განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Report on Grigol Robakidze University Authorization

Expert Panel

Chair

- Mark Davies, Emeritus Professor, University of Sunderland, UK

Members

- Mihaly Boros (co-chair), Professor, University of Szeged, Hungary
- Ketevan Aptarashvili, Head of the Department of Education, East European University, Georgia
- Nino Bogveradze (employer expert), Attorney At Law, LP Kordzadze Law Office, Georgia
- Giorgi Fareshishvili (student expert), Caucasus International University, Georgia
- Tornike Khoshtaria, Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, Teaching University Geomedi, Georgia
- Ia Pantsulaia, Associate Professor, Tbilisi State Medical University, Georgia
- Nino Parsadanishvili, Head of Horizon Europe Office, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia

Tbilisi
2024

Authorization Report Resume

General information on the educational institution

LLC Grigol Robakidze University (known colloquially and in this report as 'GRUNI') is a private for-profit university established in 1992, originally under the name of 'Alma Mater'. The University's headquarters are in Tbilisi, and it runs a branch campus at Batumi, which offers a proportion of the programmes available at Tbilisi. The University claims to have created an educational space focused on developing national consciousness, liberal values, and meeting the demands of the modern labour market. It also claims to have strong social values, focused on the needs of its students and creating study opportunities for those who would not otherwise benefit. It offers programmes in the following faculties, also referred to as schools: Business and Management, Law, Public Administration and Policy, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Medicine (including Dentistry). Bachelor's degrees comprise: Business Administration, Business Administration (Finance), Business Administration (Management), Business Administration (Marketing), Journalism and Mass Communication, Law, Psychology, Public Administration and policy, and Tourism. Master's degrees comprise: Business Administration, Clinical Psychology and Counseling, Law, Mass Communication and Public Relations, and Public Administration. There are two one-cycle education programmes in Medicine and Dentistry and doctorate programmes in Business Administration, Law, Political Philosophy and Public Administration. Since the last authorization the most significant development has been the creation of the medical school in Tbilisi. The University employs approximately 420 teaching staff, of which approximately 180 are academic staff. It has approximately 3900 students, though approximately 33 per cent of those were suspended at the time of the authorization site visit.

Brief overview of the authorization site visit

GRUNI submitted a lengthy self-evaluation report (SER) to the NCEQE accompanied by various evidence items, some of which were in English as specified by the NCEQE. Although structured around the authorization standards the SER was difficult to interrogate, lacked a logical structure and was in general descriptive rather than evaluative. This made the work of the Expert Panel difficult. The Panel requested some additional documents during the site visit, though these were not always supplied. The Panel met virtually to agree workload distribution before the site visit, which was from 24 – 27 June 2024: two days at the Tbilisi campus and one (the final) day at the Batumi campus. During the site visit the Panel had tours of both campuses, including facilities at Tbilisi where clinical education took place. The Panel toured classrooms, social and eating facilities, libraries, IT suites, OSCE suites, simulation suites, mediation facilities, moot court, television studio, stock-trading room, and forensic laboratory. The Panel met: the Rector, Vice Rectors, member of the Rector's office, and Chancellor; the self-evaluation team, members of Academic Committee and Universities Dissertation Board; representatives of the Quality Assurance Office; faculty Deans; Heads of support services, including research; Heads of Programmes; Academic staff at both campuses; Invited staff at both campuses; students and graduates at both campuses; the Student Self-Government President and Student Ombudsman; employers; and senior staff members at the Batumi campus. In each case participants were extremely effusive and enthusiastic, and in general conveyed the presence of a collegiate atmosphere.

Overview of the HEI's compliance with standards

The HEI is **substantially compliant** with Standard 1: *Mission and strategic development of HEI*

The driving apparatus of the University is generally sound and multifaceted, even though a discrete mission is absent. The vision of University is highly ambitious and aspirational but sends a strong directional steer. There is good alignment with both Georgia's and more broadly European higher education goals, and the University's societal function and role both locally and internationally is addressed. These drivers are publicly-available. Even though the mission is broad, some members of the University had difficulty in explaining how they contributed to it. Strategic planning is in strong evidence and the University collects data on progress against the plans but the Panel was not provided with definitive evidence of how in practice the University uses those data to track progress.

The HEI is **substantially compliant** with Standard 2: *Organizational structure and management of HEI*

The organizational structure of GRUNI ensures the implementation of the activities outlined by the strategic development and action plans. The structure includes functionally interconnected units that support the University's mission and strategy through a combination of hierarchical and horizontal relationships. Key principles guiding this structure include openness, flexibility, and functional completeness, ensuring that the University can adapt to new challenges and opportunities while maintaining a focus on core processes including teaching, research, and public service. The functions and responsibilities of structural units of the institution are defined and divided, and staff know their functions well, though the independence of Student Self-Government could be better assured. The functions and responsibilities of postholders are clear though many individuals have multiple roles and this creates conflicts of interest. The procedures for appointment or election to the management bodies of the University are transparent, fair and in line with the law. Internationalization is significant and expanding. Quality assurance processes are in general well understood and effective, though there is scope for more sophisticated planning in relation to the student body. The University has sound principles in relation to ethics and integrity, but could use its plagiarism detection software more effectively.

The HEI is **substantially compliant** with Standard 3: *Educational Programmes*

The procedures for planning, designing, approving, developing and annulling educational programmes are sound. The overall aim is to train generations of competitive specialists in humanitarian, social, management, medical, and other in-demand fields. A regulated approach and the transparent and uniform structure of programmes should make the overview and proper quality assurance of the programmes easier. However, programme committees are poorly defined and are asked to take account of an inordinately wide range of opinions before acting. Programmes are evaluated using summary statistics and there is opportunity for a more thorough analysis through data disaggregation to help the University understand itself better. Programme and course learning outcomes are clearly defined, but there are some notable exceptions that need attention. Also students

do not clearly understand the concept of learning outcomes. In general programmes ensure achievement of their objectives and learning outcomes, but the way in which learning outcome achievement is measured could be simplified. Some norm-referencing persists and this should be avoided. Each programme offers students flexibility in the choice of optional components and this is a positive feature, as is the involvement of external stakeholders in programme review. Notwithstanding the above, the programmes are in general well-devised and meet the needs of future graduates and their employers.

The HEI is **fully compliant** with Standard 4: *Staff of the HEI*

Human resources and labour relations are managed in accordance with the relevant internal and legislative frameworks, in part through adherence to a sound Human Resources/Personnel Management Policy based on principles of equality, diversity, transparency, free expression, mutual respect, support, openness, professional development, and optimization. The academic staff are central to education and research, however there are concerns about the appropriate remuneration system and some benefits for affiliated personnel. New employees follow an adaptation period, but the Panel considered that a more transparent, systematic and objective arrangement would be more effective in meeting the University's needs. Professional development for staff, including new staff, is available. Yet it is possible that new staff may begin to teach without any formal training in the profession. The workload of teaching staff complies with relevant legislation and is balanced, allowing time for research activities. The duties of affiliated and non-affiliated staff are specified well.

The HEI is **fully compliant** with Standard 5: *Students and their support services*

The University has established comprehensive publicly-available regulations governing student status and the educational process at all levels offered. These regulations encompass the initialization, suspension and termination of student status, student mobility, qualification granting, issuance of educational documents, and recognition of education received during the learning period. Students are well aware of these regulations, and the responsibilities of, and implications for, them. The University has implemented various measures to ensure the protection of student rights and interests. The rights and obligations of students are clearly outlined in the University charter and individual student-University agreements. The University promotes some student participation in governance and quality assurance processes. Students have the right to evaluate educational programmes and faculty performance, and can be elected or nominated to University management bodies. Financial protections for students are embedded in the regulatory framework. The University has established appeal mechanisms for study outcomes and dissertation defence results; regulations prohibit negative alterations to student assessments, except in cases of breaches of academic integrity. An independent Student Ombudsman office has been established to address potential rights violations, but it saw no cases during the most recent authorization period and this raises concerns about the effectiveness of the current ombudsman mechanism: there is an opportunity to bolster the detection of issues through better monitoring. Through initiatives such as scholarships there is a palpable sense of social and community support, and a commitment to the education of students across the range of social groups. Student support services are well-developed, particularly those oriented towards graduate employability, which are multi-faceted. The diverse communication strategy, coupled with financial and administrative support for student initiatives, creates an environment that encourages active

student participation in academic and extracurricular activities. Nevertheless, there is scope for enhancement through supporting student organizations and clubs, and cross-campus student activities.

The HEI is **fully compliant** with Standard 6: *Research, development and/or other creative work*

GRUNI is active in research, in promoting research within the institution, and in enhancing the development of international research collaboration. GRUNI ensures effective conditions for fostering research and other creative activities of its academic staff and students, but there is some lack of ambition to reach the highest levels. The Scientific Research and Creative Initiative Development Foundation funds internal projects, research visits, conference participation, and publication fees. The Foundation works in parallel with the Scientific Research Management Center, which organises development and training for research. Citation rates have improved dramatically of late, albeit from a low base. Conferences and research funding tend to have local focuses and there is opportunity for GRUNI to establish its research presence more consistently on a bigger global stage. This also fits with its plans regarding internationalization, even though GRUNI has already taken considerable strides towards internationalization. Research is organised into centres or institutes, which overlap with the school structure. Notwithstanding the above, the Panel was unable to determine the locus of research activity and some University staff were similarly confused. The graduation rate of PhD students, by global standards though not by Georgian standards, is low, and there is opportunity for improvement to make GRUNI distinctive.

The HEI is **fully compliant** with Standard 7: *Material, information, and financial resources*

The University has two main campuses, one in Tbilisi and one in Batumi. Additionally in Tbilisi it occupies space at a dental clinic, a university hospital and a clinical skills centre. In general the buildings are well suited to their purpose, with good educational space. The exception is the Batumi campus where classrooms are in need of some cosmetic refurbishment and none, except an IT laboratory, contained any technology to aid teaching. Nonetheless some of the specialist facilities including a moot court, TV and radio studio facilities, stock-trading room, forensics laboratory and simulation equipment for medical students are excellent. Across its rage of sites the University could do more to fully adapt for students with physical disabilities. However, in general there is a good match between the facilities provided and the number of enrolled students. The library occupies space at both main campuses; each space has a reading room, individual working space and a room designated for teamwork, alongside information technology resources and audio-visual equipment, including computers, photocopiers, unlimited internet access, and printers. The library's collection of books and electronic resources complies with the required reading literature lists specified in the course syllabuses. This ensures that students have access to all necessary materials via hard copy as well as digitally. 'Nexus' is used as the principal electronic communication platform between teaching staff and students. The Panel was provided with a demonstration of Nexus both from teacher and student perspectives that confirmed its wide functionality. The financial standing of the University ensures the performance of activities described in strategic and mid-term action plans and the allocation of financial resources as described in the budget is economically achievable.

Summary of Recommendations

- It is recommended that that key postholders be better aware of how their function relates to the mission of the University

- It is recommended that the findings of monitoring strategic progress are acted on

- It is recommended that efforts are increased to fully engage and inform all interested parties in the process of strategic planning

- It is recommended that communication and transparency regarding the appointment procedures for student members of the Academic Committee, is enhanced, ensuring that all students, are well-informed about their eligibility and the significance of their participation

- It is recommended that full autonomy of the Student Self-Government is ensured

- It is recommended that that in planning the student body fully comprehensive data are generated and used efficiently

- It is recommended that all statistical data geneated by the University concerning students be analysed disaggregated by various factors such as student sex, programme, location of study

- It is recommended that results and future plans of the educational programmes be communicated to a wider range of external stakeholders, such as governing organizations, cooperating health care facilities, scientific societies, research institutes, alumni, pharmaceutical and other industrial companies

- It is recommended that the programme and course learning outcomes for the medicine programme are revised so that they reflect the intended nature of learning outcomes and are assessable units

- It is recommended that the nature of learning outcomes is effectively communicated to students

- It is recommended that studies on animals are done in compliance with specific regulations and the "Three Rs principle" in research and testing (Directive 2010/63/EU establishes measures for the protection of animals used for scientific or educational purposes); the regulations and the Code of Ethics of GRUNI should be brought into line with these principles

- It is recommended that all norm-referenced assessment should be removed and only criterion-referenced assessment be used such that an individual student's grades are dependent on her/his performance only

- It is recommended that the use of Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) be extended to assess clinically relevant competencies to emphasize the standards of practical clinical training

- It is recommended that a mandatory training course in learning and teaching at university-level be developed and implemented for all new teaching staff

- It is recommended that the salary policy for affiliate staff is reviewed

- It is recommended that the adaptation period is replaced with a probationary period or similar, and clear and transparent criteria for ultimate recruitment are defined

- It is recommended that a monitoring system be implemented that identifies individual and systemic issues that should be reported to the Student Ombudsman office, making use of regular check-ins with student representative bodies

- It is recommended that the participation of international students in the mechanisms for the protection of student rights and lawful interests is strengthened, namely in student self-government

- It is recommended that all the classrooms at Batumi be equiped with modern teaching technologies

- It is recommended that all learning and social spaces be fully accessible to all persons, regardless of disability

Summary of Suggestions

- It is suggested that the workload of top-level managers who hold multiple administrative positions be regularly assessed to ensure they are not overloaded

- It is suggested that relevant departments be placed under the Deputy Rector in the field of foreign student recruitment

- It is suggested that the analysis of Likert data by the use of means is ceased

- It is suggested that fully digitized processes for presenting and interpreting survey data and preparing reports is implemented

- It is suggested that plagiarism-detection software be used intelligently (not using any similarity percentage) to determine whether students' work is plagiarized or not, and that this change is communicated effectively to staff and students

- It is suggested that mechanisms be established to safeguard against the potential threats posed by AI

- It is suggested that the role, tasks and competencies of the programme committee established for programme management be clearly defined and regulated

- It is suggested that accepted international practice in assessing learning outcomes as threshold concepts be adopted

- It is suggested that a comprehensive system for student organizations and clubs be implemented

- It is suggested that research programmes that require collaboration between students from both campuses and the hosting of 'Campus Culture Weeks', or similar, to showcase the unique aspects of each campus to the other be initiated

- It is suggested that high-quality internationalization of research activities is pursued more vigorously, including conference participation, international journal targeting and publication, and generating external research income

- It is suggested that the organization of research be revised into a simpler model such that it is clear what each researcher can expect and access from the University. If research centres and institutes are retained their roles and remits should be transparent to all
- It is suggested that an analysis of the reasons for non-completion of doctoral students be made and a plan devised to increase the completion rate
- It is suggested that the awareness of library databases be better promoted among students
- It is suggested that giving applicants and/or alumni access to certain features of Nexus be considered
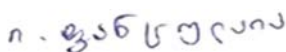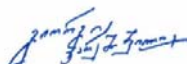
Summary of Best Practices
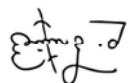
- The operation and equipment of the Center for Training and Expertise in Criminology, which is exceptionally effective for the law programme students especially those pursuing studies in criminal law
- The availability and calibre of specialist equipment to support the programme in Medicine

Summary Table

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

Signature of expert panel members

1. Mark Davies (Chair)

2. Mihaly Boros (Co-chair)

3. Ketevan Aptarashvili (Member)

4. Nino Bogveradze (Member)

5. Giorgi Fareshishvili (Member)

6. Tornike Khoshtaria (Member)

7. Ia Pantsulaia (Member)

8. Nino Parsadanishvili (Member)

Compliance of the Authorization Applicant HEI with the Authorization Standard Components

1. Mission and strategic development of HEI

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The University does not have a discrete mission, but rather expresses its purpose as a series of five goals. Although the goals as expressed in the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) are slightly different from those in the document 'Mission, Vision, Goals, and Values of Grigol Robakidze University' and those on the University's web page, which in turn are also different from those in the Strategic Development Plan, the sentiment is almost identical and there is good alignment with both Georgia's and more broadly European higher education goals, and they specifically address the University's societal function and role both locally and internationally. The goals stress the importance of developing active members of society, fostering knowledge creation and dissemination, and facilitating students' personal development and competitiveness in the labour market.

The mission is framed within the principles of the Bologna Process, embracing European educational values and objectives. The primary basis for defining the mission includes fostering a knowledge society, promoting social and professional mobility, advancing technological and service innovations, and enhancing national culture and business, which lay the groundwork for social welfare.

The mission statement highlights the University's commitment to international academic standards and high-quality teaching and learning. It aims to prepare students for local and international educational and employment markets while establishing a robust scientific research culture and protecting and expanding general knowledge.

The University also has the vision of 'University Without Borders' that involves 'a leadership role in global university policy'. Taken literally this vision seems unassailable, but more broadly gives inspiration to internationalism, which is a significant activity of the University.

The University's values encompass high morals underpinned by notions of liberalism and democracy, and intend to put students at the centre of learning activities. As such they are sound.

The University makes its vision, mission, goals and values publicly-available via its website.

Although during the interviews, the Expert Panel observed that the mission is, in general, well-integrated into the functions of staff and other stakeholders, and its ethos forms a basis of student learning, this would inevitably be the case because the overall mission is so broad. The SER noted that 'each structural unit focuses on a distinct aspect of the University's overall mission'. The Panel tested this statement by asking members and heads of various structural units to explain what aspect of the University's mission they focused on: most were unable to clearly articulate their role in relation to the mission.

Evidences/indicators

- The self-evaluation report
- The university mission
- The university website
- The interviews with the stakeholders
- Document 'Mission, Vision, Goals, and Values of Grigol Robakidze University'
- Strategic Development Plan

Recommendations

It is recommended that that key postholders be better aware of how their function relates to the mission of the University

Suggestions

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

The University's goals are closely tied to its mission and key priorities. These goals are realistic, have clear deadlines, and can be measured to track progress.

The University's comprehensive strategic development plan outlines its seven-year development strategy (from 2024). The plan promotes the achievement of the University's goals by mobilising human and material-technical resources and establishing mechanisms to achieve strategic objectives. It includes specific objectives and tasks that align with the university's mission and priorities. The University's action plan clearly explains what needs to be done in the future, when it should happen, and what resources (financial, material, and staffing) are required.

The strategic development and action plans cover all aspects of the University's operations. This includes institutional development, quality assurance, educational programme planning and implementation, student body planning, research, arts and creative activities, human and material resources, student services, and infrastructure. The action plan clearly describes future activities, specific timeframes for their implementation, performance criteria, and the necessary resources (material, financial, human) for their successful completion.

The strategic development plan and the action plan interact well and are consistent, the latter effectively coordinating the implementation of the former [1.2.1;1.2.2]. This is suggestive of the University being aware of its own position and addressing shortcomings.

The university employs a strategic planning method that involves drafting detailed strategic development and action plans. This method includes regular monitoring and evaluation of progress. Efficiencies of procedures are calculated using an algorithm to convert perceived attainment to a numerical score, even though the use of ordinal data in this way is mathematically inappropriate. In its SER the University reported the efficiency of each of its strategic objectives as ranging from 64.7 to 79.2 per cent [p28]. However, it did not report on how it acts on these results and so the Panel could not be sure that such action existed.

According to the SER the University's strategic planning process is highly participatory, involving input from staff, students, employers, and other stakeholders. It was explained that his inclusive approach ensures that the strategic plan reflects the needs and aspirations of the entire University community. However, during the interviews, it was observed that not all interested parties were familiar with the strategic priorities that the strategic plan document reflected.

The university actively contributes to societal development and knowledge dissemination through various activities. These include social, cultural, economic, and environmental programmes and events, lifelong learning initiatives, and the active participation of academic and scientific staff in social issues. It also offers expert consultation services and conducts research for different industry actors.

Evidences/indicators
- The self-evaluation report
- The strategic development plan
- The action plan
- The university website
- The interviews with the stakeholders

Recommendations

It is recommended that the findings of monitoring strategic progress are acted on

It is recommended that efforts are increased to fully engage and inform all interested parties in the process of strategic planning

Suggestions

Best Practices (if applicable)

Evaluation

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

2. Organizational Structure and Management of HEI

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The organizational structure of GRUNI ensures the implementation of the activities outlined by the strategic development and action plans. According to the SER, the structure includes functionally interconnected units that support the University's mission and strategy through a combination of hierarchical and horizontal relationships. Key principles guiding this structure include openness, flexibility, and functional completeness, ensuring that the University can adapt to new challenges and opportunities while maintaining a focus on core processes including teaching, research, and public service.

There are five Deputy Rectors responsible for the following fields: teaching, learning and student support, administrative and juridical, quality assurance, scientific research, and foreign student recruitment. According to the University's organizational structure, they oversee the structural units related to their respective areas. However, the Deputy Rector responsible for foreign student recruitment does not have direct oversight of any structural units. In an organizational structure, it is generally beneficial to ensure that all roles, especially senior ones such as a Deputy Rector, have clear responsibilities and oversight of specific departments or functions. If the Deputy Rector in the field of foreign student recruitment does not have any units to directly supervise, this may indicate a potential gap in the structure.

According to GRUNI's structure, the Student Self-Government operates in coordination with the Rector, indeed the Panel heard that the Rector is able to influence appointments. According to the Law of Georgia on Higher Education, 'The administration of a higher education institution may not intervene in the activities of the students' self-government bodies' (Article 45). This legal framework underscores the importance of autonomy for student self-governance, ensuring that students have the freedom to manage their affairs without university interference.

The functions and responsibilities of structural units of the institution are defined and divided, and staff know their functions well. Evidence supplied by GRUNI included all the functions and job descriptions of the three levels of management (top, middle and low). The top level includes the Rector, Academic Committee as a corporate bogy, Chancellor, the Deputy Rectors, and the Deans of faculties. The Academic Committee includes representatives of academic staff and students. According to the "Grigol Robakidze University Academic Committee Provision," student members of the committee are elected by the representative assembly of the student self-government. The self-government can select students to serve on the committee, even if they are not part of the self-governing body, and this means that, because the student self-government is not wholly independent of the University, neither are the student appointments to Academic Committee. An

interview with a representative of the student self-government revealed a lack of information regarding these procedures. The Panel noted no guidelines or other information for the student self-government about the processes by which student members of Academic Committee are appointed, thus students, are not well-informed about their eligibility and the significance of their participation.

One of the main functions of the Academic Committee is to review the University's strategy and action plan, as well as to approve the monitoring results of the strategic plan. However, during interviews with members the committee, there was no indication of its involvement in these functions (see recommendation in 1.2 concerning acting on progress in relation to strategy).

The Panel noted that several top-level managers hold multiple administrative positions. For example, Deputy Rectors may also serve as Deans or the Head of the Quality Assurance Service, while Quality Assurance Coordinators in academic schools concurrently hold positions as Deputy Deans. These multiple roles were explained during the interviews as a strategy to enhance the emphasis on quality across all levels of University operations, optimize staff performance, and provide motivation to staff. However, the Panel noted the potential for significant potential, if not realized, conflicts of interest.

The procedures for appointment or election to the management bodies of the University are transparent, fair and in line with the law. The University has a well-kept database of such appointments. During interviews with employees from various levels of the University, all expressed their confidence in the fairness of employment procedures. GRUNI has a plan that ensures continuity of all major business processes taking place at the institution. The plan takes into account all possible risks, mechanism for their prevention and in case the prevention is not possible, GRUNI has a strategy for risk mitigation.

The panel recognises that the GRUNI mission and goals along with its leadership support the international cooperation of the institution and the process of internationalization. GRUNI manages to attract significant numbers of students from abroad, mainly in the field of medicine. GRUNI has elaborated its internalization policy and supports international mobility of students and staff. During the reporting period the University signed 79 memoranda of understanding with international higher education and scientific research institutions. GRUNI plans internationalization activities in teaching-learning and extracurricular areas. These include the international mobility of students and staff, participation in Erasmus programmes, exchange programmes, internships at foreign companies, conferences, study tours, and working visits to Europe, among others. Thus GRUNI's aims regarding internationalization are both well developed and realized within the context of the University.

Evidences/indicators
- University Structure, Batumi representative office structure
- Statute About the Regulation of Education
- Academic Committee Provision
- Internationalization Policy
- Mechanisms for attracting foreign students and staff
- Statistical data of the internationalization process
- GRUNI website
- The interviews with the stakeholders
- The self-evaluation report

Recommendations

It is recommended that communication and transparency regarding the appointment procedures for student members of the Academic Committee, is enhanced, ensuring that all students, are well-informed about their eligibility and the significance of their participation.

It is recommended that full autonomy of the Student Self-Government is ensured.

Suggestions

It is suggested that the workload of top-level managers who hold multiple administrative positions be regularly assessed to ensure they are not overloaded

It is suggested that relevant departments be placed under the Deputy Rector in the field of foreign student recruitment

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

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

In accordance with the Law of Georgia on Higher Education, GRUNI has an internal quality assurance system that the Panel viewed as generally sound. The system operates on the principle of plan, implement, evaluate, develop (PDCA). GRUNI has developed internal quality assurance mechanisms, periodically evaluates the quality of its services and resources, and disseminates the results of its various surveys. Nonetheless, in judging effectiveness of University processes there is some over-reliance on the use of Likert scale-type data to generate an overall mean of effectiveness for a particular unit or process. Such mean generation of ordinal data is mathematically spurious and could mask considerable dissatisfaction by hiding the distribution of responses. However, this practice is not universal and in many cases full distributions are considered. Although there is a manual process for interpreting survey data and preparing reports, the QA unit generates a large amount of data and enhancing digitalization in this area will optimize efficiency and effectiveness.

The University allocates appropriate resources to support the effective implementation of its quality assurance mechanisms, ensuring continuous assessment and development of institution-wide activities and resources. There is appropriate emphasis on the enhancement of systems and processes. ICT support to the QA system across the organization is well coordinated and efficient. Specifically, the e-learning application 'Nexus', which gives students information on their academic progress, and enhances the efficiency of communication between students and professors.

The Quality Assurance Service cooperates with all structural units of the university, academic and invited staff, students, employers and other interested parties to achieve the set goals. When discussing quality culture with staff, it was mainly described as an integral part of University's daily activities and is considered the responsibility of all individuals involved in the process.

The university has a mechanism for planning its student body, guided by established methods and institutional benchmarks. According to the 'Student Contingent Planning Methodology', based on the resource assessment of the educational programmes, the number of students that the university will be able to serve efficiently and effectively within the framework of each educational programme has been calculated. The current

student quota at GRUNI is 3920. For re-authorization purposes, the University aims to increase this quota to 4900 (including 700 students at the Batumi campus). The University provided a calculation of the student contingent; however, the Panel could not evaluate the dynamics because only a summary of the requested number of students by programmes was provided. It is important that student population planning be done on a yearly basis, and the provided calculation table should show details including the enrollment of students, and the indicators for the completion of programmes. It should be noted that the Student Contingent Planning Methodology does not include information about Student Contingent Monitoring Procedures. The Panel requested additional documents or information on this matter but none were supplied, and so it concluded that further information was not available. It is important that the University periodically conducts monitoring and ensures the involvement of programme leaders and other relevant structural units in planning the student body.

Evidences/indicators

- Quality Assurance Policy
- Results of Student and Other Stakeholder Surveys
- Mechanism for Student Contingent Planning
- The interviews with the stakeholders
- The self-evaluation report

Recommendations:

It is recommended that that in planning the student body fully comprehensive data are generated and used efficiently

Suggestions:

It is suggested that the analysis of Likert data by the use of means is ceased

It is suggested that fully digitized processes for presenting and interpreting survey data and preparing reports is implemented

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

2.3. Observing Principles of Ethics and Integrity

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirement

The University's Code of Ethics sets out some basic principles and the ethical standards to be observed by staff and students. Staff and students confirmed their understanding of the Code and that it is publicly accessible. It was also established by the Panel that all are subject to the Code, including the Rector.

The University has implemented mechanisms for detecting and preventing plagiarism. The relevant part of the 'Procedures and Mechanisms for Detecting, Responding to, and Dealing with Plagiarism, Including Prevention Measures' provides a definition of plagiarism, information on citation and referencing, explanation of the institution's

arrangements for detecting and prosecuting offences, and the penalties that are to be applied when an act of plagiarism has occurred. These procedures apply to staff as well as students. Both students and staff confirmed that student work such as essays theses and dissertations is, where possible, checked electronically for plagiarism, and confirmed that they had received training relating to plagiarism, its avoidance, and its detection. The software generates a 'similarity score'. Some staff and students indicated to the Panel that any score of 12 per cent or over is considered to indicate plagiarism. In effect this means that a 11 per cent score is not considered to show plagiarism, which does not have a logical basis. As a consequence the University may be assigning passing grades to student work of compromised academic integrity. Using similarity scores in this way, indeed arguably in any way, is not assisting with the detection of plagiarism, and by extension not upholding the University's values.

The University also conducts training sessions on artificial intelligence (AI). However, the University seemed to underestimate the potential scale of use of AI, and the speed with which AI tools are developing that can compromise the integrity of student and staff work. There is value in establishing and deploying evolvable mechanisms to safeguard against the potential threats posed by AI and to protect against AI-related risks.

The SER and senior staff affirmed the University's commitment to academic freedom and this was confirmed by academic and invited staff, and students. Staff are familiar with and share the principles of academic freedom; there is good dissemination of information on academic freedom policies; and that academic process are based on principles of academic freedom.

Evidences/indicators
- Code of Ethics
- Procedures and Mechanisms for Detecting, Responding to, and Dealing with Plagiarism, Including Prevention Measures
- Plagiarism detection electronic software
- University website
- The interviews with the stakeholders
- The self-evaluation report

Recommendations

Suggestions

It is suggested that plagiarism-detection software be used intelligently (not using any similarity percentage) to determine whether students' work is plagiarized or not, and that this change is communicated effectively to staff and students

It is suggested that mechanisms be established to safeguard against the potential threats posed by AI

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

According to the mission of the University, by delivering educational programmes grounded in research and tailored to student interests, the aim is to train generations of competitive specialists in humanitarian, social, management, medical, and other in-demand fields. The procedures and regulations for the design, development, approval, implementation, and cancellation of educational programmes corresponding to this aim are governed by the Educational Program Standard, established by the Rector's order. The structure of the programmes is standardized according to accepted descriptive parameters, and segmented into three main parts: the Conceptual Context Block, Matrix Block, and Functional Block, which covers both mandatory and elective courses that are part of the programme's teaching framework. This regulated approach and the transparent and uniform structure makes the overview and proper quality assurance of the programs easier.

The accredited educational programs of GRUNI are grouped around the School of Business and Management (with 6 Georgian language Bachelor programmes; the English-language Business Administration Bachelor programme will be terminated in 2024); the School of Medicine (with 2 programmes, Dentistry (Georgian language) and MD (English language)); the School of Law (with 3 programmes, Bachelor, Master, Doctorate, all Georgian language); the School of Public Administration and Policy (with 3 programmes, Bachelor, Master, Doctorate, all Georgian language); the School of Social Sciences and Humanities (with 2 Bachelor, 2 Master and 1 Doctorate programme, all Georgian language). The programme catalogue is provided online at www.gruni.edu.ge/footer_content/index/232/1442825820.

The SER outlined a robust policy for planning, designing, implementing, and developing educational programmes; this well-structured process is based on market research, stakeholder consultations, and alignment with GRUNI's mission.

As concerns market research, the results of the survey presented in the SER demonstrate that a significant proportion of employers, approximately 50 per cent of organisations, are willing to hire graduates of the University with a bachelor's degree; approximately 28 per cent prefer graduates with a master's degree, while there is much less demand for people with higher (doctoral) qualifications such as a doctorate, with less than 1 per cent of respondents showing interest. In addition, approximately 20 per cent of respondents are open to employing someone with any qualification. Approximately 84 per cent of University graduates considered themselves competitive in the labour market with the knowledge and skills acquired during the programme. As can be seen from the above, GRUNI makes extensive use of statistics (often percentages to two decimal places) to support its arguments, but this statistical background should be treated with caution. On the one hand, the data demonstrate that labour market analysis is practiced systematically by GRUNI for programme development, but on the other hand it should be emphasised that the results presented in this all-inclusive way do not provide meaningful information on GRUNI students that have graduated from the various schools. This homogenous statistical approach is in need of attention: data should be disaggregated by as many factors as is statistically meaningful.

The SER also states that the design, development, implementation and cancellation of education programs are guided by PDCA cycles (see section 2.2), depending on feedback from programme staff, professional associations, students, graduates and employers, and labour market research. This is a useful and well taken approach, but the previous remark

applies to the analysis of feedback statistics also, which shows that graduates find their jobs in different fields and sectors, "including healthcare and social services (27.13 per cent), finance and banking (13.30 per cent), marketing/PR (11.70 per cent), and administration and justice (9.57 per cent)". Obviously, this approach cannot be indicative of the effectiveness of individual faculties. It should be stressed that comparative surveys should be presented with specific statistics disaggregated by at least schools (n=5), taking into account the different levels of education for each individual programme (n=19), and probably by other factors.

In parallel to the SER, the University's website (www.gruni.edu.ge) provided detailed information on existing educational programmes (program catalogue), curricula, the administrative and academic staff of the school supervising the programme and international partner organisations. To serve a wider audience, the website provides updates on the educational and scientific activities carried out or planned by the University, both in Georgian and English. The website also contains links to regulations and guidelines related to the core functions of the University.

GRUNI has established a complex institutional system for overseeing the educational programmes. This system includes the programme committee, comprising the programme's leading faculty members, and a committee of graduates and employers, which includes employed graduates and representatives from relevant profiled organizations. Although the Committee certainly undertakes critical roles, the conditions of operation, competences and the agenda were not sufficiently clear to the Panel and neither were they understandable to the external stakeholders and members of the University interviewed. Furthermore, any modifications to a programme will not only require the Program Committee's deliberation and approval, but cooperation is needed with other participants and stakeholders including the academic and invited staff, students, representatives from the Batumi Branch, the Alumni and Employers Committee; representatives of professional associations; the academic school (represented by the Dean), the library, the Student and Alumni Support Center, the Human Resource Management Center, the International Integration Center, the Financial Service, the Strategic Development and Marketing Research Center, the Quality Assurance Service, Academic Committee; the Deputy Rector for Quality Assurance, and the other Deputy Rectors. The participation and coordination of these diverse bodies will surely ensure a comprehensive and integrated approach to the development and refinement of the educational programme but in this case a much simpler, more transparent and straightforward approach ("who, what, when") regulation is warranted (because "among many midwives the child is lost").

During the reporting period the educational programs at GRUNI have all undergone various degrees of modification, which are specified in detail in the SER for each school. The annexes provide evidence that these amendments are in force and that the University applies them in its academic practice.

The rules and procedures for cancelling an educational programmes are also governed by the University's regulations. In the event of a programme cancellation, according to the SER the University undertakes a consultative process with the NCEQE and partner universities to facilitate the transfer of affected students to continue their studies on similar programmes. Financial matters arising from this transfer are governed by agreements established between the involved parties. The Student Registration Center is responsible for providing necessary information to both, according to the SER, the NCEQE and the University. In such cases or in the case of internal mobility, the comparison and coordination of the different constituent courses is managed by the programme heads in collaboration with the School's quality assurance coordinator. The process is guided by the relevant policies; the syllabi of the programmes are employed to identify equivalencies and make adjustments, as necessary. The Panel noted that the references to NCEQE arising from the SER in this paragraph are likely erroneous, the relevant body being EMIS.

The health science programmes meet the needs of the Georgian society and contribute to social responsibility. The medical curriculum clearly includes the necessary components of biomedical sciences, clinical sciences and skills, behavioural and social sciences, and allows for the acquisition of clinical and professional skills. In terms of design and development, GRUNI has complied with the recommendations of the previous accreditation report, namely that the programme has been adapted to align with the renewed subject benchmark for higher medical education, the amount of Georgian language teaching has been increased to the current acceptable level, and the components of scientific research and clinical skills development have been strengthened to the present satisfactory levels.

The interviews revealed that stakeholders, including students and employers, were actively involved in the process of programme evaluation; they were aware of their role and the importance of their involvement in the procedure, and had ample information about the University's SER. Nonetheless the current view of stakeholders is rather narrow and there is scope for transmitting the University's considerable successes to a wider range.

Evidences/indicators
- The interviews with the stakeholders
- The self-evaluation report
- Various annexes to the self-evaluation report

Recommendations

It is recommended that all statistical data geneated by the University concerning students be analysed disaggregated by various factors such as student sex, programme, location of study

It is recommended that results and future plans of the educational programmes be communicated to a wider range of external stakeholders, such as governing organizations, cooperating health care facilities, scientific societies, research institutes, alumni, pharmaceutical and other industrial companies

Suggestions

It is suggested that the role, tasks and competencies of the programme committee established for programme management be clearly defined and regulated

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

GRUNI is multi-disciplinary University with five schools, each with its own specific profile and characteristics. The management of the educational programmes at all three levels are governed by regulatory documents developed by the Quality Assurance Service; these regulations are based not only on Georgian legislation but also on international standards. The University adhered to ECTS guidelines when designing and developing its educational

programmes. The educational and research components of these programs are closely linked considering the field specificities, theoretically ensuring that students achieve the learning outcomes within the allocated timeframe.

Learning outcomes at both programme and course level are generally sound, and represent assessable units. The exception is in medicine, where in many cases the programme learning outcomes consist of syllabus items, such as 'hand washing' and 'sutures'. However, at course level the medicine learning outcomes are mostly appropriate, but there are some exceptions where learning outcomes are unassessable, such as 'conducts learning and practice processes' [MED176C] and 'adapts to a multicultural environment' [MED174C; MED169C]. Both staff and students confirmed that learning outcomes are transmitted to students, typically at the commencement of courses. However, students' understanding of the nature learning outcomes was poor: many equated learning outcomes with curriculum elements or with grades.

Each programme offers students flexibility in the choice of optional components, these are selected on the basis of content, learning outcomes and the specificities of the field of study. A general overview of the programmes showed that in this respect there was no difference between the standards set out in the rules and the practice followed by the University.

In order to verify the correspondence between learning outcomes and goals, curriculum maps have been developed. The analysis of the programme objectives and learning outcomes, together with the appropriate map, gives a complete picture of the extent to which the students of a given programme will be able to develop during the introductory and advanced courses.

In general the University's programmes are built on the principle of student-oriented approaches, have well-defined, specific, and measurable objectives, and the curricula are designed to cover all necessary content and skills, systematically organized to build knowledge progressively. A very positive finding is that several external stakeholders have recently been introduced to review the programmes, considering, among other things, labour market requirements, learning outcomes and student performance outcomes.

The regulation of educational programmes covers the description and the recommended form of syllabi of the academic courses (including course codes, title, lecturers, status of the course, ECTS reflecting contact and independent learning hours, prerequisites for admission, objectives, learning outcomes in accordance with the described qualification framework, teaching and learning methods, lecture weeks, evaluation system with indication of evaluation components and methods, mandatory/basic literature and other educational materials, additional information on academic integrity). In this respect the management of the academic process is transparent, the content of the reviewed syllabi defines the activities clearly, and the structure includes all the mandatory data and necessary details.

Similarly, specific data were analyzed by the Panel to check the completeness of the information provided on the compliance of the awarded qualification/academic degree with the content of the programme, and the proper distribution of credits between the educational and research components. The credits of bachelor's, master's and doctoral programmes are distributed according to the regulations and the accepted practice established at the University. The 360 ECTS credits of the Medicine programme required for graduation are evenly distributed among basic science, preclinical and clinical courses and proportionally assigned to mandatory and optional subjects. Similarly, the one-cycle Dentistry programme with 300 ECTS fully aligns with subject benchmarks of higher education of the field. Global higher education requirements are incorporated into the curricula, such as respect for human dignity and rights, animal rights (see comments below), awareness towards legal, economic and ethical aspects of medical work, emphasis on intercultural competencies, ensuring equal opportunities for University members,

avoidance of unethical discrimination, and valuing diversity. In the process of evaluation, the criteria developed within the framework of the appropriate field standards were analyzed, and the research skill components (such as the evidence-based principles, skills and knowledge in biomedicine and efficient use of information and information technologies in medical contexts) were also addressed. The Panel concludes that the health sciences (Medicine and Dentistry) programmes fully meet the criteria and expectations in this important aspect as well.

GRUNI perceives the individually-tailored curriculum as a tangible expression of each student's academic freedom. The aim is to ensure quality education, maximize and exploit the student's interests, and enhance motivation. In order to put these principles into practice, the University is using the Nexus system to manage the educational process. The system allows students to develop individual curricula based on their interests and abilities. During the academic registration period Nexus provides students with training courses, grouped into blocks, such as compulsory or optional courses, each course being detailed according to descriptive parameters such as course name, lecturer, credit allocation, prerequisites, minimum and maximum number of students/groups. In addition, information on the dates and locations of courses, including details on classrooms or laboratories are given. For courses without prerequisites, the system offers recommendations regarding the ideal timing for completion. Furthermore, students can choose courses from other HEIs, both domestic and foreign, with which the University has established mutual credit recognition agreements through relevant memoranda or other agreements. Students with special needs can access electronic information from lecturers, participate in online lectures, receive assignments and individual consultations, and submit their work for evaluation electronically. Additional support services are provided for visually challenged and hearing-impaired students; suitable desks are also installed in some classrooms to accommodate students with disabilities.

In case of animal experimentations, the control of the process, including the fate of the animals used in experiments, are important issues worldwide, with significant ethical implications. According to the website of GRUNI 'different approved methods of the treatment of sick animals are shown' to GRUNI students in the 'Preparation Suite'. Appendix 2 (Ethics of Scientific Research) of the Standard of Scientific Research Activity document refers to "animal rights" as follows, 'It is not allowed to conduct such an experiment where the rights of animals are not protected, it causes their physical and/or psychological suffering, or unjustified death (World Declaration of Animal Rights 23.09. 1977)'. It should be emphasized here that the referred 'Declaration' is outdated and doomed to obscurity, it has no practical scope, no legal force and most importantly it was not adopted by any international institution (UNESCO was chosen as host for the proclamation in 1978 by the so called 'International League of Animal Rights'). It is suggested that "animal rights" be reformulated as "animal protection laws" and the relevant paragraphs of Standard of Scientific Research Activity on the use and protection of animals in scientific or educational processes should be changed and updated - Directive 2010/63/EU can serve as an example to establish standardized and internationally acceptable measures in this regard.

Evidences/indicators
- The interviews with the stakeholders   - The self-evaluation report   - Various annexes to the self-evaluation report

Recommendations
It is recommended that the programme and course learning outcomes for the medicine programme are revised so that they reflect the intended nature of learning outcomes and are assessable units

It is recommended that the nature of learning outcomes is effectively communicated to students

It is recommended that studies on animals are done in compliance with specific regulations and the "Three Rs principle" in research and testing (Directive 2010/63/EU establishes measures for the protection of animals used for scientific or educational purposes); the regulations and the Code of Ethics of GRUNI should be brought into line with these principles

Suggestions

Best Practices (if applicable)

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 objectives of the educational programes are clearly defined; the classification of fields of study, the national qualifications framework and the field characteristics of higher education define the learning outcomes clearly and the University has developed a complex system for assessing learning outcomes, with matching complex methods.

The assessment is a cyclical and ongoing process, and it is employed to improve the educational programmes. According to the SER the educational programmes undergo continuous monitoring, assessment is carried out at the end of the academic year, and an interim exploration of the achievement of the learning outcomes is carried out at the end of each semester. In theory, this method ensures the improvement of the quality of programmes. The evaluation of a programme's compliance with higher education requirements includes both direct and indirect (student self-assessment, employer and graduate surveys) assessments of learning outcomes. The Quality Assurance Service has developed methods/activities for teaching, learning, and evaluation, which are published in a nomenclature format. Nonetheless, this section of the SER was curiously silent about how learning outcomes are assessed. On discussing with University staff, the Panel discovered that learning outcomes are deemed to be met if a certain variable proportion of students have met them. The determination of whether learning outcomes have been met overall is complex and its completion tells the University very little about its own performance. Such complex methods of dealing with learning outcomes are exist in a number of higher education systems globally, but the predominant method is much simpler and treats learning outcomes as threshold concepts (as they were originally intended to be used), such that for a course or programme, a student will only pass if s/he meets all the learning outcomes. Thus the learning outcomes specify the minimum standard to be achieved.

The Rector of the University approves the documents of the educational process which outline the general rules for the assessment of learning outcomes. The regulation establishes a uniform structure for both intermediate and final evaluations; formulates a system for awarding academic degrees and diploma categories while the specific methods/activities and criteria utilized in the teaching and learning process are detailed in

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the syllabi. The primary goal of the assessment is to accurately determine students' learning outcomes at both the course and academic programme levels. The individual programme employs diverse teaching methods tailored to different fields and learning styles and may include lectures, hands-on activities, group work, and technology-enhanced learning among others. In this line, there are robust assessment and evaluation mechanisms in place to measure students' progress and achievements, these include formative assessments (ongoing) and summative assessments (end of course) as well.

Information on assessment methods is communicated to students through both electronic and direct contact routes. These via Nexus, where all curricula, together with descriptions of teaching, learning and assessment methods and criteria, are available. In addition, the Dean's Hour, held monthly in each group, addresses the day-to-day activities of students, including internal regulations and ethical concerns. In these meetings, the lecturers discuss all components of the curriculum, including the learning, teaching and assessment systems. Also the Student Support Centre also provides information and methodological materials relevant to the implementation of the educational programme.

The assessment process includes a feedback mechanism, the teachers categorise errors and analyse trends in front of the group, without revealing the identity of individual students. Through a dedicated section of Nexus and/or the exam notebook, students gain insight into the nature of their mistakes, which helps their academic progress.

In general, the assessment involves five types of positive grades: (A) excellent – 91-100 points; (B) very good – 81-90 points; (C) good – 71-80 points; (D) satisfactory – 61-70 points; (E) sufficient – 51-60 points. There are two types of negative grades: (FX) no passing grade – 41-50 points indicates that a student needs to work harder to pass the final exam and based on his/her independent work he/she is accepted to take the final exam; (F) fail - 40 points and below indicates that the work is insufficient, and he/she must retake the course. With grade FX a student is eligible to make one additional examination attempt in the same semester not earlier than 5 days after the final examination and in case of another failure a student is expected to repeat the entire failed academic course. While the Panel heard that extensive criterion-only referencing is used in the assessment of students, some norm-referencing persists, where a certain proportion of students are awarded a particular grade, no matter what their absolute performance. This means that a student's grades are dependent not only on her/his performance, but on the performance of other students in the same cohort. This should be avoided.

Students have the right to submit a reasoned assessment appeal to the Dean within a specified time limit. The appeal is then examined by a temporary committee, set up by the Dean and composed of at least three members. At the discretion of the Dean, or at the request of the student, an invited expert (in cases involving a qualification paper) may be appointed to the committee. The committee assesses the appeal in accordance with the criteria set out in the syllabus. A decision on whether to accept or reject the claim is made by a simple majority vote of the members but decisions that would worsen the student's assessment are strictly prohibited.

In case of healthcare programmes, regular review of learning outcomes takes place in the frame of the basic, preclinical, and clinical subjects of the Medical School and Dentistry School. As part of good practice, Dentistry students are trained at the Educational-Research and Clinical Center of the University "Gruniverse", a modern clinical establishment equipped with cutting-edge simulation technologies, teaching resources and equipment for the comprehensive and efficient execution of the programme, while medical students have ample access to the independent Clinical Skills Center of the University equipped with state-of-the-art low- and high-fidelity simulation technologies and facilities. The assessment methods are appropriately meeting the objectives and the learning outcomes, such as they are (see section 3.2): essays, case/situation-based tasks, quizzes/tests/combined tests/questionnaires, analysis of clinical, instrumental and laboratory data, demonstration of practical/clinical skills, clinical reasoning/case analysis,

mini-Clinical Evaluation Exercise (Mini-CEX), and Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) are used. More details on this subject are given in the Obstetrics and Gynaecology (MED164C) syllabus. According to the description the 'integrated OSCE consists of 12 stations (10 active and 2 rest) and is conducted in' the Obstetrics and Gynaecology course itself (two stations: 'Pelvic examination', 'gynaecological speculum insertion'), the Pediatric Clinical Skills course (MED161C) (six stations: 'assessment of basic anthropometric data', 'nasogastric intubation', 'injection into the muscle; subcutaneous injection', removal of a foreign body from the airways', 'assessment of the newborn', 'first aid for nosebleeds'), and in in the Endocrinology course (MED158C) with 2 stations. However, OSCE as an option is not recognized in the curriculum of the Endocrinology course where both mid-term and final assessments are defined as 'tests'.

The inclusion of OSCE-based evaluation, including intermediate assessment activities is ongoing (as described by the previous recommendations of the Accreditation Council), and this should be extended to further courses and practical clinical subjects (examples are MED168C Anesthesiology with verbal presentation of CPR and defibrillation technique and MED129C Topographic Anatomy, a *par excellence* practical subject, where the final assessment is a two-hour test).

Evidences/indicators
- The interviews with the stakeholders
- The self-evaluation report
- Various annexes to the self-evaluation report

Recommendations

It is recommended that all norm-referenced assessment should be removed and only criterion-referenced assessment be used such that an individual student's grades are dependent on her/his performance only

It is recommended that the use of Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) be extended to assess clinically relevant competencies to emphasize the standards of practical clinical training

Suggestions

It is suggested that accepted international practice in assessing learning outcomes as threshold concepts be adopted

Best Practices (if applicable)

Evaluation

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

o   ☐ Does not comply with requirements

4. Staff of the HEI

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Based on the SER and the accompanying evidence documents, the University manages human resources and labour relations in compliance with Georgia's laws, its own regulations, the statute of scientific activity, and labour bylaws. The Panel established through interview that the staff of the University play a vital role in the pursuit of the University's overall mission. Quality teaching and research depend on staff qualifications and experience. Therefore, the University has established a Human Resources/Personnel Management Policy based on principles of equality, diversity, transparency, free expression, mutual respect, support, openness, professional development, and optimization. As part of this policy the University sets movable benchmarks for its staff and the work completed by them in order to manage the institution's activities.

The University's staff is categorized into administrative, academic, scientific, visiting, and support roles. Administrative staff include the Rector, Deputy Rectors, Chancellor, Deans, (although some are also academic staff), while the support staff include the head of structural (support) units and office managers. The academic staff, such as professors, associate professors and assistant professors, are central to education and research, including student advising, scientific guidance, and represent the University as applicable. However, there are concerns about the appropriate remuneration system and some benefits for affiliated personnel. Currently, affiliate staff are paid hourly based on teaching contact hours, which does not account for other work, including their professional development directly related to their roles, and meeting the Expert Panel. The salary policy for affiliated staff should be reviewed to ensure fair compensation.

The university follows a regulation requiring all new employees to undergo a three-month adaptation period, which involves cognitive and orientation activities, training, and cultural events. New staff members are assigned an advisor (also termed mentor) based on their personal preferences, work experience, and personality traits. The advisor is appointed by the Rector on the recommendation of the Head of the Human Resources Management Centre. The advisor plays a crucial role in helping the new employee integrate into the University environment and build a positive relationship with the institution and its community. The advising programme is overseen by the Rector. At the end of three months, new employees are expected to submit a report and provide feedback on their experience, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the University. While the adaptation period and the presence of a personal advisor are beneficial for facilitating integration and preparation, the feedback submitted by the new employee may affect their job security. The Panel considers that a refocusing of activities towards a more systematic and objective performance analysis under the term 'probationary period' or similar would better serve the University's needs and make a clear signal to the new employees.

Prospective employees in teaching roles recommended or selected through a competitive process are interviewed by key members of the administration, including Deputy Rectors, Deans, and the Rector. These interviews allow both the administration and the new employee to become acquainted with each other and assess the candidate's readiness for

the role. The results of these interviews are formally documented to maintain transparency and clarity in the recruitment process.

The University has established a comprehensive system for the professional development of its staff, which is managed by the Center for Professional Development. Within this centre, a team of expert consultants and trainers ensures the practical implementation of the professional development policy. The Center has reviewed and developed new training programmes (Appendix 4.1.5). For instance, a training programme was designed to address communication issues with students, based on feedback from a staff evaluation by students that revealed some lecturers were unable to communicate effectively. Nonetheless, although teaching staff are issued with an 'Academic and Invited Staff Guide', which contains important and valuable information about managing the learning process and gives tips on how to be a good teacher, and new teaching staff are offered some support in learning how to teach, none of this is mandatory. Some support to new teachers may be offered by more experienced staff, but experience is no guarantee of quality. If teaching staff are found to be inadequate then training is mandatory, but the Panel considered that this is retrospective remedy after damage has been done. Teaching in higher education is a profession, and it is expected that any professional is properly trained for her/his role.

The university has implemented a bonus system for its staff, as indicated in the SER. During interviews, it was confirmed that there are benefits applicable to all staff members based on individual evaluations. For instance, administrative and support staff are assessed based on the quality of their activities, while academic staff are evaluated on educational, organizational, methodical, scientific, community development activities, and student feedback.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-evaluation report
- The interviews with the stakeholders
- Regulations on the governance of educational and scientific activities (Appendix 4.1.1)
- Human resources/personnel management policy (Appendix 4.1.2)
- Professional development policy for personnel (Appendix 4.1.3)
- Advisory group (Appendix 4.1.4)
- Syllabi for professional development training (Appendix 4.1.5)
- Administrative and support staff satisfaction survey (Appendix 4.1.6)
- Academic and invited staff satisfaction survey (Appendix 4.1.7)
- Distribution of academic staff by age and gender (Appendix 4.1.8)
- Retention rate of administrative staff (Appendix 4.1.9)
- Retention rate of academic staff (Appendix 4.1.10)
- Affiliation rules and conditions (see Human Resources, Personnel Management Policy, Appendix 4.1.2, Article 6)
- Sample employment contracts (Appendix 4.1.11)
- Personnel recruitment materials (Appendix 4.1.12)
- Job descriptions and qualification requirements for personnel (Appendix 4.1.13)
- Personnel files (Appendix 4.1.14)
- Personnel management policies and regulations
- Academic and Invited Staff Guide

Recommendations

It is recommended that a mandatory training course in learning and teaching at university-level be developed and implemented for all new teaching staff

It is recommended that the salary policy for affiliate staff is reviewed

It is recommended that the adaptation period is replaced with a probationary period or similar, and clear and transparent criteria for ultimate recruitment are defined

Suggestions

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

At the time of the site visit the University employed 179 academic staff engaged in educational programmes, out of which 145 are affiliated academic staff. The staffing complement is shown in the table below. Over the past six years, there has been an increase of 17 academic staff and 29 affiliated staff.

Academic Position	School of Medicine	School of Law	School of Business and Management	School of Humanitarian and Social Sciences	School of Public Administration and Politics	Total
Professor	18	15	14	10	5	62
Associate Professor	15	16	17	18	11	77
Assistant Professor	4	2	6	2	1	15
Assistant	11	4	7	2	1	25
Total	*48*	*37*	*44*	*32*	*18*	*179*
Affiliated Professor	15	14	11	9	5	54
Affiliated Associate Professor	10	12	13	15	9	59
Affiliated Assistant Professor	2	2	4	2	0	10
Affiliated Assistant	8	4	7	2	1	22
Total	*35*	*32*	*35*	*28*	*15*	*145*

Based on the SER, the institution has implemented a workload system where the full-time equivalent (FTE) is calculated by multiplying regular hours by 52. Workload standards are established through surveys of academic staff and ensure an equitable and efficient distribution of workload within the University.

The workload of academic staff consists of three main components: educational/academic workload, organizational-methodical workload, and scientific workload. Educational/academic workload encompasses teaching contact hours and student assessment. Organizational-methodical workload includes preparatory and administrative tasks, while scientific workload pertains to research activities and outcomes.

Under the FTE system, the University sets a specific hourly workload for full-time employees. For affiliated academic staff, this translates to a maximum annual workload of 1,560 hours, spread over 780 hours per semester. Workloads are flexible, with minimum and maximum limits determined by staff expertise and institutional needs. Affiliated academic staff may engage in activities at other institutions with the University's approval, provided that their educational duties, scientific duties, and organizational tasks fall within the established limits, with a maximum workload of 40 hours per week. The teaching-scientific workload of academic staff who also are in administrative or support positions is reduced by 50 per cent. Affiliated staff are primarily involved in lecturing and guiding assistants in conducting seminars and practical sessions, as well as curriculum preparation and student assessment to ensure adherence to established criteria. Also affiliated personnel are responsible for their own curriculum preparation and student assessment to ensure compliance with established criteria. Established (non-affiliated) academic staff at the University have a weekly workload of 20 hours, excluding research responsibilities, which limits their maximum annual workload to 1,040 hours. Non-affiliated academic staff supervise undergraduate topics, supervise master's and doctoral students, review scientific papers, and conduct university research. This system ensures the effective contribution of all academic staff in educational and research activities.

Both affiliated and non-affiliated academic staff adhere to individual workload plans according to the University's Quality Management Regulations. Annual evaluations of affiliated staff assess academic and organizational performance, guided by criteria from the University's Center for Quality Assurance and Human Resources. The university's self-evaluation report presents the ratios of academic, administrative, visiting and support staff to programmes, students and other stakeholders. According to this information, it is planned to improve the ratios by 2030. For example, the ratio of academic and scientific staff to the total number of administrative and support staff will be increased to 1.5 and the ratio of academic, scientific, invited staff number to the number of higher educational programmes will be increased to 36.6. The Panel viewed these goals as appropriate.

Evidences/indicators
- The self-evaluation report
- The interviews with the stakeholders
- Personnel Workload Scheme (Annex 4.2.1)
- Personnel Workload in Other HEIs (Annex 4.2.2)
- Methodology for Determining (Planning) the Number of Personnel (Annex 4.2.3)
- Results of Student Surveys (Annex 4.2.4)
- Report on Academic and Invited Personnel Satisfaction Research(Annex 4.1.7)
- Educational Program Standard (Appendix 4.2.5)

Recommendations

Suggestions
Best Practices (if applicable)
Evaluation

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

5. Students and Their Support Services

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

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The University has established comprehensive regulations governing student status and the educational process. These regulations encompass the initialization, suspension and termination of student status, student mobility, qualification granting, issuance of educational documents, and recognition of education received during the learning period. These regulations are publicly accessible on the University's website, ensuring transparency and ease of access for all stakeholders.

For the enrollment of students without the unified national examinations or general master's examinations, as applicable, in order to assess language proficiency for the admission, the University conducts a recorded interview with each applicant and ensures that the video recording is made available to the Ministry of Education and Science. In addition, for Master's programmes the University conducts written examinations to assess the applicant's English proficiency.

The University employs the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) to recognize the education students acquire during their studies. This system defines the total academic workload for students and outlines the requirements for each educational component and the academic programme as a whole. Attachments to the regulations provide standards for bachelor's and master's theses, evaluation criteria, operations of the quality awarding body, and the process for issuing educational documents.

The university has developed separate regulations for doctoral programs, including detailed procedures for dissertation defence. These regulations address the status of doctoral students, define the structure of doctoral programmes, and outline the system for planning, monitoring and evaluating educational-research activities.

The student survey indicated that approximately 90 per cent of students are familiar with the regulations governing student status and the educational process: a high level of awareness among the student body. Students met by the Panel were clearly aware of the regulations related to the student status and other aspects of educational processes.

The University has implemented various measures to ensure the protection of student rights and interests. The rights and obligations of students are clearly outlined in the University charter and individual student-University agreements. Specific sections of the charter (articles 42-47) are dedicated to detailing student rights, duties and responsibilities.

The University promotes student participation in governance and quality assurance processes. Students have the right to evaluate educational programmes and faculty performance, and can be elected or nominated to University management bodies (but see Standard 1). An ongoing initiative to revise the student code of ethics demonstrates the University's commitment to involving students in shaping the regulations that affect them.

Financial protections for students are embedded in the regulatory framework. There are provisions for tuition fee refunds in cases of status suspension or termination and students are protected from tuition fee increases upon reinstatement of status. Doctoral students may qualify for continued financing under specific conditions.

The University has taken steps to ensure student health and well-being, including the provision of some recreational space. The university provides medical offices and cafeterias on its campuses, classrooms and some accessibility features for students with special needs, including ramps, specialized restrooms, elevators and Braille signage (but see Standard 7).

The University has established appeal mechanisms for study outcomes and dissertation defence results. Importantly, regulations prohibit negative alterations to student assessments, except in cases of plagiarism.

An independent Student Ombudsman office, staffed by students, has been established to address potential rights violations. Students can file complaints electronically or in person and the Ombudsman is required to respond within 30 days. The Panel discovered that the Student Ombudsman office had no pending cases during the most recent authorization period. The Panel considered it extremely unlikely that no cases had arisen during this period and the absence of activity raises significant concerns about the effectiveness of the current ombudsman mechanism in addressing potential student rights violations. There is an opportunity to bolster the detection of issues through better monitoring in conjunction with student representatives to ensure that the Student Ombudsman office is attuned to emerging concerns within the student community.

Furthermore, the Panel saw the lack of participation of international students in the mechanisms for the protection of student rights and lawful interests, namely in student self-government. There is scope to develop and implement strategies to increase the participation of international students in the student self-government. This may include the following.

• Conducting outreach specifically targeting international students to raise awareness about these mechanisms;

• providing multilingual information and resources about student rights and protection processes;

• offering training or orientation sessions for international students on how to engage with these mechanisms;

• regularly collecting feedback from international students on barriers to their participation and addressing identified issues.

Efforts have been made to improve students' understanding of agreements and regulations. New orders or regulation changes are posted on both the University website and the learning management portal. A recent survey indicates that almost all students are aware of being informed about agreement provisions and of available consultation mechanisms, though only approximately 75 per cent have information about student rights protection mechanisms.

Overall, the University has developed a comprehensive regulatory framework covering all educational levels and has implemented multiple measures in attempts to ensure the protection of student rights and lawful interests. GRUNI demonstrates a commitment to transparency, student participation and continuous improvement in these areas. The high levels of student awareness and satisfaction with these measures, as indicated by survey results, suggest that the University's efforts in this regard have been largely successful.

The Panel formed the view that through initiatives such as scholarships there is a palpable sense of social and community support, and a commitment to the education of students across the range of social groups.

Evidences/indicators

- Undergraduate Regulations (Annex 5.1.2)
- Graduate Regulations (Annex 5.1.3)
- University Dissertation Council and Doctoral Studies Regulations (Annex 5.1.4)
- Standards for the Scientific Component of Doctoral Studies (Annex 5.1.5)
- Standards for the Elective Component of Doctoral Studies (Annex 5.1.6)
- Student Ombudsman's Regulations (Annex 5.1.1)
- Student Code of Conduct (Annex 5.1.10)
- Regulations on Educational and Scientific Activities (Annex 5.1.7)
- Regulations on Student Status and Educational Processn (Annex 5.1.1)
- Sample Contracts Signed with Students (Annex 5.1.8)
- The self-evaluation report
- The interviews with the stakeholders

Recommendations

It is recommended that a monitoring system be implemented that identifies individual and systemic issues that should be reported to the Student Ombudsman office, making use of regular check-ins with student representative bodies.

It is recommended that the participation of international students in the mechanisms for the protection of student rights and lawful interests is strengthened, namely in student self-government.

Suggestions

Best Practices (if applicable)

Evaluation

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

5.2 Student Support Services

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The University demonstrates a comprehensive approach to student consulting services, aimed at facilitating educational planning and enhancing academic performance. The cornerstone of this approach is the Nexus electronic management system, which allows students to create personalized learning plans. This system embodies the University's

commitment to academic freedom while ensuring quality education and maximizing students' interests and abilities.

The individual curriculum planning process is guided by principles of freedom of choice, understanding of programme context and content, and equal responsibility for optional and mandatory components. During the academic registration period, students can access Nexus to review available courses, which are categorized into University courses, compulsory courses, elective courses, and free components. The system provides detailed information about each course, including prerequisites and scheduling, and automatically restricts course selection based on accumulated credits and scheduling conflicts.

For first-year students, GRUNI offers orientation activities, including guidance on using the Nexus system and selecting courses. The 'Dean's hour' includes focused discussions on utilizing Nexus for individual study planning. ECTS coordinators and consultants from the Student and Alumni Support Center provide individual consultations on credit planning.

The University offers a range of consultation mechanisms, including in-person and electronic options. A student survey indicates that almost all students are aware of these consultation services, highlighting effective communication of these resources. The consultation services encompass the Nexus system, Deans' hour, orientation activities, informational-methodical manuals, volunteer student consultation service, ECTS coordinator consultations, guidance from the Student and Graduate Center consultants, course leader consultations, and doctoral mentorship. The University ensures the integration of international students by offering dedicated orientation sessions to familiarize them with the campus, local customs, and important resources; using technologies (via social media) to connect international students and share information about local events and opportunities; organizing trips to local landmarks, cultural sites or nearby cities to help them explore their new environment. The University pays similar attention to the Batumi campus students.

To address academic performance issues, the University has developed a specialized feedback form/matrix. This tool allows the quality assurance unit to identify factors contributing to low performance and implement targeted interventions, such as offering additional instruction hours, providing feedback to lecturers, or developing strategies to enhance group engagement.

GRUNI has established a robust career support service through the Student and Graduate Support Center. This centre, overseen by the Deputy Rector for Teaching, Learning and Student Support, aims to foster the academic, career and personal growth of both current students and alumni.

The Career Support Coordinator leads several key initiatives, including the following.

- Organizing employment forums and employer meet-and-greets
- Providing up-to-date information about job vacancies and career opportunities
- Developing contractual relationships with companies
- Offering individualized support for students' employment endeavors
- Expanding the network of preferential services available to students
- Offering consulting services

The coordinator collaborates with the University's Strategic Development and Marketing Research Service to conduct employer research, guiding the development of relevant training programmes. Regular dissemination of job vacancies, individual consultations and trainings on employment-related topics are part of the centre's services.

The University has integrated career skills as an optional course within the academic curriculum and maintains a dedicated webpage for employers to submit their employee

requirements. The centre also facilitates professional practice and internship opportunities for students and graduates at both local and international institutions.

Student feedback indicates high satisfaction with these services, indicating that career planning services are accessible and effective, internship opportunities are facilitated, job vacancy information is regularly disseminated, and employment-focused events are frequently organized.

Throughout the authorization period, the University has hosted numerous career development events, including employment forums, masterclasses and interactions with successful alumni. These initiatives have likely contributed to students securing employment or internships across various sectors. The University also maintains a collaborative relationship with the employers' association and provides online resources for job search and application processes.

GRUNI demonstrates a strong commitment to providing comprehensive student consulting services for educational planning and academic performance improvement. Additionally, it has established an effective career support service that offers appropriate counselling and support regarding employment and career development. The high levels of student awareness and satisfaction with these services indicate their effectiveness in meeting student needs and preparing them for future careers.

GRUNI also keeps students informed about various activities and opportunities. The agreement between the University and its students outlines multiple information sources, including the university website, the Nexus academic management platform, information boards, electronic displays and newsletters. Students are expected to regularly check these resources for updates.

The University employs a multi-faceted communication strategy that includes digital platforms, physical displays, and interactive methods. Social media and mobile messaging services are routinely used to reach students. Event announcements on the website provide detailed information, including date, time, location, target audience and involved entities. Information tables in the University lobby at the Tbilisi campus allow student self-government bodies and active student groups to directly inform peers and staff about significant upcoming events.

To facilitate easy access to information, the University's website features a categorized "news" archive, covering various aspects of University life such as learning-teaching activities, international integration, employment/internship opportunities, scientific activities, dissertations, and vacancy contests. Weekly emails containing newsletters about competitions and grants are sent to students, providing comprehensive information on projects, programmes and events announced by the University and other organizations. Students met by the Panel were aware of the various opportunities available to them.

The University promotes student involvement in research through its Fund for Scientific Research and Creative Initiative Development. This fund has conducted internal grant competitions that require student participation in research projects, encouraging academic engagement beyond regular coursework. Projects involving collaborations between staff and students are particularly encouraged, promoting a culture of academic partnership and innovation.

The university demonstrates strong support for student initiatives, both financially and administratively. According to the student survey, approximately 95 per cent of students acknowledge that the administration supports various student initiatives and event organization. An equal percentage of students agrees that the University provides financial

support for various events, underscoring the institution's commitment to fostering an environment that supports student-led activities.

Student participation in international projects and events is facilitated. The University allocates funding to support the participation of students, including those from socially vulnerable backgrounds, in international mobility programmes. During the reporting period, up to 120 students were provided the opportunity to study abroad, a significant increase from previous years, with substantial funding allocated for this purpose.

The University's website includes a dedicated section for 'International integration', which consolidates all activities related to foreign engagements or international events within Georgia, including international mobility opportunities such as exchange programmes and conferences.

The University extends its support to ensure that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, can participate in various projects and events. This includes financial benefits, which may extend to complete tuition fee waivers and prioritization in competitions for international student mobility. The University has established specific social benefits and a flexible tuition fee payment scheme to accommodate students' financial situations.

The university actively promotes sports and healthy living among its students, supporting self-government initiatives to organize sports activities and inter-university youth competitions. It also facilitates educational and exploratory activities, enabling students to travel within Georgia and abroad.

Furthermore, the university focuses on enhancing civic responsibility among students by facilitating and supporting student-led initiatives and various social projects aimed at assisting vulnerable groups and cleaning public spaces.

There is a strong commitment to ensuring student awareness and involvement in various university-level, local and international projects and events. The multi-faceted communication strategy, coupled with financial and administrative support for student initiatives, creates an environment that encourages active student participation in academic and extracurricular activities. The high levels of student awareness and satisfaction with these efforts, as indicated by survey results, suggest that the University's approach is effective in engaging its student body and supporting its diverse interests and initiatives.

Though the University has achieved much in its support for students the Panel concludes that there is opportunity for further support in two areas. The introduction of a system to support student organizations and clubs would enhance student engagement, foster leadership skills, create a more vibrant campus community, and promote personal growth and networking. Likewise the initiation of research programmes that require collaboration between students from both campuses and the hosting of 'Campus Culture Weeks', or similar, to showcase the unique aspects of each campus to the other would strengthen the unity of the student body and create a cohesive institutional identity.

Evidences/indicators
• Individual Study Plan
• Student Satisfaction Survey (Appendix 5.2.2)
• Regulation of the Student and Alumni Support Center (Appendix 5.2.3)
• Activities in the Field of Career Development (Appendix 5.2.4)
• Alumni Survey (Appendix 5.2.5)
• Standard of Scientific Research Activity (Appendix 5.2.6)
• Analysis of Labor Market and Employer Requirements (Appendix 5.2.7)

•   The self-evaluation report •   The interviews with the stakeholders
Recommendations
Suggestions It is suggested that a comprehensive system for student organizations and clubs be implemented It is suggested that research programmes that require collaboration between students from both campuses and the hosting of 'Campus Culture Weeks', or similar, to showcase the unique aspects of each campus to the other be initiated
Best Practices (if applicable)
Evaluation ☒ Complies with requirements ☐ Substantially complies with requirements ☐ Partially complies with requirements ☐ Does not comply with requirements

6. Research, development and/or other creative work

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

GRUNI is active in research, in promoting research within the institution, and in enhancing the development of international research collaboration. The last includes the dissemination of the research results of its staff members, and attracting international expertise for the benefit of students. On the basis of its own funding schemes, GRUNI ensures effective conditions for fostering research and other creative activities of its academic staff and students. Teaching staff were able to give multiple convincing examples of how they used their research to inform their teaching.

The guiding external and internal documents under which GRUNI operates its research activities include: the Law of Georgia on Higher Education; The orders of the Minister of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia, which are related to the implementation/support of research activities; the mission of GRUNI and its development strategy for fundamental and/or applied research/creative activities; GRUNI's Statute; and its standard of scientific-research activity.

The standard of scientific-research activity determines the directions of scientific research activities that are carried out by the following structural units: the Scientific Research and Creative Initiative Development Foundation and the Scientific Research Management Center.

The Scientific Research and Creative Initiative Development Foundation is mainly involved in the awarding of the following grants within GRUNI.

- Scientific-research grants (the budget has increased 3.6 times and totals 480,198 GEL as compared to the previous reporting period). Some notable projects include the following.
  - o Fundamental research grant, 'The role of renewable energies in the development of green business in Georgia';
  - o Student's research grant, 'National and international standards of professional ethics';
  - o Applied research grant, 'Raising awareness of sustainable development in schools' (in cooperation with Tbilisi City Hall).
- Scientific-research visits. Twenty-five initiatives of academic and invited staff, as well as students (including doctoral students) were supported, in which about 100 people participated during the reporting period.
- Textbooks and monographs. Compared to the previous reporting period, funding has increased 3.3 times.
- Funding for journal publications both in Georgia and internationally. Examples include the collection of the National Tourism Administration of Georgia, and Canadian and Latvian journals.
- Conference participation including the following.
  - o XV International Conference in Economics jointly organized by GRUNI, University of Eastern Europe, World Economic Research Institute (WERI) and University of Seville - EconWorld2023@Tbilisi (2023).

- o Joint international multidisciplinary forum of GRUNI and the European Scientific Institute, which is held annually, for the ninth time in a row, in Tbilisi and Batumi offices in Georgia.
- Creative initiatives: twenty-three projects implemented in the reporting period.
- Initiatives of doctoral students. Since 2018, 32 projects were financed, which accounted for approximately 15 per cent of the budget allocated to research.
- Postdoctoral projects. The university has a postdoctoral research institute (but see 6.2) as a tool for attracting talented staff to GRUNI. Activities funded included a research visit to the Harvard University Business School.

The Scientific Research Management Center manages the annual awards to staff based on their research outputs. It also organizes training for GRUNI staff and students mostly focusing on research training and the support of young researchers. In relation to the latter it is implementing the following projects: International Youth Leadership Certificate Program, publication of research articles together with foreign partners, 'Empowering Agricultural Resilience Through Holistic Strategy (EARTH)' with Michigan State University, new studies and events with the World Economic Forum.

For the facilitation of research activities GRUNI also cooperates with diplomatic representations based in Georgia and is active with numerous bodies such as DAAD Office, and the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation. The University also participates in activities directed to rendering recommendations to the Government regarding various topics of urgent importance, an example of which is participation in the development of an anti-crisis and post-crisis government plan.

GRUNI's citation count has increased 548 times in the current reporting period compared to the previous reporting period (from 26 to 14,259). More than 90 per cent of citations come from SCOPUS (13,354 citations) and more than 40 per cent from Web of Science (6,060 citations). The total citation index of GRUNI affiliated professors is 26 times higher than that of non-affiliated professors, namely 13,740 citations against 519. The total number of scientific activities identified in the given reporting period is 1665, which is 2.05 times higher compared to the previous reporting period (812 units). While this means that the works of GRUNI staff are being cited, it is not a direct measure of the quality of research outputs and the 548 multiplier only serves to show the low baseline in the previous reporting period. While it is very clear to the Panel that GRUNI is taking research seriously and has made great strides, there is much more to be done to attain a respectable level of research credibility by international standards. A starting point would be to ensure that all research outputs are targeted towards high-ranking international journals: at present many papers produced are cryptic in local or regional journals. Likewise there is a growing of external grant income and this should be pursued vigorously. Also conferences attended tend to be local and GRUNI may wish to establish itself more consistently on a bigger global stage. GRUNI must not forget its roots, but to be internationally credible it should expand its research horizons; this also fits with its plans regarding internationalization. To some extent this is a refocusing from the local to the global, not a change in direction.

Mechanisms for ensuring the effectiveness of the supervision of doctoral studies and procedures for the evaluation and defence of the dissertation are transparent and fair and are described in the regulations of the University Dissertation Board and Doctorate which also contain provisions regarding the procedures for the appointment of a supervisor, educational activities of the doctoral student, and preparation of an individual plan. Both University regulations and staff met by the Panel confirmed that the workload of academic staff is planned in a manner not to create any difficulties in supervision of doctoral students. It was also emphasised to the Panel that internal opportunities are available for project teams (comprising both academic staff and students) to apply for 'seed' funding leading to novel ideas that might then attract external funding from organisations such as the DAAD office, or National Science Foundation. The defence of the dissertation is public and is documented by shorthand recording or video recording, which is an integral part of the

protocol. Doctoral theses are publicly available online. The results of doctoral projects and their publications are incorporated into the teaching at various levels.

Evidences/indicators

- The self-evaluation report
- The interviews with the stakeholders
- Mission
- Strategic Development Plan
- Conducted Scientific-Research Activities
- Research Activities Undertaken by Staff
- Memorandums with International Research Organizations
- Joint Research Projects
- Current and Planned Scientific Activities
- Professional Development Policy for Personnel
- Scheme for Loading Academic Staff
- Participation of Researchers and PhD Students, Dissertation Defense Committee
- Closed Doctoral Programs
- Evaluation of Master's and Doctoral Theses
- Regulations on Evaluation and Defense of Doctoral Dissertations
- Regulations of the University Dissertation Council and Doctorate
- Standard of scientific components of the doctoral program
- Research Ethics
- University web page

Recommendations

Suggestions

It is suggested that high-quality internationalization of research activities is pursued more vigorously, including conference participation, international journal targeting and publication, and generating external research income

Best Practices (if applicable)

Evaluation

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

6.2. Research Support and Internationalization

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The University's strategic development plan and its internationalization policy are the major framework documents that drive the University's support for research and its internationalization agenda.

To facilitate research, development and creative activities GRUNI has established several institutional units including the position of Deputy Rector for Scientific Research, the

Scientific-Research Management Center, the Fund for the Development of Scientific Research and Creative Initiatives, the University Library, and the in-house journal 'Academic Digest', which should act as an outlet for minor or very locally-focused research outputs. Research activity at GRUNI is carried out in line with the standard of academic ethics.

The scientific research management center was claimed in the SER as the coordinating body of the research centers and institutes in the University. Putatively the centre promotes the development of the research and creative potential of the academic staff, the implementation of fundamental and applied research, and is focused on the development of existing knowledge and the creation of new knowledge. Under the centre's auspices the following research institutes and centres are operating at GRUNI:

- Scientific Institute of Law and Criminology;
- Scientific-Research Institute of Human Rights;
- Institute of Philosophy and Social Sciences;
- Scientific-Research Institute of Public Administration;
- Scientific Research Institute of Juvenology;
- Scientific-Research Institute of History and Geography of Georgian Emigration;
- Scientific-research center of the School of Business and Management;
- Scientific Research Center of Land Law;
- Scientific Research Center of Medicine.

Some centres and institutes have their own research periodicals that ensure publication opportunities for staff and students. For instance the Research Institute of Law and Criminology publishes a scientific journal 'Kiminolog'; The Institute of History and Geography of Georgian Emigration publishes an analytical magazine 'Georgian Emigration'. Other centres and institutes participate in publishing journals in collaboration with partner organizations. For example, 'Journal of Constitutional Law' (not to be confused with *Journal of Constitutional Law* published by the University of Pennsylvania), 'Actual Issues of Law' and 'Journal of Medical Law and Management'. The value of these outlets and the value to the University in having its staff publish in them when more prestigious outlets are available is questionable at best. This is a question of institutional reputation, not just efficient use of resources.

The main financial source of support for research and creative activities at GRUNI is the Scientific Research and Creative Initiative Development Foundation. When implementing group projects, priority is given to joint projects of academic staff and students, where joint involvement and interdisciplinarity of representatives of the Tbilisi and Batumi campuses is possible.

For the purposes o**f** internationalization of research activities, GRUNI has been cooperating with foreign universities including Kyiv State University of Economics, European College of the University of Hamburg, Webster University, Düsseldorf International Center for Education and Scientific Information, University of Dubcek (Slovakia), Mikolas Romer University, Vytautas Magnus University, John Comenius University**.** The University has also signed many memorandums of cooperation, inlcuding with the World Economic Forum (WEF), Harvard Business School (HBS), Texas A&M University, and the European Scientific Institution. In addition GRUNI hosted public lectures and events from the following international partners: Harvard University, Tartu University (Estonia), University of Nebraska , Tallinn University (Estonia). The University is a member of some subject associations, including the European Cultural Tourism Network, Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe, and European Law Faculties Association.

GRUNI has attracted a modest number of foreign academics to examine doctoral dissertations or to supervise master's theses. Most active country representatives in these regards are from the USA, Germany, Slovakia, Ukraine, Czech Republic, Armenia, and Austria. Also three PhD students have had a foreign co-supervisor or scientific consultant.

GRUNI is increasing the financing of international scientific activities. During the reporting period, GRUNI spent 227,119 GEL on articles, conferences and business trips for research internationalization. In addition, in the same reporting period, without separating the local and international sections, 609,820 GEL was spent on internal grant projects and book printing, a large part of which was used for international activities and the publication/purchase of foreign language literature. From meetings the Panel formed the view that GRUNI shares information about all its funding opportunities transparently and ensures equal opportunities for all interested parties to benefit from the funding schemes.

Overall the University is moving in a positive direction in internationalization of research, notwithstanding the suggestion in section 6.1.

Despite the foregoing, the Panel found it very difficult to understand where the locus of research in the University was; members of the University were unable to articulate this. The Panel heard and read that schools take some responsibility for the organization of research activity, that research centres and institutes may or may not be located within schools, and that these centres and institutes also have responsibilities for research organization, some of which overlap with those of schools. Each individual member of teaching staff is a member of at least one research centre or institute, though the support provided by each centre or institute to its staff was difficult to understand. Research centres and institutes engage in a number of activities including conference organization and cooperation agreements but it was unclear whether these accumulate from the individual activities of members or are strategic outputs of the centre or institute as a whole. If the latter it was not specified how the centres and institutes are administratively organized to achieve this. Any links between the Scientific Research and Creative Initiative Development Foundation and the Scientific Research Management Center on the one hand, and the centres and institutes on the other were not readily understood by the Panel. Staff met by the Panel who were engaged in research did not emphasize the importance or indeed the existence of research centres and institutes. Likewise the SER noted that the 'university already has a postdoctoral research institute as an important tool for attracting talented staff', but it seemed that the institute existed in name only, had no structure, and for a time at least, no postdocs associated with it. The Panel heard that some postdocs had recently left the 'institute' on successful completion of their doctoral programme, thus the university's understanding of the term postdoc, usually defined as a research worker who holds a doctorate, was unclear. The Panel concluded that the organization of research in the University was overly complex and unclear to members of the University.

The graduation rate of doctoral candidates is 12.5 per cent. This value is not low in relation to other HEIs in Georgia or indeed to some other countries, but it is very low if a global comparison is made. In many cases the reasons for non-completion are out of the University's hands, but if it is able to find a way to substantially increase this rate that would be a significant fillip to its research performance, recruitment into doctoral programmes, and reputation.

Evidences/indicators

- Strategic Development Plan
- Standards for Scientific-Research Activities
- Strategy of the Research Center
- Public, Donor, and Judicial Procedures for Research Financing
- Establishment of Student Investment Fund

- Support for Emerging Researchers' Initiatives
- Evaluation of Master's and Doctoral Theses
- Internationalization Policy
- Memorandums with Foreign Research Partners
- Joint Research Projects
- University web page
- The self-evaluation report
- The interviews with the stakeholders

Recommendations

Suggestions

It is suggested that the organization of research be revised into a simpler model such that it is clear what each researcher can expect and access from the University. If research centres and institutes are retained their roles and remits should be transparent to all

It is suggested that an analysis of the reasons for non-completion of doctoral students be made and a plan devised to increase the completion rate

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 system of evaluation and analysis of the quality of research activity, research units and research productivity of personnel at GRUNI uses the following mechanisms.

For a research project to be awarded funding the Committee of the Fund for the Development of Scientific Research and Creative Initiatives evaluates the contents and scientific directions of the project and its implementing team; partial or full funding will be awarded. While this is not an evaluation of the quality of activity *per se*, it does allow the University to understand the research fields and directions of its staff.

For the evaluation of the scientific productivity of a member of academic staff, GRUNI has introduced a scoring system, which takes into account citation rates and acts as a performance incentive. Also the quality management service in collaboration with the particular research center or institute evaluates staff to determine the Professor of the year.

Research centres and institutes report by completing a form that collects various data including outputs, and number and identity of associated active research personnel.
The reports are analyzed by the Scientific Research Management Center and based on the identified strengths and weaknesses relevant trainings and seminars are planned.
In order to further develop the university's research activities, the quality assurance service of the university is also involved in the process of evaluating scientific

productivity, which provides the relevant staff and research units with the results of the evaluation. Based on the analysis of the results obtained an action plan is drawn up to effect any necessary remedy and/or enhance performance.

Evidences/indicators

- Mechanism for Evaluating the Quality of Research/Operational Activities (Standards for Scientific-Research Activities)
- Results of the Evaluation of the Quality of Research/Operational Activities
- System for Evaluating the Scientific Productivity of Personnel (Standards for Scientific-Research Activities)
- Activities by Academic Personnel Based on School Review
- Decisions of the Research and Operational Initiatives Evaluation Committee
- Evaluation of Academic and Invited Personnel
- The self-evaluation report
- The interviews with the stakeholders

Recommendations

Suggestions

Best Practices (if applicable)

Evaluation

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

7. Material, Information and Financial Resources

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The University conducts educational and research activities at the following addresses in Tbilisi and Batumi.

- Four locations in Tbilisi as follows.

    o Central Campus located at Tbilisi, Irina Enukidze #3. 4716 m^2, including 2196 m^2 of educational space and 2,520 m^2 of auxiliary/recreational space.
    o The Gruniverse, the dental clinic, located at Tbilisi, Berbuki Street #1. 500 m^2 including 375.56 m^2 of educational space.
    o The Clinical Skills Center located at Tbilisi, Ljubljana Street #36. 1000 m^2, including 872 m^2 of educational space and 128 m^2 of dormitory space.
    o University Hospital 'Pineo' located at Tbilisi, Gorgasali Street #93. 9255 m^2, including 3842 m^2 of educational space.

- One location in Batumi as follows.

    o Batumi Branch Campus located at Batumi, Tamar Mepe Street #60. 1164 m^2, including 921 m^2 of educational space.

Students can access University e-resources at all campuses.

Each building serves the fulfillment of its educational goals and meets the requirements of its research activities and educational programmes. The campuses are provided with central heating systems, ventilation, water supply, and continuous natural and artificial lighting with installed electric stabilizers for the assurance of electrical safety and an uninterrupted power supply. Fire safety equipment, including fire alarms, hydrants, in-date fire extinguishers, and evacuation plans providing the instructions for safe exit in case of emergency, are installed across the premises. There are sanitary units with cold and hot water and some are adapted for people with physical disabilities. Libraries are equipped with proper inventories.

At Tbilisi the University has a stock-trading room, equipped with the necessary hardware and software for trading and appropriate recreational facilities to combat 'burn-out' among students. Also at Tbilisi is a television studio including editing and cosmetic facilities. At Batumi there is a well-appointed moot court; at Tbilisi there is an arrangement for law students to use real courtrooms. The Panel considered these facilities to be fit-for-purpose and invaluable for the learning of students.

A very positive feature is the Center for Training and Expertise in Criminology located at the Central Campus. This is as forensics laboratory with crime-scene simulation and is equipped with modern forensic equipment, spectrometers, optical and digital microscopes, dactyloscopy materials, ultraviolet, infrared and other alternative light

sources, night vision equipment, investigative cases, digital photo equipment, audio-visual equipment, specialized video films, and special computer software.

The campuses have separate teaching auditoriums for theoretical and practical studies, research laboratories, group work areas, administrative and storage spaces, room for archived materials and relaxation areas. The teaching and auxiliary spaces are separated. The auditoriums and laboratories are, in general, adequate, have sufficient inventory and equipment and are furnished with the necessary equipment and furniture, capacities and facilities for all programmes. The classrooms at Tbilisi were found to be well appointed and decorated, each containing audiovisual display facilities and some smart technology. However, those at Batumi were in need of some cosmetic refurbishment and none, except an IT laboratory, contained any technology to aid teaching, and the Panel was informed that each teacher brings any necessary technology with her/him. The Panel observed a single teaching session at Batumi: the teacher was not using any visual or other aids.

GRUNI has a security service and a video control with the required stickers within the premises. There is security video recording and storage facilities with the recordings automatically erased.

GRUNI has developed a first aid system. There is medically-trained staff in place in each campus equipped with first aid supplies including in-date medications.

Persons with mobility issues are well-catered for at Tbilisi with access ramps and lifts as appropriate, and Braille signage. At both campuses special sanitary units are allocated for people with disabilities there is designated parking for these individuals. At Batumi there is lift access within the main building, but not to a secondary building which contained a significant learning space for students. Thus free navigation and movement was not assured for all.

The dental clinic Gruniverse is equipped with modern technology and divided into three areas: in the first area there are two well-furnished and well-equipped auditoriums for teaching; the second area is dedicated for the patients' treatment and consultations, while the third area is designated for practical classes.

The Clinical Skills Center is equipped with moulages, mannequins and consumables necessary for the practical learning within a simulated environment. Overall, the facilities available for the study of medicine are state-of-the-art. It has a dormitory capable of housing up to 80 students, auditoriums, the "GRUNI" radio studio and student rest areas.

At the University Hospital 'Pineo' there is a multi-profile clinic, with study spaces for students.

In general there is a good match between the facilities provided, the goals stated in the mission statement, the requirements of the educational programmes, and the number of enrolled students.

Evidences/indicators
- Self-Evaluation Report
- Site-Visits in Tbilisi and Batumi
- Extracts from the Registry
- University website
- The interviews with the stakeholders

Recommendations

It is recommended that all the classrooms at Batumi be equiped with modern teaching technologies

It is recommended that all learning and social spaces be fully accessible to all persons, regardless of disability

Suggestions

Best Practices (if applicable)
The operation and equipment of the Center for Training and Expertise in Criminology, which is exceptionally effective for the law programme students especially those pursuing studies in criminal law
The availability and calibre of specialist equipment to support the programme in Medicine

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 located in two university campuses: in the Central Campus in Tbilisi (101 m^2) and in the campus in Batumi (111 m^2).   The university plans to significantly expand the library's capacity in the Central Campus in Tbilisi by constructing a new building over an area of more than 350 m^2. This is not to say that the current space is inadequate to support learning, rather the new building will create additional private study space. This development does not include the provision of more hard-copy holdings because the present provision is adequate for the current student complement and electronic versions are available.

Each library has a reading room, individual working space and a room designated for teamwork. Libraries are equipped with tables and chairs, alongside information technology resources and audio-visual equipment, including computers, photocopiers, unlimited internet access, and printers.

The library's collection of books and electronic resources complies with the required reading literature lists specified in the course syllabuses. This ensures that students have access to all necessary materials via hard copy as well as digitally. Through the electronic academic process management system Nexus, students have access to electronic learning materials. The library has an electronic catalogue organized according to modern library standards, an inventory book, and a registration journal. Rules for use of the library are published on its website.

Students and staff have access to international library databases both from the University premises and remotely. Databases include EBSCO EP Package ELITE, HeinOnline, and Elsevier databases including ScienceDirect and Scopus. Students have remote access to consolidated versions of the GSS code and legislative acts from the Legislative Herald.

Library operations are supervised by the library director and the staff consisting of five employees among which two are based at the Batumi Campus. Library staff are experienced in library activities and GRUNI provides for their professional development as needed. There are periodic training events for staff and students concerning access and use of library resourses. However, some students met by the Panel were not aware they could access electronic databases remotely.

The Panel concluded that the University works for the improvement of library resourses; updates and new acquisitions are communicated with the students via the library's website and Nexus. The university's budget allocates adequate funds for the development of library resources.

Evidences/indicators
- Self-Evaluation Report
- Site-Visits in Tbilisi and Batumi
- Extracts from the Registry
- Library Rules and Regulations
- University Budget
- University website
- The interviews with the stakeholders

Recommendations

Suggestions

It is suggested that the awareness of library databases be better promoted among students

Best Practices (if applicable)

Evaluation

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

7.3 Information Resources

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The University has information technology infrastructure with 24-hour internet service, general and specific software, projectors, TVs and servers. The maintenance and development of IT resources are managed by an Information Technology Center.

Nexus is used as a principal electronic communication platform between teaching staff and students. Nexus is accessible in both Georgian and English, and provides the information on programmes, courses, syllabi, teachers, teaching materials, assessment, and students' personal financial status, academic achievements, and course selection. Through Nexus, lecturers upload educational materials, conduct consultations, and initiate discussions. Students were enthusiastic about the wide-ranging functionality of Nexus. The Panel was provided with a demonstration of Nexus both from teacher and student perspectives that confirmed the wide functionality as claimed. The Panel considered that the University might be missing an opportunity to enhance student recruitment by giving applicants access to Nexus, to discover how the University will use the technology in their learning, and to maintain an open channel of communication with them. Likewise there

may be value in allowing alumni to access certain features of Nexus to keep them informed of University activity and again maintain a communication channel.

Staff activities are monitored through the "Docflow" electronic proceedings program providing both internal and external document registration, and is equipped with a range of functionalities designed to enhance operational efficiency.

The University has an integrated system for facilitating regulated entry by staff and visitors into university premises.

The official website of the university is https://www.gruni.edu.ge which is a functional webpage in Georgian and English languages providing a communication and information function and containing the necessary information including but not limited to the University's structure, educational programmes, academic staff, regulatory documents and an electronic catalogue of the library. The website is maintained with regular updates.

The University has also developed a Student Housing Registration website assisting students seeking accommodation in the University's dormitories.

Evidences/indicators
- Self-Evaluation Report
- Site-Visits in Tbilisi and Batumi
- Technology Management Policy
- University website
- The interviews with the stakeholders

Recommendations

Suggestions

It is suggested that giving applicants and/or alumni access to certain features of Nexus be considered

Best Practices (if applicable)

Evaluation

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

7.4 Financial Resources

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The financial standing of the University ensures the performance of activities described in strategic and mid-term action plans and the allocation of financial resources as described in the budget is economically achievable. The University is financially audited by an eligible

audit company and has developed functional managerial accountability, financial management and control systems, which ensure lawful, transparent, economic, efficient, and productive use of resources for the achievement of the University's goals.

The budget is ratified on an annual basis based on the needs of the University and the needs determined by each programme. The Panel viewed the projected budget for 2024, and revenue and cost dynamics for the years 2018-2023. According to the budget, revenues totaling to 14 200 000 GEL, are generated from the following sources: tuition fees, 13 800 000 GEL; other sources of income, 400 000 GEL. Obviously student tuition fees form the primary source of financial resource.

Financial resources are focused on the implementation of core activities including providing funding for research and library functioning and development. According to the budget, the balanced expenditures totaling 14 200 000 GEL, are divided into the following items: faculty and staff salaries; practical training expenses; development of library resources to ensure programme quality; development of training and technical infrastructure; funding for research and creative initiatives; support for research trips abroad; publication expenses for articles in local publications; publication expenses for articles in foreign publications; procurement of stationery and computer equipment consumables; support for international student mobility; student support services; public relations, scholarships, and incentives; funding for sports, cultural, tourist, and entertainment activities; University development and reserve fund; procurement of medical school materials; medicines; communication and utility costs; rental services; advertising services; repayment of loan obligations; and other expenses.

Administrative staff indicated that each school may request the financing several projects per year and that a University reserve fund may be used for unforeseen or additional expenses.

Evidences/indicators
- Revenue and cost dynamics
- University budget
- Regulation of Finance Department
- Self-Evaluation Report
- The interviews with the stakeholders

Recommendations

Suggestions

Best Practices (if applicable)

Evaluation

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements