



განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

**Higher Education Institution Authorisation Experts'
Final Report for
LLC AVICENNA - Batumi Medical University**

Expert Panel Members

Chair: Pandelis Ipsilandis, Emeritus Professor at the Technological Educational Institute of Thessaly, Greece

Members:

Mitra Amini (co-chair) - Professor at the Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Iran

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Tbilisi
2023

Authorisation Report Resume

General information on the educational institution

AVICENNA - Batumi Medical University, LLC (from now on AVICENNA) is a newly established teaching university in Batumi by the founding organizations which represent 4 large medical institutions operating in the region - "High-tech Clinic Medcenter" LLC. Clinic Medcenter and the 3 largest ambulatory service provider clinics established by it in the region cover almost all medical areas including transplantation and innovative oncology services.

The main idea of the founding partners is that the co-existence and collaboration of a university and a medical institution (clinic) equipped with multi-disciplinary modern technologies, the activities of medical staff, doctors, professors and students in one space is a factor contributing to quality education which creates a strong platform for the process of knowledge transfer, application, joint project planning and research implementation.

Results of a market survey carried out by the founding clinic, as well as the results of a survey of students and graduates of the region's medical education programs consolidated the idea of establishment of the university. The site of one of the clinics founded by the Medcenter was selected to host Avicenna's main administrative and educational campus and was renovated to fit for purpose.

At this point the University seeks authorization based on plans to inaugurate a one cycle educational program in Medicine which will be offered in English for Georgian and foreign students, as their research confirmed a high rate of candidates who would like to enroll in such program. Avicenna's competitive advantages as described by its management is the integrated learning approach in medical education, the fact that clinical education is taking place in their own facilities, along with the location of the university in Batumi.

Future plans, include the development of bachelor's and master's program in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Public Health and Nursing, while the University also likes to strengthen its research profile and offer doctoral studies, having already defined priorities of research and funding schemes. Avicenna has already had some initial contacts with universities in the neighboring countries as well as Europe and looks forward to cooperation in research and exchange of knowledge through mobilities and joint programs. Besides its academic and research activities, Avicenna sees itself as playing an important role in the region, through cooperation with other medical institutions and being involved in many socially oriented projects.

Brief overview of the evaluation process for authorisation: SER and Site visit

Avicenna University submitted an extensive Self Evaluation Report (SER) to the NCEQE accompanied by supporting documentation for all the standards in Georgian and English language. The panel would like to express its gratitude for receiving a very detailed report including identification of strengths and areas of improvements in each area, that was analytical and well informative. The University's website, which was expected to be another significant source of information, was under continuous development with new materials being uploaded every date until the visit. The panel requested additional documents during the site-visit, that were provided by the University.

The site visit was organized for two days - Wednesday, April 25 to Thursday, April 26th. Before the visit the Panel had an initial preparatory meeting on April 11, and another one on April 24 before the visit.

During the visit, the panel had the chance to meet and interview the University management team (Board of Partners, Rector and Deputy-Rectors, Academic Council), the SER team, the QA team, the Administration of the School and the Medicine program (Dean, Deputy Dean, representatives of the Medical School council, Program Head, Heads of Public Health and Basic Medicine, Preclinical, and Clinical departments) representatives of Academic and Invited Staff, representatives of administrative

units (Public relation, International relations, Human resources, Legal, Student and graduate services, accounting & finance), Psychological Support and Interpersonal Wellness, and representatives of employers and internship supervisors. All participants were very cooperative and willing to participate in the discussion in an open and frank way.

Requests for additional documents and evidence during the visit were handled professionally and efficiently.

During the first day, the panel visited 3 medical facilities where clinical training takes place, inspected the areas dedicated for student practical training and conversed with the clinical staff responsible. On the second day, the panel members visited the library, the IT room and facilities, the auditoriums, spaces for students and academic staff, sanitary facilities, and also visited the clinic that is located on the 2 floors of the university building.

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

Overview of the HEI's compliance with standards

The HEI is:

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

Avicenna has a publicly stated clear mission, which reflects the aspirations of its founders who are also the founders of medical facilities owned by "High-tech Hospital Medcenter" LLC. The University aims in creating a dynamically developing, research and innovation-oriented learning space by introducing modern model of medical education that will facilitate the formation of highly competent and competitive professionals not only in medicine but in a wider range of health care professions. The operation of the University on the clinical bases of its founding medical institutions provides a real opportunity to strengthen the various links of the health promoting chain is a key element in realizing its mission. Specific actions that produce tangible and measurable deliverables that serve its mission, with necessary budget or other required resources, and clear allocation of responsibilities is presented in the University's Strategic and action plans, which may need some technical improvements to ensure full consistency between budget and actions.

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

The general structure and management system of the University, the functions of management bodies, the procedures for selecting personnel and other issues related to educational activities are defined in the Statute of the Teaching University Avicenna and are in line with existing legislation. Academic organization is currently limited to one School headed by the Dean and the Scholl council, while administrative units, are divided into three main groups and are under the supervision of the Deputy Rectors for Academic and Strategic Development, Administrative and Financial Affairs, and Clinical Bases and Educational Resource Management respectively. The responsibilities of the administrative units are described in the Regulations of Avicenna University clearly; however, a need for training the heads of key administrative units for being well aware and therefore, planning and implementing their functions and avoiding overlaps, is necessary. Special attention should be given to recruiting administrative personnel according to the procedures described in Avicenna regulations, considering predefined position requirements. QA procedures are in place and have been applied in the case of the process of development and appovement of the education program in Medicine. However, since Avicenna is not fully functioning yet. QA practices are limited, and therefore there is no evidence regarding the full implementation of PDCA quality improvement cycle.

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

The 6-year program in Medicine which Avicenna is planning to offer was defined according to the established procedures after research of the labor and educational markets, in full compliance with the university objectives, and after consultation with professionals in the field and communications with other medical universities locally and abroad. The program features a horizontally and vertically integrated curriculum between basic and clinical subjects which is expected to improve students' skills and provide prospective for their professional development. The program is well planned and formulated based on the learning outcomes and generally meets the national medical education benchmarks. Clinical facilities will be provided to a great extent by those owned by the founders of the university and complementary by other medical centers. However, the efficiency of implementation will be judged with precise indicators once the program is running, since no performance assessment is available at the time of the authorization visit.

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

Delivery of the Avicenna programmes is done by newly hired academic and invited staff; most with both, professional and teaching experience and in the case of academic staff, also significant research record. Affiliation rules are clear and almost half of the academic staff are currently affiliated with Avicenna. Upgrading of English language skills are needed in certain cases of invited staff in order to be able to teach foreign students at an English language program; overall teaching staff should at a higher level of English language skills than what is asked for students. It is noted that several training courses took place for academic staff; training should be extended to all teaching staff so that they all share the same principles of teaching and learning approaches.

Administrative staff is limited – in most cases just the head of the administrative unit (perhaps sufficient for the initial stages of operation), and most of them work on a part time basis, which may present a problem in the way basic critical services are provided. In few cases, discrepancies between requirements as they appear in job descriptions and the CVs of the incumbents have been noticed. It is understandable that hiring was done under conditions that were not so perfect to ensure applicants work stability; it is expected that all future hiring is done according to Avicenna regulations, so that hired personnel fits the requirements of the corresponding position.

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

Avicenna has clearly defined regulations for each of the educational levels for assignment, suspension and termination of student status, mobility, qualification granting, issuing educational documents as well as recognition of education, which at the time of the site visit were publicly available in Georgian language only, and not easily accessible to prospective students. Since the program is in English language and intends to enrol foreign students, all documents should be publicly available in English. Regulations for students' rights, student representation in university government, student self-governance, and student ombudsman do exist but there is a need to be reviewed for technical correction before they are put in practice. Planning for the provision of student and graduate services is at a very early phase and not managed effectively. The University has not any active students yet and perhaps this may be the reason of not being up to speed yet. It is though important that the support mechanisms for students to be planned and be in place and not addressed in an ad-hoc way when students arrive.

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

HEI is not yet an authorized higher education institution and at this stage there is lack of the possibility to have specific ongoing research projects. Accordingly, compliance with the standard is mainly checked based on the mechanisms and regulations of the University regarding the promotion, support and management of research.

Although, a teaching university, Avicenna as clearly stated in its mission proclaims that it is research and innovation oriented. As first steps it developed a clear "Scientific Research Development Policy", has established the "Research Center of Health and Longevity" and set clear research directions in public

health care, biomedicine and clinical medicine. Many of the academic staff have research experience in the above mentioned as well as in other health related fields, from previous engagement in academic and research organizations; their scientific output is under their previous affiliations, and they expected to form research teams to mark Avicenna's presence in academic research. The University's policy includes specific mechanisms to support those efforts, which are budgeted for in the 7-year budget plan of the University. Also, the HEI offers institutions in the region the opportunity to establish an association for implementing joint research tailored to the needs and priorities of the region, internationalization and commercialization of its results. Avicenna has already signed four MoU's with international medical schools and other organizations, while three more are currently actively pursued.

At this point, no specific research projects in the priorities defined in the "Scientific Research Development Policy" have emerged yet, thus the research profile of Avicenna in terms of research output results and scientific articles needs to be developed yet; increase in the research and internationalization activities budget will certainly help in this direction.

Internally, a clear scheme of evaluation of research of academic activity is in place which provides incentives to staff for being active in research activities and rewards research output based on its impact. Currently, there are no provisions for doctoral supervision, but establishing doctoral programs it is foreseen in the University's strategic plan. The HEI developed a scientific research ethics regulation and established a scientific research ethics commission, while the Health and Longevity Research Centre of the University is responsible for plagiarism control through the Turnitin software. Overall, the University has a strong commitment in research and the regulations and mechanisms to pursue its goal successfully. no specific research projects in those directions have emerged yet, and consequently no results or scientific output on Avicenna's name is listed yet.

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

The infrastructure of the University in terms of lecture halls, laboratories, clinical facilities is marginally adequate to support the teaching and learning process, for the planned number of students. Some MoU with hospitals should be revised to meet the sectoral benchmarks. Library facilities are sufficient for the first enrolments of students but certainly need to be expanded if the number of students reaches the University's target for the first 6 years. Library working hours are Monday to Saturday 9 hours per day, up to standards. IT services are provided by outsourcing and free Wi-Fi access is available to staff and students. An integrated electronic management system that system incorporates, the electronic teaching and learning subsystem, the case management functions, the library's electronic catalogue and services installed and are still being in the translation to English and customization phase and expected to be fully operational when the university starts accepting students. The same is true with the web site of the University which is not yet fully updated and not oriented to easily provide information to prospective students, interested international partners and the public.

The main source of income is students' fees. Allocation of financial resources is based on the priorities outlined in the Strategic Development Plan. The budget is carefully constructed to support all the activities included in the plan and provides a specific budget line for each activity. Expenses that relate to student and staff support should be reviewed according to the expected increase in the number of students and staff over the planning period.

Response to argumentative position of LLC AVICENNA - Batumi Medical University

On July 3rd, 2023, the panel received the argumentative position document, which included the remarks of Avicenna on the recommendations made by the panel.

The panel, after examining the arguments of Avicenna, notes the following:

- i. Compliance of HEIs to the authorization standards is examined regarding the University's capacity of being fully prepared and ready to start the operation on the day of the evaluation, therefore any gaps

that were identified during the Avicenna University authorization process are stated as recommendations that the university should address to be fully prepared operationally.

- ii. Many of the argumentative positions are well received by the University. In many cases the University states that changes have already been made or are in progress or have been planned. Although, this is appreciated by the panel, the authorization report reflects the situation at the time of the visit; thus, recommendations are based on the documentation that was provided before and during the visit, vis-à-vis **evidence derived during the interviews** and the **physical visit at the facilities**.
- iii. The panel cannot take into consideration the additional documentation provided by the HEI along with its argumentative position, as this evidence is received after the submission of the draft authorization report, (e.g., research activities in the form of poster presentations in May 2023 - a month after the authorization, further development of web site, production of English language documents, etc.)
- iv. Obviously, within the time limit of the site visit the panel interviewed a sample of personnel. Identifying a single case of a weakness, although it could just be that single case, it does raise concerns to the panel about the general compliance within a standard.
- v. The panel looked at the argumentative position of Avicenna carefully, examined each one of the 51 points raised by the HEI (not all of them referring to factual errors-many were just HEIs opinions) and when it was deemed necessary revisions and clarifications added in the report. In summary, 1 best practice was added, 6 recommendations were changed to suggestions and another 6 were combined with another recommendation or removed.

The panel would like to point out, once more, that the recommendations that follow are not based solely on HEI's published Rules and Regulations but **mainly on evidence derived during the visit** concerning the implementation of the policies. We certainly believe that the recommendations are in line with the stated vision and goals of the Avicenna University.

Summary of Recommendations

- Ensure consistency between Strategic plan, Target indicators and University budget
- Include provisions and tasks for recruitment of Academic, Invited and Administrative staff in the Action plan
- Ensure full-time employment of the rector, and as the University expands, for other key management administrators as well
- Train and empower the heads of the administrative units to assume full responsibility of planning and operating their functions before enrollment of students. Especially at the Student and Graduate Support and Career development Service and the Psychological Support and Improvement of Interpersonal Communication
- Ensure that appointment processes of the administrative personnel of the University always are carried out according to the procedures described in its regulations, and taking into account predefined requirements
- Increase the number of English-speaking of personnel employed in administrative support units, by offering English language courses for existing staff and recruiting new staff with relevant competency of English language
- Ensure full implementation of Electronic Management System before the recruitment of students
- The mechanism for planning student body should reflect University's intentions for the development of BA and MA programs in the field of Addictology, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and Nursery, and the expected number of students at the University according to the action of the strategic plan
- Issue the code of ethics for students and for staff in English as the program that is planned to be offered is in English language.

- The medical doctor degree is at the level of a master's degree; the expert panel recommended improve English level till B2 before student finish the one cycle educational program, which will be measured
- Avicenna's English language exam template should revised and contain all skills and the examiners should have qualification in providing English test exam.
- Upload the program and the full curriculum in Georgian and English Language on the Website so that it is easily accessed by interested parties
- Reflect minimal barriers for the midterm and final exam in all syllabi
- Introduce an annual staff development policy
- Ensure that program providers meet language competency requirements (according to the sectoral benchmark)
- Review qualifications of program teaching staff
- Staff hiring process must be transparent so that best candidates are selected, according to corresponding the Job Description requirements
- Provide proper training to all program providers in modern learning and teaching methods in medical education so that they all share the same principles of teaching and learning approaches
- It is recommended to determine the number of students in Laboratory work according to the sectoral benchmark (at least 5-6) and in ICU class (at the hospital) according to the sectoral benchmark (no more than 6). These will have an impact on staff workload.
- Provide clear and accurate information and documents concerning students activities, rights and obligations in both English and Georgian in all communication means
- Ensure that administrative staff has full understanding of all main procedures related to students rights' implementation
- Abolition of threshold for announcing first student self-government elections
- The competence and experience of administrative staff in the student support service providing units should be relevant to the job requirements, and staff should be increased and additionally trained
- Establish a plan by working together with prospective employers, on how to support students interests in combining working and studying in a beneficial way and set a mechanism for collecting employers' feedback that could help improving the teaching and learning process
- Increase the social support fund (including financial support), in the first year and also gradually in the following years, for students equal and full accessibility to the services and elaborate objective criteria and clarification of student selection procedure.
- Establish scholarship policy based on objective, prespecified criteria, known to students, and clarify the action plan for encouraging students with high academic performance
- Improve students sport/cultural activity supporting mechanism and facilities.
- Enhance the efforts to get involved in research activities and produce outputs under the name of Avicenna University in order to start building a research profile.
- Increase the budget of research and internationalization activities in order to reflect its ambitious plans to become a leader in research and increase the chances of reaching its goals.
- Ensure that enlargement of library space receives high priority given that the quantity of library stock is directly related to the number of students and programs
- Ensure timely expansion of the library stock to cover the needs in textbooks for the full curriculum beyond the first year courses
- Ensure the implementation of the Electronic Management System before the arrival of the first cohort of students
- Fully develop the University website in both Georgian and English language and provide a structure that enables prospective students, interested partners and the public to locate and access information easily
- Schedule training of all academic and invited staff in using the Teaching and Learning modules of LMS platform
- Increase the budget amount for student support services in relation to the increase in the number of students

- Increase the budget for participation in international research grant competitions
- Provide funds for the expansion of the library space as proposed in 7.2

Summary of Suggestions

- Consider institutionalizing the cooperation with local stakeholders, forming a body of “Industrial Advisory Committee”, to the owners and top administration bodies of the HEI.
- Enhance the strategic orientation of the Strategic Plan by grouping individual tasks to integrated objectives, while keeping task details in the Action plan
- Reconsider affiliation of the rector for the sustainability of the University and its programme
- Maintain the database of staff workload, considering their full workload at other HEIs, when staff is assigned workload at Avicenna
- Start implementing the full PDCA in QA processes, as the University commences its operation.
- Additional English language courses are required in the program, so the students would quickly catch up to B2 level.
- Planning for a higher level of integration (based on the integration ladder) and moving to a fully integrated curriculum between basic and clinical sciences, is suggested.
- The invited teaching staff should have formal teacher training workshops in the assessment field.
- The University is suggested to have a more transparent mechanism regarding appealing the final or midterm grades; a more detailed guidelines would give students more understanding of their rights.
- It is suggested to show all hired persons (employees) position in corresponding CVs
- Increase the employment of fulltime staff for heads of key administrative services
- University should determine by regulation the time limit of providing students with all necessary documentation for external mobility if the program termination occurs
- Contracts of the Legal and Student support services’ bodies should include counselling, support and proactive feedback obligations towards the student ombudsman
- Creating legal basis in the regulation of the student ombudsman of Avicenna, for widening the structure according to the increase of students contingent in the next years.
- Ensure that the level of support to the student ombudsman of Avicenna, follows the increase in the number of students in the next years
- Determine in the Student-University contract, what period in advance will the student be informed about future amendments and whether he/she or his/her representative will be able to participate in the development of the amendments.
- Solve the issue of transporting students from the city to the university and communicate with the city hall about the prospected increased demand of the public transport to the university area, prepare to solve the problem by the HEI itself or together with the official services.
- Consider the possibility for students to pay the tuition fee by instalment
- Determine a way of tracking alumni’s performance in their home countries’ license exams for further improvement of student educational and career planning process
- Improve international profile of the university; start the implementation of international cooperations under existing MOUs and expand the international cooperation with other partners in EU.
- In the criteria of the evaluation scheme, specify that the activity must be carried out on behalf of the university Avicenna
- Consider increasing the weight for publication in high impact factor journals
- It is recommended to review the Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with hospitals according to the sectoral benchmarks.
- As the number of students and programs increase the library’s role will be proactive and shall include guidance of students in using the library services.
- Finish the conversion of personal data kept in physical record at HR service in digital form

- The budget allocated for research should be correlated to university priorities in the stages of planning and implementation of scientific research

Summary of the Best Practices

- The University has a well-designed simulation training center and a variety of simulators to support the educational process.

Summary Table of Compliance of HEI with Standards and Standard Components

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


Signatures of expert panel members


1. Pandelis Ipsilandis (Chair)




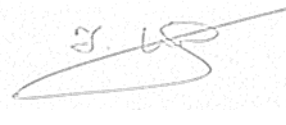
2. Mitra Amini Name, (Co-chair)



3. Jilda Cheishvili, (Member) 

4. Nino Amiranashvili, (Member) 

5. Khatuna Saganelidze, (Member) 

6. Shota Silagadze, (Member) 

Compliance of the Applicant HEI with the Authorisation Standard Components

1. Mission and strategic development of HEI

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

1.1 Mission of HEI

Mission Statement of the HEI corresponds to Georgia's and European higher education goals, defines its role and place within higher education area and society, both locally and internationally.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The Mission Statement of AVICENNA-Batumi Medical University, LLC (from now on Avicenna) is formally stated in the Regulation of Avicenna University - Batumi Medical University, LLC and is publicly available on its web site, on both Georgian and English languages. Avicenna's mission reflects the aspirations of its founders who are also the founders of medical facilities owned by "High-tech Hospital Medcenter" LLC. According to its mission, the University aims at creating a dynamically developing, research and innovation oriented, intercultural, educational space that will contribute to promoting public health to address global and regional challenges; facilitating the formation of a highly competent, competitive, human health and wellbeing-driven, caring and independent professional who will be adaptive to a changing environment.

Interviews with the founders, the Rector and the Academic Council of the University revealed their commitment to accomplishing its mission by introducing modern model of medical education which assures the facilitation of welfare, longevity, mental and physical health, and psycho-social harmony of a human being from prevention of disease to rehabilitation. Interviewed employers confirmed the needs at regional and national level for more well-trained professionals not only in medicine but in a wider range of health care professions. The operation of the University on the clinical bases of its founding medical institutions (as well as other medical institutions established/managed/owned by "High-tech Hospital Medcenter" LLC) provides a real opportunity to strengthen the various links of the health promoting chain - from the level of basic education, including professional skills and continuing education.

The HEI has a strong regional dimension in its approach and local health organizations and professionals from the NCDC Ajara Branch, the Batumi Regional Center of Infectious Diseases, and other health providers were consulted in the development of the mission and strategy of Avicenna. The university's interest in regional development in the health care sector is also evident for the cooperation with academics from "competing" HEIs in the region in defining good practices. Although the founders of Avicenna, have direct involvement in the practice of medicine, it would be beneficial for Avicenna to

consider institutionalizing the cooperation with local stakeholders, forming a body of “industrial advisory committee”, according to international standards.

Interviews with Academic council, the Head of the program of Medicine and the department heads provide evidence that the mission of the University was discussed with the key members of staff, who all share the vision that Avicenna could become a prestigious medical University, placed in a leading position in the field of medical education both locally and internationally.

Since Avicenna has not started its operations yet (expecting authorization of the HEI and consequently program accreditation), the panel is not able to assess whether its actions and operation are according to its mission. However, in the Self Evaluation document, the HEI states clearly certain principles of its own activities, including: academic freedom and integrity; teamwork and the involvement of staff and students in the decision-making process; publicity and transparency of elections and contests; equality, objectivity and inadmissibility of discrimination; support for freedom of speech and pluralism of opinions; protection of political and religious neutrality; striving for quality in the educational and research process; active involvement in activities promoting health and social welfare.

Overall, the mission and vision of the University determine the characteristics of the University, in accordance with its type and main directions of activity.

Evidences/indicators

- Mission of Avicenna Batumi Medical University - excerpt from Rector's Order No. 01-09/28 of December 01, 2022
- Avicenna - the vision of Batumi Medical University - extract from the Regulation, Annex No. 2, Article-8 of the Protocol No. 01-03/02 of July 21, 2022, of General Meeting of Partners
- Statute of Avicenna Batumi Medical University
- Self-Evaluation Report
- Medical University staff survey in order to receive feedback on the mission and vision project of the University of Medical Sciences
- Social activities plan (years 2023-2025) - according to the resolution N01-07/08 of the Academic Council of December 30, 2022, Appendix N1
- Interviews with Founders, Rector, Academic council, Medical School council, Dean, Department Heads (Public Health & Basic Medicine, Pre-Clinical, Clinical), and Employers, internship supervisors.
- Avicenna University’s webpage

Recommendations:

Suggestions:

- Consider institutionalizing the cooperation with local stakeholders, forming a body of “Industrial Advisory Committee”, to the owners and top administration bodies of the HEI.

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

1.2 Strategic Development

- HEI has a strategic development (7-year) and an action plans (3-year) in place.
- HEI contributes to the development of the society, shares with the society the knowledge gathered in the institution, and facilitates lifelong learning
- HEI evaluates implementation of strategic and action plans, and duly acts on evaluation results.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

AVICENNA has developed a 7-year strategic plan (2023-2029) following the provisions described in the official University document "Strategic Development Plan Elaboration and Performance Monitoring: Methodology of Avicenna - Batumi Medical University 29/07/2022". Accordingly, the Academic Council of the University created a temporary working-consulting group on the strategic initiatives of the University. The working group included, top management staff of the University and invited persons/field specialists, students and graduates of other universities, employers and representatives of partner clinical bases, representatives of other higher educational institutions, and experts in the relevant field. An initial version of the strategic plan which was presented to the founding partners and was approved in July, was consequently, after the hiring of the academic staff, presented to the Medical School Council for refinements and determination of requirements regarding its implementation. Final approval of the strategic plan was given by the Academic Council according to the provisions of the University's document on the Methodology for Strategic Plan Development.

The strategic plan of the University which considers the findings of an objective and realistic SWOT analysis addresses 8 strategic initiatives which include tasks that are in full accordance with the University's mission. Specifically:

1. Dynamic institutional development tailored to the needs of the country and region.
2. Implementation of international quality studies.
3. Employment-oriented, modern standards, high academic quality education provision and knowledge acquisition.
4. Internationalization.
5. Expansion of the circle of partners.
6. Creation of infrastructure and student spaces adapted to teaching.
7. Implementation of result-oriented management.
8. Active involvement in public activities.

Consideration is also given to actions that tackle possible threats identified in the SWOT analysis. For example, "*predominant dependence of investor clinics, as well as other medical institutions operating in the country, on state funding*" is tackled by "*Formation of a network of affiliated clinics*", "*barriers related to the logistics of foreign students*" by "*Finding partner agencies in target countries*", "*increase in the number of competing educational programmes*" by tasks in the "*employment-oriented, modern standard-compliant, high-quality academic education and gaining knowledge*".

A three-year Action plan includes those tasks that are also included in the Strategic plan but refer to the first 3 years of the 7-year strategic horizon. Thus, there is practically no difference between the two regarding the level of detail of the tasks. The University may consider giving a more strategic orientation to the Strategic plan by grouping detailed tasks to overall objectives to present a clearer picture of its development strategy. For example, "*Finding a partner for a joint graduate education program*" and "*Accreditation of the Joint Doctoral Educational Program in ...*" may appear in the Strategic plan as "*Development and Accreditation of a ...*", while the detailed tasks may appear in the Action plan. Same with "*Planning and Development of projects Erasmus+*" and "*Formation of the Erasmus+ program consortium*", "*mobilities*" could be grouped, as well as actions related to "*Infrastructure arrangements...*", and so on.

The panel acknowledges the great interest of the University for contributing to society, as evidenced by relative actions included in the Strategic and the Action plans, such as: participation in the following projects related to health care "Free medical consultations", Heart of Batumi", "Telemedicine Centre", "Three Colors of Batumi", "Promotion of Healthy Movement"; "Free Trials" with a total budget of 523,000 GEL in the period 2023-2027. Other social activities include organizing events dedicated to the "day of diseases" to raise public awareness; free examinations; post-Covid health screening in university clinics; organizing conferences/round tables for medical personnel employed in mountainous and remote/distant locations, etc. Avicenna is also interested in actively sharing knowledge beyond the boundaries of academic education through the establishment of the continuous professional development center.

Both Strategic and Action plans include detailed information necessary for planning and controlling the tasks. Specifically, for each of the actions: the responsible entity, the financial / human and material resources, the annual allocation of budget, and the quantitative and qualitative achievement indicators are defined; thus, allowing for an effective and efficient implementation, monitoring, and control. The University's document "Strategic Development Plan Elaboration and Performance Monitoring Methodology" describes the monitoring of the implementation process in detail; the International Relations and Strategic Planning Service coordinates the process, and the structural units submit a semester report on the tasks that they are responsible for. The Deputy Rector for Academic and Strategic Development evaluates the structural units and reports on the ongoing monitoring of plans to the rector of the University and the Academic Council, which has the authority to make a decision to change the plan(s) in relation to specific strategic objectives.

The Strategic plan provides a set of indicators and their target values in 2027/28, that depict the growth of the university in the period 2023 – 2028. The panel acknowledges the good practice of setting growth indicators but noted certain ambiguities between the actions in the Strategic plan, the target indicators, and the budget of the University. For example: According to Strategic plan, the accreditation of Bachelor program in Nursing is planned for 2024/25, and the Bachelor program in Physical medicine and rehabilitation is planned for 25/26, but in the University's budget both programs appear in the 2024/25 budget. Furthermore, although these two bachelor programs and one master program in Addictology are scheduled to have finished the accreditation procedures by 2026, the indicator "*The ratio of the number of academic, scientific and invited staff to the number of Higher Educational programs*" appears with a target value of 250/1 for 2027, and the "*ratio of the number of academic, scientific and invited staff to the number of Higher Educational programs*" target value for 2028 is 149/1. Similar concerns exist for the projected number of students, which is not clear, since the indicators seem to refer to the numbers of the students in the Medicine program only, although the Strategic and Action plans include actions for the development of BA and MA programs in the field of Addictology, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and Nursery. These inconsistencies could be just numerical miscalculations; nevertheless, they generate some concerns as to the commitment of the University to the time schedule of the strategic plan and whether the requirements in human resources needed to support the academic programmes envisaged in the strategic plan were accounted and budgeted for. As was explained to the panel, during the meeting with the Head of Finance and Accounting office, the founders will support the expansion of Avicenna to deliver additional study programmes. However, neither the Strategic and furthermore not even the Action plan include any tasks related to necessary activities and relevant budget for the delivery of the new programmes (e.g., recruitment of academic and administrative staff for the corresponding time horizon). The completeness of the Strategic and Action Plans is necessary for operating an effective monitoring and control system.

Evidences/indicators

- The Strategic Development Plan (2023-2029) and the Action Plan (2023-2025) of Avicenna - Batumi Medical University (30.12.2022)
- Strategic Development Plan Elaboration and Performance Monitoring Methodology (29.07.2022)
- The Approved Budget of Avicenna - Batumi Medical University, LLC for 2023 and Forecast Indicators for 2024-2029
- The Self-Evaluation Report
- Interviews with Academic council, Medical School council
- Interviews with the SER team, the International Relations and Strategic Planning service, the Legal service, the PR and Marketing service, the Finance and Accounting office

Recommendations:

- Ensure consistency between Strategic plan, Target indicators and University budget
- Include provisions and tasks for recruitment of Academic, Invited and Administrative staff in the Action plan

<p>Suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enhance the strategic orientation of the Strategic Plan by grouping individual tasks to integrated objectives, while keeping task details in the Action plan
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements

2. Organisational Structure and Management of HEI

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

<p>2.1 Organisational Structure and Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organisational structure of HEI ensures implementation of goals and activities described in its strategic plan ○ Procedures for election/appointment of the management bodies of HEI are transparent, equitable, and in line with legislation ○ HEI's Leadership/Management body ensures effective management of the activities of the institution ○ Considering the mission and goals of HEI, leadership of the HEI supports international cooperation of the institution and the process of internationalisation.
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>Avicenna - Batumi Medical University is established as a legal entity of private law and is currently in the process of applying for authorization as a higher educational institution. The legal form of the University is a limited liability company. The general structure and management system of the University, the functions of management bodies, the procedures for selecting personnel and other issues related to educational activities are clearly defined in the Statute of the Teaching University Avicenna and are in line with existing legislation.</p> <p>The highest governing body of the University is the Assembly of Partners, which is responsible for all key decisions related to the main functions of the University. Once in every 4 years the Assembly of Partners elects the Rector, which leads the activities of the University and represents the University in relations with third parties and institutions. The rector is the chairman of the Academic Council – the main collegial management body which makes decisions related to the academic and scientific activities of the University. The Academic Council is elected once every 4 years by the school council, from the professors and associated professors at the University. Procedures for election of the members of academic council are transparent, equitable, and in line with legislation.</p> <p>For the implementation of the goals and activities described in the strategic plan the University has relevant administrative units, which are divided into three main groups and are under the supervision of the Deputy Rector for Academic and Strategic Development, the Deputy Rector for Administrative and Financial Affairs, and the Deputy Rector for Clinical Bases and Educational Resource Management respectively. The responsibilities of the administrative units are described in the Regulations of Avicenna University. Generally, the allocation of responsibility among administrative units is clear and serves the main functions that each unit is supposed to support. Some ambiguities were noted during the interviews regarding the responsibility for supporting foreign students (e.g., application, enrolment, support for accommodation or other needs, etc.) between the International Relations and the Student</p>

and Graduate Support and Career Development Service, although according to the “Organizational Chart of the University – Functions of structural units” document, allocation of responsibilities between those two units is clear. The panel hopes that this is a single case, but nevertheless concerns were raised about the level of training of the administrative staff vis-à-vis their job requirements and therefore the panel would like to emphasize the need for well-trained supervisors, able to plan and operate the functions of the unit they supervise.

For the assurance and assessment of the quality of teaching, learning and research activities the University has a special unit - Quality Assurance Service. On the academic side, there is one main educational unit – School of Medicine. The school is responsible for implementing and delivering of educational programs and has its own organizational structure which includes: a) School Dean; b) School Council; c) Deputy Dean; d) Head of Educational Programme; e) Department of Public Health and Basic Medicine; f) Preclinical Field Department; g) Clinical Field Department.

According to the regulations of the University, the administrative and support staff are appointed by the rector, taking into consideration the statute of the University and predefined job descriptions. However, the panel discovered some inconsistencies between job descriptions and CVs of the high-level administrative personnel – in some cases prerequisites of the appointment, e.g., academic background, and/or length of previous work experience does not match the information indicated in CVs (e.g. head of IR and Strategic Planning Service, head of PR and marketing, head of Psychological supports and interpersonal communication, head of Continuous Professional Development).

The number of administrative staff defined in the Staff Schedule (list of administrative and support staff, approved by the order N01-09/02 of the rector) and their responsibilities, defined in the Statute, correspond to the size, profile, and activities of the University. However, the interviews during the site visit and the CVs of administrative staff revealed that currently the University has only 15 full time administrative staff and the heads of the most key administrative units are employed in other institutions on high administrative positions. Furthermore, the authorization panel noticed that the rector of the University who is also the head of the single educational programme provided by the University and leader in the development of the program and the university, is currently affiliated to another HEI. The panel considers that this may have an adverse impact on the sustainability of the educational and research activities of the University if it continues to stay so; therefore, it expects that for the next academic year when the university starts its educational and research activities, the rector will terminate obligations to previous engagement. The lack of competent personnel is particularly noticeable in the Student and Alumni Support and Career Development Service (see also standard 4.2). Currently this unit consists of one employee which is responsible mainly for student support services. Also, in the job description of the Head of the structural unit (Psychological Support and Improvement of Interpersonal Communication), it is declared, that degree of psychologist and 3 years of experience of psychological counselling/training is obligatory. However, the current Head of the unit lacks not only work experience, but also qualifications as she isn't a psychologist.

The University has mechanisms for monitoring management effectiveness and evaluation system, which is described in the Rule for Monitoring the effectiveness of University Management. For the effective management of its educational and administrative activities the University has purchased the Electronic Management System, which includes automated management of teaching and learning processes, electronic document processing system, human resource management (HR), staff evaluation, surveys, reporting, electronic and SMS communication, and electronic library services. During the site visit the implementation of this system was in progress; the impression of the panel is that the LMS has broad capabilities and will provide all necessary components to support the teaching and learning process, when implementation is completed. According to SER and interview results, the University is aware about rules and procedures for the creation and maintenance of records in educational management system (registry of educational institutions) and after the authorization will provide the relevant information in accordance with the current legislation. The data management in the registry of educational institutions is the responsibility of the Quality Assurance Service. Currently, the University is working on staff profiles in the LMS, although the information of staff workload within the and outside the University is not incorporated in this system, since staff has currently not had any workload at

Avicenna. Since most of the staff of HEI are working in other Educational Institutions, it is crucial for the University to maintain database of staff workload, considering their full workload at other HEIs when staff is assigned workload at the University.

In order to ensure the business continuity of its all-major processes the University has developed the business continuity policy which describes all possible risks, mechanisms for their prevention and in case the prevention is not possible, strategies for risk mitigation.

One of the fundamental components of the strategic development plan of the University is the internationalization of teaching and research. To support the process of internationalization the University has elaborated the International Policy Document which describes mechanisms and tasks for integration of the University into the international medical educational space (attracting international students and staff, increasing international mobility, developing, and implementing joint programmes, planning, and implementing extracurricular academic events, etc.). However, the interviews revealed, that there is a lack of English-speaking staff in administrative units. Practically only the heads of Legal services, Student support, and Marketing were comfortable to communicate in English. For the coherent implementation of the activities described in the International Policy Document the University should focus on recruiting administrative personnel with relevant competency of English language and offer trainings/courses for current staff.

Evidences/indicators

- Provision of the Academic Council
- Statute of the Avicenna - Batumi Medical University
- Staff Schedule - List of administrative and support staff
- Organizational Chart of the University – Functions of str. Unit - Regulation
- CVs of the administrative staff
- Rule for Monitoring the Effectiveness of University Management
- Business continuity policy
- Internationalization Policy
- Purchase agreement with “Hosti Ge” and related documents
- Demonstration of Electronic Management System (LMS)
- Interview results

Recommendations:

- Ensure full-time employment of the rector, and as the University expands, for other key management administrators as well
- Train and empower the heads of the administrative units to assume full responsibility of planning and operating their functions before enrollment of students. Especially the Student and Graduate Support and Career development Service and the Psychological Support and Improvement of Interpersonal Communication
- Ensure that appointment processes of the administrative personnel of the University always are carried out according to the procedures described in its regulations, and taking into account predefined requirements
- Increase the number of English-speaking of personnel employed in administrative support units, by offering English language courses for existing staff and recruiting new staff with relevant competency of English language
- Ensure full implementation of Electronic Management System before the recruitment of students

Suggestions:

- Reconsider affiliation of the rector for the sustainability of the University and its programme
- Maintain the database of staff workload, considering their full workload at other HEIs, when staff is assigned workload at Avicenna

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

For the continuous assessment and development of its activities and resources the University has developed the quality assurance policy and established the quality assurance system on August 1, 2022.

The quality assurance service of the University is responsible for the effective implementation of the internal quality assurance mechanisms, and other units of the institution also are involved in these processes.

Documents provided by the University and interviews during the site visit revealed that the University has in place all necessary mechanisms and procedures for the continuous assessment and improvement of teaching, learning and research activities according to the PDCA cycle. These mechanisms include: monitoring students' academic performance, evaluation and improvement of academic programmes with the involvement of internal and external stakeholders, and the evaluation of academic, scientific, invited, and administrative support staff.

Interviews revealed that the University's leadership intends to allocate more information and material resources for strengthening the internal quality assurance system (e.g., incorporate electronic questionnaires in Electronic Management System (LMS)). The panel encourages this intention.

Since the University Avicenna is a newly established Higher Education Institution, the Procedures and practice of using assessment results in its performance is very limited. Actually, at the current phase of the operations at Avicenna, the application of the PDCA cycle for quality improvement can be reviewed only for the first stage (Plan) regarding most of the operations and (Plan-Do) concerning the program development processes. The process of development and improvement of higher educational programme in Medicine shows that the Institution acted in accordance with its quality assurance policy that includes the provisions of Articles 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 of the Quality Assurance Policy of the University.

The Quality Assurance Policy of the University includes, beyond those processes related to program development, all necessary processes for internal and external quality assurance mechanism. Those include evaluation of the study courses by students, academic staff and program manager, evaluations of academic staff, invited staff, administrative staff, educational process, collegial observation, research, scientific productivity, and services. Based on the inputs of the evaluation QA prepares a series of analysis for the management of the University including academic performance of students, graduates and, employers' opinion about the program, compliance of material resources, relevance of informational and library resources and Website and Other Informational Resources, etc. Overall, it is believed that the University has all the right tools and processes in place to fully implement the PDCA quality improvement cycle upon commencing its operation, as long as all processes are effectively implemented as planned.

The University Avicenna has elaborated a mechanism for planning student body which is described in the document - Methodology for Determining the Maximum Number of Students of Avicenna - Batumi Medical University. The methodology for planning student body at Avicenna is based on a parametric

model the main parameters of which are: the maximum total semester amount of academic staff's and invited staff workload, the total number of hours of the full contact component of the educational program and in the case of clinical resources the corresponding restrictions (e.g. 10 students per patient for therapeutic, surgical, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics and 6 students per patient for resuscitation/intensive care, restriction of student numbers set by the agreements with clinics, and other material resources as laboratories, etc..

In the period of 6 years the University plans to attract 1080 students and has provided calculation of human, material, and other resources for this gradual development, according to the abovementioned methodology and benchmarks. However, the calculation of maximum number of students as well as the methodology of planning student contingent are taking into consideration the specifications of the academic programme in medicine and does not reflect University's intentions for the development of BA and MA programs in the field of Addictology, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and Nursery, declared in strategic and action plans. The panel takes this number as a rough estimate since no data exist at the time of the authorization evaluation about enrolments even in the Medicine program which is currently the only one fully planned.

Evidences/indicators

- Quality Assurance Policy
- Staff Management Policy
- Management Effectiveness Monitoring Rule
- Regulations for planning, elaborating, approving, implementing, evaluating and developing educational programs
- Methodology for Determining the Maximum Number of Students of Avicenna - Batumi Medical University
- Self-Evaluation Report
- Interviews
- Strategic and action plans
- Educational program «medicine»
- Calculation of the contingent of students at the one-cycle educational program of Medicine, determination of the number of academic and invited staff and the semester workload of Avicenna Batumi Medical University

Recommendations:

- The mechanism for planning student body should reflect University's intentions for the development of BA and MA programs in the field of Addictology, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and Nursery, and the expected number of students at the University according to the action of the strategic plan

Suggestions:

- Start implementing the full PDCA in QA processes, as the University commences its operation.

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

2.3. Observing Principles of Ethics and Integrity

- HEI has developed regulations and mechanisms that follow principles of ethics and integrity. Such regulations are publicly accessible.

- Institution has implemented mechanisms for detecting plagiarism and its prevention.
- HEI follows the principles of academic freedom.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The Statute of Avicenna - Batumi Medical University and other regulations related to its academic and research activities reflect principles of ethics and integrity.

The norms of ethical code and conduct as well as the procedures for responding to the violation of these regulations are described in two main documents: Code of ethics of the personnel of Avicenna - Batumi Medical University and Code of ethics of the student of Avicenna - Batumi Medical University. The academic and administrative personnel are aware of these regulations and the Georgian version of abovementioned documents are placed on the official website of the University. However, there is no English version available for international staff and students.

For the implementation of mechanisms for detecting and preventing plagiarism in educational and research activities the University has issued the document “Regulations for Academic Honesty Principles at Avicenna - Batumi Medical University” (approved on 5/10/22) which elaborated the rule for observing the principles of academic integrity and provisions of scientific research ethics. The Academic and invited personnel of the University were well informed about these mechanisms, including the application of plagiarism detection software - Turnitin, which was purchased in November 2022.

According to regulations for academic honesty principles, there are processes which determine cases of plagiarism after Turnitin indicates possible plagiarism and identifies the level of plagiarism (Low<5%, average 6-10%, High 11-15%). In the case of staff, if plagiarism is confirmed or no reasonable explanations are given the person could be subject to a penalty ranging from a “note” to “dismissal”. depending on the degree of plagiarism (Low<5%, average 6-10%, High 11-15%). In the case of students, the levels of plagiarism are at 5%, 6-20% and over 20%. Penalties include Note, Warning, Cancellation of positive evaluation, Cancellation of financial benefits, Termination of status.

To ensure a trustworthy, proportional, and responsible ethical research activities, the University has elaborated the Provision of Scientific Research Ethics (approved on 15/11/22) and established Scientific Research Committee (fully described in standard component 6.1)

Interviews with the academic and administrative staff revealed that the University community is familiar with and shares the principles of academic freedom.

Evidences/indicators

- Statute of the Avicenna - Batumi Medical University
- Code of ethics of the personnel of Avicenna - Batumi Medical University
- Code of ethics of the student of Avicenna - Batumi Medical University
- The rule for observing the principles of academic integrity
- A contract signed between "Avicenna - Batumi Medical University" LLC and Turnitin, LLC
- Provision of Scientific research ethics
- Website of the University: <https://avicenna.ge/ge/about/legal-reference/university-regulations>

Recommendations:

- Issue the code of ethics for students and for staff in English as the program that is planned to be offered is in English language.

Suggestions:

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

3. Educational Programmes

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

3.1 Design and Development of Educational Programmes

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Avicenna - Batumi Medical University precisely defined the policy and procedures for planning, designing, implementing, and revising educational programs in the self-evaluation report and documents. The process was confirmed during the site visit and interviews concerning the first and only program that has been through this process yet, the 6-year program in Medicine. This procedure includes the phases of the description of the field, labor and educational market, potential partners, working group, and staff for program implementation, description of the labor market, and compliance with the University objectives. The program working group includes the head of the program, representatives of the academic and invited personnel, representatives of the university administration, representatives of partner employers, and to a lesser extent students (from other University, as no students have been admitted to Avicenna yet). The program director plays a significant role. She started communicating with some high-ranked Universities in the USA and the United Kingdom regarding their educational program for Medical Doctor degrees and shares Batumi Medical University's vision and founding principles with the experts in these medical schools. The design of the Program is based on these high-ranked USA and UK curriculums - and, at the same time, is adapted to the traditions and resources of the local environment in Georgia.

The University was guided by the law of Georgia "On Higher Education", the University Statute, and the School of Medicine of Avicenna Regulations. The Program working group has defined the integrated curriculum (both horizontal and vertical). The appropriate integration between basic and clinical subjects will improve students' skills to assume appropriate clinical responsibility upon graduation and to continue their professional development. During reviewing the documents, it was obvious that the program is partly integrated. . During designing the program, regulations established by the Georgian legislation and requirements of the European credit transfer system were considered. The duration of the program is six years, including 12 semesters, and the students should earn 360 credits.

The program working group and program heads defined the structure and content of the program, relevant program objectives based on outcomes, design mechanisms for assessment of learning outcomes, and so on. The Head of the Quality Assurance Service of the University monitors this process. The program is then submitted to the Quality Assurance Service for evaluation. The Quality Assurance Service conducts a preliminary assessment of the program's compliance with the accreditation standards and prepares a conclusion. Also, the program directors will apply continuous revising of the educational program at the University based on the report prepared by the QA department, which is based on assessing educational program outcomes.

For entering the program, it is mentioned in the documents that a B1 English level is enough; the program director and heads of departments believe that during studies, students do achieve a B2 English level. However, this envisioned improvement (students reaching B2 level in English language competences) should be measured and be reflected in curricula.

From Sectoral benchmark it is mentioned that: confirmation of the above-mentioned level of knowledge by the higher educational institution as a result of an exam (including listening, comprehension and analysis of the read text, speaking) organized by the institution itself to determine the level of English language proficiency of a foreign citizen. (pg. 5)

From Avicenna Self-evaluation report and documents: Applicant 's *English level is evaluated according to the rector order N01-09/57 (30.12.2022). The evaluation process does not cover all components, includes the following component: Q/A, Dialogue, Comprehension of read text* (applicants listening skill in English is not evaluated). Apart it, according to the rector order N01-09/57- the following structures are organizers and providers of the English text exam:

1. Administration of Medical school (Dean, program leader); (by qualification MD)
 2. Deputy Rector for Academic and Strategic Development (by qualification dentist, BA)
 3. International Relations and Strategic Planning-(by qualification Social science, Health management)
- None of the above-mentioned persons has qualification in providing English test exam and this requirement (regarding the language test) are not reflected in their Job Description.

There are also annulment procedures for the program. Reasons may include academic concerns or personal reasons. The HEI will review the situation and start a dialogue with the student to gather additional information or clarify any concerns. The HEI may offer various avenues to address students' interest in annulment cases including academic advisors, counseling services and so on.

Evidences/indicators

- Avicenna Self-Evaluation Report
- Regulations for planning, elaborating, approving, implementing, evaluating and developing educational programs of Avicenna - Batumi Medical University, LLC (Approved by Appendix No. 5 of the Protocol No. 01-03/04 of the General Meeting of Partners of "Avicenna - Batumi Medical University" LLC, August 30, 2022)
- Interviews with program head and heads of PHBM, Pre-clinical and Clinical department

Recommendations:

- The medical doctor degree is at the level of a master's degree; the expert panel recommended improve English level till B2 before student finish the one cycle educational program, which will be measured
- Avicenna's English language exam template should revised and contain all skills and the examiners should have qualification in providing English test exam.

Suggestions:

- Additional English language courses are required in the program, so the students would quickly catch up to B2 level.

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

3.2 Structure and Content of Educational Programmes

- Programme learning outcomes are clearly stated and are in line with higher education level and qualification to be granted

- With the help of individualized education programmes, HEI takes into consideration various requirements, needs and academic readiness of students, and ensures their unhindered involvement into the educational process.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Avicenna - Batumi Medical University presented one program for Medical Doctor degree. The program was developed based on the University's mission, vision, and the concept of lifelong learning. Integration of basic and clinical sciences, early exposure of the student to clinical training, deepening of knowledge, and readiness to move to distance education are mentioned as the program's characteristics. The knowledge and experience gained from the program directors, peer reviews, and recommendations helped the program working group to formulate the medical education program. All representatives of the field of medicine realized the importance of the competence of doctors, values, and social responsibilities were highlighted. The program took place in three phases:

Basic science phase - includes the introductory part of biomedical sciences and modules: life, nutrition, movement, reproduction, homeostasis, and control. It studies the normal human structure, function, integration, and regulation of physiological mechanisms and introduces their relevance to the clinical context.

The preclinical phase - combines the disciplines of pathology and pharmacology and is aimed at studying the difference between normal and disease, damage to organ systems, clinical, histopathological, laboratory, and radiological manifestations, and mastery of relevant clinical skills.

Clinical phase - serves to acquire a deep and fundamental knowledge of the complete clinical disciplines, formation of independent clinical reasoning, and management of emergency medical conditions. Elective courses are also included (29 credits in total).

The student receives basic knowledge about problems and case-based methods from the first year of education. Practical training is directed in the clinical skills and simulation training system, which is well equipped with different simulators and manikins; teaching and evaluation (OSCE, OSPE) are carried out in this center; The student begins to learn clinical skills in the first semester in the simulation and skill lab center, continues through the training and reaches the maximum in the twelfth semester in real clinical environments.

Each discipline in the program is adequate to the appropriate level and is based on pre-requisite knowledge and skills gained by medical students. It is mentioned that the program is fully integrated, however, the program includes some level of integration. The medical program includes a partly integrated curriculum. The horizontal and vertical integration principle integrates the program and includes transdisciplinary modules. From the site visits, the rooms were seen for small group work, case-based learning, and problem-based learning. Teaching and learning methods reported by program directors and academic staff align with the methodological necessities of education in most disciplines.

The duration of the program is six years, including 12 semesters, and its volume is - 360 credits. One credit equals 25 hours; The total hours is 9000 hours; (6326 hours are contact hours, and 4299 hours are for independent work). The student's daily workload, calculated over 15 academic weeks, does not exceed five contact hours daily.

After finishing the program's necessities, a graduate of a one-level medical education program may be employed as a junior physician, who shall perform the duties of a doctor according to the instructions and under the responsibility of an independent medical practitioner (Article 5, Law of Georgia on Medical Practice).

Mandatory courses are distributed in 341 ECTS, elective components in 14 ECTS, and for Free courses there are 5 ECTS allocated.

The research components cover 19 ECTS, and it is distributed in three parts:

1. From Student to Scientist A – 4 ECTS, includes the following disciplines: Research Ethics, Evidence - based Medicine, Biostatistics, Basics of Medical Research, Study Design.
2. From Student to Scientist B- 6 ECTS, includes the following disciplines: Public Health and Epidemiology, Processing Data and Analyses Research Methodology.

3. From Student to Scientist C – 9 ECTS includes the following disciplines: Translational Medicine, Clinical Trials and Good Clinical Practice (GCP) Scholarly Project.

For Georgian Language there are 12 ECTS dedicated, and it is present under the course Communication and collaboration A (4 ECTS), Communication and collaboration B (4ECTS) and Communication and collaboration C (4ECTS).

There are three main phases in the programme:

- Basic phase - includes an introductory part of biomedical sciences and modules united by system functional criteria: life, nutrition, movement, reproduction, homeostasis, control. It serves the study of normal human structure, function and development, integration and regulation of physiological mechanisms and understanding their relevance to the clinical context.
- preclinical phase - combines pathology of organ systems, the disciplines of diagnosis and basic pharmacology and is aimed at the norm and the difference between disease, damage to organ systems, functional To study the causes of deficiencies and diseases, clinical, histopathological, laboratory and radiological manifestations and to master the relevant clinical skills, which are visible and measurable for teaching and evaluation;
- Clinical phase - serves a complete clinical picture of the main nosologies, their differentiation, conservative and surgical management.

The clinical skills component of the programme was developed according to a unified principle and disseminated at different stages of the curriculum - from simple to complex according to the principle of gradation. The last semester of teaching was fully devoted to practice

The annotation of the program and the curriculum will be uploaded on the website of the University.

Individualized education programs offer students appropriate formats and conditions of teaching-learning and assessment to students with different requirements, special educational needs, and different academic readiness, as well as opportunities for an adapted environment and appropriate human resources if required.

The Expert Panel approved that the medical education program was planned well based on the learning outcomes. It is essential to consider that the program is well formulated according to the documents. However, the efficiency of implementation will be judged with precise indicators once the program is running. In summary, the content and structure of the program, and the teaching and learning methods, are up to date and meet the requirements. However, it is important to note that there are no performance assessment data before running the program.

It should be mentioned that under the current legislation, the institutions must provide an action plan to the Center for Educational Quality Enhancement within 6 months from the approval of the subject benchmarks on bringing the education program of Medicine into compliance with the current subject benchmark statement.

Evidences/indicators

- Avicenna Self-Evaluation Report
- Subject Benchmark Statement of Higher Education in Medicine
- Site visit to teaching and clinical facilities including skill lab and simulation center, laboratories, classes and auditoriums, hospitals, etc.
- Interviews with program head, and heads of PHBM, Pre-clinical and Clinical department and academic and invited staff

Recommendations:

- Upload the program and the full curriculum in Georgian and English Language on the Website so that it is easily accessed by interested parties

Suggestions:

- Planning for a higher level of integration (based on the integration ladder) and moving to a fully integrated curriculum between basic and clinical sciences, is suggested.

Best Practices (if applicable):

- The University has a well-designed simulation training center and a variety of simulators to support the educational process.

Evaluation

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

3.3 Assessment of Learning Outcomes

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The Self-evaluation report clearly describes the Avicenna - Batumi Medical University learning outcomes assessment system.

The syllabi give clear information on the required and elective courses, and the number of hours allocated per course. A variety of assessment methods are mentioned in the self-evaluation report to ensure the achievement of learning outcomes. To develop a measurable, achievable, and transparent assessment system based on the mission and vision of the University, the first step was the formulation of the learning outcomes of the program. Based on the achievement of learning outcomes, The components of a student's assessment are the midterm and the final evaluation, the sum of which constitutes the final assessment.

Mid-term assessment includes assessment of the intermediate exam plus some written assessments (essay, case study, summary, etc.), oral exams (discussion, presentation, workgroup presentation, etc.), and other forms of assessment (role play, imitation, simulation, poster, etc.).

Forms of final assessment are final exams, research projects, or other types of assessment. Avicenna - Batumi Medical University has a modern simulation center for medical students which is used both for education and assessment. In the clinical phase, Objective Structured Clinical Evaluation (OSCE) will be used for assessing clinical competence, including history taking, patient examination, communication skills, professionalism, manual skills, clinical reasoning and problem-solving skills, and management of diseases. Exams are monitored in the University by the deputy for academic and strategic direction and the head of the University's quality assurance. Direct observation will also be used to assess the student's ability to adequately perform a task in a situation close to the real situation. Another assessment method is 360° evaluation, which refers to student self-assessment and observers' assessment. This method allows testing the student's knowledge and skills, and attitude towards patients, colleagues, and other healthcare personnel.

Hereby, in some syllabi, there is not written minimal barrier for midterm and for the final exam, for example, syllabi: AV -19 (block Blood), AV-20 (med microbiology), AV-22 (GI Block), AV -23 (neuroscience), AV-27 (pediatric), and others.

The assessment mechanism aligns with the University's human and material capacity; Avicenna - Batumi Medical University has a modern simulation center for medical students that can be used as a center for OSCE assessment.

"Transparent criteria are used to assess student learning. They also inform students about goals achieved, gaps, and ways of improvement. The qualification commission will study in detail the personal file of each student, taking into account the electronic system of educational process management, the information system of higher education management and the acts issued by the University, it will find out whether the student has fulfilled the requirements stipulated by the educational program. Suppose there is a defect in the student's file. In that case, the school dean's office ensures that the necessary measures are taken to eliminate it in the shortest possible time (if

the student causes the defect - it gives him the optimal time for correction and the necessary recommendations, and in case of a defect in the University proceedings - it prepares a draft of the relevant legal act/takes appropriate actions).

The qualification commission prepares a report for submission to the school board. The commission's report should mention the qualification and specialty to be awarded to each graduate.

The students will receive feedback based on the results of the exam for improving their performance. They will also receive feedback based on a 360-degree evaluation. The University reported some mechanism for appealing the final or midterm grades; however, a separate section for appeals with guidelines would give students more understanding of their rights.

In the self-evaluation report, it is mentioned that the University academic staff underwent special training at the Centre for Simulation Learning of the Recep Tayyip Erdogan University of the Republic of Turkey; for the planning of teaching and evaluation,, In the interview, the academic staff reported participating in the training workshops in the assessment, however , invited teaching staff said they were not provided any formal teacher training in the field of assessment methods to enable them to understand different assessment methods and how to improve their question writing skills. Workshops in the field of assessment, such as preparing valid and reliable question banks, competence and performance assessment, standard setting, and so on, are suggested for invited staff.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-evaluation report.
- Site visit
- Interviews with academic staff, program head, and heads of PHBM, Pre-clinical and Clinical departments
- Educational program description
- Teaching courses syllabi

Recommendations:

- Reflect minimal barriers for the midterm and final exam in all syllabi

Suggestions:

- The invited teaching staff should have formal teacher training workshops in the assessment field.
- The University is suggested to have a more transparent mechanism regarding appealing the final or midterm grades; a more detailed guidelines would give students more understanding of their rights.

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

4. Staff of the HEI

HEI ensures that the staff employed in the institution (academic, scientific, invited, administrative, support) are highly qualified, so that they are able to effectively manage educational, scientific and administrative processes and achieve the goals defined by the

strategic plan of the institution. On its hand, the institution constantly provides its staff with professional development opportunities and improved work conditions.

4.1. Staff Management

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The Staff Management Policy of Avicenna – Batumi Medical University regulates Principles of Personnel Management and Development, Selection and Employment of Personnel, Staff, Evaluation System, Remuneration of Personnel, Personnel Motivation System and other important issues.

Academic and Invited staff.

Affiliation is regulated by the document “Academic staff Affiliation, Academic and visiting staff work Determination of workload and Labor Payment method policy. “

The academic staff of the University consists of professors [10 (affiliated 4)], associate professors [15 (affiliated 6)], assistant professors [6 (affiliated 5)] and assistants [23 (affiliated 16)].

Invited Staff who is employed by another HEI, have the status of an invited professor/associate professor, depending on which academic position they are elected at the other HEI. Other Invited staff have the status of an invited senior teacher - a person with a doctor’s degree or the status of an invited teacher - a person without the academic degree of doctor.

The number of academic staff is 54 and invited staff - 95; no full-time equivalency has been reported by the University, therefore the ratio of academic to total staff, teaching staff to students, etc. that are expressed in numbers of persons employed have no significant meaning.

During the interviews with staff, the panel had the opportunity to meet a group of well qualified, enthusiastic academic staff members, while the picture was not the same in the meeting with invited staff. It was even noticed that one of the interviewees had some difficulties in communicating in English. According to the CV and additional documentation part of the staff does not match the requirement from sectoral benchmark (*At least 3 years of teaching experience in the English language programme in Medicine or experience of medical activities in English in a clinic operating abroad for at least 1 year or experience of teaching/research activities in English in the field of Biomedicine for at least 1 year in a research institution operating abroad; or completion of an English-language pre- or post-diploma programme, as evidenced by the relevant document; or Certificate of English Language Competence, at least B2 level (IELTS, TOEFL, Cambridge English, UNICert)*).

For example, in the case described above, the English language competency as it has been realized during the site interview does not match requirements. At the same time, in some cases, lecturers do not have qualification in clinical field (still studying residency).

During the interview the academic staff mentioned that they had trainings in modern teaching methodology, which was supported from the university, but invited staff said that the experience which they have is from other universities, and they were not involved in any training process from “Avicenna” university.

Interviewed academic staff feel that the HEI takes care of their professional development. According to SER, the direction of the professional development of the staff is defined based on the results of the staff evaluation and includes a list of development activities. Not all interviewed academic staff experienced this process, because they haven’t gone through evaluation yet; some were aware of it. The panel suggests that this process is formalized, and each individual member of academic staff should be responsible to submit and agree with the HEI a personal annual development plan that binds both parties. Academic staff hiring process is regulated by the “personnel management policy”; while this seems to be the case for academic staff, during the interview with invited staff some that they have been invited and by the program officials. The panel recognizes that since the University is not in operation phase yet, there are practical problems in recruiting as employability cannot be officially guaranteed, but this should not become the rule.

According to the “personnel management policy” there are different requirements for the academic position (for example: for professors 6 years teaching experience, for associate professors 3 years teaching experience) – and in some cases there is a mismatch between required and received documents, which proves that the competition process was not transparent.

Administrative staff.

The number of administration and help personnel is 28 in total. According to the provided CVs there are some cases where the current position of the person at the University of Avicenna is not clearly written; It is understandable since present CVs are development for the purpose of employment in Avicenna but should reflect Avicenna status after being employed. At the same time incompliance between Job description and personal CV was detected - for example: according to the job description (JD) of deputy dean, mandatory requirement is working experience in the similar position for 2 (two) years; the person who is hired on this position does not have the required experience. Same case for the person who is hired as a head of clinical of simulation teaching and evaluation center (according to JD, educational level at master’s degree it is mandatory, while the hired person’s CV proves that she is nurse (not even at a BA level). For both IT managers and IT specialists, mandatory requirement is working on the similar position for 1 and more years, which is not proved from CV, there are some other cases as well.

It was also noted that most of the Heads of the administrative services are employed on a part-time basis. Since Avicenna is at the phase for planning all its services, and especially those which are related to students, (e.g., international relations, marketing, IT services), it should ensure that the heads of the administrative services are working at full capacity in planning and implementing the functions of their units.

Evidences/indicators

- The Staff Management Policy of Avicenna – Batumi Medical University (Approved by “General Meeting of Partners of Avicenna – Batumi Medical University, LLC 21 July, 2022. Protocol N 01-03/01 Appendix N4
- Academic staff Affiliation, Academic and visiting staff work Determination of workload and labor
- Payment method policy (Approved by “General Meeting of Partners of Avicenna – Batumi Medical University, LLC 29 June 2022. Protocol N 01-03/02 Appendix N4
- SER
- Personnel CVs
- Interview results

Recommendations:

- Introduce an annual staff development policy
- Ensure that program providers meet language competency requirements (according to the sectoral benchmark)
- Review qualifications of program teaching staff
- Staff hiring process must be transparent so that best candidates are selected, according to corresponding the Job Description requirements
- Provide proper training to all program providers in modern learning and teaching methods in medical education so that they all share the same principles of teaching and learning approaches

Suggestions:

- It is suggested to show all hired persons (employees) position in corresponding CVs
- Increase the employment of fulltime staff for heads of key administrative services

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

4.2. Academic/Scientific and Invited Staff Workload

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The affiliation of "Avicenna" academic staff is regulated by the document "Rules for affiliation of academic staff, determination of workload of academic and Invited staff and Remuneration of work".

An academic official, including a professor, associate professor, assistant professor, or assistant, is required to adhere to the terms outlined in their employment contract.

An academic official's educational activities include developing classroom workload (contact hours with students - pedagogical workload), developing new study programs, modules, or individual program components, as well as non-auditory workload. These activities include preparation of lectures and knowledge tests, editing student papers or other assessments of knowledge, and developing new study programs, modules, or individual program components.

According to the document "Rules for affiliation of academic staff, determination of workload of academic and Invited staff and Remuneration of work" the mandatory research activities for academic staff (except for the Assistant) will start from 2023, therefore since all academic and invited staff is newly hired, their research activity corresponds to previous engagements, before joining Avicenna.

The mandatory annual academic workload at Avicenna's staff unit is determined by position as follows: a) Professor: 300 hours b) Associate Professor: 330 hours c) Assistant Professor: 350 hours d) Assistant: 400 hours. The annual teaching workload of academic staff is determined at the beginning of the academic year, based on the submission of the School of Medicine, and includes lectures, practical training, group work, seminar, curation and laboratory workload. Other non-teaching activities (preparation of syllabi and teaching materials, student counseling, administration of exams, scientific-research activities, etc., are also included in staff workload.

The university determines the number of students in the group in the process of completing the training course/clinical component provided by the program as follows:

For lectures - a maximum of 90 students per lecturer. b) For practical lessons in natural, experimental, computer, and technical sciences in laboratory/foreign languages - a maximum of 20 students. c) For practical teaching (curation) and simulation teaching in clinical disciplines of healthcare/psychology specialties - a maximum of 8-12 students. d) For other practical/seminar classes/group work - a maximum of 30 students. The panel would like to point out certain incompliances between the provided document and sectoral benchmark. *[i.e., The existence of an appropriate environment for research/practical work of students (at least 5-6 students) should be considered, following the established safety rules. At the University/training clinic and/or affiliated clinic (on a contract basis), during the study course/curation, the patient/student ratio should be no more than 6 students per patient].*

Evidences/indicators

- Rules for affiliation of academic staff, determination of workload of academic and Invited staff and Remuneration of work".
- SER
- Interview results

Recommendations:

- It is recommended to determine the number of students in Laboratory work according to the sectoral benchmark (at least 5-6) and in ICU class (at the hospital) according to the sectoral benchmark (no more than 6). These will have an impact on staff workload.

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

5. Students and Their Support Services

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

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Assignment, suspension and termination of student status, mobility, qualification granting and recognition of education are regulated by 'Regulation of Avicenna-Batumi Medical University' and 'Rule for Regulation Teaching Process at Avicenna-Batumi Medical University'. Based on the fact, that the study program is in English, and some of the prospected students will be foreigners, the university has obligation of providing applicants and students with all documentation in English - "By signing the contract, the student confirms that he is familiar with the university regulations posted on the university's website" (Academic Contract 9.4). Although, it's written in the SER, that all legal acts/regulations and information related to the discussed issues in the SER, are posted on the university's website, in Georgian and English languages, at the time of the site-visit, both the University's website and the electronic portal lack yet most of the documents (for example, Code of Ethics for Students). Also, the translation process neither on the website, nor on the electronic portal is finished yet. During the interviews, the representatives of the HEI clarified that both platforms are still in the process of development and translation of all necessary documents will be fully provided for the beginning of academic process. In this sense, the SER and the information gained during the interview, don't comply with each other.

The external and internal mobility process is regulated by the Law of Georgian on Higher Education, which protects students' right of mobility and determines, that students should be informed about the program's accreditation period within a reasonable timeframe. Also, in section 3.2 of the contract form signed between the student and the HEI, subsection "T" states that the student has the right to enjoy mobility and transfer to another higher educational institution from the second year of study, following the procedure established by Georgia's legislation. Furthermore, according to subsection "d" in section 3.3 of the same contract form, the University is obligated to facilitate the student's realization of their rights as defined by Georgian legislation and the university's regulations. Therefore, panel believes that the University - Student contract should stipulate that students will be informed about the termination of study program (if such occasion takes place in the future) well in advance, and they will be timely

provided with all necessary documentation for mobility process. This will additionally protect students' right to participate in the mobility process on time.

According to Article 56, Clause 56.1 of the University Statute, the University is obliged to ensure a fair evaluation of the student's knowledge, for which it will develop appropriate procedures, including the regulation regarding evaluation appeals described in Article 10 of the University Educational Process Regulation. The Head of Student and Graduate Support and Career Development Service, as he has the function of consultation with students and supports implementing students' rights, couldn't determine the procedure of academic evaluation appeal process. Considering that he is the only one currently employed at the Students and Graduate Support Service, it is necessary that this service has full understanding of all main procedures related to student rights' implementation (see relative recommendation in standard 2.1).

As it's declared in the academic contract, amendments or additions to the contract can only be made by written and signed agreement between the parties. In the contract, it also is not mentioned what period in advance will the student be informed about future amendments and whether he/she or his/her representative will be able to participate in the development of the amendments.

The institution has a mechanism for the protection of student rights and lawful interests, supported by student ombudsman and student self-government. Also, it's mentioned in the SER and related documents, that counseling of students on legal issues is provided by the legal service. The direct, transparent, and equal election procedure and further management of Student Self-Government will be conducted in accordance with the student self-government framework regulations established by the university, according to which, the first elections will be held after enrollment of 100 students or after enrollment of students on at least 3 courses. The established threshold creates a probable risk, that if on the first year, the threshold is not achieved, full implementation of students' rights, forming the student self-government and therefore selecting student ombudsman and ensuring their work in terms of protecting students' rights and interests, will be doubtful.

The student self-government elects from its members a defender of students' rights - a Student Ombudsman, whose main task is to protect student rights and interests at all levels, with any subject of the university. But it isn't clarified in the Regulations of the student ombudsman of Avicenna, at the beginning of student ombudsman's activity, by whom, when and how long will they be consulted about all legal issues and procedures they would be in touch with during next 2 years.

According to the statute of the Avicenna student ombudsman: a) receives statements from students and other persons regarding alleged violations or restrictions of the student's rights at the university; b) advises students on the rights and obligations of students defined by legislation and other legal acts of the university; c) is entitled to apply to the structural unit of the university to receive information/explanation on the fact of a specific violation/restriction; d) is authorized to request a specific document kept at the university, which is necessary for solving the issue; e) is authorized to submit a recommendation to the academic council of the university about the existence of a specific limitation and ways to solve it; f) performs the function of a mediator in a conflict situation arising with the participation of students; g) participates in disciplinary proceedings against the student and ensures the protection of the student's rights; h) develops recommendations on promoting the realization of students' rights and submits them to the Academic Council; i) cooperates with structural units of the university (student support service, legal service, main educational unit, etc.), student unions of other higher educational institutions and human rights organizations; k) develops an annual report on the realization of students' rights and submits it to the student self-government. The student ombudsman is elected by the student self-government of the university by secret ballot, based on direct elections among students. Also, the student self-government is eligible for demoting the student ombudsman on the basis of not fulfilling the taken responsibilities.

The University student support services, which is the responsible unit for supporting the activities of the ombudsman according to the University regulations, shall be obliged to ensure the adequacy of services towards the ombudsman in counselling and providing support/feedback to students as needed, in general and on case-by-case basis.

The panel is also concerned regarding the capacity of the student ombudsman, as in the regulations of the student ombudsman, it is determined, and it is one student.

As the student ombudsman is by himself/herself a student and has obligations of fulfilling academic requirements, it is possible, that serving 1080 students (in the future) and at the same time following his/her academic studies, will disturb his/her academic performance and introduce risks of not fulfilling increased students' demands. Apparently, the ombudsman needs to be supported by a team in carrying out his/her duties. A solution could be the formation of a support team composed by students, which are selected by the ombudsman and/or self-government and lead by the ombudsman and by this way widening the structure. This will be, from one side, supporting mechanism for the already elected ombudsman and on the other hand, guarantee a full provision of ombudsman's office's services to all students.

Evidences/indicators

- Avicenna University Statute
- Regulation of Avicenna-Batumi Medical University, LLC (Approved by General Meeting of Partners, Protocol N01-03/01, Appendix N2. 21.07.2022)
- Rule for Regulation Teaching Process at Avicenna-Batumi Medical University, LLC (Approved by General Meeting of Partners, Protocol N01-03/03, Appendix N1. 01.08.2022)
- Form of Contract signed between Student and HEI (Approved by Rector's Order N01-09/25 Appendix N1.07.11.2022)
- Framework regulation of student self-government of Avicenna - Batumi Medical University LLC (Approved by General Meeting of Partners, Protocol N01-03/05, Appendix N4. 15.11.2022)
- University Educational Process Regulation
- Regulations of the student ombudsman of Avicenna - Batumi Medical University LLC (Approved by General Meeting of Partners, Protocol N01-03/04, Appendix N4. 30.08.2022)
- Interviews
- University website and Electronic Management System
- SER

Recommendations:

- Provide clear and accurate information and documents concerning students activities, rights and obligations in both English and Georgian in all communication means
- Ensure that administrative staff has full understanding of all main procedures related to student rights' implementation
- Abolition of threshold for announcing first student self-government elections

Suggestions:

- University should determine by regulation the time limit of providing students with all necessary documentation for external mobility if the program termination occurs
- Contracts of the Legal and Student support services' bodies should include counselling, support and proactive feedback obligations towards the student ombudsman
- Creating legal basis in the regulation of the student ombudsman of Avicenna, for widening the structure according to the increase of students contingent in the next years.
- Ensure that the level of support to the student ombudsman of Avicenna, follows the increase in the number of students in the next years
- Determine in the Student-University contract, what period in advance will the student be informed about future amendments and whether he/she or his/her representative will be able to participate in the development of the amendments.

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

5.2 Student Support Services

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

In the organizational structure of the HEI, a structural unit of Support and Career Development Service for Students and Graduates has been created, the main purpose of which is active communication with students and graduates, provision of consultation and support as well as organization of extra-curricular activities for students during the process of their studies. During the site visit and interviews with the Head of Support and Career development Service for Students and Graduates, one issue of discussion appeared: A discrepancy regarding the readiness of the University to support students (especially new ones) between the description in the SER and the impression the panel received from the Head of the service. There is only one person employed in the Student Support unit, the head himself, employed on a part-time basis. He, on the other hand, must fulfill his academic activity as an assistant, and he will continue to do that in the future too. From the interviews, it was evident that he lacks the required competence for a proper implementation of students' rights' procedures and services to be provided to the students.

The panel received no clear answers to the question as to whether any planning is in place for welcoming new students, proving initial support, and direction, etc. According to the Job description, the Head of the student support services should have at least one year of work experience in the current direction, but the CV of the Head lacks this experience and doesn't comply with Avicenna's requirements. This raises a risk that the student supporting body in the administration may not adequately fulfill its goals. To prevent the risk, the staff should be increased and further trained.

Lack of staff is evident in yet another case as well – the structural unit of Support and Career Development Service for Students and Graduates takes responsibility of supporting the integration of the HEI international students in a foreign country, including providing information to students about Georgia, Ajara region, Batumi and the HEI, as well as offering services for obtaining a right of enrollment, visa application, border crossing, accommodation, and insurance services, through the university or organizations which the University cooperates with. The panel asked about the mechanism of implementation of those services and about which other organizations were going to help the unit. The Head clarified that there are no current partners and the unit itself (so the Head himself, as he is the only employed in his structure) manages all tasks, but the International Relations and Strategic Planning Service is responsible for foreign students, although not sure which services are handled by international relations and which ones by Student services. This raises another risk, that international students may not receive proper induction with regard to both academic and social/cultural integration.

On the other hand, the HEI doesn't have any mechanism to stay in touch with graduates' performance in their home countries. As we were informed, the prospected students will be mostly from India, and presumably, after graduating, most of them will return in their home country. Although it may seem too early for this, since the first graduates will appear 6 years later, some initial planning should be in place. The HEI could elaborate ways for gaining feedback from the Alumni and their compliance with home country's requirements and tracking their license exams results. This will be provided partially by the Alumni club, but it needs further organization, as building ties with future graduates should start way before their graduation. This will improve not only educational process quality, but also the support

service of the students and graduates too. But the university representatives mentioned during the interviews that they don't have such a plan or mechanism.

The HEI has defined and declared such areas of the Students and Graduates' Career Promotion and Support directions. Based on the discussions during the interview, the system seems not fully developed yet. The Head of Support and Career Development Service for Students and Graduates stated that he had never attended meetings with prospective employers. The panel is therefore under the impression that negotiations between the HEI and the employers didn't cover all necessary aspects and views of the students and graduates' career promotion and supporting. The panel didn't receive any response when asked what recommendations were given to the future employers by the representatives of the University about supporting students' career development and academic performance at the same time. On the other hand, representatives of prospective employers responded to the same question positively, (i.e., that they got recommendations), but also, they couldn't clarify any. There was no evidence about a mechanism through which employers provide feedback to the HEI to improve academic process with the latest market trends and needs. Apparently, there is a need to start planning the mechanisms for a two-direction communication between the University and employers for providing support to students and graduates for employment during their academic activity and beginning of working life and also feedback regarding the study program.

The panel was also interested in the transportation issue. The campus and main building of the university is in the outer part of the city and the current capacity of public transport isn't sufficient for the increased number of student commuters. The University's response was that the University promotes healthy life and the use of bicycles; still public transportation means should be adequately available for student commuting.

During further checking of the documentation provided by the HEI, the panel came across some grey areas. The person that was presented during the interviews as the head of the student support service unit, hasn't reported this job in his CV listed job experience. On the other hand, another person in the administrative body declared in her CV that she is the Head of the student support unit. Obviously, this created another dissonance about the department, as well as the recruiting process of administrating staff, generally.

Psychological support for the HEI students is provided free of charge by the structural unit of Psychological Support and Improvement of Interpersonal Communication within the structure of the HEI. The Head of the structural unit clarified that she would hold a meeting with students about the service and by herself informing them about the opportunity to use the center's services. In addition, in the job description of the Head of this structural unit (Psychological Support and Improvement of Interpersonal Communication) is declared, that degree of psychologist and 3 years' experience of psychological counselling/training is obligatory. Regarding this information, the current Head of the unit lacks not only work experience, but also qualifications as she isn't a psychologist. This is another issue of job compliance in the student support field (relevant recommendation in 2.1).

Another issue of discussion was the social support policy, mainly financial, established by the university. The social support fund for students is determined as 15,000 GEL per year, during the next 6 years. The main incompliance is between the fund and the student number. The university plans to gradually increase its student number up to 1080, but in the budget, social support fund doesn't increase. Deputy Rector for Administrative and Financial Affairs also agreed about the issue and replied, that University is planning to discuss increasing the fund in 2025. So, as we understood, the problem won't be solved before that. Perhaps the HEI should introduce a policy that allocates a certain percentage of the budget to various directions of social support services. Deputy Rector for Administrative and Financial Affairs clarified that it will be determined after starting the academic process according to the demand. During the interviews, the same person approved that the university hasn't clarified in its policy the criteria of selection of students who will get the financial support. The special unit - the Council of Social Issues - will be providing the evaluation process, but the basis of evaluation, criteria for more objective selection should be established.

The lack of financial resources, criteria of selection for financial support and increased number of prospective students with the same volume of funds for the next years, raises a risk, that gradually more and more students will be not able to access the social services.

Financial support for students can envisage a short-term (no more than 1 month) rescheduling of payment of tuition fee; a long-term (from 1 month to 1 year) rescheduling of payment of tuition fee; reducing the amount of tuition fee; awarding a scholarship to a student and funding the student's training/participation in a conference. It would be more supportive for students if they had the opportunity to pay the tuition fee by instalment and include the mechanism in the financial support policy. The HEI should determine policy for providing, on one hand, scholarships and, on the other hand, full granting of tuition for certain students (e.g., for excellent academic performance), so that the amounts of the scholarships and criteria by which students will be awarded and motivated for excellence are known to them. In both cases criteria must be objective, transparent and communicated to students.

The university lacks the choice of cultural and sport activities as is mentioned in the SER. According to the Head of the Student Support Service, discussions with a close-by tennis-court establishment about being available to students are in progress. The university should plan to extend support to students in various sport and cultural activities.

The panel completely understands the fact that Avicenna University is currently at a preparation phase since it is still expecting the results of the authorization and the program accreditation, before accepting students. However, it is important that the support mechanisms for students should be planned and be in place and not addressed in an ad-hoc way when students arrive. The University should pay serious attention to providing student services as it has done in planning the teaching and learning activities.

Evidences/indicators

- Regulation of Avicenna-Batumi Medical University, LLC
- Regulation of the School of Medicine of Avicenna-Batumi medical University, LLC
- Career support policy for Avicenna - Batumi Medical University students
- Student Social Support Policy of Avicenna - Batumi Medical University
- On approval of the Avicenna- Batumi Medical University Budget for 2023
- On discussion-agreement on the main indicators of the long-term (2024-2029) forecast budget of "Avicenna - Batumi Medical University" LLC
- SER
- Interviews

Recommendations:

- The competence and experience of administrative staff in the student support service providing units should be relevant to the job requirements, and staff should be increased and additionally trained
- Establish a plan by working together with prospective employers, on how to support students interests in combining working and studying in a beneficial way and set a mechanism for collecting employers' feedback that could help improving the teaching and learning process
- Increase the social support fund (including financial support), in the first year and also gradually in the following years, for students equal and full accessibility to the services and elaborate objective criteria and clarification of student selection procedure.
- Establish scholarship policy based on objective, prespecified criteria, known to students, and clarify the action plan for encouraging students with high academic performance
- Improve students sport/cultural activity supporting mechanism and facilities.

Suggestions:

- Solve the issue of transporting students from the city to the university and communicate with the city hall about the prospected increased demand of the public transport to the university area, prepare to solve the problem by the HEI itself or together with the official services.
- Consider the possibility for students to pay the tuition fee by instalment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Determine a way of tracking alumni’s performance in their home countries’ license exams for further improvement of student educational and career planning process
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements

6. Research, development and/or other creative work

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

<p>6.1 Research Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ HEI, based on its type and specifics of its fields, carries out research/creative activities. ○ Ensuring the effectiveness of doctoral research supervision ○ HEI has public, transparent and fair procedures for the assessment and defense of dissertations which are relevant to the specifics of the field
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>HEI is not yet an authorized higher education institution and at this stage there is lack of the possibility to have specific ongoing research projects.</p> <p>The university has clearly stated in its mission that the institution, although it has applied for authorization as teaching University, declares that it is research and innovation oriented. For this purpose, the University has developed a "Scientific Research Development Policy" and has established "Research Center of Health and Longevity". The University has also developed a rule for supporting university scientific research, which ensures that the institution can carry out research, development, creative activities, that will contribute to scientific, social, economic, cultural development on regional, national, and international levels.</p> <p>The institution has a clear vision of being an implementer of research and has defined research directions that include: Public health care, Biomedicine, and Clinical medicine. However no specific research projects in those directions have emerged yet, and consequently no results or scientific output on Avicenna’s name is listed yet.</p> <p>Academic staff is experienced in research from previous professional and scientific engagement and has carried out research in the following areas that are related to ensuring human well-being and healthiness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study of biomarkers associated with respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and their synthesizing genetic loci • Detection, prevention and management of regional, epidemiological, socio-economic markers of bronchial asthma and COPD • Post-covid population health • Liver transplantation and immunology • Growth and development, global development of prepubescent and early pubertal children • Biomarkers and genetic aspects of diseases of the cardiovascular system • Cancer screening in the asymptomatic population using multiple tumor markers • Coagulopathies Study in different cohorts • Addictology • Diabetes and thyroidology

- Air and sea water pollution research
- Women's rights and prevention of femicide

The university is willing to support research in its main research direction as a priority but also support the individual research interest of the academic/scientific staff.

Avicenna should be commended for its clear and strong commitment in research. According to Strategic and Action plans Avicenna's plans to develop doctoral programs in the immediate future; this action could be the means for achieving its goal. Hopefully Avicenna will see its vision to be realized.

HEI supports the integration of teaching and research, cooperates with different institutions and memorandums that have been signed for research collaboration purposes were made available to the panel.

In the self-assessment report, HEI notes that one of its important motos is "striving for quality in the educational and research process".

The HEI developed a scientific research ethics regulation and established a scientific research ethics commission. This regulation aims to safeguard and enhance the rights, safety, dignity, and well-being of research participants at the university, to foster ethical research that benefits science and society equally, and to provide a trustworthy, proportional, and responsible ethical evaluation of research.

To provide a plagiarism check mechanism, the HEI signed a contract with Turnitin, which, after obtaining Avicenna's institutional authorization and educational programme accreditation, ensures that the University uses TURNITIN's anti-plagiarism programme in compliance with the obligations under the contract signed with the company. The anti-plagiarism system will be administered by the Health and Longevity Research Centre of the University.

The role of Scientific Research Ethics Commission is to assess the protection of research participants' rights and safety by evaluating the ethical considerations in research conducted at the university, promoting the culture of research, and fostering communication between researchers and the public, while balancing scientific and public interests.

Overall, the panel's opinion is that the University is at a good stage to carry and support its research activities, having already developed relative regulations, defined research priorities and research evaluation methods – described in 6.3, and acquired academic staff with previous research experience. The panel expects to see the University to be active in research in the immediate future and starting to build its own research activity record, which currently under the present circumstance does not exist.

Evidences/indicators

- Science Research Development Policy
- Scientific Research Ethics Regulation
- The Mission of Avicenna - Batumi Medical University
- Academic Honesty policy
- Interviews with Academic and Medical School Council Members, Program Head, Dean of the School of Medicine, Academic Staff
- Self-Evaluation Report

Recommendations:

- Enhance the efforts to get involved in research activities and produce outputs under the name of Avicenna University in order to start building a research profile.

Suggestions:

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

6.2. Research Support and Internationalisation

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Existence of a research supporting structure in the organizational structure of the university is Research Center of Health and Longevity.

The mechanisms for implementing science research policy at Avicenna - Batumi Medical University are:

- a) Existence of a research supporting structure in the organizational structure of the university – Research Center of Health and Longevity.
- b) Implementation of research supporting mechanisms - research university funding system
- c) Promoting the development of research skills of academic and visiting staff of the university (trainings/retraining)
- d) Implementation of scientific research in accordance with the university's research priorities
- e) Support for scientific research of academic and invited staff of the university
- f) Forming a network of local partners in the research field
- g) Formation of a network of international partners in the research field
- h) Participation of the university in national/local research grant competitions
- i) Participation in international research grant competitions
- k) Integration of research results into the educational program of the university
- k) Promoting the involvement of students in the research conducted by the university
- m) Implementation of an objective evaluation system of research results and research productivity
- n) Adherence to high standards of research ethics and academic integrity.

In accordance with the abovementioned research policy implementation mechanisms, the university has developed development tasks corresponding to these mechanisms.

The HEI has developed a plan for achieving internationalization that includes a systematic search for international partners with similar research objectives in order to form international research consortiums for the development of grant applications and/or for implementation of international research activities, co-financed by universities.

For the internationalization, attracting and supporting new staff in research, the HEI offers institutions in the region to establish an association, the purpose of which will be implementation of joint research tailored to the needs and priorities of the region, internationalization, and commercialization of its results. Avicenna has signed the MoUs with the following HEIs: Danilo Halytsky Lviv National Medical University (Ukraine), Ivan Horbachevsky Ternopil National Medical University, Bukovian State Medical University (Ukraine), National Aviation University of Ukraine. University is also conducting active negotiations with the Milan Medical University. Successful negotiation took place with Turkey's Rize Recep Tayyip Erdogan Medical University and Armenia's Yerevan State University and memorandums will be signed in the immediate future. During the interview it was identified that HEI takes care to motivate young personnel, including students and graduates, and promote proper planning and realization of their scientific potential.

HEI declares that it “plans to use the results of research activities in terms of commercialization to increase the practical value of the research, to establish a solid position in the region for the purpose of

commercialization in the scientific/research direction and to integrate in this direction into the international network”.

The academic environment in the HEI ensures freedom of research, academic staff is free to define the object of their research, however, the research freedom is related to academic commitment and integrity, which implies that the research process and research results will not harm the public and that the research will be conducted in accordance with the universal ethical values of the staff.

According to the Scientific Research Ethics Regulations, the scientific-research project, as well as the assessment of the conducted scientific research project report, implementation in accordance with the requirements of international or domestic legal acts regulating human research, protection of the general rights of the research participants during the research process is assessed by the Scientific Research Ethics Commission, which is authorized to:

- a) evaluate the risks and potential benefits of research
- b) evaluate the scientific validity of the research project, in relation to the possibility of obtaining reliable and objective information
- c) evaluate the tools and procedures for obtaining the informed consent of the research participant
- d) evaluate the process of selection of research participants by the researcher
- e) evaluate means of encouraging research participants provided by the research project
- f) evaluate the adequacy of the measures intended for the confidential protection of the information collected about the participants in the research process
- g) determine the absence of possible risks of discrimination in the planned research;
- h) ensure that the interests of the local population are considered when conducting international research
- i) evaluate other issues that may have an impact on considering the research to be conducted ethically
- j) to evaluate the research reports submitted because of the completion of the research, on compliance with the research ethics requirements provided for in this rule.

According to HEI budget, the University accumulated finances for the scientific research, projects and participation of its staff in scientific events. The amount of research funding is determined in the annual budget of the HEI and the University gives priority to affiliated staff when considering and making decisions on research funding. University legal acts/regulations on the mechanisms of support and financing of research activities are transparent.

However, it should be noted that the university should take care of increasing the budget for research, since it has made quite an ambitious statement regarding research.

Evidences/indicators

- Scientific research development policy
- Internationalization policy
- Strategic Development Plan
- Memorandums
- Scientific Research Ethics Regulations
- Rules for supporting University scientific researches
- Tasks for Achieving Research Promotion Mechanisms

Recommendations:

- Increase the budget of research and internationalization activities in order to reflect its ambitious plans to become a leader in research and increase the chances of reaching its goals.

Suggestions:

- Improve international profile of the university; start the implementation of international cooperations under existing MOUs and expand the international cooperation with other partners in EU.

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

6.3. Evaluation of Research Activities

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The academic personnel conduct scientific-research activities in accordance with “The Rule for Academic Personnel Affiliation, Academic Workload and Remuneration of Academic and Invited Personnel”, the Code of Ethics for personnel, the code of ethics for research and other legal documents of the University regulating scientific-research performance.

The scientific-research performance of academic staff is evaluated according to "Evaluation Scheme of Scientific-Research Activities of Academic Personnel" using the data of the calendar year.

The Scientific-Research Center for Health and Longevity of the University is responsible for administering evaluation process of the academic personnel research productivity, which conducts the evaluation process in coordination with the Quality Assurance Service of the university.

The head of the Center prepares a report on the research activity of the academic personnel. This document will be consider by the Human Resource Management Service and Chancellery, Quality Assurance Service, the Deputy Rector for Academic and Strategic Development and the Rector. Based on the information presented in the report will be elaborate a proposal for professional development and/or incentive activities/forms for the academic staff. All documents will be reviewed at the meeting of the Academic Council of the University.

Scientific-research performance of academic personnel is evaluated in accordance with the rule for evaluation of scientific-research activities. The University has developed several fillable "forms" for evaluating research activity:

1. Form for Evaluation of Scientific-Research Activities of Academic Personnel

Every year, the academic staff of the University should fill out the scientific-research activity evaluation form. After the employee fills in the self-assessment fields, the Evaluation Form is sent to the entitled persons to assess scientific-research activity of academic staff.

2. Form for 360 - Degree Feedback Evaluation

For evaluation of the staff, the University uses a 360-degree feedback system (hereinafter - "360 evaluation") which provides employee performance evaluation alongside assessment of an employee’s abilities. A representative of academic, invited, administrative and assistant personnel of the University is evaluated with the 360 – degree Assessment System annually, no later than one month after the end of the calendar year.

The purpose of evaluation of scientific-research activities of the academic staff is to promote scientific performance of the academic staff and to encourage research activities bringing high scientific results, as well as to determine assessment scheme and components and evaluate scientific productivity of the academic staff alongside a report submission on the performed scientific-research activity.

Evaluation Scheme includes the components (criteria) for assessment of a scientific-research activity and the corresponding assessment indicator expressed in points for each of 16 components defined in the official document “System of Evaluation of Scientific Productivity of the Staff” (i.e., publication in impact factor journal, publication at refereed journal, presentation at international conference, etc.).

As a result of the assessment of the scientific - research activity carried out during the calendar year, academic personnel must accumulate certain number of points in the assessment components (professor-9, associate prof.-7, assistant prof.-5).

According to the Head of the program, the weights are set in a way to provide incentives and encourage the academic staff to be active in research, which makes sense, although the panel suggested that publication in high impact factor journals should be awarded more points since these publications raise the international recognition of Avicenna's research output.

It should be noted that the criteria do not specify (only in one place "On Behalf of the University") that these activities must be carried out in the name of Avicenna University. This circumstance not only avoids misunderstandings for the University but is also necessary for the sustainable development of the University, as well as for obtaining a high ranking.

Evidences/indicators

- "Evaluation Scheme of Scientific-Research Activities of Academic Personnel"
- "The Regulation of Ethics of Scientific Research"
- "Scientific Research Support Rules"
- "The Rule for Academic Personnel Affiliation, Academic Workload and Remuneration of Academic and Invited Personnel"
- Staff Management Policy (System of Evaluation of Scientific Productivity of the Staff)

Recommendations:

Suggestions:

- In the criteria of the evaluation scheme, specify that the activity must be carried out on behalf of the university Avicenna
- Consider increasing the weight for publication in high impact factor journals

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

7. Material, Information and Financial Resources

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

7.1 Material Resources

- The institution possesses or owns material resources (fixed and current assets) that are used for achieving goals stated in the mission statement, adequately responds to the requirements of educational programmes and research activities, and corresponds to the existing number of students and planned enrolment.
- HEI offers environment necessary for implementing educational activities: sanitary units, natural light possibilities, and central heating system.
- Health and safety of students and staff is protected within the institution.
- HEI has adapted environment for people with special needs

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The University possesses material resources as follows:

Buildings of total floor space of 17,327.8 sq.m. (including the affiliated hospitals). The main facility for administration and teaching is located at Batumi, Tbeti street N 4,. Building N3 and comprises:

Spaces dedicated to teaching activities 2,008.1sq.m. that include the following areas: Inpatient Care – Simulation Area, OSCE stations (8 rooms), anatomy room, PBL classrooms, Asclepius Morphology Auditorium, Galen Physiology Auditorium, Hippocrates Auditorium, Avicenna Auditorium, Cafeteria, Teaching Lab, Research Centers, sanitary areas and others. Totally, 30 room areas are dedicated to host teaching activities (with a capacity to host 1090 students) and additional spaces for recreation areas, and foyer.

The rooms in the building have natural as well as artificial light possibilities. Buildings have central heating system. All facilities are fit to provide access to person with special needs. Two stairwells and two elevators are installed in the building.

For the research activities, there are several rooms on the third floor of the main building, equipped with modern technologies. Also, an auditorium N1 (16 sq.m), Room N2 PCR (16 sq.m), Room N1 box extraction (16 sq.m), and an Extract room.

In one affiliated hospital there are also three main rooms dedicated for the “Avicenna” students. the room in the hospital which are dedicated for the study – where not finished yet, during the site visit the rector and co-founder explained that they are in the process of purchase additional equipment for those rooms.

In the three floors of the main campus the following auditoriums are dedicated for the studying:

On the third floor:

- Auditorium N1 (16 sq.m)
- Room N2 PCR (16 sq.m)
- Room N1 box extraction (16 sq.m)
- Auditorium (psychological support center)
- Extract room

On the IV floor:

- Auditorium (420) -21.7 sq.m
- Auditorium (421) -25.9 sq.m
- Auditorium (422) -37.4 sq.m
- OSCE simulation rooms (14 rooms -including anatomy simulation)

On the V floor:

- Auditorium (502) -19.2 sq.m
- Auditorium (503) -41.2 sq.m
- Auditorium (504) -50 sq.m
- Auditorium (510) -32.3 sq.m
- Auditorium (511) -20.8 sq.m
- Auditorium (512) -92.45 sq.m
- Auditorium (513) -92.45 sq.m
- Auditorium (517) -35.9 sq.m
- Auditorium (518) -72. 1sq.m
- Auditorium (519) -40.3 sq.m

Teaching areas' total capacity can accommodate 1090 students, a ceiling that meets the projection of the student number for the first 6 years, under the assumption that capacity is available at 100% and scheduling utilization is also close to 100% of available space.

Lawful possession of fixed assets is based on written agreements and registration of such rights into the Public Registry.

The University's main buildings has divided sanitary units, with continuous hot and cold water supply.

The “Avicenna” university has fire prevention and safety system, first aid, and order mechanisms, and has appropriate inventory in place. Fire equipment is located on each floor of the building, in visible areas, with detailed instruction of use, and evacuation plans approved by competent agencies.

The University's building has additional emergency exits (where doors open inside out (non iron - easy to be handled); There is also a doctor's room properly equipped with necessary items to handle in emergency situations.

The program will be implemented in four affiliated hospitals and nine non-affiliated hospitals.

In MoU's with non-affiliated hospitals, requirements from sectoral benchmark statement are not stated explicitly:

Indicatively, information about the duration of each study course, a timetable/schedule about the possibility of accepting the number of students in the same period of time during a specific study course is missing. In some MoUs (e.g. Batumi Republic hospital) the duration of collaboration (MOU) is only 5 years, while the program's duration is 6 years. Therefore, for sustainability of the program it is necessary to extend those MoUs to at least 6 years collaboration. The duration of the MoU is for five years ().

Evidences/indicators

- Documents certifying the possession of fixed assets, extract from the Public Registry
- Internal measurement drawings of buildings
- MoU with hospitals
- SER
- Interview results

Recommendations:

Suggestions:

- It is recommended to review the Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with hospitals according to the sectoral benchmarks.

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

7.2. Library Resources

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The library is an independent structural unit which is running according to its own regulations.

The university library is located on the 4th floor of the main university building, where most of teaching activities take place. The library space in the building includes the library and two reading rooms that can accommodate the personal or groupwork needs of students and staff.

The main space hosts the books stock, workspace for staff working in the library and IT equipment, that includes 13 computers (8 in the reading rooms, 3 for storage, 2 for service personnel), 2 printers, 2 copiers, and a scanner. In this area space for reviewing a book or reading is limited; students and staff must use one of the other rooms. At this point the collection of the books represents mainly the needs for the first year of the medicine program. The panel randomly checked the syllabus submitted by the institution and all the mandatory literature required for first year courses was available in printed and/or electronic media. Besides textbooks the library stock includes other books and periodicals about medicine, such as encyclopedias, reference literature, textbooks, magazines. The library has membership in several well-known international bases of scientific journals and clinical scientific bases (up to date). The university staff and students can use clinical scientific bases from the university library and from the hospitals as well.

Students and staff can access the library electronic catalogue in-house and remotely reserve books. The panel witnessed a presentation of the electronic catalogue system and during the interview was informed that the university is a member of the Library Association of Georgia and has signed a memorandum with the Akaki Tsereteli Public Library of the city of Batumi. Through its network the library can respond to requests for material (books, papers, etc.) that are not available in its current stock.

The staff of the library includes a professional librarian. During the visit the panel had the opportunity to discuss the operation of the library with the librarian, and was convinced that she is well trained and could handle librarian related matters (catalogues, electronic resources, etc.)

According to the University, the library space can accommodate about 50 students simultaneously in all 3 rooms. The panel's opinion is that, although the library space is adequate to host the expected 1st year students of the Medicine program, the University must consider adding more space to the library facilities in the immediate future.

The library is staffed by a librarian and another person; its working hours are 9:00 to 21:00, Monday through Saturday, a total of 72 hours per week.

Evidences/indicators

- Avicenna Self Evaluation Report
- Visit to the Library spaces
- Interviews with Library personnel

Recommendations:

- Ensure that enlargement of library space receives high priority given that the quantity of library stock is directly related to the number of students and programs
- Ensure timely expansion of the library stock to cover the needs in textbooks for the full curriculum beyond the first year courses

Suggestions:

- As the number of students and programs increase the library's role will be proactive and shall include guidance of students in using the library services.

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

7.3 Information Resources

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Avicenna has a formal IT Management policy in place which defines the requirements for information technologies and acquisition/installation practices, and the processes of collecting, processing and transmitting information, specific technologies and rights of people who have access to information including the necessary requirements for safe and efficient use of information. Through the policy's

framework, the responsibilities of structural units, staff and students in terms of access to information technologies and information resources of the University are determined clearly.

All auditoriums are equipped with computers and demonstration equipment; the OSCE examination center is equipped with a video-surveillance system and an electronic examination management system. In the educational laboratories, appropriate computer equipment is also located, with the necessary inventory for conducting teaching with a demonstration method. Also, a computer auditorium equipped with 20 computers has been set up. Library users have access to computers installed in two reading rooms. Wi-fi connection is provided throughout the campus which facilitates free access to internet for staff and students. Overall, the teaching and learning environment is supported sufficiently regarding the IT infrastructure.

Main IS services are provided through outsourcing. The university has licenses to use an integrated electronic management system (LMS platform), through "Hosti.ge" LLC. The system incorporates among other subsystems, the electronic teaching and learning system, the case management functions, the library's electronic catalogue and services.

LMS platform is currently at the stage of implementing all the services that can provide and being adopted to fit the environment of Avicenna (services, roles, English language interfaces). During the site visit the panel had a chance to watch a demonstration of the functionality of the IS in terms from the student's perspective (administrative and academic), the facilities for the lecturers, as well as the facilities for administrative services and the management of documents. A significant amount of work is still pending both in adopting the system and digitizing documents that are still in hard copies (e.g., staff folders in HR). The system allows off-campus access for students and staff.

The library service is implemented with a module integrated in the electronic management system, and the electronic catalogue is placed both on the website and in the electronic management system.

The University has a plagiarism programme (Turnitin), which will be constantly used in the educational process depending on the relevant requirements.

The website of the system is in the process of being updated and new information was continuously added the period before the site visit, both in English and Georgian language. Still, the current structure of the website resembles a document retrieval facility designed to address the authorization needs and not inform the public and prospective students. Currently no information regarding the details of the program(s) and student enrollment exists. The public relations and marketing unit is aware of that, and their explanation is that without receiving authorization and program accreditation they are hesitant to put related information on the site. Certainly, the design of the website should change towards being more targeting to interested parties (students, parents, social partners, current and potential international partners).

The structural unit of IT services is currently staffed by one person working on a part-time basis. During the interviews with the responsible person, it was explained that personal data protection mechanisms are relevant and secured. The person in charge of IT services also referred to university policies for ensuring business continuity. Data is backed up on a regular basis (every 3 hours) during the day on the cloud. There is also a university storage server. To ensure the security of documents placed on the server, at the end of each day, files are automatically backed up on the google drive.

Evidences/indicators

- Avicenna Information technology management policy (29.07.2022).
- Avicenna Self Evaluation Report.
- Business Continuity Policy of Avicenna - Batumi Medical University, LLC
- Agreement with Internet provider
- Document confirming domain purchase-registration
- Service contract with Shindi LLC. for website creation and registration-branding of social media channels
- Budget of 2023-2029 of Avicenna - Batumi Medical University, LLC
- Interview with the IT services.
- Visit and interview with library staff.

Recommendations:

- Ensure the implementation of the Electronic Management System before the arrival of the first cohort of students
- Fully develop the University website in both Georgian and English language and provide a structure that enables prospective students, interested partners and the public to locate and access information easily
- Schedule training of all academic and invited staff in using the Teaching and Learning modules of LMS platform

Suggestions:

- Finish the conversion of personal data kept in physical record at HR service in digital form

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

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

7.4 Financial Resources

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The main financial plan of the institution is its annual budget. According to the Financial management policy of Avicenna, the preparation of the budget for each specific year begins at least two months before the beginning of the new calendar year and is approved before the beginning of the new budget year. The deputy rector in charge of administration and finances presents a budget proposal to the academic council which then is approved by the general meeting of partners of the University.

The 2023 budget along with a projection for the 2024-2029 connected to strategic development planning period was approved by the founding partners in December 2022.

Avicenna's budget is composed of the two parts income and expenditure. The main income in the budget comes from tuition fees, with a smaller portion in the first year of operation coming from the founder's contribution. According to the financial plan the operation of the University is expected to be completely sustained by students' tuition fees in the following years. The budget is built on the assumption that annual enrollment for the Medicine program will be 180 students. During the interviews with the founders, rector and administration representatives it was evident to the panel that interviewees believed that the assumption is realistic and that the founders will increase their contribution if there is a need to do so. According to the provisions of the University's financial management policy, the founder has an obligation to provide financial support in the event of a current or annual budget deficit, which is an insurance of the income part.

The allocation of financial resources is based on the priorities outlined in the Strategic Development Plan. The budget is carefully constructed to support all the activities included in the plan and provides a specific budget line for each activity. Overall, for the first-year operation, direct support of educational activities accounts for 64% of the budget, 20% is allocated to university management and development fund and 7.5% to research and internationalization activities. However, the part of the budget allocated to participation in international research grant competitions (taking into account co-financing) is not

adequate according to international standards in order to support the effort needed to gain such grants. The budget for extension of the library is 360,000 GEL over the 7-year planning horizon, but this does not include infrastructure expenses (i.e., expanding the library space as it is addressed in sub-standard 7.2). The panel also notes that although the number of expected students during the planning period increases six-fold, the Student Support Fund remains at the same level from the second year throughout the rest of the planning period.

The implementation of the budget is controlled by the audit, which prepares the conclusions and recommendations to the Board of Directors. The audit report, along with the budget execution, is submitted to the general meeting of partners for final evaluation. Since this is the first year of operations the audit process will take place for the first time in the beginning of 2024.

Evidences/indicators

- The Strategic Development Plan (2023-2029) and the Action Plan (2023-2025) of Avicenna - Batumi Medical University (30.12.2022)
- Financial management policy of "Avicenna - Batumi Medical University" LLC (part/k/minutes N01-03/04, 30.08. 2022, Annex N2)
- The Approved Budget of Avicenna - Batumi Medical University, LLC for 2023 and Forecast Indicators for 2024-2029
- Interviews with the Deputy Dean for administrative services and finances
- Interviews with the Accounting and Finance Service
- Interviews with the SER team

Recommendations:

- Increase the budget amount for student support services in relation to the increase in the number of students
- Increase the budget for participation in international research grant competitions
- Provide funds for the expansion of the library space as proposed in 7.2

Suggestions:

- The budget allocated for research should be correlated to university priorities in the stages of planning and implementation of scientific research

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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