განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Accreditation Expert Group Report on Higher Education Programme

Doctoral Program in Business Administration
The University of Georgia

Date of Evaluation:
November 5, 2019

Report Submission Date:

Tbilisi
2019

HEI's Information Profile

Name of Institution Indicating its Organizational Legal Form	University of Georgia'
HEI's Identification Code	LTD
Type of Institution	University

Higher Education Programme Information Profile

Name of the Programme	Business Administration
Level of Education	Doctoral Studies (third level of the Higher Education)
Qualification Granted Indicating Qualification Code	Doctor of Business Administration (Ph.D.) 0413
Language of Instruction	Georgian
Number of Credits	180
Programme Status (Authorized/ Accredited/New)	Accredited (2014)

Expert Panel Members

Chair (Name, Surname, University/organization/Country)	Prof. Emeritus Pandelis Ipsilandis TEI of Thessaly, Greece
Member (Name, Surname, University/organization/Country)	Assistant Professor Merab Khokhobaia Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University
Member (Name, Surname, University/organization/Country)	Davit Rusia (employer's representative)
Member (Name, Surname, University/organization/Country)	Ms. Irma Aleqsidze (student representative)

Accreditation Report Executive Summary

- **General information on the education programme**

  The Doctoral program in Business Administration of the University of Georgia (UoG) has been functioning at the Faculty of Business and Administrative Sciences since 2004 and has had students continuously since then. During the last five years 33 students were admitted (out of 37 applied), and four of them have been awarded the Ph.D. degree. Currently the program has 11 students, the rest have temporarily suspended their studies, or have abandoned the program. Most of the students intend to be engaged in academia, and some of the graduates are academic staff of the University.

  The Doctoral program "Business Administration" passed accreditation in 2014 (Decision of the Accreditation Council N2981 in 24/12/2014). Now the program submitted for the re-accreditation.

  A recent program evaluation took place in a process that included the research of stakeholders and based on the results of this survey it was improved. Improvements refer to the structure of the program and updating program courses and relevant literature in an effort to develop and improve/enhance the program. The program is focused on the international market, for the purpose of which agreements of cooperation with various international associations have been signed in recent years; however, it still lacks an international perspective.

  The Program is implemented by qualified academic staff of the Faculty of Business and Administrative Science who deliver mainly the research component (i.e. doctoral supervision) and a small part of the earning component, while most of the program's is delivered at University level doctoral courses by academic staff from other faculties. Overall, academic staff engaged in the delivery of the program has teaching and research experience, and the program director provides strong leadership. The program is delivered at modern promises and the University provides appropriate support regrading material and administrative resources.

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

  The accreditation visit took place on Tuesday November 5, 2019. Before the visit, the experts' panel received a Self-Evaluation Report (SER), the Programme Description document accompanied by detailed syllabi of all programme components (in English) and documents regarding University Services, CVs and documentation regarding the academic staff, etc. (in Georgian).

  During the visit, the panel had the chance to meet and interview representatives of the Faculty administration, the Programme Director, the SER work team, staff from the Quality Assurance office, academic staff (both affiliated and invited), doctoral dissertation supervisors, students and PhD graduates of the program, as well as social partners. All participants were very cooperative and willing to participate in discussion in an open and frankly way. Requests from the panel regarding the provision of additional information were handled professionally and efficiently during the visit.

  The experts' panel would like to express sincere thanks for the cooperation of all participants and their participation in fruitful discussions during the visit.

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

The program is:

- **Substantially Compliant** with the first standard: *Educational programme objectives, learning outcomes and their compliance with the programme*

The programme has established objectives that are stated consistently among various documents. The program goals attempt to broaden its perspective by incorporating a managerial angle in its objectives. Thus, although goals include the main objectives of a Ph.D. program, still the program conveys a vague message to potential students and interested parties. The Faculty and the Program administration care about enhancing its research profile – establishment of the so-called *Scientific Institution,* which monitors and evaluates the quality of the academic staff research output according to international standards, and the policy to link quality outcomes with staff remuneration are examples of their interest.

Program learning outcomes (LOs) comply with the program objectives, are linked to program objectives; are realistic and achievable and in compliance with the qualification obtained through the program and with the level of qualification. They should be enhanced to reflect English language and ICT skills, the importance of which was noted by the market survey. No evidence of employer involvement was received during the interview of employers.

It is important that the program is supported by stakeholders with the right profile for a Ph.D. program. Such cooperation may breed new research ideas and fields. Furthermore, cooperation with interested organization (private, government, non-government) and international partner universities, increase the chances of attracting research funds for national and international sources.

- **Substantially compliant** with the second standard: *Teaching methodology and organization, adequate evaluation of programme mastering*

Information on admission preconditions is public and transparent - accessible at the Program web page, which needs to be updated. The program aims in selecting high caliber students and admission criteria are rigorous and in line with those goals. Mandatory preparatory courses for students with strong academic profile but no relative studies at Master's level and pre-admission counselling to prospective students regarding program requirement should be considered as an action against student abandonment and postponing studies.

The structure of the programme has undergone specific changes that improve its structure which were welcomed by students and graduates. Nevertheless, the learning component should be under the Faculty's control, thus easily adjusted and aligned with the objectives of a Ph.D. program in Business Administration.

Students are exposed to the many facets of Higher Education teaching and have the opportunity develop appropriate practical skills. The Research methodology course, the completion of dissertation and the production and publication of two scientific papers work towards the development of expected research skills upon graduation. Transferable skills should also include contemporary information systems for quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Publication of papers in English will enhance transferable skills in English language and eventually increase internationalization.

Appropriate teaching and learning methods used throughout the program with emphasis, as expected in building skills in research methodology, intensive seminar teaching and practice-assistantship.

The evaluation of students is performed in accordance with the set procedures; it is transparent and complies with the legislation. Detailed information is given in relevant documents. Overall, the evaluation process for both learning and scientific component is transparent.

- **Compliant** with the third standard: *Student achievements and individual work with them*

All necessary students support services are in place. Students receive appropriate consultations and support regarding the planning of learning process, improvement of academic achievement, employment and professional development. In the framework of the Programme, students have an opportunity to participate, events, conferences, research fellowships, and international exchange programmes. Attention should be given to increase student participation in international programs, which is currently low.

Various structural units of the University ensure the organization of the academic process.

Every student has a qualified supervisor and if necessary, more than one co-supervisor who has scientific-research experience relevant to the topic of the thesis. The University subsidizes student expenses for research (field research, publications, etc.) up to 1/3 of the program fees. A University document defines rights and obligations of the supervisor and the supervision process. Interviewed students and alumni expressed their satisfaction with the qualified supervision and mentioned that they are constantly able to receive consultation and assistance from the supervisors, as well as formal and informal communication.

- **Substantially Compliant** with the fourth standard: *Providing teaching resources*

The program is carried out by 20 academic staff members, 18 of them affiliated with the University, thus ensuring sustainability of the program. Academic and invited staff members meet the legislative and the university requirements regarding their qualification.

Scientific supervisors of doctoral students possess contemporary knowledge of the field and are the authors of scientific publications relevant to the content of the doctoral dissertations they supervise. Attention should be given to increase research output in journals and conference proceedings that are accessible by the international community. The Scientific Institute and the system of awards for quality publications is expected to contribute in this direction.

Number of doctoral students are relevant to the number of academic staff for supervision, considering that doctoral students can be supervised by the academic staff although certain overloads have been observed. The head of the doctoral program is a very knowledgeable, experienced and competent person. She is devoted and personally involved in all aspects of program implementation.

Academic staff members submit annually a report of their teaching, research and other scientific activities. Staff evaluation is conducted by a staff evaluation committee, which consists of permanent and special members. Students participate in evaluation of academic performance. Results are used to develop professional development plan, career advancements, and salary adjustments. The evaluation process can be further enhanced if academic staff is required to submit their own personal development plan.

University ensures all the necessary resources to achieve program-learning outcomes in terms of both infrastructures (well-kept modern and spacious premises) and learning materials and support (library, IT systems). Expansion to e-books and additional scientific software is desirable.

Tuition fees allow the sustainability of the program in terms of covering operating fees, support for student participation in conferences. Additional funding from international and national development and research grants could provide additional resources for strengthening scientific/research activity and internationalization.

- **Substantially Compliant** with the fifth standard: *Teaching quality enhancement opportunities*

Quality Assurance is provided at University and Faculty level includes evaluation of program implementation, measuring learning outcomes through direct and indirect methods, and recommendations for future development of the program to the Program Committee. Relative documentation is publicly available. Involvement of employers in the programme evaluation and development was not apparent should be improved and become more substantial.. The program evaluation procedure developed by UoG ensures the compilation of internal and external methods of evaluation, involvement of all the stakeholders in program evaluation and its further development. Program monitoring and periodic review takes place under those guidelines. Because the Faculty does not have "ownership" of the most part of the learning component the effectiveness of the process, regarding program modifications, is constraint and adjustments should be considered.

- **Summary of Recommendations**

  o Clarify the main objective of the programme and define it around the core component of doctoral education thus avoiding any miscommunication with international academic and research community.

  o To communicate the objective of the programme among students, staff, also invited staff and supervisors internally and externally to ensure that the programme structure, its content are aligned around that goal and is shared among main stakeholders.

  o Form a proper group of stakeholders especially selected for the Ph.D. program.

  o Expand Learning Outcomes to include internationalization requirements and transferable IT skills for research (e.g. in the area of data science)

  o Provide consistency across all information sources regarding program description.

  o Introduce mandatory preparatory courses for students with strong academic profile but no previous studies in Business Administration at Master's level.

  o The Faculty of Business and Administrative Sciences should acquire "ownership" of the learning part of the program. Course offered by other Schools should be reviewed and aligned to the profile of the doctoral program in Business Administration.

  o Update the documents of the Program description including admission criteria, course structure, learning outcomes on relative web pages.

- IT skills for research (e.g. Data Science for quantitative research or qualitative data analysis software) should also be considered in program enhancement since they were identified as priorities in employers' requirements for doctoral students.

- Demand that the publishing of the two papers as precondition for the doctoral defense to be in English language to help students develop their English language skills and at the same time increase dissemination or research output.

- University of Georgia scientific journals or international conferences should not count for meeting preconditions of dissertation defense.

- Course *"Qualitative Research Methods"* should be adapted to address Research Methodologies in Business with emphasis in Qualitative techniques, and enhanced in the area of information system support for qualitative analysis.

- Elements of the course *"Reference and Translation of text"* that relate to academic writing skills for the doctoral students of this program should be kept. Reducing the workload of the course to 5 credit, will make room for offering courses related to the profile of the program.

- Learning outcomes of the *"Specialization module in Business Administration"* should be expressed in a way that allows the course to fit to specific research profile(s) of doctoral students.

- Formalize the requirements regarding publishing at least one of the two papers by establishing a list of high impact English language international scientific journals, as not all indexed journals and/or conferences are of the same scientific quality.

- The faculty should initiate efforts to increase internationalization among doctoral students. For example, short-term "Summer Schools" for Ph.D. students offered by European and other Universities in the framework of ERASMUS+ program or independently

- Academic staff should focus on publishing research work in journals and conference proceedings referred in scientific databases accessible by the international scientific community in order to increase international exposure of research output.

- Software material base should be expanded to include more software tools that doctoral students may need for their research.

- Involvement of employers in the programme evaluation and development should be improved and become more substantial

- Ensure that adjustments to the learning component of the doctoral problem are feasible – not only in terms of adding / removing courses but also in differentiating the profile of course to better fit the needs of a Ph.D. program in Business Administration.

- **Summary of Suggestions**

  - Formalize the benchmarking process of the program.
  - Have the information about program objectives, publicly available at the university web page in English.
  - Considered actions of more detailed communication of the orientation and requirement of the programme to prospective students.

- Collect feedback for determining the reasons for high dropout, and study suspension rates.
- Update the program web page regarding admission requirements.
- Increase the involvement of stakeholders by proper selection of employers from Organizations associated with research issues in the field of Business and Economics and/or Higher Education Institutes.
- Consider the possibility for students to take courses at other universities or doctoral summer schools abroad if the fit their thesis profile.
- Continue and intensify efforts for attracting research project work sponsored of funded by national or international bodies.
- The University should consider raising the standards of academic performance for doctoral candidates above those that are set be national regulations as the later reflect minimum acceptable performance in general, while doctoral students should be devoted to excellence.
- Attention should be given to avoid overloads in doctoral supervision work.
- Enhance the evaluation process of Academic staff by introducing a requirement of submitting annually short term development plans that include specific actions and activities that they plan to undertake in 1-3 year horizon. Plans can be updated annually, approved by the administration and evaluation can be linked to degree of realization
- Consideration should be given to have the library acquire e-books in the field of Business and Economics.
- Increase of budget for strengthening scientific/research activity and internationalization
- Exploit opportunities for additional funding from international and national development and research grants.
- It is advised to get in-depth information regarding the programme through moderation of focus groups regarding students and graduates, taking into consideration the small number and their level of maturity (i.e. doctoral students).
- The program can administrate simulations of informal external evaluation events with participation of external to the department / faculty actors. Experience of University membership bodies like AACSB and CEEMAN could be helpful.
- Device additional mechanism besides surveys to request input of employers that their interests and needs fit the program profile (e.g. focus group, round table discussions about areas of research interests, etc.).

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

  - The establishment of the so-called Scientific Institution
  - Providing financial support to students in terms of reduced fees, to cover research related expenses (field research, material, subscription, publication fees, etc.).

- **In case of accredited programme, summary of significant accomplishments and/or progress (If Applicable)**

Compliance of the Programme with Accreditation Standards

1. **Educational programme objectives, learning outcomes and their compliance with the programme**

   A programme has clearly established objectives and learning outcomes, which are logically connected to each other. Programme objectives are consistent with the mission, objectives and strategic plan of the institution. Programme learning outcomes are assessed on a regular basis in order to improve the programme.

1.1 Programme Objectives
Programme objectives define the set of knowledge, skills and competences the programme aims to develop in graduate students. They also illustrate the contribution to the development of the field and the society.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements According to the Guidelines for doctoral programmes in business and management (adopted by the EQUAL Board in May 2016) the objective of the doctoral programme is ***to prepare researchers*** who can qualify for research and teaching roles in academia or functions outside of the higher education sector informed by research work at the highest level, e.g. in Research Institutes, Consulting companies, etc. The doctorate according to the *Equal Guidelines for Doctoral Programmes in Business and Management (http://equal.network/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/161110-EQUAL_Guidelines_Doctoral.pdf)* should be a sign of competence in doing research necessary for functioning as a faculty member in a research-based educational environment, or as a member of a research institution in the field. The programme under review has established objectives that are stated consistently among various documents. According to the Self Evaluation Report (SER) and the Doctoral Programme description document, the program objectives are to *"… prepare a researcher and a scientist of a <u>wide profile in Business Administration</u> with the purpose of creating new knowledge, transferring it, identifying a problem and make decisions based on their justifications, <u>compliant with the international and the country requirements</u> and to develop Ph.D. students' pedagogical skills".* Goals of the program, according to SER include *"… to develop a graduate's scientific and <u>managerial skills</u>, as well as to improve his / her knowledge and practical skills in order to enable the him/her to work as a <u>senior manager</u>, researcher and professor / lecturer…".* In clarifying the objectives and goals of the program, references to the type of employment positions of graduates is made, including *"educational institutions; Scientific and research institutions; Analytical research centers; <u>commercial and international organizations</u>; analytical and research departments of state and private sectors; in <u>senior management positions of private companies</u>,… a well as industrial and non-commercial/non-governmental organizations that need an in-depth scientific knowledge in the area of business administration and research skills".*

It is evident that, the program is attempting to broaden its perspective by incorporating a managerial angle in its objectives. Thus, although goals include the main objectives of a Ph.D. program, still the program goals convey a vague message to potential students and interested parties.

Although, graduates of Ph.D. programs pursue careers in senior managerial positions in private, government and other organizations, this is not in any way the role of a Ph.D. program, which should clearly focus on developing research competence, research oriented transferrable skills and not general scientific knowledge in business administration. Ph.D. level research could be related to socioeconomic and business and problems but is not related to managerial competences

The high rate of students abandoning (5 out of 33 – 15%) or suspending or prolonging their studies (15 out of 33 – 45%), a problem that seems more severe in 2017 (2 out of 7 continue) and 2018 (1 out of 4 continues) cohorts.

Interviewed employers who represented traditional business not the research community also seem to sustain this vagueness as most of them referred to a Ph.D. degree not for its merit regarding research competence but as a sign of a "better qualified" employee. However, few of the interviewed employers had a clear perspective about what a Ph.D. program offers and presented interesting ideas that were never shared with the program administration before; they see their involvement in the accreditation process as a *"first step to do so"*. Therefore, the program should select a group of employers with the right profile for a Ph.D. program. Such cooperation may breed new research ideas and fields. Furthermore, cooperation with interested organization (private, government, non-government) and international partner universities, increase the chances of attracting research funds for national and international sources.

Since most of the doctoral students are already involved in University teaching and most of the rest plan to be involved, the program ought to align its goals properly. Nevertheless, the fact that some of the graduates / students are employed by the University increases the responsibility of the program to establish clear focus and strengthen the areas of research competences, since those graduates will be the next generation of Higher Education teaching and research staff. This way th program will fulfill the University's mission for *"setting its own example for striving for perfection"*.

The Expert Team acknowledges the efforts of the Faculty and the program to put research quality as a top priority goal. Examples of such efforts are the establishment of the so-called *Scientific Institution,* which monitors the quality of the staff's research output according to international standards, and the policy to link outcomes with staff remuneration.

The program was benchmarked against other doctoral programs in the field of Business Administration offered by Universities in Georgia and abroad and certain findings are listed. The Expert Team would like to encourage the administration to further develop the good practice of benchmarking so that through more systematic comparison and justification of similarities and divergence, areas for improvement can be identified.

Overall, program objectives and goals are suitable for a Ph.D. level program but lack clarity and indistinctiveness.

Therefore, the discussions and clarification of the main objectives of the academic doctoral program (Ph.D.) aiming to prepare researchers in Management science is needed among administrative and academic staff to ensure the effective design of the program LOs and the content of the program. The program objectives has to emphasize also the internationalization by particularizing what is meant by "*international requirements",* for a holder of a Ph.D. degree in Business Administration.

Program objectives are publicly available at the university Georgian language web page. In the English language pages, the associated link directs to the same Georgian document. Therefore, it is suggested to have the information about program objectives publicly available at the university web page in English as well.

Evidences/indicators

- o The University Mission;
- o Doctoral Program in Business Administration;
- o Self-Evaluation Report;
- o Provision of Doctoral Studies
- o Long-Term Action Plan for Strategic Development of the University of Georgia (2014-2020)

Recommendations:

- o Clarify the main objective of the programme and define it around the core component of doctoral education thus avoiding any miscommunication with international academic and research community.

- o To communicate the objective of the programme among students, staff, also invited staff and supervisors internally and externally to ensure that the programme structure, its content are aligned around that goal and is shared among main stakeholders.

- o Form a proper group of stakeholders especially selected for the Ph.D. program.

Suggestions for programme development:

- o Formalize the benchmarking process of the program.

- o Have the information about program objectives, publicly available at the university web page in English.

Best Practices (if applicable):

- o The establishment of the so-called Scientific Institution

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

Evaluation

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

1.2. Programme Learning Outcomes
➢ Programme learning outcomes describe knowledge, skills, and/or the sense of responsibility and autonomy, students gain upon completion of the programme; ➢ Programme learning outcomes assessment cycle consists of defining, collecting and analysing data; ➢ Programme learning outcomes assessment results are utilized for the improvement of the programme.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

Program learning outcomes (LOs) comply with the program objectives, are described coherently, addressing knowledge, skills and competencies considered by the content of the program. Program has developed learning outcomes and program objectives map, which demonstrates compliance of each learning outcome with each program objective.

Program learning outcomes are realistic and achievable, in compliance with the qualification obtained through the program and with the level of qualification.

According to regulations, potential employers and the academic personnel participate in defining the program's learning outcomes. However, no evidence of employer involvement was received during the interview of employers. As stated in the previous section, the faculty and the program administration should form a special group of employers with the right profile for a Ph.D. program that can contribute to program development, including learning outcome definition. At the same time, a labor market research is held and based on the research outcomes, requirements of the labor market are incorporated within the program. English language and ICT skills were identified as highly demanded for Universities in filling academic positions; however, no explicit reference is made in program learning outcomes. *"Compliance with internationalization requirements"*, which is defined as program objectives, is not addressed in program learning outcomes as well. Therefore, it is recommended to refer explicitly to specific and measurable learning outcome in this area (e.g. ability to publish in international journals in foreign languages, establish international research co-

operations, etc.). ICT skills related to important advances in the field of data science that provide valuable transferable research skills should also be addressed in the program's Learning Outcomes.

Program has developed learning outcomes map, which describes achievement of each learning outcome through the components of the program. Procedures for evaluating learning outcomes include primary and / or secondary labor market research and consultations with lecturers, comparative analysis of similar programs and application of international practices, and graduates' survey. Achievement of the learning outcomes involves the analysis of the students' post-course results within compulsory modules.

Excessive inconsistency between the LOs included in the program description submitted to the Expert Team and the corresponding document available at the program's web site (*https://online.ug.edu.ge/programs/pdf/doctor/172.pdf*) were found regarding the structure, content and their number.

Evidences/indicators

- o Self-evaluation Report
- o Educational Program
- o Program's webpage (accessed 08/11/2019)
- o Results of interviews with the administration
- o Survey results with the stakeholders
- o Program learning outcomes map

Recommendations:

- o Expand Learning Outcomes to include internationalization requirements and transferable IT skills for research (e.g. in the area of data science).
- o Provide consistency across all information sources regarding program description.

Suggestions for programme development:

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

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Evaluation

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

Programme's Compliance with Standard

Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
Educational programme objectives, learning outcomes and their compliance with the programme		☒		

2. Teaching methodology and organization, adequate evaluation of programme mastering

Programme admission preconditions, programme structure, content, teaching and learning methods, and student assessment ensure the achievement of programme objectives and intended learning outcomes.

2.1. Programme Admission Preconditions
Higher education institution has relevant, transparent, fair, public and accessible programme admission preconditions.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements Admission preconditions to the Doctoral program in Business Administration are clear and in line with the existing legislation and the regulations of the University and include a Master's degree in Business Administration, Economics or related studies. Students with Master degrees in other areas are admitted if they have managerial experience. Knowledge of English at least at B2 level confirmed by a university exam or respective certificate is required (specific minimum requirements are set for various recognized certificates). Applicants must submit a Ph.D. proposal (concept) that includes research topic, description of the research topic and justification of the topic, future research methods and a master's thesis if their master field is relative. Proposed research fields by potential supervisors are made public to interested candidates early enough, who can communicate and receive consultation from potential supervisors before submitting their application.

In making its decision, the School Board considers candidate's research skills based on research done within the master's thesis or on future research methods presented within the proposal and relevancy of the proposed research methodology to the research questions

Information on the admission preconditions is public and transparent - accessible at the program's web page, although certain deviations have been noted (e.g. requirement of reference letters) that must be corrected.

The program should consider requiring the completion of mandatory preparatory courses for those candidates without a degree in relevant field.

The program aims in selecting high caliber students and admission criteria are rigorous and in line with those goals. However, a high dropout and suspension rates are observed over the recent academic years (see also section 1.1). Interviewed program directors and academic staff believe that candidates are well prepared to pursue doctoral studies and the main reason for students abandoning or postponing studies are the conflict of students' employment obligations to the demanding requirements of the programme. The Expert Team was not informed about any efforts to collect feedback for determining the reasons for high dropout, and study suspension rates.

Although, the programme should be praised for keeping the requirement at high academic level and in no case should even consider lowering the requirements, possible pre-admission actions should be considered in terms of clear communication of the orientation and the requirement of a Ph.D. programme.

Evidences/indicators

- o Self-evaluation Report
- o Doctoral Program description and Syllabi
- o Results of interviews with program directors and supervisors
- o Program's webpage (accessed 08/11/2019)

Recommendations:

- o Introduce mandatory preparatory courses for students with strong academic profile but no previous studies in Business Administration at Master's level.

Suggestions for programme development:

- o Considered actions of more detailed communication of the orientation and requirement of the programme to prospective students.
- o Collect feedback for determining the reasons for high dropout, and study suspension rates.
- o Update the program web page regarding admission requirements.

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

Evaluation

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

2.2 Educational Programme Structure and Content

Programme is designed according to HEI's methodology for planning, designing and developing of educational programmes. Programme content takes programme admission preconditions and programme learning outcomes into account. Programme structure is consistent and logical. Programme content and structure ensure the achievement of programme learning outcomes. Qualification to be granted is consistent with programme content and learning outcomes.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

University regulations are in place for program evaluation and continuous development that provide the involvement of students and stakeholders. Quality assessment at the School of Business and Administrative Sciences regarding program development is based on surveys of graduates, employers, labor market, academic and invited staff and comparative analysis of similar programs, as well as internal evaluation of achievement of learning outcomes.

Overall, the structure of the programme has undergone specific changes that improve its structure which were welcomed by students and graduates. However, no involvement of stakeholders was observed during the interview with employers, perhaps for reasons mentioned in sections 1.1 & 1.2.

Recent restructure of the program includes:
- Providing students' flexibility in selecting taught courses according to their interests and previous background. Within this context several compulsory courses became electives (e.g. *Assistance to a professor* (students with previous university teaching experience are not obliged to take the course), *Reference and Translation of Text, Philosophy of Sciences, etc.)*
- Increasing the credits of *Quantitative and Qualitative Research* courses from 5 to 10 credits
- Introduction of two new elective subjects that reflect labor market demands: *Academic writing for scientific publications* (to enhance skills in producing scientific papers in English) and *E-learning management systems* (enhance IT skills).
- Flexibility for students in taking certain teaching modules throughout the course of the program (not restricted within the first year).

Thus, the Program consists of a 60 ECTS learning component, which comprises compulsory courses (45 credits) and elective ones (selection of 15 out of 35 credits offered), while the research component accounts for 120 credits. The compulsory learning component comprises core courses addressing building research abilities [*"Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods" (10 ECTS. each), "Specialization module in Business Administration" (10 ECTS)*], Higher Education Teaching abilities *["Contemporary Teaching Assessment Strategies in Higher Education" (5 ECTS)*" and Transferrable skills [*"Preparation and Management of Research Projects (10 ECTS)"*].

The largest part of the learning component (8 out of 10 course) is offered by other University Faculties, thus it is not directly focused to serve the specific needs of the Faculty of Business and Administrative Sciences. Although some subject are generic (e.g. "*Teaching strategies in Higher Education*", "*Assistance to a Professor*") and can be addressed to all Ph.D. students regardless their research field, others need to be more oriented to the profile of the programme. For example, "*Qualitative Research Methods"* is offered by a distinguished academic in Humanities but it is strongly oriented towards Humanities and Social Science rather than Business (details in section 2.3). The course "*Reference and Translation of text",* offered by the Faculty of Humanities is more focused on linguistics and does not justify a 10-credit workload for Ph.D. in Business Administration. Courses that are offered by the School of Science and Technology should also be reviewed, so that they are aligned with the objectives of a Ph.D. program in Business Administration.

It would be to the benefit of the program if the Faculty of Business and Administrative Studies acquire "ownership" of the learning part of the program, although this will reduce economies of scale. Of course, certain generic subjects can be delivered by other Faculties where expertise resides.

The Doctoral Program typical term is 3 years (6 semesters) as most doctoral programmes in European Universities. Within this period, the PhD student should meet all the requirements considered by the program, or his/her student status will be terminated. However, as mentioned before, most of students postpone the research part of the programme completion of Ph.D. dissertation. Postponing the research component may have adverse effects in the quality of the research (i.e. relevancy of the subject, outdated data, advances in the state of the art, etc.). As such, it should be administered in a controlled way so that student flexibility is not harming quality of research.

Doctoral students are obliged to publish 2 scientific articles as well as participating in at least 1 conference under the status of a speaker before the defense of their dissertation. One of the articles should be in a peer-reviewed/reviewed international scientific journal (online and/or printed journal) of the relevant field issued abroad, or in the proceedings of an international conference issued abroad, if the mentioned journal is included into the database of recognized scientific journals. The other article may have a consent from the editors to be published in any peer-reviewed/reviewed journal.

The above-required precondition for the defense of the Dissertation is definitely commended by the expert team. During the review of such publications by the graduates of program, the Expert Team found that in one case this requirement was not fulfilled regarding *scientific journal printed abroad* requirement. The program should make sure that those preconditions are administered and it is recommended that University of Georgia scientific journals or international conferences are excluded.

According to labor market survey for Ph.D. holders (mentioned in the SER), English language skills are greatly demanded. One way to enhance English language skills is to demand that the publishing of the two papers as precondition for the doctoral defense to be in English language. At the same time, the newly introduced course "*Academic Writing for Scientific publications*" should be delivered in English.

Labor market survey also shows that ICT skills are important. To this extend the program was revised to include a course in "*E-learning management systems*", which addresses IT skills in education. Development of transferable IT skills for research (e.g. Data Science for quantitative research or qualitative data analysis software) should also be considered.

Dissertations are written in Georgian language and an extended abstract of it is submitted in both Georgian and English. That will eventually help doctoral students to sharpen their English language skills and eventually facilitate the dissemination of research output, which, according to SER, is an area for improvement.

Dissertation defense is public. The defense process involves the presentation of a Doctoral thesis, a scientific discussion, and the conclusion (evaluation) of the Dissertation Defense Commission. The rules of defense determined by the provision of the University Dissertation Council.

The structure of the Program is published on the web page of the program, however it is outdated and needs to be updated.

Evidences/indicators

- o Self-evaluation Report
- o Doctoral Program description and Syllabi
- o Results of interviews with program directors, supervisors and academic staff
- o Matrix of the program outcomes

Recommendations:

- o The Faculty of Business and Administrative Sciences should acquire "ownership" of the learning part of the program. Course offered by other Schools should be reviewed and aligned to the profile of the doctoral program in Business Administration.

- o Update the documents of the Program description including admission criteria, course structure, learning outcomes on relative web pages.

o IT skills for research (e.g. Data Science for quantitative research or qualitative data analysis software) should also be considered in program enhancement since they were identified as priorities in employers' requirements for doctoral students. o Demand that the publishing of the two papers as precondition for the doctoral defense to be in English language to help students develop their English language skills and at the same time increase dissemination or research output. o University of Georgia scientific journals or international conferences should not count for meeting preconditions of dissertation defense.
Suggestions for programme development: o Increase the involvement of stakeholders by proper selection of employers from Organizations associated with research issues in the field of Business and Economics and/or Higher Education Institutes. o Consider the possibility for students to take courses at other universities or doctoral summer schools abroad if the fit their thesis profile.
Best Practices (if applicable):
In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress
Evaluation ☐ Complies with requirements ☐ Substantially complies with requirements ☒ **Partially complies with requirements** ☐ Does not comply with requirements

2.3 Course
➢ Student learning outcomes of each compulsory course are in line with programme learning outcomes; Moreover, each course content and number of credits correspond to course learning outcomes; ➢ Teaching materials listed in syllabi are based on the core achievements in the field and ensure the achievement of intended programme learning outcomes.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

For each course, a very detailed subject descriptor (Syllabus) has been developed. Each descriptor contains: Course objectives, intended learning outcomes, teaching methods used to achieve learning outcomes, detailed description of weekly content, corresponding literatures, and individual work, assessment methods for each component of assessment work, as well as clear criteria linking student achievement to grades (rubrics) , and suggested literature.

Since the courses are offered by different faculties, Learning Outcomes (LOs) are stated in different formats and level of analysis; in most places, they are divided in *Knowledge and understanding*, *Skills* and *Responsibility and autonomy*. A summary "Map of Learning Outcomes" indicates which courses or programme components contribute to each of programme LOs. Courses are not allocated to semester and no prerequisites were established. According to academic staff and students, this presents no problem because there is no sequential dependence among courses and students are studying on a flexible program.

Generally, course LOs are stated clearly and support program LOs. Certain cases need attention since corresponding LOs and/or content are not clearly related to the program LOs. For example:

- *"Qualitative Research Methods"*. Some of the learning outcomes (e.g. *the peculiarities of alternatives to positivism in sociology understood in the interdisciplinary context and the characteristics of new approaches to normative and interpretive paradigms*), the content, and the orientation of bibliography (titles include *Research Methods in Sociological Sciences, Research Methods in Education, A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* but lack of *Qualitative research in Business and Management).*
- *"Reference and Translation of text"* is another example, where a part of the content could be useful as element of developing academic writing skills, but a full 10-credit course, in the field of Linguistics, is not justified vis-à-vis program learning outcomes.
- *"Specialization module in Business Administration"*. Learning outcomes aim in in *systematic knowledge of the latest advances in business management,* however the content strongly focus on the area of Finance (9 out of 14 sessions), while 2 sessions are devoted in Economics and 3 session in Management). The suggested literature consists of books that are suitable for postgraduate studies, while according to title and course objectives it should be based on the latest scientific research work. Nevertheless, the Program administration should consider alternative ways to make this seminar-based course focus directly to the field of the dissertation topic of each candidate, to better orient and prepare students for the research part of the program. Learning outcomes can be made more coherent (e.g. condense all reference to *evaluate, critically analyze, synthesize …*) while some that refer to previous knowledge should be reconsidered. (e.g. *analyze the financial information needed to make the right investment, basic concepts and regularities of economics*).

The literature listed in the syllabi is updated, it is English language based in the most part, well organized and presented, but it is restricted to books and in the most part does not include additional reading materials, scientific articles, and web-based materials.

Program syllabi should be available on program's web pages both in Georgian and English language.

Evidences/indicators

- ○ Academic program and syllabi
- ○ The Program learning outcomes map
- ○ Interview with Academic staff and Invited Staff

Recommendations:

- ○ Course *"Qualitative Research Methods"* should be adapted to address Research Methodologies in Business with emphasis in Qualitative techniques, and enhanced in the area of information system support for qualitative analysis.
- ○ Elements of the course *"Reference and Translation of text"* that relate to academic writing skills for the doctoral students of this program should be kept. Reducing the workload of the course to 5 credit, will make room for offering courses related to the profile of the program.
- ○ Learning outcomes of the *"Specialization module in Business Administration"* should be expressed in a way that allows the course to fit to specific research profile(s) of doctoral students.

Suggestions for programme development:

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

Evaluation

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

2.4 The Development of practical, scientific/research/creative/performance and transferable skills
Programme ensures the development of students' practical, scientific/research/creative/performance and transferable skills and/or their involvement in research projects, in accordance with the programme learning outcomes.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

The Doctoral program is focused on development of doctoral student scientific/research/practical and transferable skills.

The *"Professor's Assistance"* aims in development of practical teaching skills and is supported by the courses *"Contemporary Teaching Assessment Strategies in Higher Education"* and *"E-learning management systems"*. Doctoral students are involved in developing topics of lectures and seminars, conducting independent lectures under the supervision of the professor/mentor and evaluated in delivery lectures independently (evaluated by mentor/supervisor), and preparation of analysis and evaluation of lectures.

Doctoral students conduct seminars and lectures within the framework of the "Start-up Factory", a University facility that aims in promoting entrepreneurial, as well as practical and research skills, among Bachelor and Master level students and assist lower level students in working on real case problems presented by business representative within the framework of "Transfer of Technologies" program.

Overall, students are exposed to the many facet of the teaching process in Higher Education.

Students acquire transferable skills in the management of research projects and quantitative analysis through the corresponding courses, which are valuable for their career as researchers.

The development of scientific/research abilities starts with the courses *Qualitative and Quantitative Research Method*, and continues with the involvement of students in their supervised research and concludes with the defense of their dissertation. It is important that student research capacity is evaluated not only within the program but also through the prerequisite of students achieving two scientific publications in international journals and a conference presentation that have an ISSN, international editorial board (or scientific committee), one of which should be in materials indexed in Scopus or Web of Science databases.

The Expert Team had the opportunity to review the Ph.D. theses of the four (4) graduates of the program. Although evaluation of the research work is impossible within the time limitations of the site-visit, the dissertation seemed generally comparable with international standards, with one of them (jointly supervised by University of Georgia and University of Wales) of distinct Quality.

Currently, most of the research topics emanate from the research interests of the academic staff. The university has just recently started working in the direction of developing research projects that can be funded from external sources and two projects were already funded. The program should intensify its efforts to move in this direction, through international or national-level cooperation with other universities, agencies organizations. Recommendations regarding the

selection of program stakeholders could help. Both academic staff and students will benefit and the program will receive more recognition.

Evidences/indicators

- o The Academic program and syllabi
- o Review of graduate's Doctoral Theses
- o The Faculty Provision of Doctoral Studies
- o Interviews with Program director, Ph.D. supervisors, students and alumni

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

- o Continue and intensify efforts for attracting research project work sponsored of funded by national or international bodies.

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

Evaluation

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

2.5 Teaching and learning methods

Program is implemented using student centered teaching and learning (SCL) methods. Teaching and learning methods correspond to the level of education, course content, student learning outcomes and ensure their achievement.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

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

As expected for a doctoral programme, priority is given to building skills in research methodology, intensive seminar teaching and practice-assistantship.

According to the SER and the Course syllabi, methods of achieving the learning outcomes: Lecture – seminars, Explanatory method, Demonstration method, Interactive lectures with the engagement of students in the lecturing process, Discussions where students are challenged in the discussion, argumentation and stating their opinions, Team work, Case studies, Problem Based Learning (PBL), Action Based Learning, Project Based Learning, etc. Interviewed students and alumni expressed their satisfaction regarding their teaching and learning experience during their studies

The entire learning process is very well monitored, though specific assignments, group-work, practicals, etc. described in detail in the syllabi.

Evidences/indicators

- o Course syllabi
- o Interview with the programme directors
- o Interview with the Academic staff
- o Interviews with students and alumni

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

Evaluation

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

2.6. Student Evaluation

Student evaluation is conducted in accordance with established procedures. It is transparent and complies with existing legislation.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

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

With regard to the learning component of the programme, students are evaluated based on their performance during the semester, several interim assignments (in the form of doctoral assignments, presentations, projects, paper assignments, seminars, etc.) and grades of their final evaluation. Allocation of grades to different assessments depends on the nature of the course but in all cases, a clear rubric is laid out in the course syllabus.

Grading scheme follows the regulation of Higher Education in Georgia were students pass if they accumulate more than 50% of the total point across all methods of assessment.

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

The scientific component is evaluated during the defense of the dissertation thesis by the doctoral board set up for the specific thesis, which may include external academics. The regulation regarding publishing 2 scientific papers and a conference presentation as preconditions to defense of the doctoral thesis, strengthens the evaluation of the dissertation research, and as such is commented by the Expert Team.

Considering the fact that most of the state in the art in the field of Business Administration is published in English language, the university should consider formalizing the requirements regarding publishing at least one of the two papers in an established list of high impact English language international scientific journals, as not all indexed journals and/or conferences are of the same scientific quality. Along the same lines, it would be advisable to set a requirement that the above publications are in English language.

The evaluation of research component/components of the Doctoral educational program is performed by means of the following system: the evaluation of the dissertation by the dissertation committee is performed in a confidential manner, using a 100-point system. In the case of receiving insufficient evaluation (41-50 / Did not pass), the Doctoral student granted a right to present a renewed version of the Dissertation work. In the case of completely insufficient evaluation (40 or less - Failed), the student will be denied the right to present the same dissertation paper.

The evaluation of students is performed in accordance with the set procedures; it is transparent and complies with the legislation.

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

Evidences/indicators

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

Recommendations:

- o Formalize the requirements regarding publishing at least one of the two papers by establishing a list of high impact English language international scientific journals, as not all indexed journals and/or conferences are of the same scientific quality.

Suggestions for programme development:

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

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

- o The prerequisite of publishing 2 scientific papers before dissertation research strengthens the evaluation of the dissertation.

Evaluation

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

Programme's Compliance with Standard

Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
Teaching methodology and organization, adequate evaluation of programme mastering		☒		

3. Student achievements and individual work with them

HEI creates student-centered environment by providing students with relevant services; programme staff ensures students' familiarity with the named services, organizes various events and fosters students' involvement in local and/or international projects.

3.1. Student support services
Students receive appropriate consultations and support regarding the planning of learning process, improvement of academic achievement, employment and professional development.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements The Expert Panel on the basis information collected through programme Self Evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and interviews during the site visit realized that all necessary students support services are in place. Students receive appropriate consultations and support regarding the planning of learning process, improvement of academic achievement, and professional development. The hours of academic / scientific / invited / administrative / support personnel are provided for student consultation. Students confirmed this during the interview. The "MyUG" platform students receive all information regarding the planning of their educational and research activities, while doctoral student may receive individualized consultation from the program staff and directly from the program director, both on academic, as well as on organizational issues of the program. Supervisor/co-supervisor/coordinator is responsible for providing full information regarding program curriculum to the students. During the determination of the study profile, the doctoral students can receive necessary information, consultation and assistance in planning the learning process and improving achievements from supervisor and administrative and supporting units of the Faculty. Students receive financial support from the University in terms of reduced fees to cover research related expenses (field research, material, subscription, publication fees, etc.). The amount of 1000GEL per spend in research related expenses is subtracted from their annual fees (3000 GEL).

The university publishes a scientific journal "Caucasus Journal of Social Sciences", where student at Master's/PhD level of the University of Georgia to publish articles free of charge. The Scientific-Research Institute also provides grants / funding for PhD students to participate in scientific conferences and to publish scientific articles.

In the framework of the Programme, students have opportunities to participate in local and international projects, events, conferences and research fellowships; they could also participate in international exchange programmes, although no such occurrences reported, as most of the doctoral students have jobs. To increase internationalization of the program the faculty should direct its efforts to identify short-term "Summer Schools" that are primarily designed for Ph.D. students and are organized by European and other Universities either in the framework of ERASMUS+ program or independently.

Students are informed about various local and international projects and events.

Students Employment Facilitation Service supports the career development of students and graduates of the University. In terms of career services, systematic training sessions, employment forums, individual consultations, exclusive novelties about current vacancies, and other activities are available for the students and the alumni.

The university has a plagiarism software (Turnitin) in place.

Evidences/indicators

- o Self-evaluation report (SER);
- o Site visit;
- o Programme description
- o Self-Evaluation Report
- o Interview with the Academic staff
- o Interviews with students and alumni

Recommendations:

- o The faculty should initiate efforts to increase internationalization among doctoral students. For example, short-term "Summer Schools" for Ph.D. students offered by European and other Universities in the framework of ERASMUS+ program or independently

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Suggestions for programme development:

Best Practices (if applicable):

- o Providing financial support to students in terms of reduced fees, to cover research related expenses (field research, material, subscription, publication fees, etc.).

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

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

3.2. Master's and Doctoral Student supervision
Master's and Doctoral students have qualified thesis supervisors.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

The Expert Panel on the basis information collected through Program Self-evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and the Site Visit discovered that the Program meets the accreditation standards in this regard.

Students receive consultation from the program director and the potential supervisors before admission in forming the topic of their research and the concept note.

Upon enrollment students assigned a qualified supervisor and if necessary, more than one co-supervisor who has scientific-research experience relevant to the topic of the thesis. At the same time, the doctoral board is formed for the individual student. If the research topic requires additional expertise, a co-supervisor is assigned and if expertise is not available in the Faculty, invited staff is called.

The University's elaborated document (Doctoral regulations), describes in details all matters regarding the process of doctoral studies both from administrative and academic perspective. Supervisors conduct consultations with students on a regular basis. The doctoral student develops an individualized curriculum in agreement with his / her scientific supervisor and the director of the relevant PhD program.

Interviewed students and alumni expressed their satisfaction with the qualified supervision and mentioned that they are constantly able to receive consultation and assistance from the supervisors, as well as formal and informal communication. |
| **Evidences/indicators**

- o   Self-evaluation report (SER)
- o   Interviews with Ph.D. supervisors
- o   Interviews with students and alumni
- o   CVs of academic staff involved in the program
- o   University of Georgia Doctoral regulations (approved by Academic Council # 62/19) |

o   Defended dissertations presented to the Experts Team
Recommendations:
Suggestions for programme development:
Best Practices (if applicable):
In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

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

Programme's Compliance with Standard

Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
Student achievements and individual work with them	☒			

4. Providing teaching resources

Programme human, material, information and financial resources ensure programme sustainability, its effective and efficient functioning, and achievement of intended objectives.

4.1 Human Resources
➢ Programme staff consists of qualified people who have necessary competences in order to help students achieve programme learning outcomes;

- The number and workload of programme academic/scientific and invited staff ensures the sustainable running of the educational process and also, proper execution of their research/creative/performance activities and other assigned duties. Balance between academic and invited staff ensures programme sustainability;
- The Head of the Programme possesses necessary knowledge and experience required for programme elaboration. He/she is personally involved in programme implementation;
- Programme students are provided with an adequate number of administrative and support staff of appropriate competence.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

Academic and invited staff members meet the legislative and the university requirements regarding their qualification. The qualifications of staff (academic and invited) members are confirmed by their professional and academic experience and their continuous and recent scientific activity. Supervisors of doctoral students possess contemporary knowledge of the field and are the authors of scientific publications relevant to the content of the doctoral dissertations they supervise. The research output varies among academic staff members, with some having extended publication record, however the presence in international databases of their research output and citation is not analogous to volume of publications. It is imperative that attention should be given to publish in journals and conference proceedings accessible by the international scientific community. It is expected that the Scientific Institute of the University will significantly contribute in this direction.

The doctoral program is carried out by 20 academic staff members (8 professors, and 12 associate professors) from the Faculty of Business and Administrative Sciences as well as other University. Most of the academic staff members (18) are affiliated with the University. All the above ensure sustainability of educational program.

Number of doctoral students are relevant to the number of academic staff for supervision. In most academic staff does not exceed 3 supervisions of doctoral thesis including students who have suspended their studies, but there are few cases where the number of supervised doctoral students (active and suspended) is more than 10. Although this can be justified because of the fields of expertise and experience of certain members of staff, attention should be given so that supervision work is more balanced and no overloads happen. Nevertheless, this is directly connected to the quality of the supervision and with the research output of academic staff.

Academic staff has determined consultation hours for students. The schedule of consultation hours is available to students from the beginning of the semester.

The head of the doctoral program is a very knowledgeable, experienced and competent person. She is devoted and personally involved in all aspects of program implementation.

Administrative support is provided by qualified personnel in the Faculty, Quality Assurance Service, Student Affairs Center, International Relations Service, etc.

Evidences/indicators

o Self-evaluation Report
o Educational program
o Interviews with administration, academic/invited staff, doctoral supervisors, students, alumni
o CVs of academic and invited staff.

Recommendations:
o Academic staff should focus on publishing research work in journals and conference proceedings referred in scientific databases accessible by the international scientific community in order to increase international exposure of research output.

Suggestions for programme development:
o Attention should be given to avoid overloads in doctoral supervision work.

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

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

4.2 Professional development of academic, scientific and invited staff
➢ HEI conducts the evaluation of programme academic, scientific and invited staff and analysis evaluation results on a regular basis;   ➢ HEI fosters professional development of the academic, scientific and invited staff. Moreover, it fosters their scientific and research work.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements   Staff evaluation is conducted by a staff evaluation committee, which consists of permanent and special members. Permanent members are the Rector of the University, the Director of the School, the Head of the relevant Department /the Director of Institute, the head of the Program, the representatives of the Quality Assurance Service and the Human Resources Management Service.

Special members of the Staff Evaluation Commission are invited by the decision of the Rector of the University. The evaluation takes places according to a predetermined methodology and gives feedback to the employee.

Academic staff members submit annually a report of their teaching, research and other scientific activities. Academic performance is also evaluated by the students through surveys taking place at the end of each semester for every course.

The results of a university employee's job performance are used to develop his / her professional development plan, training planning, promotion / demotion, salary adjustment rotation, motivation and other staff decisions. The evaluation process can be further enhanced if academic staff along with the annual report of performance at the same time submit a personal development plan that includes planned activities.

The University of Georgia encourages professional development of academic, scientific and invited staff, and supports implementation of scientific/research activities by them. Indicative actions include:

- Establishment of the Scientific Institute for better organization of research, integration of research in the educational process and enhance quality in research.
- Awards for staff, publishing an article in a peer-reviewed journal
- Scientific Institute sponsors staff participation in conferences, research business trips.
- Publishing the scientific journal "Caucasus Journal of Social Sciences".
- Project "Scientific Wednesdays" aiming to support the development of research skills for academic staff and PhD students.
- Workshop of quality assurance professionals organized by the International Association of AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business).
- Participation of the Faculty of Business and Administrative Sciences in the project: Modern Competencies in Academic Learning (MOCAT), which through collaboration between universities aims to support the use of modern methods, tools and materials for academic staff in the field of teaching methodology
- Participation of the staff of Business and Administrative Sciences in trainings organized within the frameork of the EU Erasmus KA2 program (STAR), which aims at professional development of teachers in the field of innovative pedagogy approaches.
- Participation of the administrative staff in trainings within the framework of World Bank supported project "EduCoP: Education for opportunity: Supporting Universities in Achieving Academic Excellence
- Other trainings for academic, administrative staff and Ph.D. students delivered by international professionals (e.g. "Project Cycle Management (PCM)")

Evidences/indicators

- o Self-evaluation Report
- o Scientific performance report of academic staff

o   Results of the interviews with academic and invited staff, administration, quality assurance office.

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development: o   Enhance the evaluation process of Academic staff by introducing a requirement of submitting annually short term development plans that include specific actions and activities that they plan to undertake in 1-3 year horizon. Plans can be updated annually, approved by the administration and evaluation can be linked to degree of realization

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

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

4.3. Material Resources
Programme is provided by necessary infrastructure and technical equipment required for achieving programme learning outcomes.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements University ensures all the necessary resources to facilitate the achievement of the Learning Outcomes of the Program. The premises of the University are modern and are kept in a very good condition. Auditoriums for working in small and large groups and classrooms are properly equipped, space for students working independently is available, and offices for administration, academic staff and administrative services are comfortable and functional. Overall, the University provides a comfortable and pleasant environment for staff and students. Compulsory literature determined by the course syllabi are available in the library.

International online library databases are available to students and to all staff members, through which recent scientific periodical editions are available to them. Students can freely access to online library databases from the computers on campus. Access outside the campus is provided through their student identification numbers.

Consideration should also be given to have the library acquire e-books in the field of Business and Economics, so access of doctoral students to library materials is expanded and facilitated.

IT services include internet access, the "MyUG" platform that holds syllabuses and regulating documents of the educational process and through which students receive all the necessary information relating to their academic performance and planning of the educational process, communicate with to administrative and academic personnel. The platform also allows students to express their opinions and current problems.

Students have access to software like SPSS for statistical analysis, although the list for available to students software should be expanded to include other software tools that doctoral students may need (e.g. Eviews econometric s/w, Qualitative analysis s/w, Data Mining s/w). The program administration in collaboration with Ph.D. supervisors should define a list of software applications that could be required in doctoral research.

The "Startup Factory" a facility within the University, in collaboration with the School of Business and Administrative Sciences provides opportunities for consultations of startup businesses from the idea to its implementation, engagement of students in technological transfer activities, invites speakers relevant to the lecture courses and conducts seminars.

Evidences/indicators

- o Self-evaluation Report
- o Educational Program
- o Syllabi
- o Library, material and technical resources and equipment
- o Results of interviews with librarian, administration, academic and invited staff, students.

Recommendations:

- o Software material base should be expanded to include more software tools that doctoral students may need for their research.

Suggestions for programme development:

- o Consideration should be given to have the library acquire e-books in the field of Business and Economics.

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

Evaluation

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

4.4. Programme/faculty/school budget and programme financial sustainability

The allocation of financial resources stipulated in programme/faculty/school budget is economically feasible and corresponds to programme needs.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

The Expert Panel on the basis information collected through the site visit, Program Self-evaluation Report and relevant enclosed documents believes that implementation of the program is financially sustainable.

Based on the financial calculations of the administration, the break-event point for operating expenses is 2 students per year (6 students in total), while current average enrollment is 6 student per year, and 18 active students.

The budget provides for student's conference or publication costs 1000 GEL annually, 5% of total income as contribution to the overall University budget, and 20% of all budgeted expenses (varies according to the number of students) for covering University services.

The Expert Team position is that beyond financial sustainability, a Ph.D. program provides value to the Faculty and University for it promotes Bachelor and Master programs in the directions of research (1/3 of admitted students are graduates of the University).

Evidences/indicators

- o Interviews during the Site-Visit
- o Self-evaluation report
- o The budget of Doctoral Program for Business Administration

Recommendations:

Suggestions for programme development:
 	
    ○ Increase of budget for strengthening scientific/research activity and internationalization
 	
    ○ Exploit opportunities for additional funding from international and national development and research grants.

Best Practices (if applicable):
In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress
Evaluation ☒ Complies with requirements ☐ Substantially complies with requirements ☐ Partially complies with requirements ☐ Does not comply with requirements

Programme's Compliance with Standard

Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
Providing teaching resources		☒		

5. Teaching quality enhancement opportunities

In order to enhance teaching quality, programme utilizes internal and external quality assurance services and also periodically conducts programme monitoring and programme review. Relevant data is collected, analyzed and utilized for informed decision making and programme development on a regular basis.

5.1 Internal quality
Programme staff collaborates with internal quality assurance service(s) available at the higher education institution when planning the process of programme quality assurance, creating

assessment instruments, and analysing assessment results. Programme staff utilizes quality assurance results for programme improvement.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

Quality Assurance Service coordinates the provision of internal quality at University of Georgia. Quality Assurance Service functions at University as well as Faculty level according to provisions of *"Quality assurance mechanisms of the educational program"* of the University.

The School of Business and Administrative Sciences of the University of Georgia has developed a mechanism for the implementation and evaluation of the program, within the frames of which a periodical evaluation is conducted that serves the purpose of program development and its continuous improvement.

The direct evaluation of the program is based on:
- Student evaluation analysis and comparison with the achievement of program outcomes - which implies the analysis of midterm and final evaluation outcomes.
- Analysis of the reports of mentors of educational courses (challenges identified in the learning process, teaching methods, difficulty of the course, workload, educational material)
- Survey of student satisfaction with the program that take place at the end of the semester.

Although the above sources of information do provide important income for evaluation of the program, additional sources may be used. For example, exit interviews from students who graduate, at the time of the completion of their studies, collection of input from alumni, will provide additional feedback for program development. In addition, the Expert Team would like to suggest that the approach of focus groups should be used to derive input from students, graduates and alumni, as it is more effective, given the small numbers in those groups. Additionally, for long term monitoring of the key learning outcome, which is the ability for independent research, systematic monitoring of the graduate's research output after graduation is required. The quantity and quality of their research output will reflect the quality of the program.

Though some suggestions for internal quality improvement still exists, the Expert Panel on the basis of information collected through Program Self-Evaluation Report, relevant enclosed documents and the Site Visit concludes that the Program meets the accreditation standards and complies with its requirements.

Evidences/indicators

- o Document Quality assurance mechanisms of the educational program
- o Direct and indirect quality evaluation instruction for the School of Business and Administrative Sciences
- o Survey results of academic staff, students
- o Analysis of students' academic performance
- o Self-Evaluation Report
- o Interview results.

Recommendations:
Suggestions for programme development: ○ It is advised to get in-depth information regarding the programme through moderation of focus groups regarding students and graduates, taking into consideration the small number and their level of maturity (i.e. doctoral students).
Best Practices (if applicable):
In case of accredited programme, significant accomplishments and/or progress

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

5.2 External quality
Programme utilizes the results of external quality assurance on a regular basis.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements External quality assurance of the program includes program appraisal by external stakeholders and comparisons with respect to external environment. According to information provided in the SER and discussions during interviews, the instruments that are used include: - The alumni employment index - upon the completion of the program, the graduate's employment index is searched for and analyzed periodically. - The alumni evaluation research output using qualitative and quantitative techniques - The employers survey using qualitative and quantitative techniques - which serves the purpose of ensuring the competitiveness of program graduates. Within the mentioned frames, is performed the research and determination of those skills and opportunities that are necessary for the labor market and which is considered as a mandatory condition for the employment. The mentioned research is conducted once in 3 years.

- Academic and invited personnel research using qualitative and quantitative techniques - within the frames of which, identification of the areas to be improved in the understanding of the academic personnel with regard to the program outcomes is performed, with the purpose of continuous renewal of both relevant competencies and teaching methods and literature. The mentioned research is conducted once in 2 years.
- A comparative analysis of similar programs - with the purpose of improving and renewing the program, a review of similar program is performed once in 3 years and the planning of events of improving the existing program may be carried out on the basis of competitive university programs.

Based on the interviews during the site visit the Expert Team was not convinced about the contribution of the employers in the evaluation of the program. Employers' contribution could be more substantial if their research, scientific, business, social profile fits the objectives of the Ph.D. program. Such a group of employers could provide important feedback and help the development of the program in identifying new areas of research related to socioeconomic and business environment of Georgia.

Evidences/indicators

- Document Quality assurance mechanisms of the educational program
- Direct and indirect quality evaluation instruction for the School of Business and Administrative Sciences
- Survey results of academic and invited personnel, students, graduates, employers
- Self-Evaluation Report
- Interview results.

Recommendations:

- Involvement of employers in the programme evaluation and development should be improved and become more substantial

Suggestions for programme development:

- The program can administrate simulations of informal external evaluation events with participation of external to the department / faculty actors. Experience of University membership bodies like AACSB and CEEMAN could be helpful.

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

Evaluation

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ **Substantially complies with requirements**

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

5.3. Programme monitoring and periodic review
Programme monitoring and periodic review is conducted with the involvement of academic, scientific, invited, administrative staff, students, graduates, employers and other stakeholders through systematically collecting and analysing information. Assessment results are utilized for programme improvement.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with standard requirements

The Faculty of Business and Economic Studies has developed mechanisms for continuous monitoring of the program that leads to improvement actions. Besides the processing of the feedback collected from student satisfaction surveys, academic and invited personnel, graduates and potential employers, other mechanism like periodic monitoring of progress of lectures and implementation of activities planned by the syllabus.

The University has created two on-line platforms that facilitate continues feedback regarding the program, the educational processes and resources to administration. "My UG" platform is open to students to express opinions and report problems, while a similar platform, "Online UG", serves the academic staff.

Both, program implementation and program outcomes are periodically reviewed.
Program implementation is measured by: Course evaluations by students and lecturers, Lecturer evaluation by students, Consistency of the course with program objectives, Curriculum evaluation, Student and academic staff participation in research projects, scientific conferences, publishing, scientific reviews and dissertations (only for academic staff).
Program outcomes are measured by: Alumni opinions on most and less useful courses in curriculum, relevance of program developed competencies to employment, relevancy of program to career development, and Employers opinions regarding the relevancy of graduates competencies, as well as required competencies.

The program evaluation procedure developed by University of Georgia ensures the compilation of internal and external methods of evaluation, involvement of all the stakeholders in program evaluation and its further development. Nevertheless, the Ph.D. in Business administration program is in a peculiar situation in the sense that the learning component of the program is not

controlled by the Faculty that offers it. The vast majority of the courses are offered outside the Faculty and are addressed to doctoral students from different Faculties. That makes the task of adjusting the curriculum and content, in order to better fir the program profile, very difficult, no matter how elaborate the University provisions regarding monitoring and periodic review are.

Evidences/indicators

- Document Quality assurance mechanisms of the educational program
- Instruction od Continuous improvement of Quality
- Direct and indirect quality evaluation instruction for the School of Business and Administrative Sciences
- Survey results of academic and invited personnel, students, graduates, employers
- Self-Evaluation Report
- Educational program
- Interview results
- Stakeholder survey results

Recommendations:

- Ensure that adjustments to the learning component of the doctoral problem are feasible – not only in terms of adding / removing courses but also in differentiating the profile of course to better fit the needs of a Ph.D. program in Business Administration.

Suggestions for programme development:

- Device additional mechanism besides surveys to request input of employers that their interests and needs fit the program profile (e.g. focus group, round table discussions about areas of research interests, etc.).

Best Practices (if applicable):

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

Evaluation

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

Programme's Compliance with Standard

Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
Teaching quality enhancement opportunities		☒		

Enclosed Documentation (If Applicable)

HEI's Name:

The University of Georgia

Higher Education Programme Name:

The Doctoral Program in Business Administration

Number of Pages of the Report: 44

Programme's Compliance with the Standard

Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
1. Programme objectives are clearly defined and achievable; they are consistent with the mission of the HEI and take into consideration labour market demands		☒		
2. Teaching methodology and organization, adequate evaluation of programme mastering		☒		
3. Student achievements and individual work with them	☒			
4. Providing teaching resources		☒		
5. Teaching quality enhancement opportunities		☒		

Expert Panel Chair's

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