განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Final Report on Gori State Teaching University Authorization

Expert Panel Members

Chair: Sokratis Katsikas, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway
Members:
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Authorization Report Resume

General information on the educational institution

Gori State Teaching University is located in Shida Kartli. It was established in 2007 as a result of the merger of two higher education institutions, namely the LEPL Gori State University and the LEPL Tskhinvali State University. In 2010, the LEPL Gori University was renamed Gori Teaching University, and in 2011 the Gori Teaching University, a legal entity under public law, was reorganized into a "Non-Profit (Non-Commercial) Legal Entity - Gori Teaching University". In 2012 the name of the University was changed to "Gori State teaching University". The University, henceforth GSTU, provides in total 28 education programs at the undergraduate (17) and master's (8) levels in the humanities and social sciences, education, public administration, business, law, exact and natural sciences, tourism. GSTU is organized in three faculties, namely the Faculty of Business, Social Sciences and Law; the Faculty of Humanities; and the Faculty of Education, Exact and Natural Sciences. In addition to the academic study programs, GSTU also provides life-long continuous education programs and services. GSTU had, at the time of the writing of the self-evaluation report, 1,683 active and 736 suspended students; the current "marginal number of students" is 3,000. GSTU employed, at the time of the writing of the self-evaluation report, 306 members of staff (of which 89 academics, 80 affiliate academics, 105 invited, and 109 administrative and support). Its total budget was 4,702,530 GEL, of which 215,000 were allocated to research-scientific activities, and another 20,000 to library operations and development.

Brief overview of the authorization site visit

The site visit was implemented as a series of online meetings, because of the restrictive mobility measures in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Exception to this was the physical visit of the University premises that was performed on the afternoon of April 20,2021 by two of the authorization team experts accompanied by Sandro Tabatadze of the NCEQE. The overall visit started in the morning of April 19, 2021, and continued with full day meetings for interviews of the panel with NVU leadership, management, and staff on April 20 and 21, 2021. On the afternoon of the last day, the deliberation of the expert panel took place, during which the experts agreed on their findings regarding the extent of compliance of GSTU with the authorization standards and their components. The chair of the panel delivered a brief overview of the panel findings to GSTU leadership and a wider audience.

Overview of the HEI's compliance with standards

Gori State Teaching University has been found to be compliant with requirements as regards standards 3,4, and 6; and substantially compliant with requirements as regards standards 1,2,5, and 7.

Argumentative position

N	Expert recommendations / ექსპერტისრეკომენდაცია	Answer / პასუხი	Documents / დოკუმენტები	Expert panel responses
1	1.1 Clearly define the distinctive characteristics of GSTU based on its type and profile in the mission statement.	The mission of Gori State Teaching University fully meets the requirements for higher education institutions defined by the legislation of Georgia. Thus, the mission clearly defines the distinguishing feature of the institution. In particular, according to the mission, the educational activities of the teaching university, are in alignment with the interests of the country, along with the interests of the Shida Kartli region. This is evidenced by an appropriate entry in the text of the mission: "Teaching University provides accessible, high-quality academic (undergraduate, graduate) and vocational education in line with the interests of the country and the region."		The mission itself states: "The mission of Gori State Teaching University is to prepare competitive specialists equipped with theoretical, methodological and practical knowledge, oriented on the local and international labor market, who, with their life style and successful activities, will promote the transition of the modern society into a highly developed, just, democratic, moral and highly conscious society." The quoted text is mentioned, along with others, under the **activities performed to accomplish the mission.** The recommendation is to enrich the mission statement itself, rather than the activities to implement it, with the institution's distinctive characteristics. **Action taken:** None.
2	1.2 Refine the three-year action plan to improve the allocation of resources to tasks; the measurability of the fulfillment criteria, possibly by	We agree with the proposed recommendation.		**Action taken:** None.

	means of defining KPIs; the details of the timing of individual tasks; and the human and financial resources to allocate to each task.			
3	1.3 Further encourage substantial involvement of all University stakeholders to the process of developing the strategic and action plans.	All stakeholders of the University actively participated in the process of developing strategic and action plans. This is confirmed by the links presented.	https://gu.edu.ge/ge/events/samushao-shexvedra8.page https://gu.edu.ge/ge/events/7-wliani-2018-2024-gegmis-ganxilva.page https://gu.edu.ge/ge/events/strategiuli-ganvitarebis-gegmis-proeqtis-ganxilva.page https://gu.edu.ge/ge/events/strategiuli-ganvitarebis-samwliani-gegmis-proeqtis-ganxilva-studentebtan.page https://gu.edu.ge/ge/events/shexvedra-	The recommendation calls for **further** encouragement of **substantial** involvement of **all** stakeholders. **Action taken:** None.

			kursdamtavrebulebtan1.page https://gu.edu.ge/ge/events/shexvedra-universitetis-akademiur-personalsa-da-shida-qartlis-damsaqmeblebtan.page https://gu.edu.ge/ge/events/strategiuli-ganvitarebis-sabchos-wevrebis-shexvedra-universitetis-tanamshromlebtan.page https://gu.edu.ge/ge/events/shexvedra-universitetis-studentebtan-da-kursdamtavrebulebtan.page https://gu.edu.ge/en/events/an-online-meeting-of-strategic-development-council-members-was-held-with-	

			university-students-and-alumni.page https://gu.edu.ge/en/events/a-meeting-of-the-strategic-development-council-members-was-held-with-the-the-university-staff.page https://gu.edu.ge/en/events/an-online-meeting-of-the-strategic-development-council-members-was-held-with-the-academic-staff-of-the-university-and-the-employers.page	
4	2.1 The University should have a separate administrative unit in charge of Human Resources with its own provision and separate functions in order to ensure the effective implementation of	In 2017, as a result of a change in the structure of the administration by the academic and representative councils, the structural unit of the administration - the Human Resources Management Service - was abolished and the functions and powers of the said service were added to the functions and powers of the auxiliary structural unit of the university-Chancellery. Accordingly, two divisions were established in the same unit - the Human Resources	https://gu.edu.ge/uploads/other/11/11566.pdf	The document (Provision of Chancellery) was not provided among the other documents presented by the university. Still, it is possible to amend the corresponding description in the report and to reformulate the recommendation to a suggestion. **Action taken:** Text in substandard 2.1 of the report modified. Text of recommendation modified and recommendation changed to

	corresponding activities defined in the strategic plan.	Management Division and the Registry Division. Issues related to human resource management are also mentioned in the statute of the structural unit. The case that the human resources division operates within the mentioned structural unit does not hinder the effective implementation of the activities defined in the strategic plan, which is confirmed by the four years of experience of the structural unit existing in this form. Therefore, we consider it expedient to remove this recommendation from the expert recommendation section or move it to the advice section.		suggestion.
5	2.2 The University should enhance the role of the Representative Board in the actual decision-making process.	The powers of the Representative Council of Gori State Teaching University are defined by the „Law of Georgia on Higher Education" and the first article of the Order N125 / N of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia of September 3, 2013, "Charter of Legal Entity of Public Law - Gori State Teaching University". Decisions are made by the council in accordance with the rules and conditions established by the above-mentioned normative acts. Consequently, the University is deprived of the opportunity to add complementary functions to the Representative Council or change the nature of its role in the decision-making process. Therefore, we consider it expedient to remove this recommendation from the expert recommendation section or move it to the advice section.	https://gu.edu.ge /uploads/other/1 1/11561.pdf	The recommendation cannot be removed since it is addressing the fact that the Representative Council does not actually take part in the decision-making process, i.e. it is a non-functional unit. **Action taken:** None.
6	2.3 The University should enhance the transparency and equity of the	Gori State Teaching University ensures the publicity of individual administrative-legal acts, fairness and transparency of elections. In particular, the announcement of the	https://drive.goo gle.com/file/d/1O j- kY_a7Jr3XIX5xLj	The recommendation cannot be removed since the fact that no competitions take place is indicative of lack of equity and transparency.

		procedures for the election and appointment of management bodies by encouraging competitiveness among the academic staff members and making sure that the action plans and visions are presented and become subject of discussion.	competition / election will be posted on the official website of the university and will be placed in public places in the teaching university space to ensure its publicity and accessibility for interested parties. In addition, when selecting a person for the position, the relevant management body/unit evaluates the action plan / concept submitted by each candidate. In view of the above, we consider it expedient to remove this recommendation from the expert recommendation section or move it to the advice section.	61Ukk1sAWG5Ti-/view?usp=sharing https://drive.google.com/file/d/12pDwnem7h0y4japZORu6b4bLI1W53noT/view?usp=sharing https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IttFGvDfhqu4LbXuYUJ80j_0SEWRE-0C/view?usp=sharing	**Action taken:** None.
7	2.4 The University should promote ethical code and conduct norms by offering relevant events and/or by foregrounding its importance in reminders periodically circulated among staff members and students.	The agreements between the teaching university and the staff, as well as the teaching university and the students, clearly state that the university's internal regulations and the university's code of ethics and disciplinary norms are an integral part of the said agreements. In addition, the University is obliged to immediately notify the student / staff of their change by posting it on the University website and / or in a public place in the university space. Appropriate measures are periodically taken at the university to promote the inception of a code of ethics and norms of conduct.	https://gu.edu.ge/ge/events/universitetis-etikis-kodeqsisa-da-disciplinaruli-pausixmgeblobis-normebis-gacnoba.page https://gu.edu.ge/en/events/introducing-the-code-of-ethics-and-norms-of-responsibilities-of-gstu-to-students.page https://gu.edu.ge/ge/events/universitetis-etikis-kodeqsisa-da-	The fact that not a single case of violation of the Code of Ethics has been reported by the students and alumni, its functionality appears somehow questionable. So, the recommendation cannot be removed. **Action taken:** None.

			disciplinaruli-pausixmgeblobis-normebis-gacnoba1.page https://gu.edu.ge/en/events/introducing-university-code-of-ethics-and-disciplinary-liability-norms.page	
8	2.5 The University should ensure that plagiarism is detected and responded to at all levels (BA and MA) and in all courses where a written work belongs to assessment components.	We agree with the proposed recommendation.		**Action taken:** None.
9	2.6 The University should ensure that Academic Freedom is understood and realized in practice by the whole University community.	Protection to the principles of academic freedom is declared in the University Charter, rules of Procedures, code of Ethics. The mentioned documents are an integral part of both the student agreements and the staff employment contracts. Accordingly, the university community (staff and students) is aware of and shares the principles of academic freedom - the right of academic staff and students, to independently conduct teaching, research and study. This circumstance is confirmed by the results of a proper survey conducted at the university. In	https://gu.edu.ge/ge/iuridiuli-nobari/shinaganawesi https://gu.edu.ge/uploads/other/11/11561.pdf http://gu.edu.ge/uploads/other/9/9274.pdf	Not possible. The fact that the students are not aware of their right to form conclusions and express their opinions might have devastating results for the whole learning outcomes and at the same time it might be indicative of teaching methods being out-of-date. **Action taken:** None.

		view of the above, we consider it expedient to remove this recommendation from the expert recommendation section or move it to the advice section.		
1 0	3.1 A more diversified approach to assessing students' learning outcomes should be employed in educational programmes delivered at the University – more diverse assessment methods should be used and relevant assessment rubrics should be developed, which will reflect the specificity of the study courses and the field of study.	We think that the methods of assessing the student learning outcomes used in institution's educational programs are quite diverse and take into account the peculiarities of the courses, which are indirectly confirmed by the fact that virtually all educational programs of the university have been successfully accredited in 2020. An example of an expert recommendation on this sub-standard is the assessment methods for the English Theoretical Grammar (BA English Philology Program), in particular, it is stated that: "The midterm exam is conducted by closed and semi-open tests; The main problem is the fact that in both cases, both types of questions are evaluated with 5 points. An effective approach should not be to give the same assessment to both open and closed questions. In addition, it is not advised to use the same type of assessment method for closed and open-ended questions. As for the midterm and final exams, only one type of assignment is given and its assessment method. "The syllabus provided in the course (see the link) confirms that this information does not correspond to the existing reality (the title of the course may be incorrectly stated by the experts). From the syllabus it can be seen that the following methods are used in both mid-term and final assessment: quizzes - 3 points, open-ended questions - 5 points, closed and semi-open assignments - 2 points and closed questions - 1 point. Each		**Action taken:** Correction of factual error in the report.

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		evaluation method has appropriate evaluation criteria. In view of the above, we consider it expedient to remove this recommendation from the expert recommendation section or move it to the advice section.		
1 1	4.1 Designate one or more specific staff members, in either the Quality or the HR service, as being responsible for coordinating and carrying out the training needs assessment and the staff professional development processes.	We agree with the proposed recommendation.		**Action taken:** None.
1 2	5.1 Simplify the appeal procedure, which may manifest itself in the involvement of student representatives in the commission or other action. All of this ensures student confidence and the effectiveness of the appeal procedure.	The involvement of representatives of the Student Support and Career Development Center, the Legal Service and the Student Self-Government Body in the student appeal procedure, from our point of view, will further complicate the appeal procedure. In addition, such changes will not increase the effectiveness of the procedure, as these representatives do not have the appropriate competence in the relevant field. In accordance with the current procedure, the appeal commission set up by the dean of the faculty includes specialists of the field, a lecturer responsible for deliberative voting, as well as the student, who disputes the result of the assessment. The involvement of student representatives in this commission,		Different viewpoint, no factual errors. **Action taken:** None.

		we think, is also legally problematic, as given that the protection of personal data is a mandatory requirement under Georgian law, the results of a student assessment may not be made known to other students without his or her consent. In view of the above circumstances, we consider it expedient to remove this recommendation from the expert opinion section and to move it to the advice section.		
1 3	5.2 Provide students with corporate mails, which will be used for transferring any kind of information.	We agree with the proposed recommendation.		**Action taken:** None.
1 4	6.1 Develop a consistent vision and mid-term strategy for enhancing the scientific-research capacity of Gori Teaching University, which will equally envelope all the faculties of the HEI.	We agree with the proposed recommendation.		**Action taken:** None.
1 5	6.2 Elaborate and integrate transparent and concrete criteria for the internal funding of the research projects. Examples of such criteria are: The	We agree with the proposed recommendation.		**Action taken:** None.

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	scientific value of the submitted project; The importance of the project for raising the awareness of the HEI and its involvement in scientific circles; Involvement of students (undergraduate, graduate) in the project; Cooperation between the faculties of the HEI within the project; Practical applicability of the project outcomes; Budget / project cost-effectiveness and others, which will also ensure equal participation in the research activities and equal funding for different faculties of the HEI.			
1 6	6.3 Carry out, by the Scientific-Research Center, regular monitoring and evaluation of the projects' implementation,	We agree with the proposed recommendation.		**Action taken:** None.

	especially referring to the projects funded internally.			
1 7	7.1 The correlation among the management, strategic planning and budgeting processes should be improved. To this end, the University should introduce a budgeting process which will be more useful for the decision making/management processes in market economy systems. For example, Activity Based Budgeting can be used. Further, conditional separation of the assets and of the management activity between VET and HEI's activities should be made.	Article 18, Paragraph 1, Subparagraph "c" of the Law of Georgia on Higher Education and Article 1 of the Order N125 / N of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia of September 3, 2013,in accordance with Article 12, paragraph 1, sub-paragraph "c", the Board of Representatives of the Teaching University has approved the "Rule of Budgeting of LEPL-Gori State Teaching University", according to which the budgeting and procurement service starts working on October 1 of each year in order to plan the upcoming budget and possible budgetary fields, in cooperation with the main educational (faculties) and other structural units of the university and based on the budgetary data provided by them, and taking into account the current legislation;whereas the process of preparation and submission of the draft budget is coordinated by the head of administration. In addition, the budget approval procedure is regulated by the same rules and normative acts mentioned above. As for the separation between vocational education and higher education activities in the budget, both directions are presented separately in the consolidated budget of the university. Notwithstanding the argument, this recommendation does not meet sub-standard 7.1 of the Higher Education authorization standards, which assesses the material resources of the HEI. In addition, it is important to note that the authorization		Different viewpoint, no factual errors. **Action taken:** None.

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		standards for the sub-standard - "7.1 Material Resource" - do not provide for evaluation criteria or indicators / evidence related to management, strategic planning or budget processes. In view of the above circumstances, we consider it expedient to remove this recommendation from the expert opinion section and to move it to the advice section.		
1 8	7.2 The "Statute of Administration of the Gori State Teaching University" should clearly state what responsibility regarding labor safety each department has, and that persons should be certified in labor safety.	We agree with the proposed recommendation.		**Action taken:** None.
1 9	7.3 The University should develop or buy a comprehensive and integrated learning process, accounting, and proceedings management IT system.	The educational process at the university is managed by a special program developed for this very purpose, which integrates the modules for monitoring the payment of tuition fees by students, as well as the management of electronic registry. However, the latter module is not used by the institution due to the fact that the university has been involved in the Eflow(Electronic document flow system) since 2015, which it uses quite successfully and efficiently. In addition, the University, as a legal entity under public law, is obliged to carry out financial reporting processes in the unified electronic system of the National Treasury of the Ministry of the Finance of		Different viewpoint, no factual errors. **Action taken:** None.

		Georgia using the appropriate software. Therefore, given the existing regulations and the obligations of the university, we consider it impossible to introduce a comprehensive and integrated study process, accounting and registry IT system at the university. We believe that the university uses the existing IT systems in its activities effectively and, therefore, we consider it appropriate to remove this recommendation from the expert recommendation section.		
20	7.4 The University should ensure the effectiveness of the business processes, by introducing more effective budgeting and financial planning activities.	As it is well known, the university is a legal entity of the public law and is a non-profit organization, its budgeting and financial planning activities are carried out in accordance with the regulations / rules defined by the legislation of Georgia. There exists, a unit for Budgeting and Procurement, which in coordination with other institutional units prepares the budget of the university, whereas after its proper review and approval by the university, it ensures the proper and efficient implementation of the university's business processes. This is confirmed by the fact that the institution still successfully copes with all existing challenges. We consider it appropriate to remove this recommendation from the expert recommendation section and to move it to the advice section.		Different viewpoint, no factual errors. **Action taken:** Modification of text in section 7.4 of the report. No change in recommendations.

Summary of Recommendations

1.1 Clearly define the distinctive characteristics of GSTU based on its type and profile in the mission statement.

1.2 Refine the three-year action plan to improve the allocation of resources to tasks; the measurability of the fulfillment criteria, possibly by means of defining KPIs; the details of the timing of individual tasks; and the human and financial resources to allocate to each task.

1.3 Further encourage substantial involvement of all University stakeholders to the process of developing the strategic and action plans.

2.1 The University should enhance the role of the Representative Board in the actual decision-making process.

2.2 The University should enhance the transparency and equity of the procedures for the election and appointment of management bodies by encouraging competitiveness among the academic staff members and making sure that the action plans and visions are presented and become subject of discussion.

2.3 The University should promote ethical code and conduct norms by offering relevant events and/or by foregrounding its importance in reminders periodically circulated among staff members and students.

2.4 The University should ensure that plagiarism is detected and responded to at all levels (BA and MA) and in all courses where a written work belongs to assessment components.

2.5 The University should ensure that Academic Freedom is understood and realized in practice by the whole University community.

3.1 A more diversified approach to assessing students' learning outcomes should be employed in educational programmes delivered at the University – more diverse assessment methods should be used and relevant assessment rubrics should be developed, which will reflect the specificity of the study courses and the field of study.

4.1 Designate one or more specific staff members, in either the Quality or the HR service, as being responsible for coordinating and carrying out the training needs assessment and the staff professional development processes.

5.1 Simplify the appeal procedure, which may manifest itself in the involvement of student representatives in the commission or other action. All of this ensures student confidence and the effectiveness of the appeal procedure.

5.2 Provide students with corporate mails, which will be used for transferring any kind of information.

6.1 Develop a consistent vision and mid-term strategy for enhancing the scientific-research capacity of Gori Teaching University, which will equally envelope all the faculties of the HEI.

6.2 Elaborate and integrate transparent and concrete criteria for the internal funding of the research projects. Examples of such criteria are: The scientific value of the submitted project; The importance of the project for raising the awareness of the HEI and its involvement in scientific circles; Involvement of students (undergraduate, graduate) in the project; Cooperation between the faculties of the HEI within the project; Practical applicability of the project outcomes; Budget / project cost-effectiveness and others, which will also ensure equal participation in the research activities and equal funding for different faculties of the HEI.

6.3 Carry out, by the Scientific-Research Center, regular monitoring and evaluation of the projects' implementation, especially referring to the projects funded internally.

7.1 The correlation among the management, strategic planning and budgeting processes should be improved. To this end, the University should introduce a budgeting process which will be more useful for the decision making/management processes in market economy systems. For example, Activity Based Budgeting can be used. Further, conditional separation of the assets and of the management activity between VET and HEI's activities should be made.

7.2 The "Statute of Administration of the Gori State Teaching University" should clearly state what responsibility regarding labor safety each department has, and that persons should be certified in labor safety.

7.3 The University should develop or buy a comprehensive and integrated learning process, accounting, and proceedings management IT system.

7.4 The University should ensure the effectiveness of the business processes, by introducing more effective budgeting and financial planning activities.

Summary of Suggestions

1.1 Design and implement actions aiming at increasing staff and student awareness and sharing of the University's mission.

1.2 Provide training to the structural units of the University towards enhancing their ability to engage fully and effectively with the process of monitoring progress in the implementation of the strategic and action plans.

1.3 Support the monitoring process with appropriate methods and software tools.

2.1 The University might consider having a separate administrative unit in charge of Human Resources with its own provision and separate functions in order to ensure the effective implementation of corresponding activities defined in the strategic plan.

2.2 The University should define the relationship between its structural units in a way that it becomes clear which structural unit executes the decisions of which Council. The subordination and connection between the administrative units and the Councils should be depicted appropriately in the structural chart.

2.3 The University should introduce a corporate mailing system in order to enhance the information flow between the management bodies, academic staff and students, making sure that they are informed in transparent and timely manner about internal regulations, recent processes, public events and international funding opportunities.

3.1 Once all programmes are revised, it is advisable that programme learning outcomes are clustered into relevant domains, e.g. 1) Knowledge and Understanding, 2) Skills, 3) Responsibility and Autonomy.

3.2 It is advisable that learning outcomes for the programmes and the methods for their assessment are revised; e.g. in the BA-MA Primary Teacher Preparation programme it is stated that graduates can present research findings both in Georgian and English, however, the English proficiency level is not specified, and accordingly the assessment method for this learning outcome is hard to evaluate.

4.1 Revise the benchmarks for the ratios of academic personnel to administrative and support staff and focus more on development of academic affiliated staff instead of the proposed decrease of the invited lecturers and administrative and support personnel.

5.1 Conduct statistics on all students who suspend, terminate status, or using external/internal mobility. the given picture will help to identify existing problems and develop the studying process.

5.2 Conduct research on Alumni employment rate, which will involve requesting information from authorities and direct employment information.

6.1 Enhance involvement of the Scientific-Research center in implementation of the internally funded research projects, especially during the monitoring and evaluation phase.

7.1 The university should employ internal audit, in the direction of the efficiency audit, or they should ask the State audit office of Georgia to conduct an efficiency audit of the University.

7.2 The University Department of Finance / Accounting should develop a special document on accounting policies and procedures.

Summary of the Best Practices

4.1 Evaluation and remuneration of the affiliated personnel based on performance, with clear performance indicators and scoring system.

5.1 Creating Special spaces for students, like cinema, bank, Wendy's corner, Justice house, is making GSTU special.

Summary Table

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

Signature of expert panel members

Sokratis Katsikas (Chair)		Sesili Kadaria (Member)	
Nino Dolidze (Member)		Nikoloz Parjanadze (Member)	
Eka Gegeshidze (Member)		Levan Tsagareli (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 does have a mission statement, that reads as follows: "The mission of the University is to train competitive specialists focused on local and international labor markets, equipped with theoretical, methodological and practical knowledge, who through their lifestyles and successful activities will contribute to the transformation of modern society into a highly developed legal, democratic, moral and civil society." Even though this mission statement is in line with Georgia's and European higher education goals, it does not accurately define its role and place within the higher education area and society, both locally and internationally, as it does neither highlights nor is well rooted on the institution's distinctive characteristics. Further, during the interviews with staff and management, the experts were not able to confirm that GSTU's mission is shared across the academic community and the stakeholders of GSTU, despite the claim that in a relevant survey among academic staff and students the percentage of those agreeing that the University's activities are in line with its activities was over 90%. An explicit statement of the GSTU's vision has been provided in its strategic plan 2020-2027: "The Teaching University is oriented on constant development and harmonization with European education. The University work will support the country in terms of strategic economic development, prepare successful specialists and integrate them on the competitive labor market".
Evidences/indicators 1. Self Evaluation Report 2. Official webpage of GSTU 3. Interviews with management and staff 4. Strategic plan 2020-2027
Recommendations: 1.1 Clearly define the distinctive characteristics of GSTU based on its type and profile in the mission statement.
Suggestions: 1.1 Design and implement actions aiming at increasing staff and student awareness and sharing of the University's mission.
Best Practices (if applicable): None
Evaluation ☐ Complies with requirements ☒ **Substantially complies with requirements** ☐ Partially complies with requirements ☐ Does not comply with requirements
1.2 Strategic Development
o   HEI has a strategic development (7-year) and an action plans (3-year) in place.   o   HEI contributes to the development of the society, shares with the society the knowledge gathered in the institution, and facilitates lifelong learning

	o HEI evaluates implementation of strategic and action plans, and duly acts on evaluation results.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

GSTU has developed and follows a strategic development plan for the period 2020-2027, which has set five strategic goals, as follows: Institutional and organizational development; Development of the Educational and scientific-research activities; Development of student services; Development of the academic/administrative personnel support system; Development of the material, information and financial resources. These goals are consistent with the University's vision and mission and are further broken down into a set of tasks/objectives. The strategic plan is accompanied by a three-year action plan for academic education, and a one-year action plan for vocational education. All plans are driven by the strategic development goals and the SWOT analysis and cover all major aspects of the institution's operation. However, not all actions in the action plan are allocated resources (financial and human) for their implementation, and the fulfillment criteria for several of these actions do not lend themselves to accurate measurement, or they are qualitative. Some activities are not as specific as they should be, for instance a planned action is "strengthen improvement of quality involvement from structural unities of the University". Such a definition does not give a clear understanding of what is expected from the responsible units. Additionally, most of the actions on the action plan extend over all three years, and specific intermediate deadlines or milestones have been defined. Further, the resources allocated to many of the tasks are vague; in many cases only "relevant accounts" is mentioned instead of a budget figure. Several tasks that should normally be assigned to the international relations unit are assigned to the public relations unit instead. This has been attributed to the recent establishment of international relations as a separate unit. If the strategic and action plans are refined and followed, they can guide GSTU into achieving its goals.

GSTU has followed the PDCA cycle in developing its strategic plan, it has performed a SWOT analysis, and it uses the PESTEL methodology for developing its plans. The process for developing the strategic plan is owned and managed by the University's Strategic Development Council, that has been formed with the Rector's decree #1-26 of 10 April 2020. The Council is chaired by the Vice-Rector and comprises eight additional members, that include the three deans and heads of administrative units of the University. The Council reports to the Rector and to the University's Academic Council. Among the functions of its mandate are to determine and ensure the involvement of staff, students, potential partners or other stakeholders in the strategic planning of the University, i.e. to ensure that the process of developing the University's plans is participatory and inclusive. During the interviews the experts have learned that the academic community has been invited to provide feedback on the draft plans, such feedback however was not as extensive as it could and should have been. The involvement of students and of external stakeholders in the process of developing the strategic plans of the University can and should be further encouraged and enhanced.

The University has been traditionally contributing to the social development of the region and of the country, and it continues to do so, through several relevant successful outward-facing activities, such as cultural, environmental, and social events and programs; lectures and participation of academic staff in public discussions; region and country relevant scientific research in selected domains.

Monitoring the progress in the implementation of the strategic and action plans is carried out by a monitoring team, which has been set up by the Rector's decree N 1-27 of 5 April 2019. The process is carried out annually, but in the event of unexpected circumstances in response to which it is necessary to make immediate changes to a strategic or action plan, unscheduled monitoring can be initiated by the Rector. The monitoring team is responsible for developing the monitoring report, that provides an annual assessment of the implementation status of the tasks set out in the action plan for the reporting year, based on the indicators set out in the action plan for these tasks. At the request of the monitoring group, the heads of the structural units of the University submit a report to the monitoring group, which will reflect the results of the activities defined in the previous year's action plan, for the implementation of which the structural unit was responsible (or involved in implementation). The monitoring team is authorized to request additional information related to the implementation of the action plan from other structural units of the University. Based on these reports, the monitoring team determines the implementation status of the previous year's action plans and evaluates the achievement of the established result with the relevant indicators defined for each task. This status can be "completed"; "mostly completed"; "partially completed"; "implementation is underway"; "implementation has not started"; or "terminated". The monitoring report is then submitted to the Strategic Development Council, which evaluates the implementation of action plans and develops a draft report that includes recommendations for corrective changes and / or measures to be taken in the action plans. The draft report is sent to the relevant structural units of the University to consider and send feedback. Based on the reconciliation of proposals and opinions received from the structural

units, the Strategic Development Council develops the final version of their implementation report. This report is subsequently submitted to the Academic Council, for their consideration. When this discussion is concluded, the Rector, if necessary, mandates the necessary corrective actions. During the interviews the experts learned that the monitoring process is effectively in force, and this has been well demonstrated by the University's ability to adapt swiftly and effectively to the new circumstances imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, further improvement is possible, as experience with the implementation of the monitoring process accumulates among and within the University's structural units.

Evidences/indicators

1. Strategic development plan for 2020-2027
2. Action plan (2020-2023)
3. Rector's decrees
4. Self Evaluation Report
5. Interviews with management and staff

Recommendations:

1.2 Refine the three-year action plan to improve the allocation of resources to tasks; the measurability of the fulfillment criteria, possibly by means of defining KPIs; the details of the timing of individual tasks; and the human and financial resources to allocate to each task.
1.3 Further encourage substantial involvement of all University stakeholders to the process of developing the strategic and action plans.

Suggestions:

1.2 Provide training to the structural units of the University towards enhancing their ability to engage fully and effectively with the process of monitoring progress in the implementation of the strategic and action plans.
1.3 Support the monitoring process with appropriate methods and software tools.

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

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
o Organizational structure of HEI ensures implementation of goals and activities described in its strategic plan
o Procedures for election/appointment of the management bodies of HEI are transparent, equitable, and in line with legislation
o HEI's Leadership/Management body ensures effective management of the activities of the institution
o Considering the mission and goals of HEI, leadership of the HEI supports international cooperation of the institution and the process of internationalization.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The organizational structure of the University consists of three faculties, a library, auxiliary structural units such as the Rector's Office, the Office of the Head of Administration, the Chancellery, the Secretariat of the Academic Council and the Secretariat of the Representative Council, and the following administrative units: Finance Department; Educational Process Management Department; Legal Department; Student Career Advancement and Support Department; International Relations Department; Public Relations Department; Budgeting and Procurement Department; Material Resources Management Department; Security Department; IT Department; Examination Center. The strategic plan allocates each task and activity to one or more of these units, thus ensuring achievement of indicated goals. However, the panel members could not find any mention of the Human Resources Department either in the structural chart presented in the SER or in any other document provided by the University. During the interviews it was found out that Human Resources are managed by the Chancellery along with document processing. Even though it might be easy for such a small HEI as GSTU to assign both duties to only one of its administrative units, still it might be important to have a separate unit in charge of Human Resources, especially if taking into consideration that Human Resources are mentioned in the strategic plan and are allocated with certain tasks. It is not evident that the Chancellery has capacity to carry out those tasks, since the functions of the Chancellery described in the Rule of Document Processing do not embrace issues related to management of Human Resources.

The structure and functions of the administrative units are described in the statute of the University as well as separately in the respective provisions of each unit. Although the functions and responsibilities of the structural units are clearly defined, the experts found that the Representative Council does not actually take part in the decision-making process. The Representative Council merely approves the decisions made by the Academic Council; this was confirmed during interviews with the members of the Representative Council. Neither any cases of candidate rejection nor disputes on administrative issues were reported. The members of the Representative Council claimed that they felt free to express their own opinions, but it is obvious that this is a rather formal, non-functional unit that does not make any decisions that would have impact on the management of the University. This can also be noticed in the structural chart of the University (figure N4 in the SER) where the subordination of the units is not depicted. Since the entire institution is managed in a centralized manner, no problems arise in terms of coordination at any level of administration.

The requirements and procedures for the election and appointment of the management bodies are in line with the current legislation. They are described in *the rules for electing governing bodies*, a document approved by the Representative Council. The actual validity of the regulations described was confirmed during the interviews. A member of the Academic Council reported that she was informed about the upcoming election of Academic Council members via the website and there was a small competition (of 2 candidates per vacancy) between the faculty members so that each of them had to present their vision to the respective Faculty Boards. She admitted that her focus on certain issues appeared more beneficial to the Faculty Board members and that is why they elected her as their representative in the Academic Council. However, no competition took place while appointing and electing individuals in other management and administrative functions (e.g., the Rector, the head of administration, deans, heads of administrative units); this might be indicative of lack of transparency and equity.

Due to the geographical proximity to the occupied region, the capability of the University's management body to make decisions in a timely and effective manner has been challenged twice – during the August war in 2008 and during the pandemic in 2020-21. In both cases business continuity of the processes at the University was maintained, thus proving the flexibility of the management bodies in the critical periods on the one side and the efficiency of the risk management strategy described in *the rule of continuity of business processes* on the other. For instance, trainings on information technologies were held as an immediate response to the challenge of online learning and a distant access to the library resources was provided because of collaboration of the library and the IT-department, which can also be regarded as a nice example of coordinated conduct of administrative units. Furthermore, the document processing is regulated by the corresponding rule and supported by the electronic system "eflow", maintaining the registry of educational institutions as prescribed by the current legislation.

The University has an internationalization policy in place. Its goals, mechanisms and evaluation criteria of their effectiveness are described in the corresponding document. It is obvious that the University supports the international mobility of students and academic personnel not only on paper,

but also in practice. It also attempts to attract foreign students and there is already a positive experience of organizing summer schools for the foreign students. During interviews several students and professors shared the experiences that they gained during their visits abroad, that were made possible within the scope of various exchange mobility programmes offered by the University. Furthermore, the University encourages the development of joint educational programmes and the involvement of its personnel in various international projects and research activities. Ambitious aspirations of the bilateral cooperation with the European HEIs as well as the presence in the international scientific journals were also tangible in the interviews. The panel members found out that information about international programmes and funding opportunities is regularly made available on the webpage of the University. In addition, special information meetings are organized by the International Office of the University. However, the relevant information is not spread by email (since there is no corporate emailing system in use), but rather informally; this might be another area of improvement.

Evidences/indicators

1. The Statute of LEPL GSTU.
2. The provisions of structural units of GSTU.
3. Rule of Election of Managerial Bodies at LEPL GSTU.
4. Rule for document processing.
5. The plan for business processes continuity.
6. Internationalization Policy of LEPL GSTU.
7. Mechanisms and Evaluation System for monitoring management effectiveness at LEPL GSTU.
8. Interview results.

Recommendations:

2.1 The University should enhance the role of the Representative Board in the actual decision-making process.
2.2 The University should enhance the transparency and equity of the procedures for the election and appointment of management bodies by encouraging competitiveness among the academic staff members and making sure that the action plans and visions are presented and become subject of discussion.

Suggestions:

2.1 The University might consider having a separate administrative unit in charge of Human Resources with its own provision and separate functions in order to ensure the effective implementation of corresponding activities defined in the strategic plan.
2.2 The University should define the relationship between its structural units in a way that it becomes clear which structural unit executes the decisions of which Council. The subordination and connection between the administrative units and the Councils should be depicted appropriately in the structural chart.
2.3 The University should introduce a corporate mailing system in order to enhance the information flow between the management bodies, academic staff and students, making sure that they are informed in transparent and timely manner about internal regulations, recent processes, public events and international funding opportunities.

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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

2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms

o Institution effectively implements internal quality assurance mechanisms. Leadership of the institution constantly works to strengthen quality assurance function and promotes establishment of quality culture in the institution.

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The Quality Assurance Office of the University consists of 6 members: the head of QAS, three heads of faculty QA services and two specialists in charge of accreditation / authorization and research quality. These human resources are indeed appropriate for a HEI with 28 educational programmes to implement internal quality assurance mechanisms. The fact that the heads of the faculty QA services are at the same time members of the team of the University QAS seems to be beneficial for the coordinated work at all levels. The QAS collaborates with the Deans, the Department of Human Resources as well as with the Academic Process Management Department to assess the implementation of the educational programmes, the performance of the academic personnel, the students' academic performance, and the quality of the University services and material resources. For this purpose, regular surveys are conducted mainly deploying an internal learning process management system. The results of the surveys are submitted to the Academic Board and utilized for the further development and improvement of services, performance, and educational programmes. A number of nice examples for this kind of improvements have been provided in the course of the interviews: A lecturer was not carrying out his duties properly, so he was offered a training that would support him to develop professionally; in one course all the students received high marks that appeared somehow suspicious and this became a subject of investigation after which special recommendations were given to the lecturer; whereas in another course very low marks were observed and it turned out that the course was too difficult for the students, so the lecturer was advised to change his teaching methods and to increase the consultation hours, which solved the problem; the water closets have been renovated; WiFi issues have been resolved; and the salary policy was modified by introducing a remuneration scheme that would encourage the staff to become more active in terms of teaching, supervision and research. Furthermore, several training courses were offered to the academic and administrative personnel, based on the analysis of their current needs. The focus of training mentioned in the interviews lay on the prevention of plagiarism, the use of Zoom, document processing etc. The employers confirmed that their suggestions have also been considered while developing the educational programmes. For instance, English language courses have been intensified and a course in history was added to the curriculum in tourism management in order to make the graduates more qualified for the requirements of the job market. Students stated that based on their feedback the library provided extra (electronic) copies of the textbooks that had not been enough for the larger classes before, and a new course in professional ethics was launched upon their request. The heads of the programmes reported some content changes in certain courses and some minor modifications in programme structure, that were carried out considering the results of the surveys. At the University there is also in place a system for evaluating the effectiveness of quality assurance mechanisms that is based on the quantitative data representing the achievements in research and teaching. All this made the experts feel that quality assurance is a participatory process at the University, and its attempts to establish the quality culture have been quite successful.

The University has a methodology for planning the student body. This is described in detail in a separate document. While planning the student body, the Academic Council considers various factors, such as student retention rate, University resources, situation on the job market etc. The planning of the student body is a dynamic process, as the number of students to be admitted is adjusted annually. An informal contact to local schools and observation of current tendencies are reportedly important suppositions for these adjustments.

Evidences/indicators

1. The Quality Assurance System of LEPL GSTU.
2. The Rules for Evaluating the Implementation of an Educational Program at LEPL - GSTU.
3. The Rule for evaluating the academic and scientific-research work of academic and invited staff of LEPL GSTU.
4. The Rule for evaluating of the work of administrative and invited staff of LEPL GSTU
5. Mechanism for monitoring students' academic performance at LEPL GSTU.
6. Students and stakeholders survey results.
7. Methodology and Mechanism of Planning Student Body at LEPL GSTU.
8. Interview results.

Recommendations:

None

Suggestions:
None

Best Practices (if applicable):
None

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements
The University has a code of ethics in place. According to the interviewed respondents, the code of ethics has been violated several times, causing a proper response on the side of the University management. Responses varied depending on the regulation that was violated and the degree of violation itself. In some of the cases the response was a warning, a reprimand, or a strict reprimand, whereas in the others it was judicial action. The University has won all the trials so far; only one case has been submitted to the Appellate Court. The Code of Ethics is available on the website of the University. It is also included in the contracts closed between the University and the employees as well as the University and the students. However, the University administration does not offer relevant events in order to promote ethical code and conduct norms. Since no cases of violation of ethical code could be recalled by the students and alumni, the efficiency of the code is somewhat unconvincing. Information on plagiarism and the mechanism of their prevention is also accessible on the website of the University. In addition to that, the awareness of plagiarism among students is raised in the mandatory first-year course "Academic Writing". The students are reminded prior to every examination that cheating is prohibited and, if detected, plagiarized work would be invalidated. Interestingly, no plagiarism cases (in a University with a student body of more than 1500 students!) were reported either by the teaching staff or by the students; this raises suspicions about the functionality of the corresponding regulations and mechanisms. In the course of interviews, it was found out that even though there is a plagiarism detection tool ("Urkund") in place, it is merely used for checking MA thesis and conference papers of students (not their essays or homework papers) and teaching staff. The lecturers claimed to have such a close contact with their students that plagiarism seemed impossible and at the same time the students were aware that "even 1% of plagiarism" might cause a huge trouble. For the panel members it became evident that at the University there is a lack of awareness of plagiarism and its detection possibilities. As declared in the Strategic Development Plan, academic freedom is among the main values shared by the University. During the interviews both teaching staff and students demonstrated their understanding of Academic Freedom. For the teaching staff it meant the possibility to define the assessment components independently, to choose the content and teaching methods for one's own courses oneself, and to be able to initiate modification of syllabi and curricula. For the students, on the other hand, Academic Freedoms is related to the opportunity to select courses and minor programmes freely. Apparently, the students are not aware of the whole scope of this notion ("to form conclusions for themselves and express their opinions" - Academic freedom | Britannica).

Evidences/indicators
1. The Internal Regulations of LEPL GSTU.

2. Code of ethics and norms of Disciplinary Liabilities at LEPL GSTU.
3. Mechanisms for detection, prevention and response to plagiarism at GSTU.
4. The Statute of LEPL GSTU.
5. Interview results.

Recommendations:

2.4 The University should promote ethical code and conduct norms by offering relevant events and/or by foregrounding its importance in reminders periodically circulated among staff members and students.
2.5 The University should ensure that plagiarism is detected and responded to at all levels (BA and MA) and in all courses where a written work belongs to assessment components.
2.6 The University should ensure that Academic Freedom is understood and realized in practice by the whole University community.

Suggestions:

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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

3. Educational Programmes

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

3.1 Design and Development of Educational Programmes

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The University has the formal procedures for planning, designing, implemented and developing educational programmes outlined in a policy document 'LEPL Gori State Teaching University Instructions for Planning, Designing, Developing and Annulment Educational Programmes', and the document with final amendments was approved by the Academic Council on March 28th, 2020. According to the aforementioned policy document, planning, designing and developing educational programmes is a participatory process which presupposes engaging all key stakeholders – academic and invited staff, students, alumni, employers, professional associations, etc. This process is also described in detail in the self-evaluation document provided by the University and much emphasis is put on the necessity to consider stakeholder interests, modern educational and market demands, regional development goals and the mission of the University. Interviews with Programme Heads and academic personnel showed that they are aware of these procedures, they follow them and describe in detail how specific programmes were initiated and developed. For example, and the case is also described in the SER, this current methodology of educational programme development was tested while working on a new Bachelor-Master programme in Primary Education, and the programme was successfully accredited. As for performance indicators which could serve as evidence of how well-designed and developed programmes are, it should be noted that during the period 2019-2020 the University accredited or re-accredited 20 educational programmes.

While making decisions on planning, implementation or development of the programmes, the University considers the feedback by different stakeholders, and reflects relevant changes in the

programmes. The University provided the analysis of stakeholder (students, alumni, employers) survey results, according to which certain changes and improvements have been introduced in various programmes. For example, in the BA Programme in Informatics, a suggestion made was to intensify a practical component of the programme, and a course paper/course project was introduced in the programme to focus more on practical application of the obtained knowledge; another suggestion was to practice more web-programming. Accordingly, a study course 'Introduction to ASP.NET Technology' changed its status and turned into a compulsory study course; 'Python Programming Language' was added as an elective course, etc. There are examples from other programmes as well. For example, in the BA Law programme, based on the survey results, the study courses 'Police Law', 'Construction Law', etc. were added. To ensure more practice and sharing practical experience, judges, probation and police unit representatives are invited to engage more in the educational programme.

The University works on the renewal and the development of the study programmes offered to ensure their relevance to the modern labour market and educational demands, as well as legislation. For example, currently the University works on renewing all its educational programmes so that they follow the revised National Qualifications Framework and Learning Fields Classifier approved by the Order #69/n of April the 10th 2019 of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia, and they are outlined in accordance to the three domains: 1. Knowledge and understanding, 2. Skill, 3. Responsibility and autonomy.

Evidences/indicators

1. Methodology for planning, designing and development of educational programmes.
2. Stakeholder survey result analysis.
3. LEPL GSTU Educational Programme Assessment Instructions.
4. Interviews with Programme Heads, Academic Personnel, Students, Alumni.

Recommendations:

None

Suggestions:

None

Best Practices (if applicable):
None

Evaluation

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

3.2 Structure and Content of Educational Programmes

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The University follows the current legislation and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation (ECTS) guidelines while developing and managing educational programmes. As it was mentioned above, some of the programmes offered by the University follow the revised National Qualifications Framework and Learning Fields Classifier approved by the Order #69/n of April the 10th 2019 of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia, and they are outlined in accordance to the three domains: 1. Knowledge and understanding, 2. Skill, 3. Responsibility and autonomy; these programmes are: BA and MA Programmes in Law, BA Programme in Public Administration, BA-MA

Integrated Primary Teacher Preparation Educational Programme and Georgian Language Preparatory Programme. Other educational programmes follow The Georgian Minister of Education's Order #120/N of December 10, 2010 on the 'Approval of the National Qualifications Framework'. The University is currently working on reviewing and renewing all these programmes to make them fully compliant with the revised National Qualifications Framework and Learning Fields Classifier approved by the Order #69/n of April the 10th 2019 of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia, and the process is planned to be complete by the date defined by the Order#69/n. The programmes clearly state the qualifications to be granted and they are in line with the National Qualification's framework.

The learning outcomes of the programmes are clearly stated and are in line with the level of higher education, and the qualification to be granted; however, as it was mentioned above, certain programmes outline their learning outcomes in accordance with the three domains: 1) Knowledge and Understanding, 2) Skill, 3) Responsibility and Autonomy, and some of the programmes follow the old standard, e.g. the BA Programme in Biology, the BA Programme in Mathematics, the BA Programme in Sports, etc. The 60-Credit Teacher Training Educational Programme does provide learning outcomes in a new format that describes learning outcomes using verbs from the revised Bloom's taxonomy. However, it does not define the domains these learning outcomes could be classified into, e.g. 1) Knowledge and Understanding, 2) Skills, 3) Responsibility and Autonomy; accordingly, though it is a minor issue, still it is advisable to cluster these learning outcomes according to the relevant domains.

The structure of each individual programme ensures logical connection between the components; prerequisites for the study courses within each programme are defined, and are organised in a logical and cohesive way. Maps of prerequisites are developed for each individual programme, and the information is organised in a user-friendly manner. However, in some cases it is not quite clear how certain learning outcomes are achieved and how this achievement is measured; e.g. in the Bachelor-Master programme for Primary Teacher Preparation, one of the learning outcomes states that a student can present research findings both in Georgian and English; students do study 4 courses in English, but still, it is not defined in the programme what their initial language level is when enrolling on the program, and which level they achieve upon completion of the programme. This kind of issues is to be better monitored and formulated because, in this particular example, presenting research findings in English requires quite a high English language proficiency level, and thus, it is advisable to define a specific language proficiency level, probably, at least B2 level.

Teaching and learning methods in the programmes are relevant and are to support the achievement of the learning outcomes defined in the programmes. The information about the programme structure and the content is available to the interested parties, e.g. through the University website: e.g. BA in History - https://gu.edu.ge/en/sabakalavro-programebi/humanitaruli/history. The interview with the students showed that upon enrollment once they start their studies programme, the coordinators introduce the specificity of the programme to them.

At formal level the University supports the development of individualized study plans to support students with specific learning needs and requirements. In interviews students or other University personnel could not recollect any case of students with special educational needs, except for one case when resources were printed in a bigger font size, for a student with vision impairment.

Evidences/indicators

1. Educational programme, syllabi.
2. Catalogue for educational programmes.
3. The University website.
4. Student satisfaction survey.
5. Alumni survey.
6. Interview results.

Recommendations:

None

Suggestions:

3.1 Once all programmes are revised, it is advisable that programme learning outcomes are clustered into relevant domains, e.g. 1) Knowledge and Understanding, 2) Skills, 3) Responsibility and Autonomy.

3.2 It is advisable that learning outcomes for the programmes and the methods for their assessment are revised; e.g. in the BA-MA Primary Teacher Preparation programme it is stated that graduates can present research findings both in Georgian and English, however, the English proficiency level is not specified, and accordingly the assessment method for this learning outcome is hard to evaluate.

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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

3.3 Assessment of Learning Outcomes

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The University educational programmes have a learning outcomes assessment system that considers the specificity of the field and includes relevant assessment formats, tools and instruments which enable to measure and assess student performance and achievement. The assessment system developed for the programmes does clearly describe the assessment process and follows the Minister of Education and Science's Order #3 of January 5th, 2007. During the interviews, the students confirmed that they are informed about the assessment system once they embark on their studies and they know the regulations concerning their duties and obligations. The academic personnel also described in details how the whole assessment procedures are regulated – conducting exams, keeping students' papers as evidence, appeal procedures, etc. In spite of this, still there are certain issues to be considered. Assessment criteria are not quite clear in all the syllabi; e.g. the Theoretical English Grammar (BA English Philology Programme) states that in the midterm exam there will be close-ended and semi-open tests; major concern is the fact that in both cases both questions are assessed by 2 points. It does not seem to be an effective approach to allocate the same weight to both open-ended and close-ended questions. Besides, it is not appropriate to use the same type of assessment rubric for close-ended and open-ended questions. As for midterm and final exams, only one type of task and its assessment rubric are provided; it is advisable to use a more diversified approach to assess students' academic performance and achievement of learning outcomes. Besides, exactly the same type of assessment methods and assessment rubrics are used in the study course 'History of Antique Literature'. The specificity of these two study courses is different; accordingly, it is logical to expect that there should be some variation in the assessment methods. The case is exactly the same with the study course 'Introduction to English Philology'. At the institutional level, the University does show different practices – providing more diverse activities to assess the students' learning outcomes and relevant assessment methods and rubrics, e.g. the syllabus for the study course 'Principles of Micro-Economics' in the BA Programme in Business Organisation and Management does employ more diverse approaches in students' assessment. It is obvious that the specificity of these two programmes and the study courses are quite different, and it is logical to expect that different programmes are using different approaches to assessing students' performance; however, what is underlined in this comment is the diversity of assessment methods and the assessment rubrics. Generally, all these syllabi and some other syllabi (e.g. Tourism and Environmental Management from the MA Programme in Hospitality Management) are using exactly the same assessment rubric for open-ended questions; it is advisable to develop rubrics for open-ended questions to reflect the specificity of the study course and the field of study. From this perspective, the assessment methodology provided in the syllabus 'Comparative Criminal Law Process' (MA Programme in Law, Criminal Law Module) is an excellent example; the assessment methods and instruments in this syllabus are detailed, specific, straightforward and very logical, reflecting the specificity of the study course; besides, it is easy to read and understand what exact instruments and criteria and used to assess the students.

Evidences/indicators

1. Programmes and Syllabi.
2. Minister of Education and Science's Order #3 of January 5th, 2007.
3. Interview with Programme Coordinators.
4. Interview with academic personnel.
5. Interview with students and alumni.

Recommendations:

3.1 A more diversified approach to assessing students' learning outcomes should be employed in educational programmes delivered at the University – more diverse assessment methods should be used and relevant assessment rubrics should be developed, which will reflect the specificity of the study courses and the field of study.

Suggestions:

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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

4. Staff of the HEI

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The University has developed a personnel management policy, which is reflected in the "University Personnel Management Policy" document, as well as in other regulatory documents. The document defines the compatibility of personnel management policies with the University mission and development strategy, in particular with values such as transparency and openness, integrity, fairness and impartiality, equality, professional development, innovation and initiative, ethical standards. It provides for the existence of a personnel management system aimed at attracting and developing qualified academic, administrative and support staff.

The total number of the University's staff is 306, including 80 affiliated academic personnel, 105 invited staff and 109 administrative and support staff. Affiliated personnel compose at least 50% of the academic staff for the program. The ratio of personnel/student is 1/40 for the undergraduate and 1/30 for the graduate programs.

The University has elaborated the "Methodology for defining the amount of academic and invited personnel at the education program", according to which the annual workload (including education, scientific-research and other) is min 600 hrs, with 150 contact hrs. The workload is defined based on the specificities of the educational program and courses, number of students, material-technical resources and infrastructure.

Administrative and support staff: The document "Rules for Hiring Heads and Support Staff of Structural Units, Remuneration Amounts and Conditions" defines the terms and conditions of support staff, including auxiliary, academic, structural unit head, and others. Recruitment and dismissal of staff is carried out by the head of the administration, in agreement with the rector. An employment contract is concluded with the hired staff, which defines their rights and responsibilities. In addition, the document regulates admission through a competition, which is decided by the head of the administration in agreement with the rector. The document precisely states the conditions of the competition, the required documents, and the rules of selection of the competition commission, which consists of at least 3 members. To make the admission process unbiased and to encourage access to various candidates, external members with the right of deliberative vote are allowed in the commission, as well as invited independent specialists. The rules and stages of the competition for a specific vacancy are determined by the head of the administration, in agreement with the rector. The conditions for appealing the results of the competition and the procedure for holding a re- competition are provided. No cases of appeal or failed competitions were recalled during the interviews. As the representative of the HR office described, the small number of young people occupied at administrative positions is one of the major weaknesses of the Gori Teaching University. The University is planning to introduce a regulation for attracting young administrative and support staff, which will encourage first and foremost new initiatives, creativeness and openness as selection criteria. The HR representatives recall several recent appointments that were also made in favor of young graduates of the University, for example a 2-years graduate, who was a preferable choice of the students, was appointed as the head of the students' service. Currently the administrative and support staff are evaluated by the head of administration annually, based on the performed working hours, which are calculated with timesheets (recently introduced by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Affairs). But the new regulation will also envisage more criteria, oriented to performance evaluation, such as creativeness, initiation of new extra-curricular projects and activities etc.

The regulations of the University allow to hire a person by the decision of the head of administration for a 6-month probationary period, during which the person has been assigned a senior employee as coach or mentor, who ensures his / her integration into the new work environment. However, during the interviews no such cases were brought up.

The Administrative and Support Staff Performance Evaluation Rule provides for the assessment of the competencies required for each position, identifying strengths and weaknesses to identify professional development needs and career planning. Annual staff appraisals are conducted by the Rector, the Head of Administration, the Head of the University and Faculty Quality Assurance Service, and the Dean of the respective Faculty, and it is submitted to the Academic Council. The document defines the evaluation criteria and scores, as well as the ranking and the management of the results.

Academic and invited personnel: The "Charter" defines the rights and responsibilities of academic, administrative and support staff, the rules of appointment and election, the procedure and conditions for the attestation of a professor. The "Rule for Competitions for Academic Positions" is approved by the Resolution 09-07 of the Representative Council and provides for selection of the University's academic staff through open contests in a transparent, equal and fair competition. The document defines the composition of the academic staff (Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor and Assistant), their functions and duties, qualification requirements, as well as the conditions for announcing the competition, the procedure for evaluating the participants, the failed contests etc. The terms for election to the position state that a professor is elected for a term of 8 years, in special cases for life, an associate professor for 8 years, an assistant professor for 4 years, and an assistant for 3 years. The date and conditions of the competition are published on the University website as well as on other media and are available to interested parties. The decision on the results of the competition is made by the Election Commission established by the Rector's decree N1-64. Immediate publication of competition results, terms of appeal and canceled and re-run competitions are also ensured.

The affiliation procedure is regulated by the "Academic Staff Affiliation Terms and Conditions", which also defines the rights and responsibilities of affiliate personnel, conditions for and funding of international and local scientific events on behalf of the University, funding of publications, bonus and incentive mechanisms, as well as encouragement and financial support. Also, involvement of affiliated staff in educational, research and scientific activities, student guidance and counseling. The University Internal Regulations regulate the mechanisms for remuneration and incentives for staff, such as non-monetary rewards, one-time cash prizes, and rewards. However, the new Personnel Development Scheme which underlines individual remuneration and bonuses to the affiliated academic staff based on their performance was introduced in the University in January 2020. The performance indicators, besides teaching, include their involvement in scientific-research activities,

publications in impact-factor journals, participation in international fora etc. Out of 80, 52 affiliated staff members are currently involved in this scheme which, according to the interviews with academic staff, is very motivating and provides for quality performance.

Assessment of academic staff is carried out regularly; according to the Rules for the Evaluation of Academic and Research Staff, the evaluation is based on the annual staff self-assessment report, the results of the annual academic workload, the evaluations of the courses, and students' evaluations, the evaluation of the monitoring process implemented throughout the year. The evaluation is carried out by the quality assurance body of the faculty. The document sets out the indicators by which the assessment may be considered satisfactory or unsatisfactory, as well as the development of a staff performance improvement plan in case of unsatisfactory assessment, to address revealed weaknesses. According to the Quality Service and HR representatives, the evaluation results are used to improve teaching quality. For example, the training needs are assessed based on evaluation reports, self-evaluations, surveys and students' evaluations. In one particular case the latter led to the dismissal of a professor. The claim was brought up to the faculty council, a special committee was set up by the dean and after thorough consideration of all the evidence, the professor was dismissed. In other cases, the University representatives spoke about introduction of specific trainings, as remedy measures for low evaluation.

The University also conducts attestation of professors (in accordance with the "Rules for conducting the attestation of professors"); this is held once every 5 years, under the supervision of the Academic Council by the Competition and Certification Commission.

The documentation submitted by the University provides reports on the annual teaching and research activities of the academic and invited staff of the faculties for the 2019-2020 academic year, which are submitted by the Deans of the Faculty to the Quality Assurance Service of the University. The reports reflect the results of the evaluation of the affiliated staff (satisfactory / unsatisfactory), the evaluation points of the educational and scientific activities and the evaluation points of the educational activities of the invited staff. The same reports provide recommendations for addressing identified weaknesses. Based on the reports on the annual teaching and research activities of the academic and invited staff of the faculties for the 2019-2020 academic year, the Quality Assurance Service and the Teaching Process Management Service develop recommendations for improving training and research activities.

The University has submitted a document of planned activities for the professional development of academic and invited staff, which includes a list of trainings in 2020 and 2021. The main topics are: new teaching methods (distance learning), working with library databases, Covid 19 and other regulations, plagiarism-related regulations, conducting scientific research and writing projects, English language.

It is not fully clear which office is responsible for the training needs assessment (TNA) and subsequent planning. Currently it is conducted by the Quality and HR services, but as the authorization experts recommend, designation of one or more specific staff members, in either the Quality or the HR service, as being responsible for this function will facilitate the process.

The general observation of the authorization experts regarding academic and invited staff, based on the conducted interviews, can be summarized as follows: acknowledging the difficulty of maintaining high quality affiliated personnel and attracting young talents to permanent positions, the University is focusing on the quality of the invited teachers, individual performance-based bonuses for the affiliated staff and development of an attractive environment for their graduates.

Evidences/indicators

1. Self-evaluation report.
2. University Personnel Management Policy.
3. Rules for Hiring Heads and Support Staff of Structural Units, Remuneration Amounts and Conditions".
4. Rules for Competition for Academic Position.
5. Academic Staff Affiliate Terms and Conditions.
6. HEI Internal Regulations Document.
7. The University Charter.
8. Rules for the Evaluation of Academic and Research Staff.
9. Rules for conducting the attestation of professors.
10. Methodology for defining amount of academic and invited personnel at the education program.

11. Standard 4, appendices 1,2,3, Reports on the Annual Teaching and Research Activities of the Academic and Invited Staff of the Faculties for the 2019-2020 Academic Year.
12. Minutes of the evaluation team of the evaluation results N1 – e.
13. The Administrative and Support Staff Performance Evaluation Rule.
14. Contract samples with academic, invited, administrative and support staff.
15. CVs of the academic, invited, administrative and support staff.
16. Interview results with the Quality Assurance Service, Chancellery Offices of Human Resources Management and Public Relations, Academic and Invited Personnel, Deans of the Faculties.

Recommendations:

4.1 Designate one or more specific staff members, in either the Quality or the HR service, as being responsible for coordinating and carrying out the training needs assessment and the staff professional development processes.

Suggestions:

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

4.1 Evaluation and remuneration of the affiliated personnel based on performance, with clear performance indicators and scoring system.

Evaluation

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

4.2. Academic/Scientific and Invited Staff Workload

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The document "Management Effectiveness Monitoring Mechanisms and Evaluation System" sets benchmarks for indices such as the ratio of academic and invited staff, the percentage of academic affiliated staff and foreign academic staff, the number of administrative and support staff, the staff retention rate, the average age of the academic staff, gender balance for academic staff (female / male), the annual funding of staff development activities.

In order to effectively manage its activities, the University has developed the benchmarks and plans measures to improve them for the year 2024: Sustain the existing ratio of academic personnel with administrative and support staff to 0.82; Increase the ratio of academic personnel with the total number of staff from 0.29 to 0.30 and with invited personnel from 0.85 to 0.92. The ratio of academic and invited staff to students' number to be increased from 1/9 to 1/11; the ratio of academic and invited staff to the educational programs to be maintained at 7. Increase the ratio of affiliated academic staff to the academic and invited staff from 0.41 to 0.43; to students from 1/21 to 1/26; Increase the indicators of sustaining academic personnel from 0.93 t 0.95; of invited lecturers from 0.58 to 0.65; of administrative and support staff from 0.72 to 0.75. It should be noted that in the case of the first two benchmarks the plan is to decrease the total number of employees and invited staff, rather than increase the academic staff. But as the University is planning to attract more young people to permanent positions and is effectively working to maintain its quality invited personnel, the authorization experts suggest to revise the benchmarks and to focus more on the development of the academic affiliated staff. Otherwise, considering the University's HR policy, the benchmarks can be assessed as adequate and achievable.

The recruitment of the academic staff and the workload is determined by "The rule for participating in scientific-research activities of academic personnel, teachers and persons not holding these positions, as well as attracting invited specialists, their remuneration and terms", approved by the 09-112 decision of the Board of Representatives. According to this document, the annual workload

of the academic staff is distributed as follows: Classroom hours: Professor - 140-180 hours; Associate Professor - 200 - 240 hrs; Assistant Professor - 260-300 hours; Assistant - 320 - 360 hrs; Senior Teacher - 260-300; Teacher 320 - 360. Besides, the academic workload includes preparing a lecture (15 hours), working individually with students (max. 84 hours), supervising master's and bachelor's theses (max. 150 hours), publishing a scientific paper or preparing a conference paper (30-50 hours), scientific invention (100 hours), development of a lecture course, textbook or monograph (max. 200 hours), translation of a scientific paper, monograph or textbook (100 hours), preparation of a scientific grant project on behalf of the University (50 hours), implementation of a scientific research project (120 hours), practice responsibility (30 hours), pedagogical practice methodology (3 hours per student), field practice responsibility (40 hours per group), student assessment (1 hour per student), student research paper supervision (max 30 hours), heading an academic educational program (Max. 240 hrs), review of undergraduate and graduate theses (5 and 10 hrs per thesis). An academic staff member holding an administrative position is exempt from the classroom workload, while the maximum number of the pedagogical workload is limited to 400 hours.

As the interview results with the academic and invited personnel showed, the workload is adequately distributed, to allow them engagement in extracurricular activities and scientific research projects.

Evidences/indicators

1. Self-evaluation report.
2. Management Effectiveness Monitoring Mechanisms and Evaluation System.
3. Rule for participating in scientific-research activities of academic personnel, teachers and persons not holding these positions, as well as attracting invited specialists, their remuneration and terms.
4. Interview results with the Quality Assurance Service, Chancellery Offices of Human Resources Management and Public Relations, Academic and Invited Personnel.

Recommendations:

None

Suggestions:

4.1 Revise the benchmarks for the ratios of academic personnel to administrative and support staff and focus more on development of academic affiliated staff instead of the proposed decrease of the invited lecturers and administrative and support personnel.

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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

5. Students and Their Support Services

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

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The Legal Entity of Public Law – Gori State Teaching University has developed regulations named "Charter of LEPL Gori State University" and "Regulatory Rule of the Educational Process at LEPL Gori State University" for assignment, suspending and terminating student status, mobility, qualification granting, issuing educational documents, as well as recognition of education received during the learning period. According to the Regulatory Rule of the Educational Process's article 3.1, a University student is entitled to change the educational program through internal mobility. External mobility is also provided by the University. Recognition of student credits in the internal mobility process is carried out in accordance with the rules established by the Academic Council of the University (Article 3.10). The University has regulated qualification granting, also GPA Calculating rules (Article 15, 16). Upon completion of the educational program, the student is awarded an appropriate academic degree/qualification. During the interviews, the experts found that Approximately 20-22% of the students were granted qualification in the period 2015-2020. Conclusions about what happened to the remaining students could be derived by statistics showing how many students suspended/terminated their status or just moved to another University. The experts requested such statistical information, but no relevant information gathering activity has been undertaken by the University.

For each of the educational levels, the University has developed regulations for assignment, suspension, and termination of student status, which are reflected in the Charter of LEPL Gori State University №125/N. According to the Charter's Article 9.e, bullying, violence, and abuse against students, academic, administrative, or towards support staff are the reasons for terminating a student's status. During an interview with representatives of the University, the experts asked whether a student's status had ever been terminated for these reasons. The University staff responded that such an event has never taken place, and students are always treated with great care and kindness. This is confirmed by the fact that they have never had any disputes with students with active status. 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. The experts were informed by the students that the main reason for the suspension is non-payment of tuition fees or personal reasons. Each article unified in these regulations is fair and clear to the students. These regulations, including the Ethics code, are published on the website and are available to the students. Some of the students stated that they had information about the terms and conditions of the regulations and they were acting according to them. The University submitted samples of student contracts, which form a legal basis between the students and the University. Information regarding the terms and conditions for tuition fees is available to 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 and are not subject to change, except if changes in circumstances occur, as defined by a Decree of the Government of Georgia.

The Rector carries out meetings with the students every month, during which he tries to understand the needs of the students in financial or human support. At the beginning of the Covid-19 situation, the Universities were closed and only online teaching was provided by the academic staff. The University conducted an instant survey and determined the number of students who needed computers, after which all students were given equipment. The University is distinguished by the standards of its human relations, which is achieved with the help of the deans and administrative staff. They're doing their best to develop the most flexible and attractive environment for their students.

The appeal procedures are quite complicated for the students. According to the Regulation of the Educational Process rule's (article 11.6), a student who does not agree with the result of the assessment and/or examination is entitled to file a substantiated complaint with the Dean of the Faculty no later than four working days after the announcement of the result of the assessment and/or request the revision of the result. The complaint will be considered only if the student indicates: A) procedural violations; or B) neglect of the established evaluation system.

The responsible lecturer of the relevant course should be invited to the session of the commission with the right of deliberative vote (article 11.7), but student representatives are not involved in the work of the commission. One of the interviewed students said that she informed the University administration about the difficulties that this process presents to the students, and asked them to allow the students to be involved in the appeal procedures. Also, an interviewed alumnus stated that they had never used any appeal procedure during their BA study in the University; this is unusual. As for the protection of student rights and lawful interests and 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 the Students Self-Governance body, or to simplify the procedures; this will ensure that the student's rights will be highly protected in case of appeal.

Interviewed students were aware of their rights and obligations, they knew that in case of violation of the student's rights and legitimate interests by a representative of the University staff the student has the right to file a complaint to the University Administration through the University Chancellery regarding the staff member's actions. Complaints are discussed by the special Appeals Commission established by the Rector's Order.

The University students also have the right to appeal against the intermediate and/or final evaluations received in the components of the educational program. The appeal is considered by the Appeals Commission, established by the Dean's Decree, which decides in compliance with the relevant timeframes.

The University protects students' rights and lawful interests.

Evidences/indicators

1. LEPL GSTU self-evaluation report.
2. Regulatory Rule on Educational Process at LEPL GSTU.
3. Charter of LEPL Gori State Teaching University.
4. Interview results with students, GSTU staff.
5. "Rule on Recognition of Credits Received in other Educational Institutions at LEPL Gori State Teaching University;"
6. University web site << https://gu.edu.ge>>.
7. Alumni survey results in their careers and connects with academic development.
8. Sample of the agreement concluded between the University and the student.

Recommendations:

5.1 Simplify the appeal procedure, which may manifest itself in the involvement of student representatives in the commission or other action. All of this ensures student confidence and the effectiveness of the appeal procedure.

Suggestions:

5.1 Conduct statistics on all students who suspend, terminate status, or using external/internal mobility. the given picture will help to identify existing problems and develop the studying process.

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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

5.2 Student Support Services

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

GSTU has a Student Career Development and Support Service which includes: Student services, Career growth, and development. According to the student Career Development and Support Service provision's second article, the Center informs students about labor market dynamics and prospects,

it plans cultural, international events which will be useful for the students, and it helps them in receiving advice on any related issue. The Center develops news material (a guide to the freshmen) at the beginning of each academic year, which comprehensively describes the internal procedures of the University related to the learning process; and it provides information to students about various regulations of the University, including ethical norms and academic integrity issues. As soon as the studies are launched, the above-mentioned material is to be delivered to the students of the first academic year at all levels, including those enrolled through mobility.

Representatives of the University and the Faculty administrations, as well as of the University structural units hold informational meetings with enrolled students, where the students are provided with exhaustive information on the University space, the learning environment, University regulations and the peculiarities of the training process, the rights and obligations of a student defined by the contract with the University, and other regulatory documents. Additionally, the students are registered in the educational process management system. The staff of the institution, including the persons involved in each educational program, provide relevant information to the students about the counseling services available at the University.

The University does not have corporate emails for their students. When the experts asked the interviewed students on how they receive information about several projects, their answer was: from the website or from the dean. A close relationship with the University administration is very good to maintain, but the University is recommended to provide corporate mails and to deliver upcoming events to them. Even in the survey which was conducted by the University, the student Career Development and Support service is recommended to improve access/delivery of information on job vacancies for university students and Alumni.

GSTU has a very active and productive International Public Relationship Center, which has helped students in getting involved with exchange programs. During the interviews, one of the alumni stated that the University provided her with free lessons in the Polish language for 1 year, as she was to participate in the exchange program. It was with the help of the University that she was able to go to Poland.

Undoubtedly the University is focused on the employment base. Numerous students have stated that the rule of recognizing teaching credits is part of the University's program, and this helps them in raising their status and employment.

The University promotes students' initiatives and their involvement in various projects, their participation in student scientific circles established at departments/scientific centers, and student scientific conferences. For this purpose, the University Student Scientific Conference is held at the University, each semester. During the visit, staff showed us the collection of Student Scientific Papers, and their students' published journal, that gives the opportunity to students to do research and write an article.

The University has a mechanism for supporting student initiatives/projects, which is defined by the "Rule of Submitting and Financing Student Initiatives and Projects at LEPL Gori State Teaching University." This mechanism is used to finance initiatives/projects submitted by University students in the fields of education, science, culture, and sports.

The University has conducted survey/research on the employment of graduates of the last five years. It should be noted that the employment rate is based only on surveys; official information is not obtained from the authorities. The issue of direct employment by the University has also remained open from that research. The University will not be able to increase the employment rate if it does not have a complete picture of it.

One of the mechanisms for supporting socially vulnerable students is granting certain benefits in the payment of tuition fees, which are regulated by the "Rule of Implementation of the Social Program of LEPL Gori State Teaching University". Funding for the education of socially vulnerable students is regulated by the "Rule of Implementation of the Social Program of LEPL Gori State Teaching University" approved by the Resolution of the Academic Council. Under this mechanism, the University funds five socially vulnerable students each semester, for a period of one semester. This rule is transparent and objective, it is posted on the University website and is available to all interested parties.

As a result of visiting the University, the experts saw a variety of spaces arranged for students, e.g. Bank, Wendy's Corner, Cinema, House of Justice, etc. The University tries to create a comfortable environment for its students.

Evidences/indicators

1. GSTU self-evaluation report.
2. Regulatory Rule on Educational Process at LEPL Gori State Teaching University.
3. Charter of LEPL Gori State Teaching University..
4. "Rule of Implementation of the Social Program".
5. Interview results with students, University staff, employers.
6. Career Development and Support Service provision.
7. Rule of Submitting and Financing Student Initiatives and Projects at LEPL Gori State Teaching University.
8. "Rule on Recognition of Credits Received in other Educational Institutions at LEPL Gori State Teaching University".
9. Research on career and academic development of Alumni 2015-2020.
10. University web site << https://gu.edu.ge>>.

Recommendations:

5.2 Provide students with corporate mails, which will be used for transferring any kind of information.

Suggestions:

5.2 Conduct research on Alumni employment rate, which will involve requesting information from authorities and direct employment information.

Best Practices (if applicable):

5.1 Creating Special spaces for students, like cinema, bank, Wendy's corner, Justice house, is making GSTU special.

Evaluation

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

6. Research, development and/or other creative work

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

6.1 Research Activities
o HEI, based on its type and specifics of its fields, carries out research/creative activities.   o Ensuring the effectiveness of doctoral research supervision   o 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   The development of scientific-research activities is one of the goals of the University, reflected in its strategy 2020-2023. The Scientific-Research Center coordinates scientific-research activities at the University. The Center facilitates individual and collaborative activities of the staff, facilitates partnership with other local and international research units and individuals, support implementation of innovative projects, provides support for obtaining funding from a variety of sources, provides legal assistance as well as assistance in administration of scientific grants.

Even though the University maintains its teaching status, the academic staff carries out extensive research and scientific work, especially in the fields of tourism, history, archeology, and linguistics. This is natural, especially considering the University's position in the Shida Kartli region and its vicinity to the occupied territories. During the interviews the students, graduates, as well as the academic staff would recall several ongoing projects: The Students' Expedition to the Borderline Villages to study Lapidar Inscriptions, Folklore Scientific Expedition and the fulfilled project, the Dialectological Expedition, a students' expedition in the villages of Shida Kartli implemented in 2019, with budget of 1395 GEL.

The University has an international scientific peer-reviewed electronic journal named "History, Archeology, Ethnology". The journal's editorial and publishing board members are highly qualified Georgian and foreign researchers in the relevant scientific fields. The journal is indexed in several international databases with scientific bibliometrics. In 2020 the journal achieved an Impact Factor of 0.723 from the International Scientific Indexing (ISI) database. It is planned to integrate it into other international databases in the future. The journal has been indexed since 2020 in the bases of CEEOL (Central and Eastern European Online Library) and ERIH PLUS. The University also has a scientific peer-reviewed electronic journal named "Philological Studies". In 2021, the journal is scheduled to be indexed in the International Scientific Indexing (ISI) and ERIH PLUS.

Integration of research into educational programs is provided by integrating the final research thesis as a compulsory component of the master level educational program; participation of the students in annual university and interuniversity student conferences; using scientific publications, monographs and textbooks of the University staff, as well as the results of modern international research in the educational components of educational programs; encouraging student involvement in grant research projects; ensuring access to international electronic databases of periodical scientific publications for university students and staff for use in their teaching process. In the period 2014-2019, a number of scientific conferences were organized in the HEI, on the following topics: Education, Economics, History and Archeology, Education Management, Internationalization, Law, etc. The students and graduates in their interviews confirmed participation in the conferences, under the supervision of the academic staff.

The document on "Description of projects implemented, ongoing or planned in 2015-2020" contains the list of implemented projects funded by various international and local donors, for example, Rustaveli Science Foundation, European Commission Erasmus + Institutional Development Projects Competition; European Commission Erasmus+ grant competition Jean Monnet projects. The projects are implemented in cooperation with other universities, including TSU, e.g. the projects "Complex Geophysical Survey of the Inside and Adjacent Gori Fortress", "Establishment of a Landslide Economic Telemetry System for Landslide Monitoring and Early Warning", Gedimina Technical University of Vilnius; etc.

As the University does not have doctoral programs, the development of MA educational programs, especially the MA thesis component, can be considered as a main research activity for the students. The "Rule for planning, implementation and evaluation of the scientific-research component of the Master's educational program of the HEI", which was approved by Resolution 6-35 of the Academic Board in 2020, defines the purpose of the MA thesis, duties, responsibilities and qualification requirements for the supervisor, the process of working on the thesis, deadlines, and basic requirements as well as its presentation and final evaluation procedures. A similar regulation separately defines the preparation of the master thesis for the law master program.

In general, the HEI carries out research activities, however, as the content of the research projects shows, these activities are mostly implemented in specific fields, such as history, archaeology, ethnography etc. As for the other faculties, the scientific-research activities are ongoing, however, there is no systematic policy that will encourage equally involvement of all faculties in these processes. The experts suggest to develop a consistent vision and mid-term strategy by the Scientific-Research Center for enhancing the scientific-research capacity, which will equally envelope all the faculties of the HEI.

Integration of research results in teaching activities is provided by the participation of students in scientific research conferences, scientific expeditions and other research projects, as well as the research component of the MA thesis, which was verified by the students and graduates during the interviews.

Evidences/indicators

1. Self-evaluation report.
2. Research Development Policy at GSTU, Mechanisms for Assessing the Quality of Research Activities and Scientific Productivity of Staff.
3. Rules for submission and funding of initiatives and projects of academic personnel and students.
4. Description of projects implemented, ongoing or planned in 2015-2020.
5. Rule for planning, implementation, and evaluation of the scientific-research component of the Master's educational program of the HEI.
6. Interview results with the students and graduates, academic and invited staff, representatives of Scientific-Research Center.

Recommendations:

6.1 Develop a consistent vision and mid-term strategy for enhancing the scientific-research capacity of Gori Teaching Univeristy, which will equally envelope all the faculties of the HEI.

Suggestions:

6.1 Enhance involvement of the Scientific-Research center in implementation of the internally funded research projects, especially during the monitoring and evaluation phase.

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

◻ Complies with requirements
☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**
◻ Partially complies with requirements
◻ Does not comply with requirements

6.2. Research Support and Internationalization

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

As mentioned above, the main fields of the scientific-research projects within the University are history and archeology, with specific focus on the regional history. As this type of research is the least likely to be commercialized, the University provides internal funding for the projects – according to the interview with the Scientific-Research Center representatives, about 40-50 thousand GEL annually; however, the selection criteria and procedures for funding are not completely clear and transparent. The Resolution N09-46 of the Academic Council of the University authorizes the "Rule for submission and funding of initiatives and projects of academic personnel and students". The existing regulations provide for the internal financing of the projects, by the decision of the head of the administration, based on the proposal of the commission. Implementation and financial reports should be submitted within 1 month after the completion of the project. The same act also regulates the rule of submission and financing of student initiatives and projects, which facilitates the implementation of student initiatives. Although the document states the general procedure for the project submission – including eligible persons, main deadlines, establishment of the decision-making committee, encouragement of students' participation and the samples for the project body text and the budget – it does not provide any criteria on how projects are selected for funding and implementation. Examples of such criteria are: The scientific value of the submitted project; The importance of the project for raising the awareness of the HEI and its involvement in scientific circles; Involvement of students (undergraduate, graduate) in the project; Cooperation between the faculties of the HEI within the project; Practical applicability of the project outcomes; Budget / project cost-effectiveness and others. This will also help the Scientific-Research center to encourage equal participation in the research

activities and equal funding for different faculties of the HEI Besides, the monitoring and final evaluation of performed activities is limited to one project report, which must be submitted to the Rector and the Head of Administration within a month after completion. The authorization experts believe that the role of the Scientific-Research center should be more critical in the whole process, especially during the monitoring and evaluation phase, and more transparent and concrete selection criteria should be introduced to avoid bias.

The document "Research Development Policy, Mechanisms for Assessing the Quality of Research Activities and Scientific Productivity of Staff" aims to facilitate fundamental and applied research by academic staff and students and to integrate research into the learning process. The Academic Council is responsible for the implementation of the research development policy, under the monitoring of the Deputy Rector. Among the policy priorities are the promotion of the publication of scientific research results, and the implementation of joint projects in cooperation with Georgian and foreign Universities. Financial research activities can be financed from various sources, such as the University budget, scientific foundations, non-governmental and international organizations, agreements with various local and international companies.

The measures for attracting and supporting young staff in research activities at the University include encouragement of student participation in scientific research activities held on or off campus, student conferences, and winter/summer schools.

The main direction of internationalization is the implementation of Erasmus+ projects. Currently the University is involved in 5 Erasmus+ mobility programs, as well as in 3 Erasmus+ institutional development projects and in one Jean Monnet module project. In addition, in cooperation with international partners, the University has implemented two projects: (1) Bachelor's and Master's degree programs in Hotel Management for the Development of Tourism Industry in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Moldova (№ 544191 -Tempus 1-2013-1-PT PCR). The project is funded by the European Commission's Erasmus+ Grant Competition Institutional Development Projects; its duration is 2014-2017; (2) "Teaching-learning-research Integration as a Business Process (student as a user and teacher as a provider) and its impact on student's preparation outcomes". The project was implemented in 2015 by a professor of GSTU, at Vilnius Gedimina Technical University Faculty of Business Administration. Since 2011, the University has been actively involved in the Mevlana Mobility Program, under which a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with 17 foreign higher education institutions. During the last 5 years, 43 students of the University participated in international mobility programs and during the same period the University accepted one international student within the framework of mobility. During the same period, 24 representatives of the University staff participated in international mobility programs, and 11 representatives of the academic staff from different European countries visited the University within the framework of mobility.

Foreign academic staff is involved in the implementation of a number of educational programs of the University. In particular:
- Dr Ene Sylvia Sarvi, Emeritus Professor, University of Tallinn, is invited to the integrated undergraduate and graduate teacher training program;
- Pavel Libera, a researcher at the Institute of Memory of the Republic of Poland, Dr. Erdoghan Althinkayk, Professor at the of Samsun May 19 University, are invited to teach at the Master's Degree Program in History;
- An American scientist, Dr. Edward Raup, is involved in the implementation of the Master's program in English as a professor.

In 2012, within the framework of Tempus Project Tempus IV, Agreement Number 2011-2532 / 001-001 TEMPUS-SMGR 516663-TEMPUS-1-2011-ES-TEMPUS-SMGR, in order to internationalize education, the Tempus and International Relations Office was established at the Tempus and Erasmus Mundus Center of GSTU, which aims to support the participation of the University students and staff in international exchange programs and projects.

Evidences/indicators

1. Self-evaluation report.
2. Research Development Policy, Mechanisms for Assessing the Quality of Research Activities and Scientific Productivity of Staff.
3. Rules for submission and funding of initiatives and projects of academic personnel and students.
4. Interview results with the students and graduates, academic and invited staff, representatives of

Scientific-Research Center.

Recommendations:

6.2 Elaborate and integrate transparent and concrete criteria for the internal funding of the research projects. Examples of such criteria are: The scientific value of the submitted project; The importance of the project for raising the awareness of the HEI and its involvement in scientific circles; Involvement of students (undergraduate, graduate) in the project; Cooperation between the faculties of the HEI within the project; Practical applicability of the project outcomes; Budget / project cost-effectiveness and others, which will also ensure equal participation in the research activities and equal funding for different faculties of the HEI.

Suggestions:

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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

6.3. Evaluation of Research Activities

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The Rule for the Evaluation of Academic and Invited Staff and Scientific-Research Activities and the Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Mechanisms are the defining quality assurance policy documents for the scientific-research activities and performance of the relevant staff. Evaluation is carried out annually through systematic monitoring, the results of which should be identified needs for professional development, career development planning, increase of motivation and improvement of the quality of performance. The evaluation points of the annual scientific-research activity of the academic staff are: professor - min 20 points; associate professor - min 15 points; assistant professor - min 10 points; assistant – min 5 points.

The evaluation of the quality of research activities is carried out once in 3 years, by the Scientific-Research Center together with the Quality Assurance Service of the relevant faculty, on the basis of quantitative and qualitative indicators such as annual self-assessment reports of the academic staff, scientific papers published in indexed journals, data of the Rustaveli Foundation, results of personnel collegial evaluations.

The effectiveness of the quality assurance mechanisms of the current scientific-research activities at the University is indicated by the dynamics of the results of the research activities carried out by the academic staff in 2016-2017 and 2018-2020. The evaluation of the quality of scientific research activities of the academic staff is carried out on the basis of a bibliometric approach, within which the scientific research papers published by the staff in international peer-reviewed journals and the number of their citations are considered. In addition, each paper published in the Thomson Reuters Database (Web of Science), the Elsevier Publications Database, and indexed journals based on the Scopus platform is evaluated with 10 points, while each published in 5 other internationally rated journals is evaluated with 5 points. Each citation in the publication is evaluated with a score of 0.2 for the publication.

In Harzing's Publish or Perish search system, 12 publications of the University academic staff are listed in the Scopus platform indexed scientific journals for the period 2018-2020, the list of which is

provided in the submitted documentation. The evaluation of the mentioned papers, considering the number of citations (9), is 12 x 10 + 9 x 2 = 138 points. During the same period, 19 scientific papers were published by the University staff in other internationally rated journals. The evaluation of these papers, taking into account the number of citations (1), is 19 x 5 + 1 x 1 = 91 points. Taking into account the submitted publications and implemented projects, the quality index of scientific- research work done by the academic staff of the University in the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 academic years was 249 points. The quality index of the scientific-research activity of the academic staff of the University in 2015-2017 was determined similarly, with 149 points. The points are used to show the increase in scientific-research activities. It should be underlined, that the scientific- research activities comprise one of the major criteria for the individual performance evaluation of the affiliated staff, which defines their remuneration and bonuses.

The HEI has submitted a document on Brief description of implemented, ongoing and / or planned projects at the LEPL Gori State Teaching University for 2015-2020, a document regulating the Mechanisms of Research Development, Evaluation of Quality of Research Activities and Scientific Productivity of the Staff at Gori State Teaching University, approved by Resolution 6-34 of the Academic Council in 2020, as well as the Conclusion on the Evaluation of Scientific Research Activities Conducted by the Academic Staff. This last document refers to the reports submitted by the faculties on the scientific-research work of the faculties in the period 2018-2020 and implies the evaluation of the activity of the academic staff with appropriate scores, determining the productivity coefficient, which determines both the faculties' and individual productivity. However, no reports on the implementation of research projects funded by the HEI are presented; the authorization experts recommend to carry out by the Scientific-Research Center regular monitoring and evaluation of the projects' implementation, especially referring to the projects funded internally.

Evidences/indicators

1. Self-evaluation report.
2. Rule for the Evaluation of Academic and Invited Staff and Scientific-Research Activities.
3. Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Mechanisms
4. Brief description of implemented, ongoing and / or planned projects at the LEPL Gori State Teaching University for 2015-2020
5. Mechanisms of Research Development, Evaluation of Quality of Research Activities and Scientific Productivity of the Staff at Gori State Teaching University
6. Conclusion on the Evaluation of Scientific Research Activities Conducted by the Academic Staff
7. Interview results with the representatives of Scientific-Research Center.

Recommendations:

6.3 Carry out, by the Scientific-Research Center, regular monitoring and evaluation of the projects' implementation, especially referring to the projects funded internally.

Suggestions:

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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

7. Material, Information and Financial Resources

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

7.1 Material Resources

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

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

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

o   HEI has adapted environment for people with special needs

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

GSTU is one of the wealthy Universities in Georgia according to its fixed assets, especially calculated per number of students, and square meters. The University owns four buildings with total area 9216 square meters, plus an information technology laboratory with area of 111.5 square meters. A fifth educational building, located in Gori, N34 Shaptoshvili St., (with an area of 2596 sq.m.) houses vocational programs. Separately, there is the library (with an area of 767 sq.m.) and a wrestling hall which is located nearby (with an area of 265.8 sq.m.) and needs rehabilitation works. The University owns also the Dairy Factory of the University in Gori, N3 Chonkadze St. (area 562.59 sq.m.). which is leased at this time. The lease agreement stipulates the tenant's obligation to serve the university students and vocational students as an internship facility. The University also owns land in the village Ateni in Gori district (8589.0 sq. m. and 15102.0 sq. m.).

In the balance sheet 2020 it is stated that the total assets of the University are 9 916776, 00 GEL. Among them 8 971 177, 00 GEL are for long term assets, and current assets are 945 599,00 GEL, of which 520 000.00 are cash and cash equivalents. The source of the assets formation is the University's capital of 9 750 612,00 GEL, and only 166 164,00 GEL is short term liabilities. It should be mentioned that most assets have not been revaluated recently, and their market value could be higher than stated in the balance sheet. The University is not using revulsion reserve item in their balance sheet, in spite of the existence of a reference item for using amortized assets.

The budget presented by the University has been prepared according to the public treasury requirements, but is of little usefulness for decision making. For example, the SER states that 215 000 GEL is the cost for research, but proper evidence of that information could not be found in the presented documents. Further, some amounts are shown against different activities in the strategic development action plan, but these do not match the presented budget according to compound budget or the budget according to departments. The budget is not summarized according to the 3-year action plan.

In the budget income/expenses for vocational programs are separately presented. Also during the interviews with different stakeholders, we found out that the University is looking for authorization for Vocational programs; this is not stated among the University's strategic goals.

Accordingly, the University should improve its budgeting process; the VET priority should be added to the strategic plan; and the University should introduce a budgeting process which will be more useful for the decision making/management processes in market economy systems. For example, Activity Based Budgeting can be used. Further, conditional separation of the assets and of management activity between VET and HEI's activities should be made.

Despite the above points, it can be said that the University has adequately responded to the requirements of educational programmes and research activities, and corresponds well to the existing number of students and planned enrolment, but the Management, Strategic planning and Budgeting processes should be improved.

GSTU has a nice environment for teaching and researching. The sanitary units are clean, COVID-19 regulations are followed, in the buildings there are wide windows with natural light and possibility of fresh ventilation system, the buildings have central heating system, the academic and administrative staff's working places are equipped with air conditioning systems.

The University has a maintenance service and a security service department, the environment in the buildings is safe, fire safety systems, video surveillance cameras covering the inside areas and the external perimeter exist, and the University has also installed alarm safety systems in the same

spaces.

The University has departments for the safety and for the security that are responsible for maintenance and the security of the University. Recently the Georgian Parliament issued a new regulation about labor safety in the Act "Organic Law of Georgia – In labor safety". According to that act, Article 7 states that the employer is obliged to have 1 or more occupational safety specialists or to establish an occupational safety service for this purpose. The Statute of Administration of GSTU does not state anything about labor safety issues. During the interviews, the experts learned that this function is divided and distributed between the Juridical and the Safety departments. In order for this requirement to be better fulfilled, the "Statute of Administration of the Gori State Teaching University" should clearly state what responsibility regarding labor safety each department has, and that persons should be certified in labor safety.

A Doctor's office operates in the University, which is supplied with relevant equipment and medicine. In the University fire-fighting stands are installed in the buildings and are up to date. The buildings of the University have facilities allowing the movement of persons with special needs.

According to the SER, and based on the on-site interviews, the students, administrative and academic staff and invited personnel are satisfied with sanitary-hygiene, heating, ventilation, protection, and safety systems.

Evidences/indicators

1. Self Evaluation Report.
2. On-site Interviews and observations.
3. GSTU structure, mission, strategy, and activity plan.
4. Budget 2020, 2021.
5. Financial statements 2020, 2019.
6. Statute of Administration of the Gori Teaching University.
7. Extracts from the public register.
8. Inventory materials.
9. Fire safety, medical assistance, and law enforcement mechanisms.
10. Official webpage of the University.

Recommendations:

7.1 The correlation among the management, strategic planning and budgeting processes should be improved. To this end, the University should introduce a budgeting process which will be more useful for the decision making/management processes in market economy systems. For example, Activity Based Budgeting can be used. Further, conditional separation of the assets and of the management activity between VET and HEI's activities should be made.
7.2 The "Statute of Administration of the Gori State Teaching University" should clearly state what responsibility regarding labor safety each department has, and that persons should be certified in labor safety.

Suggestions:

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

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

GSTU has copious library resources, including some unique editions. The library has 440,360 library items, including 84,915 titles, 308,877 copies of books and 132,896 magazine issues.

Library resources can be used by the University staff, academic personnel and students. Library resources are located in several buildings of the University and include the following spaces: bookstore, subscription department, library staff work space, meeting and group work space, information technology space. In two buildings of the University there are reading halls separated from the library. The number of books in the reading hall of the main study building is 2,112. In the Library use is regulated by a rule that defines the necessary procedures for joining the library, as well as the terms and conditions for using hard copy and electronic resources.

University personnel and students have access to international electronic resources, among them Cambridge Journals Online, BioOne, e-Duke Journals Scholarly Collection, Edward Elgar Publishing Journals and Development Studies e-books, IMechE Journals, New England Journals of Medicine, Royal Society Journals Collection, SAGE Premier, Openedition Journals, OXFORD ACADEMIC Journals. The University signs a contract with NNLP "Georgian Integrated library information network Consortium -2017" every year.

The library is open every day, except on Sundays and holidays defined by the Labor Code of Georgia, from 09:00 to 19:00. It is possible to use the books in the library space or take them home. An electronic catalog (OPAC) is available at the University website. Via the electronic catalog, the reader can find the desired item in the library, both in printed and electronic versions (which is especially important when using the library remotely). The library staff provide individual training for persons interested in familiarizing themselves with the catalogue functions.

There are mechanisms for developing and updating library resources and services. Each year the library obtains teaching and research materials according to the requirements of the programs, the academic personnel, and the students.

Both students and academic personnel assess the Library services as being of good quality.

According to the presented documents, on-site interviews and on-site observations, the Library environment, and its resources and service support the effective implementation of educational and research activities, and the University continuously works for their improvement.

Evidences/indicators

1. Self Evaluation report
2. On-site interviews and observations.
3. University structure, mission, strategy, and activity plan.
4. Statute of Administration of the Gori State Teaching University.
5. Book fund inventory materials.
6. Official webpage of the University.

Recommendations:

None

Suggestions:

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

GSTU has an Information Technology Support department, whose responsibility is to provide the University with the necessary infrastructure and to manage information technology activities. A special unit has responsibility for Information technology infrastructure. The Department provides support for educational, scientific-research and administrative activities with computer equipment, necessary software, and internet connectivity. The Department administers computer networks and systems, provides information systems to the University structural units, administers University databases, and maintains information security. The Department is operating according to its statute. Classrooms, administrative offices, and other spaces are equipped with computer, internet and projectors, smartboards and with other technical equipment which is necessary for providing efficient support to teaching and research activities. In the campus there is a free wi-fi access for the students. According to the balance sheet, nonmaterial assets, which are mainly software licenses, are valued at 71 904,00 GEL.

In the period of the Covid-19 Pandemic the University immediately switched its teaching process to distance learning, using the "ZOOM.US" software. To this end, the Department provided the University academic and invited staff with the necessary information and trainings. For students they used special guidance. The University assessed the students' accessibility to information technology at home, and students who did not have computers were given computers for temporary use.

The IT Support Department of the University manages the IT risks, identifies, studies and responds to security-related issues, uses antivirus applications to prevent the spread of computer viruses, periodically monitors the University information system, updates and optimizes software and software security.

Data protection at the University is ensured by the IT management policy and personal data protection mechanisms. It is defined rules for accessing and disclosing personal data of individuals and students employed at the University, as well as the procedures and deadlines required for requesting and receiving personal data.

The University has electronic services and the following electronic management systems: for management affairs the University uses an electronic proceedings management system - eFlow, and representatives of the University staff are involved. An electronic catalog (OPAC) is available for library users. The Oris accounting software is used for accounting activities. For the learning process the University uses an internally developed electronic system, which provides learning support services, but it is not directly connected with the accounting program or the electronic proceedings management system, and it needs further development. Currently, when the University has 1700 students, perhaps the cost of developing or buying a more comprehensive and integrated learning management, accounting and proceedings management IT system is not reasonable, but as soon as the student numbers increase a need for that kind of information system will become apparent. During the interview with the IT staff, the experts learned that they have plans for developing learning systems, but the pandemic situation has slowed the process down. To ensure the continuous operation of key components of the information technology infrastructure, uninterruptible power supplies (batteries) exist, which ensure the smooth operation of these components in the event of any interruption of electricity of reasonable duration. In case of damage to any server or network device, there is an alternative to replace the damaged hardware with a new one as soon as possible. The University has data storage and backup systems that are being regularly monitored and

maintained.

The University has a web domain registered to the name of GSTU, and the site is hosted by the company "Cloud 9". The website is available in the Georgian and English languages. The University website contains all the news and important information that the university students, staff and other interested parties need. It performs both a communicative and an informational function. The website contains contact and other necessary information (including the mission of the University, structure, catalog of educational programs, programs and criteria for selection of students for each program, expected learning outcomes and qualifications, teaching, learning and assessment procedures, academic staff, library electronic catalog, regulatory documents, strategic development plans, annual reports of the institution, financial reports, available services, etc.).

The University in social networks has active accounts on:
- Facebook https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100004424529699,
- Instagram https://www.instagram.com/gori_university/
- and linkedin pages https://www.linkedin.com/company/gori-state-university/about/.

The University also has a YouTube channel:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNwQV6Bye1nA7IvrCFwa49g.

Students, academic and administrative staff are satisfied with the services and support provided by the IT services.

According to the above we conclude that the University has infrastructure for information technologies and its administration and accessibility are ensured, electronic services and electronic management systems are implemented, and mechanisms for their continuous improvement are in place. The University ensures business continuity.

Evidences/indicators

1. Provision of the Information Technology Support Service of GSTU.
2. GSTU Information Technology Management Policy.
3. Personal Data Protection Mechanisms at GSTU.
4. GSTU website administration rule.
5. Self Evaluation report.
6. On-site interviews and observations.
7. Statute of Administration of the Gori State Teaching University.
8. Official webpage of the University.

Recommendations:

7.3 The University should develop or buy a comprehensive and integrated learning process, accounting, and proceedings management IT system.

Suggestions:

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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

7.4 Financial Resources

o   Allocation of financial resources described in the budget of HEI is economically achievable
o   Financial standing of HEI ensures performance of activities described in strategic and mid-term

action plans
o   HEI financial resources are focused on effective implementation of core activities of the institution
o   HEI budget provides funding for scientific research and library functioning and development
o   HEI has an effective system of accountability, financial management and control

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

For the purpose of authorization, the GSTU provided a budget which is prepared for the public treasury budgeting system. This is of limited usefulness for business process management services, but useful for treasury funds administration and procurement planning and administration.

The University also provided some amounts against action plan activities, but the information is fragmented, unorganized, and hard to assess its accuracy. However, the information needed for the purposes of this standard, i.e. cash flow, statement on financial results, and other financial statements, were prepared according to the IPSAS (http://treasury.ge/5390), were obtained and analyzed.

The University has resources for continuous business process. The surplus of the Current assets on Current liability is 779,435. The amendment of the working capital follows:

Current assets from working capital	Extract from 2020 balance sheet
Cash and cash equivalents	520,000.00 GEL
Receivables	348,600.00 GEL
Inventories	69,259.00 GEL
Other current assets	7,740.00 GEL
Total	**945,599.00 GEL**

In the years 2020 and 2019 the University had a profit of 52 222 GEL and 36843 GEL respectively, the student numbers are incremental at a growing trend. This provides sufficient assurance that the University can continue its operation. The financial standing of the University makes the activities described in the strategic and mid-term action plans mostly achievable.

The University has a stable income from the fees of its 1700 students. Therefore, business continuity is not threatened in terms of budget revenues, but the efficiency of the financial resources is arguable.

As stated above, the provided budget does not give proper information about fund distribution among defined activities. However, we can assert that support for scientific research is provided, but obtaining proper evidence on how much this is could not be found.

Separate finance department and budgeting and procurement department exist in the structure of the University, but no one is responsible for preparing the budget for managerial issues. A statute about accounting policy and procedures does not exist.

The University has no person responsible for internal audit. External financial audit has been prepared for the year 2018, and members of the University administrative staff said that they recently announced a call for tenders for buying audit services for the years 2019 and 2020.

While assessing sub-standard 7.4 we should consider other important issues; first of all, GSTU is legally a public body. It is very challenging for the management to fulfill the public treasury and procurement requirements, which are very inflexible and also the University authorization standards, especially for educational institutions whose main concern is the quality assurance of their education programs.
According to the above, it can be asserted that the University's financial resources are substantially focused on the effective implementation of core activities of the institution, and that the University has substantially an effective system of accountability, financial management and control.

The management of the University should introduce a management accounting and control system, in which quality assurance of the education programs, treasury and procurement requirements, and budgeting for decision making process will be integrated.

Evidences/indicators

1. Self Evaluation report.
2. On-site interviews and observations.
3. GSTU structure, mission, strategy, and activity plan. 4. Budget 2020, 2021.
5. Financial statements 2020, 2019.
6. Statute of Administration of the Gori State Teaching University.
7. Extracts from the public register.
8. inventory materials.
9. Official webpage of the University.

Recommendations:

7.4 The University should ensure the effectiveness of the business processes, by introducing more effective budgeting and financial planning activities.

Suggestions:

7.1 The university should employ internal audit, in the direction of the efficiency audit, or they should ask the State audit office of Georgia to conduct an efficiency audit of the University.
7.2 The University Department of Finance / Accounting should develop a special document on accounting policies and procedures.

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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