices. Needs regarding human and other resources are considered to ensure compliance with University regulations regarding the quality of services to students. Administrative units such as Human Resources, Financial Planning, Library and International Relations are involved in aspects that relate to their functions. Decision bodies include the Faculty board and Academic Council. The Quality Assurance Office arbitrates the process to ensure conformance with Quality Standards.</p> <p>Interviews with Deans of Faculty, Academic council, Quality Assurance Office, Academic Staff, and Social partners confirmed that the procedures regarding program planning are followed. Indicative examples that reported during the interviews include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consultations with local government who suggested that the University emphasizes in agrarian studies, and Veterinary programme, which has been just accredited as well as Vocational programmes to be opened in Akhalkalaki campus.</li> </ul>

- Enhancing programs in Engineering, Agrarian and Natural Sciences Faculty in the fields of agro chemistry, agro technology, food production, etc.
- Student's suggestion for introducing the possibility of internship in bachelor programmes, and the employers' willingness to accept and employ internship students.
- The deficit of math teachers in the region that lead in planning for a new integrated programme for math teachers.
- QA office have returned programmes back to Faculties for reconsideration before their submission to Academic Council (for example; Astronomy, Veterinary, Criminal labs, etc.)
- Chief of Court of Justice ([interviewed employer](#)) provides feedback to Law Faculty

Currently, Samtskhe-Javakheti State University runs 24 accredited educational programs; 10 at Bachelor level, 9 Master level, 3 Doctoral level. The University also offers two short cycle (60 credits) programmes (Georgian language preparation, and Teacher training).

Eight other programmes are in the process of closing. The *Rule for Planning, Developing and Elaboration of Educational Programmes* includes procedures for modifying or suspension / abolition of programmes. Students' interests in case of changing / cancelling a programme are protected. Continuing their further education at SJSU is provided in accordance with the *"Rule for Recognition of Student Mobility and Education during the Study"*. The panel had the opportunity to confirm conformance to the rule, as one of the interviewed student was enrolled in a discontinued programme and she was given the opportunity to transfer their credits and continue studying in another programme.

The University is in a process of updating the programmes to the new standards. Several programmes have already been reaccredited based on the new standards but almost half of them run on the 2012-2014 accreditations. According to the University's *"Rule for Planning, Developing and Elaboration of Educational Programmes"* the basis for changing a programme are *"findings of internal and external assessment, student, alumni evaluation or other stakeholder's feedback data from the satisfaction survey questionnaires"* and *"recommendations issued by the accreditation experts"*. No major revisions to reflect changes in the corresponding fields have been noted in certain programmes. For example, changes in the constitution of Georgia are not reflected in relative courses in the *BA in Law* programme; the goals of Ph.D. in Informatics are restricted to certain fields, some of them outdated and do not address the evolution of informatics in Data science, internet of things, Intelligent and Machine Learning methods and systems, etc.).

In general, the educational programmes, including those that are developed or in development process or initial planning phase, intend to serve the realization of the university mission through providing students with the relevant theoretical knowledge and practical skills for their further professional development and employability, supporting formation of persons with national and civil awareness who can contribute to the economic and social development of the region.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- Mission and Strategic Plan of SJSU
- Self-Evaluation Report
- Methodology for planning, designing and developing educational programs
- Programme descriptions
- Procedures for approving, modifying and cancelling the educational program
- Mechanisms for further education of the program students, in case of changing / cancelling the respective educational program
- Interviews with the Academic Council, Academic and Scientific Staff, Students, Alumni, and Social Partners

<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programmes should be continuously monitored regardless of the timing of accreditation to keep up to date with developments in corresponding fields.</li> </ul>
<b>Suggestions:</b>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Substantially complies with requirements</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>
<b>3.2 Structure and Content of Educational Programmes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme learning outcomes are clearly stated and are in line with higher education level and qualification to be granted</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b> <p>While designing a program, Samtskhe-Javakheti State University follows current legislation and European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) guidelines. All undergraduate programs comprise 240 credits. Master's Degree Programs are 120 credits, while Doctoral degree programs are 180 credits, with the learning component not exceeding 60 credits. All three-level educational programs provide mandatory and elective courses. A primary teacher integrated Master level program that has a different 300-credit design is constructed according to the relevant sectoral characteristic. Two short cycle program in Georgian Language preparation and Teacher Preparation amount to 60 ECTS credits each.</p> <p>Largely, program structure and content are constructed based on logical connection and consequence between the components. Overall, the content of the programmes are aligned with programme goals, and the structure allows the smooth progress of students through the programme. Specific remarks for each level are given in the following paragraphs:</p> <p><u>Bachelor level Programmes</u></p> <p>All first level programmes are based on 240 ECTS workload allocated in 8 semesters. All programmes include general (University) courses, core field courses, and electives either in an area of specialization or free electives. Internship (10 credits) and /or Bachelor Thesis (10 credits) are optional. The panel considers this option as a good practice as internships provide students the opportunity of first contact with the labor market and Bachelor Thesis serves as a capstone activity. Linking the topic of Bachelor thesis with internship could increase the benefit to the students. Given that social partners expressed their willingness to offer internships to students, the university should introduce this option on more programmes as appropriate. In most cases, courses delivered at later stages have proper preconditions; the same should be the case for internship, Group projects and Bachelor thesis.</p> <p><u>Master level and Integrated Studies programmes</u></p> <p>Second levels programmes offer both compulsory and elective courses (120 credits) and include a Master Thesis (30 credits). Certain programmes (<i>Business Administration, Criminology, Agro technology</i>) include a compulsory component of training practice at the last semester of studies. Nonetheless, since</p>

Training Practice refers to application of prior learning, prerequisites should be clearly defined (the case of *MA in Business Administration* could be a good example).

Preparation for Master thesis, which usually includes *Scientific Writing* and *Research Methodology*, differs among programmes. Only one programme (*Business Administration*) offers both, two programmes (*Criminology and History of Georgian Literature*) offer *Scientific Writing* only, two programmes (*Agro Technology, and Integrated Studies for primary education teachers*) offer only *Research Methodology*, and four programmes (*Business Informatics, Astronomy, History of Georgia and Kartvelian studies*) do not include any similar course.

#### Doctoral Programmes

Doctoral programmes comprise a study component of 45-60 credits, which includes, courses in research methodology, subject related compulsory and elective courses, professor assistantships and seminars. Scientific writing skills are provided only in the *Business Administration* doctoral programme. Students of the other doctoral programmes would benefit also if their programmes include development of scientific writing skills, which is part of programme's learning outcomes.

Variations have been observed in stating Program Learning Outcomes (LOs) among different programs. Certain programs, mostly the ones that have been accredited recently do have very clearly stated LOs, in line with the higher education level and qualification to be granted, according to new standards (mostly programmes accredited after 2016 – *Business Faculty* programmes, but also programmes accredited as far back as 2012 in the *Faculty of Education Humanities and Social Science* as well as the *MA in Astronomy*). Another group of programmes have clear Learning Outcomes according to older standards (*Public Administration* and *Information Technology*).

However, there are still programmes that their LOs do not fit the relevant guidelines of the QA Office that stated in the SER "*number of LOs in programs ranges from 5 to 12*" and "*the application should reflect the outcome, not the process, and should therefore be brief and without details...*" LOs of Programs in *Law, Agrarian Science, Agro technology, Business Informatics, Ecology* are extensively described (in certain cases exceeding 1000 words). The guidelines of the QA Office are in conformance with the European Higher Education Area norms, and programmes should restructure LOs accordingly so that they describe overarching outcomes of the programme as a whole, and not content or specific skills or knowledge related to components of the course. For example, LOs in the *doctoral programme in Informatics* refer to specific IT technologies that are already fading out, while new state of the art emerges, LOs in *Law* and *Criminology* describe more or less elements of the content. On the other hand, whatever the programme delivers should be reflected in the Learning Outcomes. For example, all three active Ph.D. programmes provide for the development of teaching skills at University level but this is not reflected in their LOs.

Consideration should be given to the role of Learning Outcomes, which is not to describe the programme but to set verifiable accomplishments that the average programme graduate can achieve. In this respect, LOs drive the design of the content the teaching and the assessment methods. For example, all doctoral programmes require B2 knowledge of English language as corresponding LOs state and rightfully so, that doctoral students should be able to communicate internationally. However, during the interview with doctoral students, the panel was not convinced that this LO is being achieved.

Teaching-learning methods are defined according to the specifics of the field. Several programme description do not list teaching and learning activities. The impression from interviewed students was that there is no plurality in teaching and learning methods employed. Some of them were not even aware of the electronic platform. Academic staff development should also include actions in teaching – learning approaches and tools.

SJSU provides access to program information through the web site where the program catalogue is located. The catalogue includes information on all programs at the University. The catalogue is updated periodically in accordance with changes in educational programs.



<b>Evidences/indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-Evaluation Report</li> <li>• Methodology for planning, designing and developing educational programs</li> <li>• Programme descriptions</li> <li>• Procedures for approving, modifying and cancelling the educational program</li> <li>• Interviews with the Academic Council, Academic and Scientific Staff, Students, Alumni, and Social Partners</li> <li>• Web-site of Samtskhe-Javakheti State University</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish preconditions for BA Internship, Group projects, MA Practice as these activities refer to application of prior learning.</li> <li>• Update the structure of Master level and Doctoral programmes, where necessary so that students develop appropriate level skills relating to Scientific Writing and Research Methodology.</li> <li>• Restructure LOs in certain programmes so that they describe overarching outcomes of the programme as a whole, the achievement of which can be verified.</li> <li>• Communication in English language is imperative for future Ph.D. holders as they are expected to be the new generation of University teachers and researchers. Ensure that programme Learning Outcomes is achieved.</li> </ul>
<b>Suggestions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The University should consider introducing student internship in more programmes as appropriate.</li> <li>• Continue and intensify academic staff development in teaching – learning methodologies.</li> </ul>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Substantially complies with requirements</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="radio"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>
<b>3.3 Assessment of Learning Outcomes</b>
<p>HEI has law-compliant, transparent and fair system of learning outcomes assessment, which promotes the improvement of students' academic performance.</p>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b> <p>The learning outcomes assessment system implemented in HEI takes into consideration specifics of the field and enables identifying whether students have achieved learning outcomes defined by specific educational programme or study course. The learning outcomes assessment system considers evaluation of student knowledge and evaluation of program learning outcomes. Both are considered as the most recognized indicators of program success.</p> <p>The regulation regarding the evaluation of student knowledge clearly prescribes the assessment rules and indicators and is in line with the legal acts and internal regulations. The student assessment system includes adequate forms, components, and methods of evaluation that allow to determine to which extent the learning outcomes envisaged by the educational program or single study course have been achieved.</p> <p>The concept of academic freedom at the university is reflected on the evaluation process. The lecturer is entitled to select the appropriate assessment methods, the adequate components and the forms of</p>

evaluation, set assessment criteria. The student has an opportunity to observe his/her assessment results through the electronic process management system. However, during the site-visit it was revealed that not all students are familiar with this electronic platform and the university needs to train them how to use the system and ensure that the system is more informative and supportive; for example, to enter all midterm components grades, provide feedback to students, upload study materials, homework, self-assessment tests, etc. .

Another most important assessment component is evaluation of program learning outcomes. Learning outcomes for recently accredited educational programs are written in a way that they are achievable, realistic and measurable. The curriculum map is developed according to the instructions described for each educational program, where it is indicated which courses, activities and research components develop the student's particular learning outcomes. It also indicates the level (basic, average, deep) to which a concrete course develops the corresponding learning outcomes of the program. The program has target benchmarks for each learning outcome. Direct and indirect assessment methods are used. The direct assessment tools and materials are: presentations, essays, exam results, etc. The indirect method of assessment involves: interviewing students, graduates, and employers and analysing the results, etc.

A special regulation for assessment of the learning outcomes of educational programs is elaborated. The program coordinator creates a monitoring team along with Faculty Quality Assurance specialists and academic staff members. They evaluate learning outcomes and compare benchmarks. At first the methodology of evaluating the LOs was elaborated for the 300-credit bachelor-master's teacher training program. The process of implementing the methodology has started, but the HEI needs to reflect the approach in all educational programmes.

SJSU has implemented the student appeal system, that it is regulated by the examination and study processes regulation. After the student is informed about his/her assessment results through the Electronic process management system, he/she has a right to appeal the exam result as prescribed in the examination and study processes regulation. The Faculty Dean establishes an Appellation Commission by an individual legal act, within three days after the announcement of the results. The Faculty Appellation Commission is authorized to invite a field specialist to the Commission if necessary.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- The regulation of the evaluation of student knowledge;
- Learning outcomes assessment system;
- Educational programs;
- Interview results.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Ensure that students are trained in using the electronic process management system and make the system more informative, and supportive in enhancing learning and providing feedback to students.
- Ensure that all educational programmes' learning outcomes are achievable, realistic and measurable.
- Implement the methodology of evaluating of learning outcomes in all educational programmes.

#### **Suggestions:**

#### **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

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

#### Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Samtskhe-Javakheti State University is legal person of public entity and basic rules of staff management are regulated by the legislation. HEI adopted Samtskhe-Javakheti State University Management policy, which includes basic principles of administrative, supportive and academic staff management and HR policy. Human resource management system includes personnel attraction, selection, development procedures.

SJSU, as a regional tries to attract and maintain well-qualified academic staff. In addition to minimum qualifications prescribed by legislation, additional qualifications are set. For the professor's position, candidates should have at least 5 of the 6 years of scientific-pedagogical experience at Higher Education Institutes and qualifications regarding scientific degree, published scientific work, teaching work to coincide with the specific field that is defined in the competition.

Interviews with administration, and staff revealed that the University supports staff development in many ways, which is mostly managed by faculties and university management on ad-hoc basis. To support the strategic goals of the University, staff development should be provided in an organized way planned, monitored and controlled by a strong HR department, jointly with academic units and other administrative units. For example, within the framework of achieving University strategic goals, annual or medium term personal development plan for each individual staff member should be drawn and agreed upon between individual staff members and the University, thus being the basis of performance evaluation.

Law on Higher Education determines exact rules of hiring academic staff and SJSU follows it. Invited lecturers are hired with suggestion of the faculty and program supervisor. Interviewed invited staff comprised experienced professionals with teaching experience who add value to the programmes by transferring industry experience into the classroom. Nevertheless, HEI should develop strategy for involvement new generation of academics and implement it. According the SER, by developing new Ph.D. programs, the University aims to involve new researchers and lecturers. This also should be reflected in numbers of academic staff. Nowadays the University has only 2 assistant professors and none of assistants.

Affiliation terms and conditions are adopted by the Academic Council. The rule is general and does not include concrete terms, beside the idea of affiliation. The University has special scientific grant competition for professors, which is very motivative for the staff, and also productive, but it must have special forms of accountability and be evaluated by the grant giver administrative body. The panel's

overall opinion is that both academic and invited staff show a high degree of devotion to the University and their jobs.

SJSU uses staff satisfaction survey and its results to plan trainings, seminars and other developmental events. SJSU organized several events for staff development: trainings on antiplagiarism and how to use Turnitin program, modern teaching methods and learner centered education; Creating curricula and syllabi. HEI also encourages staff to study English for internationalization and personal development, it finances English language courses for administration and lecturers. Result of staff mobility through ERASMUS+ is currently very low, institution is more oriented on student mobility, while staff mobility support is very important and it will help the University to improve administrative and academic performance of the staff.

No formal system of peer review exists, but in certain cases, it is a common practice for the invited staff and academic staff to do peer-observation.

Professors' initiatives are welcomed by the administration. Many books, trainings, conferences and participation in international events were funded by the University. Most of these decisions are made by the rector and head of administration, some of activities, which needs substantial financial support, are discussed on the Representative Council (Senate). However, there is no exact clear procedure and rule how to get finances and how to report to the administration and get feedbacks on their activities.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- Results of Interviews
- Charter of the Samtskhe-Javakheti State University
- Self-Evaluation Report
- Resolution #14 of the Academic Council on the Adopted of SSSU Management Policy, 28 March 2019
- Resolution of the Representative Council on Adoption of Administrative and Program Support Personnel Recruitment at the LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University, 19 July 2017
- Functions of HEI Structural Units

#### **Recommendations:**

- The University must develop strict system of responsibility and implement it – responsibility should be checked by the collegial organs, such as academic council (not only by the rector and head of administration); Academic staff has to be evaluated based on their academic performance, every internal grant competition must include accountability and be evaluated by the University.
- The University must develop plan for involving new generation of academics in study and research process, also encourage them to be part of academic staff and ensure that SJSU will have enough academics to be in charge after retirement of some professors.
- The University must develop special staff mobility and exchange programs for administrative and academic staff, encourage them to take part in it.

#### **Suggestions:**

- Enhance the role of the HR department in coordination and monitoring staff development.
- Implement a peer review systems among academic and invited staff. It could be mandatory for newly hired academic and invited staff.

#### **Best Practices (if applicable):**

#### **Evaluation**

- ☐ Complies with requirements
- ☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

<input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements
<b>4.2. Academic/Scientific and Invited Staff Workload</b>
Number and workload of academic/scientific and invited staff is adequate to HEI's educational programmes and scientific-research activities, and also other functions assigned to them
<p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>Samtskhe-Javakheti State University has a semester-based updatable scheme of academic staff. Regulations limit contact hours for auditory work, also, define academic research and service activities that should be covered by the staff.</p> <p>Auditory workload is defined by the resolutions of Academic and Representative Councils. According workload, beside the lectures-seminars (auditory hours), personnel are obliged to conduct consultations, update syllabus, develop resources for evaluation. They have obligation to make research and publish articles (at least one article in two years in international peer reviewed academic journals).</p> <p>As a new university rule, academic staff is expected to allocate 40% of their time in teaching, 40% in scientific work and 20% on an optional basis. According workload, auditory hours for professors, associate professors and assistant professor are different, but there is no information about hours that should be spent for academic research or other services. This part of academic staff's activities is not calculated in hours and are evaluated by points. The current scheme is too complicated. During the interviews with administration and staff, the panel could not get a clear idea as to how total workload is computed. The University must determine all kinds of activities in hours and differ them.</p> <p>Being a regional university, operating in remote area of the country, SJSU, for certain specialties, needs to attract qualified staff from other regions. For academic staff who commutes to the University from other regions, SJSU provides subsidies for travel expenses, free accommodation, for overnight stay, at a common house for staff at the Akhaltsikhe campus, and free transportation between the two campuses. However, the panel would like to point out that those staff who travel from other cities to teach and provide supervision may potentially find themselves juggling between multiple activities and academic appointments, which can lead to burnout <del>on one hand</del>, less integration with the rest of the academics, which can affect the development of joint research activities, and inefficient supervision. Furthermore, these staff may find themselves physically lacking time for professional development and research activities.</p> <p>There are no any restrictions for professors to teach at other universities, but when there is no mechanism to determine any other hours beside auditory hours, it is not clear how professors can balance them (hypothetically professor can teach all other hours at other universities and there is no mechanism to control this).</p> <p>Overall, the panel concludes that there is no exact instruments on how the University can supervise the workload effectively.</p> <p><b>Evidences/indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results of Interviews;</li> <li>• The resolution #6 on Adoption of the auditory workload limits for the academic personnel, teachers and contracted specialists at LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University, February 25, 2017;</li> <li>• The workload scheme of the academic/contracted personnel and indicator considering the workload of the person in other HEIs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The University must create adequate mechanism of workload of academic staff, determine exact hours for auditory, research and other activities. Workload should include concrete obligations and measurable obligations that have to fulfil by the staff.</li> </ul>

<b>Suggestions:</b>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b>
<b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Substantially complies with requirements</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>

## 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

- 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.
- HEI ensures the protection of student rights and lawful interests.

#### **Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements**

Regulations for student admission, suspension and termination of student status, mobility, qualification granting, and recognition of education are unified under the document named "Regulatory Rules of the Learning Process". All relevant information is available to students and prospective students in the University's "Study Guide", which is available on the SJSU website.

SJSU takes special care for the enrolment of foreign students and Georgian ethnic students leaving abroad (mostly in neighbouring countries) who do not speak Georgian. Foreign students enrolled in the program in accordance with terms and conditions defined by the legislation of Georgia. Citizens of foreign countries can obtain a certificate within the framework of the Georgian Language Preparation Program for Foreigners implemented by Continuous Education Centre of Samtskhe-Javakheti State University. Thus, Bachelor degree programs are open to Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Abkhazian and Ossetian applicants who successfully pass tests of general skills in Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani languages and pass United National examinations in Abkhazian or Ossetian languages and undertake training program of Georgian language.

The university carries out induction meetings for the freshman students every year, where the Rector, Faculty Deans and the university administration members welcome and introduce students to be acquainted with the university environment. Foreign students were very satisfied with the way SJSU supported them to be acquainted with the university environment and suggested that more preparation in Georgian language would help them, especially at the first year of their studies (see next section). That was evident to Panel, during the interview with non-Georgian speaking students.

The university submitted student contract samples, which form a legal basis between the students and HEI. Information regarding the terms and conditions for tuition fees defined by agreement are

available for the students before the beginning of registration for United National Examinations and these terms and conditions shall be deemed as an integral part of the agreement are not subject to change except for changes in circumstances, that is defined by Decree of the Government of Georgia. The students are informed about contract terms and conditions before signing.

The grounds of suspension or termination of student status is defined by the legislation. The maximum term of student status suspension is 5 years. Student status shall be terminated after 5 years from the date of suspension of student status. Based on an analysis of relevant data, the main reason of student status suspension is non-payment of tuition fees or personal reasons.

Rules for internal and external mobility and earned credits from previous studies at other Universities are recognized based on compatibility with the corresponding SJSU programme. A designated Faculty Commission of Credit Recognition is responsible for making decision regarding credit recognition is decided by.

Interviewed students were aware of the procedures they have to go through in case they are not satisfied with the evaluation results. As for the protection of student rights and lawful interests, and for the review of students' appeals related to the work of administrative bodies, the university is advised to involve representatives of the Center of Student Services, the Legal Office, and Students Self-Governance body. Eventually, the University should consider the establishment of an "Ombudsman" office.

Student self-governance is active and very well organized, engaging in a diversity of activities in cultural events, sports, interaction with local authorities, inviting outside speakers, etc. It seems that they established effective communication with the student body through social media (mainly Facebook) and liaison between students and administration. Students are represented in the Representatives and Faculty Council, but students are not represented at the Academic Council level.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- Regulatory documents – Regulatory rule of learning process (Appendix 46)
- Sample of agreement concluded between the University and student (Appendix 45)
- Mechanism to protect student's rights and their legal interests (Appendix 46)
- Results of Student surveys conducted by the University (Appendix 18)
- Web page of LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University - <http://www.sjuni.edu.ge>

#### **Recommendations:**

#### **Suggestions:**

- Establish a mechanism to examine appeals related to the work of administrative bodies. Involvement of the Center of Student Services, the Legal Office, and Students Self-Governance body is suggested. Eventually, the University should consider the establishment of an "Ombudsman" office.

#### **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**

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

#### **Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements**

In the current structure of SJSU, Student services, Career growth and development are part of the public relations office. A new Center of Student services, Career growth and development is envisioned as part of the strategic goal regarding the upgrade of the university structure. Thus, information / consultation services are provided on a daily basis by the faculty. Students are served by the Faculty Dean, Faculty Specialist. The consultancy mainly deals with curriculum planning (additional specialty choices, free credit choices, boarding, academic achievement improvement mechanisms, accumulated credits, exams and mobility). The absence of a single point of contact was obvious in interviewed students, who however expressed no complaints.

As for the academic consultations, the students are provided with individual consultation hours. The scheme of consultation services related with development of academic performance with participation of academic teachers are listed in the syllabus of each course and information is provided to each student at the beginning of the semester. Information indicating the hours, the audience and the location of scheduled consultation is available on information board of faculty.

The learning platform (Moodle) can play a significant role in supporting the learning process, however it seems that its capabilities are not fully exploited by faculty and therefore by students yet. In fact, some of the interviewed students were not aware of it and others stated that they do not use it in all courses. It is important that faculty must be trained to make effective use of the platform as a tool for supporting learning. On the other hand, students seemed aware regarding plagiarism issues, consequences of plagiarism, and the TURNITIN tool.

The University is a leader in teaching Georgian language to foreign students and also minority Georgians who lack good knowledge of Georgian and it has been praised for this. Interviewed foreign students who take preparatory courses in Georgian language expressed the need for more language training, before their university studies to overcome communications problems, especially in the first year of their studies. The panel strongly believes that strengthening the skills of Georgia language will be significant help for foreign students both in the academic life but also in social life and integration with the university and local community.

The University Rector initiated a monthly “Rector's Hour” in the form of free format meeting, that any student can attend, ask questions which are answered by the Rector, and discuss issues. Students praised this practice and generally the attention and care shown by the Rector towards them. Foreign students seemed extremely pleased that they have more opportunities to meet the Rector and talk to her face-to-face.

The Public relations department informs students about various opportunities regarding scholarships, internship competitions, other contests, available vacancies, opportunities to participate in European and National projects, etc. Still, there is a need for an organized Career Office that will retain a database of interested employers and vacancies, organize career days, support students in job seeking (CV writing, interview practices, etc.). The last Employment Forum was organized by the Public Relations Office in 2015.



Opportunities regarding international exchanges and opportunities are provided to students by the Head of Foreign Relations. However, exchange activity is very limited and restricted to neighbouring countries, mainly because the lack of English language skills is a barrier.

The Student Self Government is very active, organizes and implements activities in the field of culture, sports, general education and science, and other community events. The University introduced initiatives for the creation of university sports teams, musical ensembles and creative groups, coordination of implementation of related activities. Material and technical base of the University is being improved in order to promote sport life. Building a sports complex in Akhalkalaki co-financed by the University and the local community is planned for the immediate future.

SJSU is fully aware of the socio economic conditions of the region and tries to make education financially feasible for the local residents. Low fees and programmes fully subsidized by the state (MA Economics) or no-fees (MA Astronomy) are offered to students. In addition, SJSU continuously tries to create and maintain support mechanisms for vulnerable students. In this respect, several scholarship programmes are available to support vulnerable students with good academic performance. The following scholarship programs are available at the university: State scholarship program, University scholarship program, Grigol Khandzteli Scholarship program, Scholarship program of local government – City Hall of Akhaltsikhe. Some of the interviewed students were beneficiaries of these scholarships, and in general students were aware of the opportunities.

Benefits for socially vulnerable students also include: Arrangements for individual schedule of tuition fee payment, and tuition exemption for students in severe social and/or economic conditions (Socially vulnerable families, families with serious medical illness, orphans, families who fought for territorial or living in occupied areas).

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- Student survey result conducted by University
- Planned and implemented activities
- Career support service
- Support mechanisms for socially vulnerable students
- Web page of LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University - <http://www.sjuni.edu.ge>
- Memorandums of Cooperation with several organizations

#### **Recommendations:**

- Provide proper training to the academic and invited staff in use of the learning platform Moodle so it is used to its full capacity as an effective support mechanism in the learning process and communication with students.
- A fully functioning Career office separate from Public relations must be established to act as a liaison between employers and the University, to organize training in required skills for job seekers, and relative events Career Days, Employers forums, etc.
- Consider increasing the preparation cycle for the preparatory programme in Georgian language, by either extending its length or continuing in parallel (non-credit) during the first semester / year of regular studies. That will facilitate assimilation and integration to the academic and social life.

#### **Suggestions:**

- Establish a plan to increase student mobility beyond the neighbouring countries.

#### **Best Practices (if applicable):**

- Monthly held “Rector’s Hour”, agenda-free meeting, open for all students and having face to face discussions related to problems or issues they raise.

### 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

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

### Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

SJSU's strategic development plan for 2019-2025 defines institutional priorities and places a particular emphasis on integration of research and teaching and expanding communication, the latter being largely understood as an action to strengthen institution's aspiration towards internationalisation. Research is therefore declared as one of the key strategic directions of SJSU and associated activities are meticulously described in the action plan. SJSU views interdisciplinary research in humanities as an essential activity to address existing challenges facing the region. In addition, importantly, the practical significance of agriculture and economics are widely understood and embraced by the university community – both students and staff. In support of its crucial role in the development of Samtskhe-Javakheti region, SJSU closely cooperates with the local and regional economic agents, such as municipalities, regional administration, regionally based international and non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, legal institutions, industrial consulting agencies, etc. These economic agents happen to be major employers of the SJSU graduates and key players in internship components. Hence, they play important role at all stages of development, implementation and evaluation of teaching and research activities delivered at SJSU. While their role is by no means underestimated by the institutional leaders, the panel observed that these and other economic actors can definitely play a more significant role in advancing institution's present strategy. It is therefore advisable that the institution consider inclusion of these economic actors in strategic development initiatives, outreach activities and internationalisation efforts. They can provide valuable asset in not only training and supporting students and graduates locally, but also quite importantly, for widening communication with global stakeholders. Memoranda of Understanding exist with some economic agents locally and internationally, but the institution could further benefit from extending cooperation with European universities on one hand and strengthening existing cooperation with local employer network on the other hand, with a goal to exploit all possible resources available in Samtskhe-Javakheti region.

Plans are ahead to increase the scope of research activities and setting up a structural unit responsible for research is envisioned, which will reinforce SJSU's research agenda. University understands the need for integration of teaching and research, training and support of young scientists and PhD students into a wider international scientific community.

Documentary analysis coupled with face-to-face interviews with the academic staff, program heads and doctoral students show institution's aspiration towards **enhancement of doctoral training**. The SJSU makes it clear to the potential doctoral candidates from the very beginning that to ensure success of a doctoral journey, there should be an alignment of research interests between a doctoral student and a potential supervisor. While the conditions for doctoral enrolment may differ across the programs and faculties (some programs may require doctoral students to have a doctoral proposal in order to

guarantee placement with a respective supervisor), this alignment of research interests is considered of utmost importance for successful completion of the doctorate. SJSU has clearly defined functions of a supervisor, yet the interviews reveal that the academic staff are not quite clear what doctoral supervision entails and how it should be organized. Given that the number of doctoral students who suspend their studies during the research component, the need for formal regulations to monitor the progress and ensure the relevance of the research topic is apparent. Nevertheless, they are well aware of basic requirements set forth by the institution, such as extensive publishing and research experience in the respective area. In addition to the supervision, SJSU has a good practice of co-supervision. To strengthen internationalisation focus of the research, SJSU also allows co-supervision by foreign professors. When a co-supervisor is not an invited professor from abroad, then doctoral candidates usually have foreign dissertation opponents. Academic staff affirm that their workload at SJSU and other universities enables them to supervise doctoral students effectively at this stage, however as explained in Standard 4, no effective monitoring system of staff workload exists at the University. The staff themselves see no problem having to come to SJSU for two or three days to teach and/or supervise thesis. Neither do doctoral students interviewed by the panel view this as a major obstacle in their doctoral journey – for instance, one of them, who commutes from Tbilisi, has a co-supervisor in Agricultural University of Georgia, in Tbilisi and thus has frequent contact with him there.

The institution has the highest number of doctoral students housed in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. SJSU periodically conducts satisfaction surveys among the students. According to the survey research conducted by SJSU department of QA in 2017 among the doctoral students, 85.2 % of the students were happy with the quality of teaching at SJSU at the doctoral level. The survey also revealed that 90% of the doctoral students were happy with the supervision overall, while 10 % have indicated that they were more or less happy. Doctoral supervisors are active researchers in the respective area and provide supervision in accordance with the criteria set forth by the institution. Doctoral students have an option to choose the supervisor either from SJSU or from another institution. To guarantee effective and efficient supervision, on one hand, SJSU provides remuneration for doctoral supervision as an incentive for the academic staff. On the other hand, doctoral students receive grants and funding for conferences.

Doctoral candidates are required to publish their dissertation in print or electronically. The panel examined three recent doctoral dissertations in print that were made available during the visit. The same dissertations are accessible online through the SJSU library website. Dissertations are written in Georgian, but abstracts are available in English. To meet the internationalisation requirements, doctoral students are advised to have a foreign supervisor/co-supervisor. Faculty dissertation board also provides international peer review of an article based on dissertation. In addition to this, doctoral candidates can present their dissertation at international conferences and publish a foreign language version of the article. There is funding available for that. While it is advisable to have foreign co-supervisors, there is no regulation governing how co-supervision can be conducted and what could be the outcomes – including workload, remuneration, funding for co-supervision by foreign professors, if any. Furthermore, the panel would have welcomed a more informative document or clearer strategy for joint supervision or foreign supervision, especially given that the institution deems it an important aspect for internationalisation of research. Based on the face-to-face interviews with doctoral candidates the panel was not convinced that their English language skills are at the level that doctoral programme preconditions and learning outcomes require.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- University Mission (Appendix 1)
- Scientific activities of the Academic personnel ( appendix 50)
- Memorandums of Understanding (Appendix 51) ;
- Implemented, ongoing and / or planned scientific-research creative activity projects, relevant publications (Appendix 53);
- Workload and functions of the academic staff (Appendix 42)
- The ratio of supervisors and PhD students(Appendix 42) ;
- Regulation of evaluation and protection of doctoral theses (Appendix 57);

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ordinance by Academic Council, Ordinance by Faculty Councils, PhD thesis defense procedures (Appendix 57);</li> <li>• Results of Doctoral Survey ( Appendix 54)</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formalize regulations for doctoral supervision and ensure that doctoral thesis supervisors at all Faculties follow them.</li> <li>• Formalize regulations regarding joint supervision or supervision by foreign supervisors, facilitate the process and ensure that doctoral students achieve the level of English language skills that will help them to communicate effectively in scientific fora.</li> </ul>
<b>Suggestions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SJSU could further benefit from extending cooperation with European universities on one hand and strengthening existing cooperation with local employer network on the other hand, with a goal to exploit all possible resources available in Samtskhe-Javakheti region.</li> <li>• Establish formal regulations to monitor the smooth progress of doctoral students who suspend their studies and ensure that the relevance of the research topic remains valid.</li> </ul>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Option for co-supervision either by local and Tbilisi based Georgian professor, or a local and a foreign-based professor</li> <li>• Provision for additional remuneration for supervision</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Substantially complies with requirements</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>
<b>6.2. Research Support and Internationalization</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEI has an effective system in place for supporting research, development and creative activities</li> <li>○ Attracting new staff and their involvement in research/arts-creative activities.</li> <li>○ University works on internationalization of research, development and creative activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b> <p>There is clearly an impetus, enthusiasm and understanding of where SJSU is headed in terms of research support and internationalisation. However, the corresponding efforts need more organization, frequency, consolidation and an institution-wide approach. Action plan and Strategic plan both detail specific activities too, but from the documentation provided by the institution, it is not quite clear how SJSU plans to achieve these goals. The panel appreciates the critical approach of the leadership and their understanding of pitfalls in relation to research support and internationalisation. The points to be improved are highlighted in SER and were articulated several times by senior leadership during the panel meetings.</p> <p>To attract new staff and foster active participation of young researchers SJSU initially planned to establish Meskheti Research Center, but the project was cancelled due to insufficient funding and complicated legal issues. The Research Center, still remains on SJSU's agenda for promotion and support of research among young scientists, but as it was explained to panel, it will be established under the umbrella of Doctoral School. Establishing Doctoral School is not mentioned in SER, but from the interviews, it is evident that the leadership considers it as a main unit for Research Support and Internationalisation and sees its role in raising a new generation of young scholars and advancing regional research. The rationale and vision at this point may lack clarity due to the novelty of the initiative, but the leadership mentioned that the institution would look for resources to set up and</p>

maintain the Meskheti Research Center. The panel would have welcomed a more detailed approach to the concept of a Doctoral School and its relation to planned Meskheti Research Center. At this point it was not possible either to determine how the resources could be accumulated and/, staffing or specific actions targeting interdisciplinary and international research as claimed in the SER.

University relies heavily on government support, student fees and a support from Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation. While national Science Foundation may be a great national source in funding prioritized research, there are many more channels internationally to provide for the ample support required for research support and internationalisation, which is not exploited sufficiently. Adding Research Unit to the institutional structure and staffing it with qualified research support personnel will be of immense value to garner this support. To start off, SJSU has sufficient links with Georgian and foreign researchers to strengthen this angle and such resources should be exploited to the maximum level. An example could be the memoranda with Turkish and European research centres which not only endorse participation in scientific conferences and joint publications (though clearly an important activity), but also building strong research networks and consortia-based collaborative research projects where SJSU academic and scientific could be potentially involved.

Vice Rector for Research oversees implementation of SJSU's research strategy. His role is mainly directed towards enhancing institution's strategy in research and scientific fields, attracting scientists, establishing collaborations with research institutions and universities abroad. Vice Rector for Research is so far the sole person in charge of SJSU's research and internationalisation activities, though the power is frequently delegated to Faculties as the initiative generally comes from Faculties. The Concept of Research Strategy development, which was elaborated and approved by the Academic Council in 2018, serves as a roadmap for SJSU's research policy. The Concept is exhaustively detailed and it describes principles of research integrity, academic freedom, funding schemes for research, including internal research grants financing mechanisms and administration, implementation and evaluation of research activities, etc. Despite the detailed description of the concept and well-presented descriptive material on each item listed above, the panel was not convinced in the full capacity for implementation of the concept, as well as action plan with regard to research support. It was noted that while many of the above-mentioned activities do take place, these activities lack systematic approach. Main reason could be missing centralized structures where it would be possible to plan, implement and evaluate all research related activities. Even in an ideal environment with sufficient human and financial resources where implementation of Research Support activities by Faculties could be an acceptable power delegation model, there has to be a central unit coordinating these efforts in coordination with Vice Rector for Research. Academic and scientific staff would require a great deal of technical support in planning, writing, budgeting grant proposals and later, implementing their research projects. Even more so, for international research projects given the scarcity of English language competence. Therefore, to save resources and enable efficient institutionalized research support mechanisms, our panel believes that SJSU should enable more formalized structures and include all internal and external stakeholders in support of research rather than relying on strength of personalities.

Given that there are no specific units responsible for research support and internationalization, it is hard to imagine how realistic the action plan may look for the next three years. To illustrate the point, action plan activity 1.1.3 (Scientific and Research project and cooperation with research funding agencies) entails training academic staff with skills necessary for research project development. According to the Action Plan, Vice- Rector and Each Faculties (Academic Departments) are accountable for this activity. One should note that research project development mechanisms and trainings for academic staff should ideally be organized at each Academic Department under the auspices of Research Support Unit and in cooperation of the Vice Rector for Research and International Office. In addition, the panel members believe that because there is no specific structural unit responsible for either Research support or International Relations per se, it is difficult to visualize how some of the activities under *Strategic Goal # 1 –Research could be implemented in three years*. Further evidence of this belief is missing itemized budget in the action plan, which would give a more vivid idea as to how far the goals are really achievable within three year time using tangible financial resources.

SJSU has no joint MA and PhD programs. Neither any specific, detailed plans available for developing such programs, at this point. It is only mentioned in the Action Plan that SJSU plans to develop joint educational programs, but there is no special budget allocated for this purpose, neither an academic unit nor the area specified. In existing programs, as mentioned in 6.1., there is a good practice of co-supervision either by local and Tbilisi based Georgian professor, or a local and foreign-based professor.

Funding research was not a common practice at SJSU before the doctoral programs. After introduction of Doctoral programs in 2014 it showed on SJSU's research agenda. About 3 % of the annual budget is allocated for funding research. The panel inquired whether this was sufficient to fund all the activities-conferences, publications, rewards, internal grants, etc. that the institution takes pride in. The response was that proof that these funds are sufficient is the all the meaningful research conducted at SJSU and the contentment of the researchers. In addition to 3%, SJSU, 150,000 GEL from the reserve fund may be added, should the need arise.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- SJSU Research Concept
- Procedures for Funding Research
- Mechanisms supporting research and creative work
- Memoranda with international research Centers
- Self-Evaluation Report
- Interviews
- University Website

#### **Recommendations:**

- Develop a systematic and formalized approach to research internationalisation
- Create key structural units responsible for each, such as Research Unit and Office of International Relations. Attract and train human resources for Research Support Unit and International Relations Office
- Assign individuals to each Faculty/ Academic Department to assist academic staff, doctoral students and researchers in developing research proposals for national and international research agencies
- Enhance cooperation between the Research Unit, International Relations office and Faculties to induce involvement of young researchers in EU scientific-research programmes.
- Increase funding for research in the University budget.

#### **Suggestions:**

#### **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**

Research conducted at SJSU is interdisciplinary in nature and considers history, ethnology, geography, etc. of Samtskhe-Javakheti region. SER highlights the perspectives for interdisciplinary bioeconomical research marrying research needs that address agrarian and economic prospective in the region. The QA Department is responsible for evaluating research activities conducted at SJSU, including evaluation of the research activities of the academic and scientific staff. The evaluation criteria are listed in the document entitled “Concept of Research Strategy Development”, however, mandatory activities are based on the scientific workload and define the criteria out of which academic staff has to choose a few. While each criteria are assigned the points, the highest score (60) is on authored publications in high impact factor journals. The highest point is also assigned to other research activities, including Scientific-Research projects, Collaborative research projects with Georgian Compatriot Scientists residing abroad. In fact, the Concept states that it is a mandatory for all academic staff to publish one scientific paper in every two years in a high impact factor journal. It is however not quite clear whether this holds true for all academic staff regardless the rank or only affiliated staff.

Institutional data is collected effectively beginning in year 2018. At the end of each academic year, each faculty member presents an account of his or her annual scientific work in accordance with Staff Workload scheme developed by the university. It was during 2018-2019 academic year when this method of collecting information from the faculty was first tested. QA got some information regarding the research activity at each Faculty and organized it in a form of a report. (Annex 63, Annex 65). Overall, institutional practice suggests that reports are produced annually by individual units/ or responsible persons. These reports are largely descriptive, providing some, yet helpful analysis and recommendations (Annex 19).

Evaluation of research units are not conducted because there is no such unit to evaluate their productivity or effectiveness. Furthermore, there is no service staff other than QA staff to evaluate research and scientific output. Clearly, the number and qualifications of the QA staff is not adequate to conduct full and systematic analysis of data.

Faculty participates in evaluation of research work. Faculty member have to submit annual self-evaluation of research report at the end of each academic year. SJSU Research Concept, which is a guiding document, places an emphasis on planning research, evaluation indicators and workload of the academic staff. At this point it was not possible to evaluate whether evaluation of analysis of research activities are systematic as it is fairly a new procedure. The document analysis however provided the panel with a short analytical context. One example of system and procedures in place was found in the document titled “Annex 19\_ Procedure and Report for applying quality assessment results”. It demonstrated that as a result of the analysis conducted by QA department, adjustments has to be made in staff workload to exclude possible overlap between scientific and elective components, which turned out to be the case with some professors. While some other recommendations were also made as a result of analysis of the data provided by the academic staff, the panel could not identify any follow-up actions as to whether these recommendations were translated into tangible measures.

When asked about their own research activities – the academic and scientific staff place particular emphasis on participation in international scientific conferences and publications. Less emphasis is placed on small or large-scale research projects administered by the faculty members, any research grants obtained from abroad or in collaboration with Georgian or foreign scholars. In fact, this is a common theme across different Faculties as well as administration. Nevertheless, SJSU budget provides for internally funded research projects 24,000GEL annually. In 2018, SJSU funded 3 internal grants for its academic staff and another 3 research grants were obtained by SJSU staff from National Science Foundation over the 10-year period -2008-2018. One explanation for this could be that SJSU only introduced third cycle doctoral programs 5 years ago and research was not priority until after 2014. Despite this, given that the institution relies heavily on NSF’s support, three research grants even within 5 years is a very small number for an institution that has a part of its mission traditional and innovative research- oriented quality education at all levels. Creation of new knowledge, recruitment of a pool of young and experienced researchers, and high quality research and scientific products would hardly be achieved without strong research capacity.

<b>Evidences/indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mechanism for Evaluation of Research activities -Annex 63</li> <li>• Assessment Mechanism for scientific activities- Annex 64</li> <li>• Procedure and report applying quality assessment system -Annex 19</li> <li>• Report on Research by Faculties - Annex 65)</li> <li>• Interview results</li> <li>• University Website</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systematize data collection and strengthen data analysis; involve Research Support Unit, Quality Assurance Department and Faculties.</li> <li>• Re-assess workload scheme and clarify for the staff what is being evaluated.</li> <li>• Develop a mechanism for assessment of productivity of Research Support Unit.</li> <li>• Utilize evaluation results for further development of the quality of scientific-research work.</li> </ul>
<b>Suggestions:</b>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University internal competition for research project grants.</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Substantially complies with requirements</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>

## 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.

<b>7.1 Material Resources</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ HEI offers environment necessary for implementing educational activities: sanitary units, natural light possibilities, and central heating system.</li> <li>○ Health and safety of students and staff is protected within the institution.</li> <li>○ HEI has adapted environment for people with special needs</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b> <p>The premises of the University are located in two towns of the Samtskhe-Javakheti region – Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki. Free transportation for staff is provided between the two towns, as well as free accommodation for academic staff who travels from other places in Georgia. The premises were built to purpose and have housed local colleges, are now owned by the University.</p> <p>In the Akhaltsikhe, there are two (I and II) buildings that host educational activities and common housing for academic personnel in a 24,667m<sup>2</sup> campus. The building facilities are properly equipped with relevant inventory required for education programs, as well as the spaces for working in groups and individually, scientific library, sanitation facilities, including access for people with disabilities, club,</p>



sound recording studio, archive, foyer and other spaces necessary for administrative activities, indoor and outdoor sports facilities and a Museum with an exhibition of findings in the region. Learning facilities include spacious auditoriums and computer rooms, laboratories, meeting rooms and scientific library (described in the following section). Sufficient space is provided for the administration, Faculties, Academic, and Invited staff, Administration Units and technical support. All areas are well kept and provided with continuous natural and artificial lighting systems. Central heating system is installed in the building. Sanitation facilities are supplied with constant drinking/technical water, continuous lighting and natural ventilation. Sanitation facilities comply with sanitary-hygienic norms.

Open car parking with special space for persons with disabilities is arranged within the premises of the building and they can access the building without interference. Persons with disabilities have access to the first floor of the building and the laboratory located in the basement. Special tilted elevator (platform) will be purchased and installed in near future for persons with disabilities to give them access to all floors of the building.

Common housing building of academic personnel provides a residential space of 700m<sup>2</sup> plus necessary sanitation facilities.

The Akhalkalaki campus comprises Buildings III and IV of the University, the Teacher Training Center and common housing building for students. The university covers transportation expenses of academic personnel from Akhaltsikhe to Akhalkalaki and provides transportation service by its own transport.

Building III is a three-storey, 2,088 m<sup>2</sup>, building that provides a learning space of 731m<sup>2</sup>, plus spaces for administration, academic and invited staff offices, administrative services, and auxiliary space. The building accommodates educational facilities equipped with relevant inventory required for delivering the education programs, as well as spaces for individual and group-work, library, sanitation facilities, foyer and other spaces necessary for administrative activities. Sanitation facilities are supplied with constant drinking water, continuous lighting and natural ventilation. Sanitation facilities comply with sanitary-hygienic norms. The area designated for education programs and administrative activities is equipped with continuous natural and artificial lighting systems. Central heating system is installed in the building. Facilities are roomy but some renovation is needed to bring them up to Akhaltsikhe campus standards.

Stable internet access with fiber optic cables and internal networking was implemented in 2015.

In 2018 certain works were conducted for the development of infrastructure. Wheelchair ramp and adapted sanitation facilities for persons with disabilities were arranged on the first floor of the building in accordance with Government regulations. An Open car parking with special space for persons with disabilities is arranged within the premises of the building and they can access the building without interference. Special tilted elevator (platform) are being installed and expected to be in operation in the near future to give persons with disabilities access to all floors of the buildings.

University building IV, at Akhalkalaki campus with total area of 2440.0 m<sup>2</sup>, does not function at this point since it needs major rehabilitation/reconstruction works. The University, with the support of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, plans to renovate the building and create proper infrastructure for the delivery of the Vocational programmes. According to the University administration, a 2.5M GEL government grant is in last stages of being approved.

The total area of the University Teacher Training Center is 159 m<sup>2</sup>, 65m<sup>2</sup> of which is learning space.

Common housing building of students of a total area of 2224 m<sup>2</sup> was fully rehabilitated in 2014-2015 and comprises lux rooms and conference hall and residential space for 200 students two and three bedroom rooms in a four-storey building. Each room for one and three students has private sanitation

facilities, including shower. There is a kitchen, common use area and laundry on all four floors of the building. Wheelchair ramp, adapted rooms and sanitation facilities for persons with disabilities are arranged on the first floor. Living in common housing building is free of charge for students

The University provides an environment that takes into consideration safety and health of students and academic personnel. Building premises and material values are protected 24/7 by Samtskhe-Javakheti Regional Division of Security Police Department, while surveillance cameras are installed at all floors and throughout the perimeter of the education buildings. Health care unit with qualified medical personnel, equipped with all necessary equipment operates in education building. Medications are free of charge for students and academic personnel. Fire prevention norms are in order in the education building. There are 14 units of fire extinguishers with detailed instructions of use. A fire emergency evacuation plan (and name of specific responsible person) for students and academic personnel of LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University is displayed in a prominent place. There are evacuation plans available on each floor approved by the head of University administration. During the site visit, the panel noted that certain evacuation exits at Akhaltsikhe campus do not conform to safety standards. Discussion with University administration showed that the appropriate rectifying actions will follow. Safety instructions for students and academic personnel of LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University is displayed in a prominent place.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- Various documents related to possession and operation of fixed and movable assets / Agreements with Service providers / Safety regulations, etc.
- Observations and discussion with the Administration during the site visit

#### **Recommendations:**

- Make necessary rectifications so that evacuation exits and routes at Akhaltsikhe campus conform to safety standards.
- Complete the installation of necessary equipment so that persons with disabilities have access to all floors and areas in all University buildings.
- Renovate Building 3 at Akhalkalaki campus to bring to the same standards as the buildings at Akhaltsikhe campus

#### **Suggestions:**

- Mobilize local community and social partners to ensure the government grant for the rehabilitation/reconstruction of the building that will function as Center for Vocational Education and Training.

#### **Best Practices (if applicable):**

- Provision of free accommodation for students at Akhalkalaki campus
- Provision of free transportations and accommodation to professor that do not live in the area.

#### **Evaluation**

- ☐ 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**

The library is an independent administrative unit, which operates under its own regulations, called "The Mechanisms of the Resource and Service Development and Updating of the Scientific Library". SJSU library

operates in three sites: University buildings I and II in Akhaltsikhe, and University buildings III in Akhalkalaki.

University library in the first building consists of the following spaces: depository of the library, a reading room for 50 readers, space for group meetings and discussions, 14 computers and equipped space for the students, 6 additional computers, for faculty representatives and 5 personal computers for librarians. A computer for the student with special needs is provided separately with associated equipment. Library facilities in block II include book depository, a reading room with 20 seats, space for group meetings and discussions, 12 computers and Internet access for students. Computers, 2 computer for librarians and 1 for student with special needs. The Akhalkalaki Division of the Science Library has a reading room on the third floor with a 45-student reading room, space for group meetings and discussions (including facilities for students with special needs), 4 computers and internet service for students, 1 computer for librarians, 1 computer for students with special needs, access to a printer, copier and scanner. Scanners, printers and photocopiers at all library sites can be used by any student and academic staff. The library repositories are equipped with fire extinguishers.

On the basis of University Rector Decree (13.05.2019 Order # 6 on the allocation of SJSU Scientific Library Collaboration for Individuals with Special Needs) Library staff provide services to persons with special needs.

The library has issued rules and regulations governing the use of the library, defining the library functions, its structure, work schedule, rules for issuing and returning books from the library, as well as rules of usage of computers. Besides students and faculty, Graduates and other interested people have the opportunity to use library resources and reading rooms and obtaining a readership card gives them access to Openbiblio online library.

Book ordering is done by filling out special cards as well as electronically. At all sites, users have the opportunity to request digitization and / or notes of required literature, which provided to them at no cost. The library is available for students and academic staff 6 days a week for a total of 60 hours. Information guidelines and rules are posted on the University website as well as at all three library sites.

The scientific library is provided with both network and wireless WiFi internet, all computers are connected to the Internet and the internal network where e-books are set and provides support to educational program and research activities.

The SJSU Scientific Library Foundation includes basic and auxiliary literature in Georgian and foreign languages necessary for the implementation of university education curricula. However, during the site-visit the panel was not able to locate certain books drawn from the syllabi bibliography.

The University Library is a member of the Library Association of Georgia and member of the Elsevier Consortium of the International Scientific Publishing House that was established with the support of the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation. As a participant in the project "Electronic Information for Libraries - eIFL", SJSU has access to main scientific databases and journal publishers like *Cambridge Journals Online*, *e-Duke Journals Scholarly Collection*, *Edward Elgar Publishing Journals and Development Studies e-books*, *IMechE Journals*, *SAGE Premier*, *SAGE APCs for Open Access Journals*, *Openedition Journals*, *IMechE Journals*. Starting in 2019, SJSU has free access to Elsevier databases - *Scopus* and *Science Direct*, for more than 3,500 journals and 34,000 books.

Library fund also includes electronic material (audio-video, CDs, maps, e-books) subscription of the periodicals "Tsiskari 1852", "Gantiadi", "Aril" "Audit, Recording and Finances" and the magazine "Accounting". Publishing of scientific papers of university professors, scientific journal *Gulan*, historical collection *Meskheta*, literary, scientific-popular and public journal *Aravi* and publishing of scientific conference materials at the university are also part of the library fund. Donations from various organizations and individuals are one of the most important sources of funding for the University Library.

SJSU library maintains closed association with the National scientific library in the areas of skills development for SJSU library personnel and enablement of scientific interlibrary loans. SJSU library regularly organizes meetings and trainings for the users of the online scientific databases. During the autumn semester of 2018, 6 informational trainings were held, and in 2019 Spring semester 6 informational trainings were conducted for the users of online scientific databases.

Scientific library maintains the statistics regarding to registration and use of online library databases. It also makes regular reports once per three months in accordance to the applied rule and submits report to the rector. Currently, statistics of electronic access to scientific journal is relatively low, given the number of MA and Doctoral programmes at the University.

The university regularly updates and diversifies the book stock. The library works closely within the university structural units (faculties, program heads, education management service, students) and based on the information received, according to the educational programs and syllabuses defines need for study and research resources (it refers to the book fund, as well as scientific database and required inventory). For the last couple of years the budget for textbook acquisitions remains at 15K GEL.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- Self-Evaluation Report
- The Mechanisms of the Resource and Service Development and Updating of the Scientific Library.
- Interviews with the Librarians
- Interviews with Academic and Invited Staff
- Interviews with students and alumni
- Visit to library sites

#### **Recommendations:**

- Verify and ensure that all textbooks listed in programmes' syllabi are available in library stock. Process should be monitored annually.
- Increase trainings of students and staff in the use of electronic databases and journals. Cooperation between MA and Doctoral programmes directors and academic staff teaching Scientific writing skills is essential.

#### **Suggestions:**

#### **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**

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

#### **Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements**

Information technology infrastructure created within the HEI is compliant with business processes of the institution and ensures their successful implementation. HEI owns 458 PCs (personal computers, laptops and tablets), 358 of them PCs, 35 laptops, 61 tablets and 4 servers, of which 222 computers and 61 tablets are available for students (labs, study rooms, libraries), and 136 computers and 35 notebooks

are available for academic and administrative staffs. All three buildings of HEI are provided with enough number of technical equipment, including computers, projectors, printing and scanning devices. The libraries and professor's working space are also provided with computers and printers.

University buildings I and II are connected with the AirGrid M5 HP Wi-Fi Bridge, with a bandwidth of TX/RX Rate: 135 Mbps and fiber optic 60 MB/sec Internet, while the University building III in Akhalkalaki has 5 MB/sec fiber optic internet. HEI 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> buildings are connected with 3<sup>rd</sup> one through VPN (PPTP) type connection. The Akhaltsikhe buildings operate a unified, centralized Wi-Fi network (connection: roaming, with access management capabilities) while in the Akhalkalaki building, there is a separate network that is fully accessible to university students and administrative staff. If needed, users can access the remote VPN (PPTP) connection to the university network, which has a secure and encrypted connection with users in remote areas, allowing users to access the university's internal electronic services.

The wireless network covers HEI entirely, computer training classes, labs, and training audiences, for which the internet and internet services are available. The server is located in one location of the SJSU, which is provided with cooling and uninterruptible power supplies (UPS). Infrastructure servers use Linux and Microsoft Windows Server operating systems, the infrastructure is protected by firewall. The Information Technology Management Department periodically backs up servers (BackUp) and stores them on a special space. HEI uses Eset smart security antivirus software that updates databases from a local server. Centralized management of antivirus system is provided by the Eset Remote Administrator Console. In the case of a power failure, the HEI is provided with uninterruptible power supplies.

Video surveillance cameras (at indoor and outdoor perimeter, as well as at exam rooms) are installed in all HEI buildings, and information is stored on 4 (NVR) recorders. The surveillance network is a closed system with restricted change/write access and read-only access is given to security services.

Any action taken in the surveillance system is stored in a network video recorder.

Various backup systems including Physical Backup, Electronic Backup, Internet Service Backup, as well as uninterrupted electric power backup ensure business continuity of university processes.

HEI has introduced electronic services and electronic management systems:

- An electronic learning platform (Moodle) that facilitates communication between teachers and students, stores teaching materials, information about lecture and exam schedule, practical assignments, tests and exams, assessment results, etc. It is worth mentioning that during the site-visit some students showed lack of ability in using the electronic platform and some even did not heard about it. In order to ensure the efficiency of the usage of this information system, it is recommended to organize trainings for students and motivate them to use it. In addition training of teaching staff is necessary to use the system to its full extend. At the same time QA should explore and check the satisfaction of students to improve the system and meet their expectations.
- Learning Process Management system, through which students' academic and administrative registration is conducted; where the information about students' academic performance and legislative acts related to changes in student status (initial registration, suspension, restoration, termination, and awarding qualification) are inserted, and students' transcripts are generated.
- E-system of document flow - eflow.emis.ge
- Library E-catalogue "Openbiblio"

The current web-page of SJSU ([www.sjuni.edu.ge](http://www.sjuni.edu.ge)) has been launch since 2006 and was updated in 2018. Most of the important information is on both Georgian and English languages. On the HEI web-page are available: HEI mission and structure, the Catalogue of educational programs, educational programmes and selection criteria of students, expected learning outcomes and qualifications to be granted, procedures for teaching-learning and assessment, library e-catalogue, regulatory documents, strategic development plan and annual reports of HEI, ongoing and implemented research activities, general statistics about HEI, employment opportunities, etc. The information on the web-page is updated

regularly. Administration of the web-page includes preparation of the materials to be uploaded, accuracy of which is managed by the relevant structural unit. The PR department is responsible for preparing the materials, while a web-administrator is responsible for uploading them. However, the main points of the educational programmes need to be uploaded in English language as well. This will help to attract foreign students and strengthen the international cooperation of HEI.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- IT management policy;
- IT infrastructure and purchase agreement;
- The agreement with ltd “Proservice” \*Web-site hosting agreement) №02/345 25.12.2018;
- Ltd “Proservice” (Domain agreement) #02/105 12.04.2019;
- Internet service agreement;
- Web-page www.sjuni.edu.ge;
- SJSU clerical work unified rule;
- Electronic services;
- The Curriculum Management Electronic System;
- Electronic learning process management system;
- Mechanisms for the development of electronic services and electronic systems;
- Interview results.

#### **Evaluation**

- ☐ Fully complies with requirements
- ☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**
- ☐ Partially complies with requirements
- ☐ Does not comply with requirements

#### **Recommendations:**

- Explore and check the satisfaction of students regarding electronic learning platform and meet their expectations in order to motivate them to use it.
- Ensure that the main content of educational programmes are uploaded in English language as well.

#### **Suggestions:**

#### **Best Practices (if applicable):**

#### **7.4 Financial Resources**

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

#### **Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements**

Allocation of financial resources described in the budget of HEI for 2019 is economically achievable; sources of funding are diversified ensuring adequate and effective risk management. The main financial sources are students’ fee (63%), state grants (1%), scientific-research grants (1%), international organizations’ grants (3%), other legal income (1%) and previous year’s revenue (31%). Dynamics of income according to last five years is increasing.

According to administration and Financial office, funds available to HEI are adequate to perform activities described in strategic and action plans. However, actions of Strategic Plan are not shown

explicitly in the budget. During the interview it was revealed that necessary funding for fulfillment of HEI strategic and action plans' activities will be found whenever is needed.

HEI budget is developed based on the SJSU Unified budget and the Faculty budgeting rule which is elaborated in line with the Law on Higher Education, the Law on State Procurement, the Law on Budget Code of Georgia, and other legal acts, University statute, mission, strategic development and action plans priorities.

The Head of administration leads budgeting process including development of draft budgets by the faculties, development of unified draft budget and presenting to the representative board for approval. The members of the representative board, faculty representatives, heads of structural units, student self-governance and other interested parties attend the joint university budget discussion regarding the income and expenses, legacy and relevance to the HEI development and action plans.

Financial reports for the period of 2017-2019 certify correctness, fairness and fullness of financial information.

HEI financial resources provide for sustainable and further development of learning/teaching/research activities, and human resources/infrastructure. However, it is not explicitly described in the budget for 2019 how much is considered for the development of each component. The budget only considers the expenditure for salaries (50%), services and products (40%), social activities (1%), and other expenditure (9%). The panel suggests that the budget should provide clear and transparent information of the funds allocated to fulfilment of specific strategic goals, conducting research activities, development of human resources, library and infrastructure. However, during the interviews it was mentioned that 24000 GEL is allocated for the internal research grants, that can be considered as a good practice. The university funds academic personnel's and PhD students research activities, participation in scientific conferences, publishing articles in high-ranked scientific journals, but only 3% of the total budget is allocated for such research and scientific activities.

It should be emphasized that based on staff's satisfaction survey results, the administration decided to increase salaries by 10% and it plans to increase further the salaries of professors.

HEI conducts financial audit by eligible audit company and the reports with relevant financial statements are publicly accessible. For the evaluation of the university financial resources in 2015 an external audit conducted a financial audit for 2012, 2013, 2014. On June 3, 2019 the agreement #02/160 was signed for purchase of financial audit service for 2018-2019. The university budget and financial report are published in the newspaper "Meskheti University" and SJSU web-page.

HEI has developed financial management and control system rule, where responsibility distribution, delegation, accountability and financial management control system are described.

#### **Evidences/indicators**

- The information about funding source and planned finance dynamics
- The budget of SJSU
- Financial reports of ongoing or/and previous reporting periods
- The rule of LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University responsibility distribution, delegation, accountability and financial management control;
- The document of financial management of and control system evaluation document (Resolutions of the representative boards)
- Reports of the authorized audit or audit company and respective financial reports
- Web-page of LEPL Akhaltsikhe State University - <http://www.sjuni.edu.ge>
- Interview results

**Recommendations:**

- Ensure that the budget gives the clear and transparent information about the expenses needed for the fulfillment of HEI strategic goals, conducting research activities, development of human resources, library and infrastructure.
- Increase the budget allocated for research and scientific activities.

**Suggestions:****Best Practices (if applicable):****Evaluation**

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