



განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

**Higher Education Institution Authorisation
Experts' Report
LTD - Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy**

Expert Panel Members

Chair: Michèle Wera, Accreditation Organisation of The Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO), The Netherlands

Members:

Salma Soussi, co-chair, Groupe CIM Santé, Morocco

Lana Bokuchava, student member, New Vision University, Georgia

Tamar Goderidze, member, University of Georgia, Georgia

Oleg Kvividze, member, Georgian Foundation for Genetic and Rare Diseases, Georgia

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Tbilisi
20 August 2024

Authorisation Report Resume

General information on the educational institution

Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy (TMA), established in 1992 and located in Tbilisi, is Georgia's oldest private higher education institution with over 2,500 graduates, both local and international. TMA offers an accredited a one-cycle programme in basic medical education (MD) available in both Georgian and English. Additionally, TMA plans to expand its academic offerings with two new programmes. The joint master's programme in Applied Public Health (MPH), developed in collaboration with the Georgia Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA), has received accreditation, with student admissions starting in the 2024-25 academic year. Furthermore, the doctoral programme in Medical Sciences (PhD) has been approved by the rector, with its accreditation anticipated for the 2024-25 academic year.

TMA aims to become a globally recognized medical university, embodying both Georgian and European higher education principles. Its vision is to contribute to societal development through innovative research, high-quality education, impactful social initiatives, and exemplary Institutional Social Responsibility. TMA aspires to foster interdisciplinary collaboration, academic excellence, and a student-oriented approach while addressing pressing health challenges through its research.

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

The previous external evaluation of TMA took place in 2018. The 2024 evaluation covers a subsequent six-year period, from 2018 to 2024.

During the 2024 evaluation, the panel reviewed documents provided by TMA and the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE). These documents include: the institution's Self-Evaluation Report (SER) from May 2024, with reference to the Georgian Authorization Standards for Higher Education Institutions, the institution's website, and additional documents supplied upon the panel's request.

On 6 June 2024, NCEQE organised the kick-off meeting for the panel. By mid-June, the panel members exchanged their initial impressions and prepared for the various sessions of the site visit through email correspondence. During an online preparatory meeting on 20 June 2024, the panel exchanged views and discussed the main topics for the interviews. They also agreed on the draft programme for the visit. On 23 June 2024, the panel met in Tbilisi to prepare for the interviews.

The site visit took place from 24 to 27 June 2024. During the peer review, the panel met with TMA's leadership, various bodies and committees, students and alumni, academic staff and clinicians, supporting staff, quality assurance staff, management, and employers. On the third day, the panel participated in an on-site visit of the premises and two clinics.

The interviews, conducted in more than twenty sessions, provided ample opportunity to discuss and verify the findings in the SER and to gather more specific evidence. These meetings helped the panel gain a better understanding of TMA's ambitions and achievements. The openness and enthusiasm of all attendees, especially the students, were much appreciated.

At the end of the visit, the panel assessed compliance for each NCEQE standard, using the scores: fully compliant, substantially compliant, partially compliant, or non-compliant. The site visit concluded with a final de-briefing meeting with the institution.

The SER follows the format provided by NCEQE. The document is extensive and informative, clearly the product of a rigorous annual cycle and a systematic approach to quality assurance. The report is analytical, well-written, and served as a solid basis for the 2024 review. Additional information and

further evidence were made available at different stages of the evaluation process, providing a comprehensive set of information that was found to be most useful.

Overview of the HEI's compliance with standards

Standard 1 - Mission and strategic development of HEI: compliant

The panel determined that the mission of Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy (TMA) clearly defines the institution's purpose and aligns with both national and international higher education standards. The mission emphasises student-centred teaching and learning, research development, and addressing societal needs. These three focal areas directly correspond to national higher education priorities and the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). The careful process behind the revised mission statement is considered exemplary. Additionally, TMA provides a comprehensive set of documents detailing its strategic goals and methods for achieving them. The institution also conducts regular evaluations, leading to appropriate follow-up actions. Lastly, TMA demonstrates a strong commitment to its third mission, actively contributing to societal development.

Standard 2 - Organisational Structure and Management of HEI: compliant

TMA features a well-organised structure comprising numerous institutional bodies, management units, and supporting departments. To improve collaboration and communication among these entities, TMQ might consider streamlining the structure. Additionally, the organisation operates under a closely-knit governance model. Although this management style provides several benefits, it can also render TMA susceptible during leadership changes. Furthermore, every organisation requires a solid system of checks and balances; this fundamental principle of good governance is particularly crucial for a private institution. Moreover, the panel found significant advancements since the 2018 review, demonstrating the efficacy of its quality assurance system coupled with a robust culture of quality. Also, TMA adheres to Georgian higher educational laws when establishing and executing a regulatory framework for ethics, codes of conduct, integrity, and academic freedom.

Standard 3 - Educational Programmes: compliant

TMA has an effective and well-suited policy for designing, implementing, and developing new and existing educational programmes. The educational programme in basic medicine (MW) is the first to fully benefit from this quality-driven approach. Similarly, the newly initiated joint master's programme in Applied Public Health (MPH) and the doctoral programmes in Medical Sciences (PhD) equally benefit from a comprehensive process of design and development. The panel recognizes the efforts being made to implement an innovative and student-centred MD curriculum. However, more direct patient exposure in real-life clinical settings, especially for international students, is needed to enhance the individual learning process. In all programmes, students are assessed based on the established procedures, observing the principles of fairness and transparency.

Standard 4 - Staff management: compliant

TMA's policies and regulations clearly demonstrate a robust, transparent, and development-focused approach to personnel management. Most importantly, this enables TMA to attract highly qualified and motivated staff. Their deep commitment to providing high-quality education and dedication to their roles ensures that students feel well supported and catered to. Furthermore, TMA is committed to supporting the professional development of its academic and invited staff. Additionally, the staff number and workload are sufficient. Nonetheless, TMA should vigilantly monitor the risk of excessive workload and take proper actions to uphold the quality of teaching and ensure a healthy work-life balance.

Standard 5 - Students and their support services: compliant

The panel established that TMA has effectively established and executed the processes for acquiring and altering student status, recognizing educational achievements, and safeguarding student rights. The institution also displays a solid and effective system of student support services as confirmed by the students during the site visit. The panel found that student involvement is well-established, both at the institutional level and in local and international projects and events. Simultaneously, TMA could

promote greater participation among international students in patient care initiatives within the local community.

Standard 6 - Research, development and/or other creative work: compliant

The panel strongly supports TMA's investments in research and wants to emphasise the importance of actively involving all students in research activities. This includes every MD and every MPH student, not just two or three selected students or those who participate on a voluntary basis. Research is an essential part of higher education, it is part of the Bologna process, and part of every European framework. Therefore, each educational programme should prominently feature research as a core element. Reading scientific papers and using research-based literature is not what one defines as being actively engaged in research. During the site visit, the panel saw numerous opportunities to increase student involvement in research, such as through international projects within the newly initiated PhD programme. Therefore, the panel encourages TMA to embrace these opportunities to enrich its students' educational experience and enhance their academic development. Additionally, the panel encourages and supports collaborative research projects with local and foreign institutions involving TMA academic staff. Lastly, the TMA system for evaluating research is considered effective, taking into account the up-to-date character and scientific novelty of the research projects, as well as their interdisciplinarity. In addition, the existing funding procedure encourages involvement of both academic staff and students in scientific research activities.

Standard 7 - Material, information and financial resources: compliant

TMA's facilities and equipment are well-suited to meet the educational and research needs of its programmes. The infrastructure supports a comprehensive learning environment, and partnerships with clinical and research institutions enhance practical training. The panel invites TMA to consider establishing an anatomy lab to foster the quality of the learning experience. The library environment, resources, and services effectively support the implementation of educational and research activities. The institution's proactive approach to continuous improvement ensures that the library remains relevant and responsive to the needs of its users. The combination of comprehensive physical and digital collections, advanced management systems, and user-focused services creates a conducive environment for learning and research. TMA demonstrates an integrated framework for managing information technologies and electronic services. The infrastructure is comprehensive, regularly updated, and accessible to all users. Electronic management systems are well-integrated and continuously improved to ensure efficiency. Lastly, TMA demonstrates strong financial management, with economically achievable budget allocations, a stable financial standing, and focused financial resources that support core institutional activities. The budgeting process is participative and inclusive, ensuring comprehensive planning and early risk identification. The academy's commitment to funding scientific research and library development, along with an effective system of accountability and financial control, underscores its financial sustainability and strategic growth.

Summary of Recommendations

It is important to acknowledge that TMA has proven to be remarkably responsive to the recommendations from the 2018 review. The panel supports the ongoing efforts to modernise the curriculum and to develop a strong and meaningful culture of continuous quality improvement, and the panel encourages TMA to continue these endeavours. At this stage, it is vital to focus on the implementation process of the revised curriculum and to consolidate quality improvement initiatives across all other programmes and domains.

ST 2 - Implement a robust system of checks and balances, as this basic principle of good governance is especially crucial for a private institution. Specifically, adopt a clear formal institutional procedure for appointment of key stakeholders.

ST 3 - Invest in more effective patient exposure in real-life clinical environments, especially for international MD students, to enhance the individual learning process.

Summary of Suggestions

ST 2 - Consider simplifying the organisational structure of the institution to improve efficiency and communication.

ST 2 - Regulate the decision-making process following CIMED's suggestions for implementing innovations to ensure clarity.

ST 2 - Encourage the heads to meet regularly to discuss educational matters, benefiting all three programmes.

ST 2 - Allow the student as a key stakeholder to become a permanent member of the Library Committee.

ST2 - Consider installing a separate curriculum committee for each of the three programmes — MD, MPH, and PhD — and regulating the composition and appointment of its members.

ST 2 – Contemplate publishing the self-evaluation report on the TMA website to maximise openness and inclusiveness of all stakeholders.

ST2-Consider creating an institutional policy document that formally supports the principles of academic freedom.

ST 3 - Contemplate setting a more ambitious target ratio for the successful completion of the MD programme by students in six years.

ST 3 - Ensure continuous monitoring of the teaching and learning process in the clinical environment for further improvement of the student's clinical experience in the MD programme.

ST 3 - Discuss the issue of language barriers for international MD students that are relevant to basic medical schools across Georgia, with other institutions offering medical education to find effective solutions to improve clinical exposure for them.

ST 3 - Discuss language requirements during intake interviews with prospective students to enhance effective patient communication and achieve optimal educational outcomes.

ST 3 - Make sure that the newly initiated MPH and PhD programmes fully benefit from the innovations introduced in the MD programme.

ST 3 - Follow-up on the outcomes of the pilots for workplace-based assessment in the MD programme.

ST 4 - Consider including questions about staff involvement in the decision-making process in future staff satisfaction surveys. This addition could yield valuable insights into staff opinions and enable TMA to collect pertinent data for fostering a more participatory approach to decision-making.

ST 4 - Include notices of relevant clinical work experience from clinics/hospitals in the personal files of TMA academic staff in clinical disciplines, in addition to the clinical experience listed in their CVs. This would help monitor compliance with legislation concerning their required clinical experience.

ST 4 - Monitor the risk of the staff's excessive workload to uphold the quality of teaching and ensure a healthy work-life balance.

ST 5 - Explore ways to engage more international MD students in patient care projects in the local community.

ST 5 - Encourage the further integration of local and international student groups.

ST 6 - Encourage and support collaborative research projects with local and foreign institutions with the involvement of the academic staff.

ST 6 - Enhance student engagement in research activities and embrace international opportunities to enrich each student's educational experience and foster academic development.

ST 7 - Consider introducing cadaver practice as a fundamental component of comprehensive medical training by establishing an anatomy lab and potentially collaborating with other medical schools to share resources and funding.

ST 7 - Consider creating distinct webpages for (1) student affairs and (2) quality assurance to facilitate convenient access.

Summary of the Best Practices

ST 1 - The revised mission resulted from a meticulous process that included representation from all stakeholders.

As the oldest private institution for higher education in Georgia, TMA is well-established and this results in favourable working relationships with various stakeholders, both within Georgia and internationally.

ST 1 – A well-thought-out methodology has enabled the institution to develop a supported and realistic multi-year plan.

ST 2 - TMA has made considerable progress since the previous review by embracing all recommendations and implementing a diverse range of follow-up actions.

ST 2 - All stakeholders share a strong quality culture with a collective sense that goes far beyond mechanisms and documents.

ST 3 - TMA is in the process of successfully implementing an innovative and student-centred MD programme.

ST 4 - The staff's deep commitment to providing high-quality education and dedication to their roles ensures that students feel well supported and catered to.

ST 5 - Student involvement at the institutional level, as well as in local and international projects and events, is well-established.

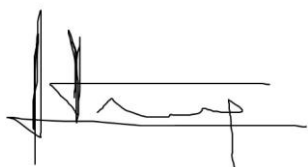
Summary Table of Compliance of HEI with Standards and Standard Components

	Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
1.	Mission and strategic development of HEI	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.1	Mission of HEI	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	Strategic development	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Organisational structure and management of HEI	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.1	Organisational structure and management	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2	Internal quality assurance mechanisms	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3	Observing principles of ethics and integrity	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Educational Programmes	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1	Design and development of educational programmes	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2	Structure and content of educational programmes	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.3	Assessment of learning outcomes	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Staff of the HEI	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1	Staff management	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2	Academic/Scientific and invited Staff workload	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Students and their support services	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.1	The Rule for obtaining and changing student status, the recognition of education, and student rights	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.2	Student support services	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Research, development and/or other creative work	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.1	Research activities	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.2	Research support and internationalisation	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.3	Evaluation of research activities	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Material, information and financial resources	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.1	Material resources	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.2	Library resources	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.3	Information resources	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.4	Financial resources	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature of expert panel members

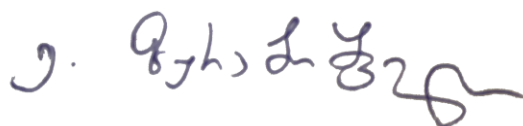
1. Michèle Wera (chair)

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2. Salma Soussi (co-chair)

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3. Elene Zurabishvili (member)

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4. Davit Topuria (member)

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5. Tamar Goderidze (member)

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6. Oleg Kvividze (member)

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7. Lana Bokuchava (member)

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Compliance of the Applicant HEI with the Authorisation Standard Components

1. Mission and strategic development of HEI

Mission statement of a HEI defines its role and place within the 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 describes 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 the higher education area and society, both locally and internationally.
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>The mission of Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy (TMA) clearly articulates the institution's purpose and closely aligns with both national and international higher education standards. Following the 2018 authorization process, TMA revised its mission to emphasise student-centred teaching and learning, research development, and societal needs. These three focal areas directly correspond to national priorities for higher education and the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). In addition, the mission took into account the shared values of the institution.</p> <p>The revised mission resulted from a meticulous process involving focus groups that included representation from all stakeholders. Their feedback was crucial in reviewing and integrating diverse viewpoints into the mission. During the site visit, interviewees confirmed their active participation and expressed satisfaction with the consultation and discussion process. The panel recognized this as a good practice.</p> <p>The mission, along with the vision and values, is published on the institution's website. Also, a recent survey shows increased awareness of the mission amongst the TMA community. During the site visit, also the external stakeholders proved to be familiar with TMA's mission. As the oldest private institution for higher education in Georgia, TMA is well-established and this results in favourable working relationships with various stakeholders, both within Georgia and internationally.</p> <p>The panel concludes that the current mission statement fully meets the requirements set for Standard 1.1. The process leading up to the revised mission statement is considered a good practice.</p>
<p>Evidence/indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TMA Mission statement ● TMA website ● Interviews during TMA site visit
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>-</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>-</p>
<p>Best Practices:</p> <p>ST 1 - The revised mission resulted from a meticulous process that included representation from all stakeholders.</p> <p>ST 1 - As the oldest private institution for higher education in Georgia, TMA is well-established and this results in favourable working relationships with various stakeholders, both within Georgia and internationally.</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>

1.2 Strategic Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ HEI has a strategic development (7-year) and an action plan (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.
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>A thoughtfully designed methodology has enabled TMA to create a well-supported strategic plan for the upcoming seven years. This development blueprint outlines seven key principles from 2021 to 2028. Additionally, TMO has formulated a three-year action plan spanning 2021 to 2024. An evaluation of this action plan serves as the foundation for reviewing the overarching development plan. This strategic planning framework empowers TMA to make necessary adjustments as required.</p> <p>The strategic planning cycle was instrumental in addressing the recommendations from the 2018 authorization process and other NCEQE assessment procedures. Particularly relevant to TMA's medicine-focused approach are the WFME/BME sectoral benchmarks. Incorporating valuable input and feedback from internal and external stakeholders, both the development plan and action plan underwent revisions in 2021. These documents are now fully aligned with the TMA mission. Crucial to the follow-up of the strategic plan and action plans is the establishment of a Strategic Development Department.</p> <p>The development plan clearly outlines six primary, and three cross-cutting priorities based on the institution's mission. For each priority area, the plan establishes overarching goals, detailed objectives, and specific actions to achieve them. The action plan, on the other hand, emphasises the execution of the development plan and specifies activities, timelines, and involved partners. The panel determined that the development and action plans offer a thorough and sufficient overview of the strategic goals and their implementation.</p> <p>Additionally, the self-evaluation report (SER) details numerous activities demonstrating the implementation of the third mission, such as health advocacy, raising awareness on health issues, providing medical services to the community, and volunteer activities. The panel highlighted the active engagement of both students and TMA staff. However, the SER identifies student participation in social activities as an area needing improvement.</p> <p>The development plan is accessible on the TMA website. During the site visit, TMA staff demonstrated a deep understanding of their institution's strategic goals.</p> <p>The panel concludes that TMA provides a comprehensive set of documents outlining its strategic goals and methods for achieving them. The institution also conducts periodic evaluations, leading to appropriate follow-up actions. Lastly, TMA demonstrates a strong commitment to its third mission and actively contributes to societal development.</p>
<p>Evidence/indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TMA Strategic Development Plan (2021-2028) ● TMA Strategic Planning Methodology ● TMA Strategic Vision for 2031 ● TMA Action Plan (2021-2024) ● Planned and implemented activities for contribution to the development of society ● Minutes of the meeting of the Supervisory Board ● Interviews during TMA site visit
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>-</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>-</p>

Best Practices:

ST 1 – A well-thought-out methodology has enabled the institution to develop a supported and realistic multi-year plan.

Evaluation☒ **Complies with requirements**

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

2. Organisational Structure and Management of HEI

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

2.1 Organisational Structure and Management

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Organisational structure and management

The governance of TMA is well defined through the organogram, the Statute of TMA document, and the Job Description document. These documents specify the functions, responsibilities and interdependence of the structural units of TMA. They are in line with the mission and objectives of the strategic development plan and ensure there is no overlapping of duties between these structures. It is worth noting that the structure of the current organogram, however functional, is rather complex given the multiple structural units, committees and departments. A more simplified organisational structure could be considered to improve efficiency and communication.

To ensure the effective implementation of its key mission, TMA has created three new vice-rector positions for research, international relations, and institutional development. The institution's primary mission is education - moreover it intends to develop two additional educational programmes - but, at present, there is no vice-rector for education. During the site visit, the panel learned that TMA leadership intends to appoint a vice-rector for education.

Additionally, each educational programme is chaired by a head, making a total of four: two for the MD programme, one for the newly initiated master's programme in Public Health (MPH), and one for the newly initiated doctoral (PhD) programme. Regular meetings among the heads to discuss educational matters would be highly beneficial for all programmes. This practice would foster collaboration, ensure consistency in academic standards, and promote the sharing of good practices, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of education across the institution.

From 2018 to 2023, TMA has doubled its administrative staff to ensure effective implementation of its activities. Additionally, the academy has developed a policy for vacant positions that is well defined and adopts transparent processes.

The appointment of the institution's key stakeholders such as the members of the board of advisors, the rector's council and the academic council is made through individual approach, driven by the needs of the academy and based on the person's expertise and experience. The rector's well-established network in Georgia is clearly an important asset in recruiting and appointing these individuals, who have proven to be leading experts in the multiple priority fields of the academy. This model of

appointment seems to be functional and serving the institution's mission. The panel's concern, however, is that of the sustainability of the approach in the absence of a clear procedure for election and appointment of members of the management bodies. In line with this, the organisation seems to be characterised by a closely-knit governance structure. While this management style offers numerous advantages, it can also make TMA vulnerable during leadership transitions. Likewise, every organisation needs a robust system of checks and balances, and this basic principle of good governance is especially true for a private institution.

The board of advisors is responsible for providing the broad vision for the institutional strategic development, adopting a 7 years, 3 years and 1 year plan. They hold weekly consultation meetings with the rector, who in turn is responsible for approving the vision with the rector's council. The board of advisors provides guidance and advice to various structural units in implementing defined activities.

The academic council is responsible for the oversight of the execution of the action plan defined by the strategic development plan, through the institution's various structural units.

The management body ensures effective management of the activities of the institution by adopting the PDCA cycle (Plan, Do, Check, Act). In the planning stage, TMA formulates an operational plan for the new academic year based on the strategic development plan and the quality assurance office annual reports. This is followed by an implementation phase. In the Check phase, the institution analyses the results and finally it establishes recommendations to address the shortcomings of the action plan. The institution utilises a project management system (PMS) model to achieve its goals. The strategic development department has been created to define each project in line with the strategic development plan, its goals, and the focus group responsible for its implementation.

The quality assurance office prepares bi—annual reports with summative data on the activities carried out by the various structural units based on the 7 authorization standards and an evaluation of the administration of learning programmes and elaborates suitable recommendations.

To ensure timeliness of the management process, TMA also utilizes an electronic management system used for both document workflow and tasks management, it enables the personnel to continuously monitor the tasks and tasks responses. Finally, the QA office has defined an evaluation system using criteria and evaluation instruments to ensure efficiency of management related to academic, scientific and administrative activities.

The Curriculum Innovations in Medical Education Department (CIMED) is a structural unit as specified in TMA's organogram. It has been created following the 2018 recommendations to respond to the needs of reviewing and modernising the one-cycle medical programme. It operates as an advisory body to the curriculum committee in adopting curricular changes. It was understood that the curriculum committee has the freedom to approve or adapt the suggested innovations to the institution's context, however, there is no policy document regulating that. For the sake of clarity, the decision-taking process following CIMED's suggestions for implementing innovations needs further regulation. Furthermore, the panel suggests installing a separate curriculum committee for each of the three programmes — MD, MPH, and PhD — and regulating the composition and appointment of its members.

The digitalisation process covers multiple aspects of TMA's activity including the educational programme, the financial reporting, document processing etc. It has also developed a business continuity plan to ensure effective management of risks.

Student involvement

The Student Academy is a representative self-governance structure of students enrolled at TMA both at the Georgian and international MD programmes. It represents the student's interests and acts as a channel of communication between the students and the various structural units. Its main objectives are to promote the quality of education, welfare and protection of students' rights. The students of TMA are also actively involved in the institution's governance by being members of the board of advisors, the academic council and the curriculum committee. However, a permanent student member is missing from the Library Committee. This can easily be remedied by allowing a student as the key stakeholder to become a full member.

Internationalisation

TMA ensures the internationalisation of its programme through several measures: staff and student mobility, inviting the participation of international experts to the curriculum design and development, participation to international grants and projects, research and publication in international journals. TMA's leadership supports these measures by allocating the necessary funds, enabling and encouraging professional development of its staff and students. The institution's attractiveness to academic staff and students alike was very clear through the conducted interviews.

The internationalisation activities of TMA reflect the institution's internationalisation strategy and goals detailed in Annex 2.7. The effective utilization of the internationalisation results in the work of the institution can be seen in multiple initiatives like the creation of CIMED and its impact on the educational programme. Another example is inviting international experts to develop the new master's programme at TMA.

The panel concludes that TMA substantially meets the NCEQE requirements for substandard 2.1 due to its vulnerable organisational structure that requires more robust checks and balances. Additionally, the composition of the institutional bodies and committees needs further scrutiny and transparency.

Evidence/indicators

- TMA Organisational Structure (Organogram)
- TMA Statute
- Job descriptions and qualification requirements
- Management of Vacant Positions for the Personnel at Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy
- Mechanisms for monitoring management efficiency and evaluation system
- Business Continuity Plan
- TMA Internationalisation Strategy
- Interviews during TMA site visit

Recommendations:

S2 - Implement a robust system of checks and balances, as this basic principle of good governance is especially crucial for a private institution. Specifically, adopt a clear formal institutional procedure for appointment of key stakeholders.

Suggestions:

S2 - Consider simplifying the organisational structure of the institution to improve efficiency and communication.

S2 - Regulate the decision-making process following CIMED's suggestions for implementing innovations to ensure clarity.

S2 - Encourage the heads to meet regularly to discuss educational matters, benefiting all three programmes.

S2 - Consider installing a separate curriculum committee for each of the three programmes — MD, MPH, and PhD — and regulating the composition and appointment of its members.

S2 - Allow the student as a key stakeholder to become a permanent member of the Library Committee.

Best Practices:

-

Evaluation

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

2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms

- Institution effectively implements internal quality assurance mechanisms. Leadership of the institution constantly works to strengthen quality assurance function and promotes establishment of quality culture in the institution.
- HEI has a mechanism for planning the 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

Quality assurance system

Quality assurance is clearly understood and adopted by TMA's leadership, staff and students across the various structural units, and is not only confined to the quality assurance office. It is perceived as a continuous process that requires the active participation of all the institution's stakeholders at different levels.

TMA carries out its internal quality assurance processes through the quality assurance office. The office follows a PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) evaluation model to assess the achievement of its goals based on the strategic development plan.

The various structural units of TMA are required to submit semestrial and annual reports portraying the advancement in achieving the institutional goals. The QA office elaborates summative analytical reports identifying the advancement of the institution in achieving its objectives, weak areas, and recommendations, then submits it to approval by the rector's council.

The QA biannual reports are a guiding document to the rector's council. The latter organizes meetings to discuss the shortcomings identified in the report and the recommendations made by the QA office to address them. (Annex 2.5.)

In addition, the QA office conducts quantitative and qualitative studies using indirect methods such as satisfaction surveys of various stakeholders, and direct methods such as employment rate, evaluation of learning outcomes (student academic performance using the distribution of grades, workplace-based assessment, clinical visits, etc.).

In the "Evaluation system of management efficiency" tool developed by the QA office, two major criteria are completing the tasks assigned by the administrative personnel, and the tasks assigned by academic and invited personnel. For each, the QA office uses evaluation instruments to assess the degree of achievement of defined goals and tasks such as anonymous surveys, direct evaluation of the educational process and academic performance of students, scientific productivity of the academic personnel. TMA addresses the shortcomings by implementing motivation processes to increase the personnel engagement. From our observation, the administrative and academic personnel, old and new personnel alike, showed great enthusiasm in working for TMA.

Student body

TMA has also developed a quality assurance procedure by developing a methodology for planning student intake, through the evaluation of the physical and human resources according to the sectoral benchmark.

Progress since previous review

Without a doubt, the panel has been impressed by the progress made since the previous authorization procedure in 2018. TMA has embraced all the recommendations and implemented a diverse range of follow-up actions. These have spanned educational reforms, organisational restructuring, improvements in infrastructure, marketing initiatives, advancements in quality assurance, and staff recruitment efforts. The panel has observed many positive outcomes from TMA's dedication and hard work.

Self-evaluation report

The self-evaluation report (SER) is the product of a rigorous annual cycle, and the results of TMA's systematic approach are evident. The report is analytical, well-written, and served as a good basis for the peer review. There are a couple of areas that were less prominent in the self-evaluation: specifically, the bedside teaching in the MD programme and the research component in the MPH

programme. Additionally, addressing the challenges within the report effectively links them to your operational plans, which would help the reader i.e. the panel in a better understanding. Overall, the SER reflects a commendable openness about areas for improvement. This transparency shows a remarkable trust not only in TMA's management but also, and especially, in its staff and students. It is proof of your collective strength and commitment to continuous improvement. Therefore, the panel suggests publishing the document on TMA's website to maximise openness and inclusiveness of all stakeholders. By now, this is standard practice throughout Europe.

Quality Culture

The panel observed a strong quality culture during the site visit and encourages TMA to uphold this also in the future, across all levels of the institution. Stakeholders were clearly familiar with the notion of quality culture implying a shared feeling of what quality means, a common understanding of quality and a commitment to quality that comes naturally to all – management, staff, and students alike. They all shared this collective sense, a natural understanding far beyond mechanisms and documents. The panel considers it to be good practice.

The panel concludes that TMA fully complies with the requirements for standard 2.2 on quality assurance. Furthermore, the panel established that considerable progress has been made since the previous review, illustrating the effectiveness of its quality assurance system in combination with a strong quality culture.

Evidence/indicators

- TMA Statute of the Quality Assurance Office
- Application of recommendations and the procedure of their fulfilment
- Report on the application of quality assessment results
- Survey results and its analysis
- TMA Student Number Planning Methodology
- Interviews during TMA site visit

Recommendations:

-

Suggestions:

ST 2 – Contemplate publishing the self-evaluation report on the TMA website to maximise openness and inclusiveness of all stakeholders.

Best Practices:

ST 2 - TMA has made considerable progress since the previous review by embracing all recommendations and implementing a diverse range of follow-up actions.

ST 2 - All stakeholders share a strong quality culture with a collective sense of what quality means that goes far beyond mechanisms and documents.

Evaluation

x Complies with requirements

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

2.3. Observing Principles of Ethics and Integrity

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

TMA has developed a policy document (Code of conduct) that defines and regulates the principles of ethics and integrity it abides by in accordance with the Georgian legislation. Its regulations apply to students and staff alike. The document clarifies the rules for conduct, the expected response in case of ethical misconduct, the disciplinary mechanisms and their application. Another document: Internal labour regulation of TMA defines the principles of performance of official duties and the rules of conduct for the personnel. The regulations are enforced by the professional behaviour committee in collaboration with the legal office and under the leadership of the vice-rector in institutional development.

Since 2020, TMA uses a digital software for detecting plagiarism: Turnitin. The software is integrated with Moodle, TMA's learning platform. It automatically assesses students' assignments and papers and helps detecting plagiarism. The acceptable similarity ratio is defined based on the nature of the assignment and the specifics of the task.

In TMA, there is a steadfast commitment to academic freedom reverberated through its students and staff alike. TMA upholds rigorous standards of academic excellence while embracing the freedom essential for true academic inquiry. This became apparent during the site visit. Students and faculty express the liberty to explore, challenge, and evolve ideas without fear of reprisal or constraint. They feel encouraged to question, debate, and contribute to medical knowledge, either in classrooms or through research projects. There is, however, no policy document to support this.

The panel concludes that TMA adheres to Georgian higher educational laws when establishing and executing a regulatory framework for ethics, codes of conduct, integrity, and academic freedom. As a result, TMA complies with standard 2.3.

Evidence/indicators

- Rules of ethics and conduct and procedures for responding to violations
- TMA LLC Internal Labour Regulations
- Interviews during TMA site visit

Recommendations:

-

Suggestions:

ST2 - Consider creating an institutional policy document that formally supports the principles of academic freedom.

Best Practices:

-

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

Currently, TMA implements one-cycle medical education programmes in the Georgian and English languages. In 2023, in cooperation with NE(NC)LP GIPA, the Georgia Institute of Public Affairs, TMA developed a joint master's programme in Applied Public Health. Also, in 2023, under the coordination

of the Scientific Research and PhD Department of TMA, the development of a doctoral programme in Medical Sciences was initiated. The programme was approved by Rector's Order and its accreditation is planned in 2024-25. The TMA Quality Assurance Office has established a procedure for planning, elaboration, approval, development and cancellation of educational programmes. It provides a structured approach for the creation of new programmes and development of existing ones.

The competency-based MD curriculum was developed with the direct involvement of European partners. Specifically, in 2019, with the active involvement of the staff of the Institute of Medical Education at the University of Groningen, a draft of the learning outcomes of the competency-based programme was developed. Learning outcomes were formulated based on the CanMEDS physician competency frames and their experience was shared with the TMA's academic/invited staff and students for final formulation.

Academic and invited staff were also actively involved in the transformation of teaching, in the formation of a student-oriented environment and competency-based learning. An external evaluation of the programme, for assessment of the competency-based curriculum, was carried out by a professor at Charite University, President of the Association of Medical Schools in Europe (AMSE).

Since 2019, the curriculum has expanded and developed teaching and learning methods such as TBL, CBCR, CBL, OSPE and OSCE. Since 2020, with the involvement of international experts. Also, a portfolio concept has been developed and successfully implemented.

In 2021, CIMED was established, led by international experts. CIMED leads the transformation process at the levels of development and practical implementation. For this, the faculty development was selected as a priority to form a team of lecturers responsible for implementation of the innovations. CIMED ensures the continuous curricula development through the implementation of a competency-based, patient- and student-centred, integrated (PSI) curriculum, integrating knowledge, skills and values into professional competencies, equipping the graduates with competencies corresponding to the requirements of the society.

With the CIMED initiative, along with the didactic aspects of the programme, the content of the programme is also being actively developed. For the development of a holistic approach to patients, psycho-social aspects have been significantly expanded in the curriculum in recent years and integrated with biomedical and clinical sciences. Under the leadership of CIMED, basic and clinical courses are integrated both horizontally and vertically.

In the first phase of enhancement of clinical teaching, the Family Doctor Project was developed and piloted. Within the project, the 6th semester students were embedded in the daily routine of the family doctor. The family doctors were pre-trained to create a dynamic learning process for students in a practical setting, observe and provide feedback to students during history taking and/or physical examination. The feedback received is used by students for further training at the Clinical Skills Center to improve their competencies, the Capstone course delivered at the end of the 6th semester gives the students an opportunity for rehearsing history taking and physical examination (professional activities) at Clinical Skills Center. The Family Doctor Project also helps integrate Georgian and international students. Within the project, Georgian and international students work in pairs, performing clinical tasks together. According to the students, this was the best experience for putting the acquired knowledge into practice in a real environment.

CIMED, together with TMA staff, reviewed international benchmark documents (US, Canada, Germany, Switzerland), on the basis of which were identified 14 main entrustable activities and their respective sub-activities, and developed didactic protocols, learning outcomes and assessment forms.

The EPA concept along with didactic materials were shared with the TMA clinical teachers at the faculty development training. The activity was held at TMA's Center for Clinical Skills, in a space as close as possible to the clinical environment.

The assessment of EPA 1 Establishing Initial Contact with the Patient and EPA 2.1 Chief Complaint was piloted in the Fall 2023 semester as part of Internal Medicine 1. To evaluate the pilot concept, a pre- and post-evaluation of the entrustable professional activity was carried out, and at the end of the semester, the Quality Assurance Office analysed the results obtained.

In the Fall semester of 2023, for the Internal Medicine 1 and Obstetrics course, a student Logbook was developed and introduced, with a list of minimum required activities to be performed by the student during the course. In the Spring semester 2024, the selected formats of workplace-based assessment (WTMA PBA) were piloted.

TMA participated in another project, namely the Erasmus+ project SAFEMED+, through which TMA gained experience from European countries in teaching and assessing clinical skills using simulation methods. Through the project, the best practices shared by Spanish members of consortia (University

of Santiago de Compostela, to conduct a national OSCE for graduating students, including virtual stations) served as a foundation for the modification of the OSCE format at the end of the 3rd and 6th academic year in TMA. The exam is conducted within the "Capstone Course 1 and 2". This is a unique approach of TMA, which equips the students with opportunities to repeat and remediate existing clinical skills prior to the summative OSCE, using SPs and infrastructure of the clinical skills centre. The summative OSCE exam serves to assess competencies, obtained throughout various clinical disciplines. Clinical Competence Capstone course 1, is a prerequisite for admission to the courses in clinical disciplines from the 4th year of study, and at the end of the 12th semester successful passing of the Capstone 2 OSCE exam (final OSCE) is a prerequisite for the award of the MD degree. The idea of Capstone courses has been approved by TMA's international partners within the SAFEMED+ project and similar courses have already been introduced in the curriculum of the medical schools participating in the project.

At the initiative of TMA, being the project coordinator, the Consortium published in four languages the book "OSCE and the Role of the Clinical Line in the Development of Clinical Competencies of Medical Students" to share the knowledge and experience gained. This resource in its turn will help TMA to ensure the achievement of learning outcomes by strengthening clinical training in line, in accordance with the SAFEMED+ project goal.

In 2023, TMA initiated a large-scale survey among prospective employers conducted by the Global Research and Consulting company ACT, which aimed to assess the knowledge, skills and professional behaviour of medical graduates by the time of commencement of training in their residency programme.

The panel determined that TMA has an effective and well-suited policy for designing, implementing, and developing new and existing educational programmes. The MD programme is the first to fully benefit from this quality-driven approach. Similarly, the newly initiated MPH and PhD programmes equally benefit from a comprehensive process of design and development. Therefore, the panel concludes that TMA complies with the requirements for standard 3.1 on educational programmes.

Evidence/indicators

- Procedure for planning, elaborating, approving, developing and cancelling an educational programme
- Analysis of the results of surveys of students, graduates, employers for the programme development and a report on the use of the results
- Student Guide, Professional Behaviour for Medical School Students
- E-learning portal for students
- Institution Web-portal – TMA@EDU.GE
- Interviews during TMA site visit

Recommendations:

-

Suggestions:

-

Best Practices:

S3 - TMA is in the process of successfully implementing an innovative and student-centred MD programme.

Evaluation

x 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 individualised 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

TMA implements two one-cycle (second level of higher education) educational programmes in Medicine in the Georgian and English languages. The joint master's programme of TMA and GIPA in Applied Public Health is already accredited and student admission will start from the 2024-25 academic year. The doctoral programme in Medical Sciences has been approved by the Rector (See the Annex 3.7) and its accreditation is scheduled in 2024-25.

The structure of the programmes is built in accordance with the guidelines of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), and the learning outcomes are clearly defined according to the sectoral benchmarks, based on the national qualification framework.

MD programmes

The basic medical education programme spans six years, comprising 360 ECTS credits, leading to the degree of Medical Doctor (MD). The structure of the MD programmes is identical, differing only in the language of instruction and the foreign languages taught throughout the study plan. For international students, to communicate with patients and medical staff, it is mandatory to study the Georgian language for 5 semesters (12 ECTS credits), and for Georgian students to study English/German languages. However, interviews with students revealed that the study of the Georgian language does not enable foreign students to communicate with patients in the clinics.

According to the strategic development plan of TMA, the target for successful completion of the MD programme by students in six years is >70% by 2023-24. According to the data of the academic year 2022-23, the rate achieved is 74%. The panel is of the opinion that the target ratio could be more ambitious.

Depending on the volume, content, learning outcomes and the specificity of the educational courses/modules, the credits are divided into compulsory (340 ECTS credits) and a variety of elective courses (20 ECTS credits). At the basic stage, elective courses are offered during the 2 semesters, and in the clinical training stage, 2 credit blocks of elective courses are offered in each semester. This ratio is increasing during the final year and in 11th and 12th semesters elective subjects are presented with 2 elective blocks per semester. The total volume of courses aiming the development of clinical skills is 32 ECTS, and the total volume of courses aiming the development of scientific-research skills is 17 ECTS credits. The learning process in the programmes is presented in three phases: Basic, Behavioural and Social Sciences (1st - 3rd years of teaching); Clinical Sciences (4th – 5th years of teaching); General Specialization (6th year of teaching). Each phase involves horizontal and vertical integration of the basic and clinical disciplines.

Real clinical cases supplied by clinicians are adapted by the group into structured cases. For integration of clinical knowledge and simulation of the clinical environment, Clinical Skills Centre has also created a standardised patient (SP) database, staffed with actors. SP is successfully applied in the preclinical and clinical stages of the programme, both in the ongoing educational process and during the OSCE exam for the training and evaluation of physical examination and procedures, as well as patient communication skills and clinical reasoning. From the second semester, Early Clinical Exposure (ECE) is introduced. However, the interviews with the students revealed that it is necessary for the institution to regulate more exposure of students to patients in a real clinical environment.

On multiple occasions during the site visit, the panel saw reasons for concern relating to the educational experience of international students in particular. The panel found that bedside teaching does not always provide the expected clinical exposure due to language barriers. The panel wants TMA to explore ways to enhance patient interaction for international students, ensuring they receive the same level of practical experience as their local peers. During the visit, international students themselves proposed several promising ideas to address this challenge, which the panel encourages management to consider and to implement effective solutions. Additionally, since this issue is relevant to medical schools across Georgia, TMA may wish to discuss it with other institutions offering medical education. By pooling resources and expertise, these institutions can work towards enhancing the

educational experience and clinical training opportunities for international students in Georgia's medical schools. Additionally, the panel finds that intake interviews with prospective students should prioritise discussing language requirements to enhance effective patient communication and achieve optimal educational outcomes.

The panel's visits to the clinical sites showed the willingness and involvement of clinicians in the educational programme. However, monitoring and improving the teaching and learning process in the clinical environment should be a continuous focus for the institution, necessitating the development of practical insights in these areas.

From the second year, Integration Weeks are introduced in the programme, including three weekly activities: meeting with a real patient having a disease corresponding to the topic stipulated by the syllabus, a clinical reasoning session using a real patient case, or virtual platforms, and a TBL session. In 2018, TMA real patient database consisted of 5 real patients, and in 2023 the number has expanded to 17 patients.

In the third year, starting from the period of 2022-23, clinical reasoning activity is carried out in the Case-Based Clinical Reasoning (CBCR) format as part of the disease diagnosis courses.

The achievement of the programme learning outcomes is based on active teaching and learning methods, such as TBL, CBL, ECE, CR, CBCR, Logbook and portfolio. To determine the achievement of learning outcomes, every semester the Quality Assurance Office conducts the academic performance monitoring, histogram visualisation and analysis. The benchmark target is the Gaussian distribution.

Since 2022, following a CIMED initiative, in the first year of study, a formative growth-oriented testing (GOT) has been added to the evaluation methods. Feedback is also given during the summative assessment and continues in subsequent semesters.

Joint MPH programme

The duration of the joint MPH programme is two years with 120 ECTS credits, the language of instruction is English and the degree awarded is Master of Public Health, MPH. Depending on the volume, content, learning outcomes and the specifics of the educational courses, the credits for this programme are also divided into compulsory (112 ECTS credits) and elective (8 ECTS credits) courses.

The compulsory component of the master's programme includes the following main areas: epidemiology and biostatistics, biological, social and behavioural aspects of healthcare, healthcare policy and management, budgeting and evaluation of effectiveness. The programme provides for compulsory study practice with 8 ECTS credits. In the final semester of the programme, the student prepares and defends a master's thesis in the field of public health, which is a mandatory research component of the programme with 30 ECTS credits. The elective courses are represented by a variety of public health areas.

PhD programme

The duration of the doctoral programme in Medical Sciences is 3 to 5 years, the language of instruction is English, and the academic degree awarded is PhD in Medical Sciences. The doctoral programme includes an educational component with 30 ECTS credits. The study component of the doctoral programme includes 3 compulsory (20 ECTS credits) and 4 elective courses. One of the compulsory courses of the study component is Assistantship. This implies the delivery of the educational course(s) for TMA's one-stage educational programme Medicine together with the scientific mentor, in coordination with the academic and administrative staff of TMA.

The dissertation thesis is developed in compliance with the strictly defined academic standards and in the format required for publication, which is determined by the document "Standard of academic writing of Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy."

To ensure availability of information about the educational programmes, a catalogue has been developed for each programme describing the prerequisites for admission, the objectives, the learning outcomes, the number of credits, the degree to be awarded, the methods of teaching and evaluation, etc. The catalogues are available on the TMA official website in Georgian and English.

To ensure seamless integration of the students with special educational needs within the academic processes, TMA provides individualised study plans. TMA develops individual study plans based on the interest of the student: when students enrol through mobility; students with academic drawback;

status-resumed students if curricula differ; exchange programme students; persons with disabilities or other special needs.

Internationalisation of programmes is characterised by the following: establishment of CIMED and its involvement in the development of faculty and programmes; participation of international experts and sharing of their experience; application of experience gained within the ERASMUS+ project SAFEMED+ in practice.

Overall, the panel concludes that TMA substantially complies with substandard 3.2. TMA has successfully introduced an innovative and student-centred MD programme, with enthusiastic support from both staff and students. The panel heard nothing but full endorsement and genuine excitement about the new features of the educational programme. This is a significant achievement, and the panel expects similar success in the clinical years. While the panel recognizes the efforts made to modernise the MD curriculum, it notes that direct patient exposure in real-life clinical settings, especially for international students, needs further attention.

Evidence/indicators

- One-step educational programme "Medicine" (Taught in Georgian) with enclosed syllabi
- One-step educational programme "Medicine" (Taught in English) with enclosed syllabi
- Joint Master's Programme "Applied Public Health" with enclosed syllabi
- Doctoral Programme "Medical Sciences" with enclosed syllabi
- Principles of Planning, Implementation, Evaluation and Appeal of the Research Component of a One- Step Educational Programme in Medicine
- TMA Study Process Regulatory Rules
- Institution Web-portal – TMA@EDU.GE
- Interviews during TMA site visit

Recommendations:

ST 3 - Invest in more effective patient exposure in real-life clinical environments, especially for international MD students, to enhance the individual learning process in the MD programme.

Suggestions:

ST 3 - Contemplate setting a more ambitious target ratio for the successful completion of the MD programme by students in six years.

ST 3 - Ensure continuous monitoring of the teaching and learning process in the clinical environment for further improvement of the student's clinical experience in the MD programme.

ST 3 - Discuss the issue of language barriers for international MD students that are relevant to medical schools across Georgia, with other institutions offering basic medical education to find effective solutions to improve clinical exposure for them.

ST 3 - Discuss language requirements during intake interviews with prospective students to enhance effective patient communication and achieve optimal educational outcomes.

ST 3 - Make sure that the newly initiated MPH and PhD programmes fully benefit from the innovations introduced in the MD programme.

Best Practices:

-

Evaluation

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

3.3 Assessment of Learning Outcomes

HEI has a 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

TMA has developed an assessment system for learning outcomes, the general principles of which are defined in the relevant procedure for regulation of the educational process and broken down into the appropriate syllabus for each course.

MD programme

The procedures governing the educational process for the one-cycle programme in Medicine and the joint master's programme as well as the Regulations of the Scientific Research and PhD Department, which regulates the assessment of the learning outcomes in doctoral studies, are posted on the official TMA website (tma.edu.ge), both in Georgian and English languages.

The level of achievement of the student's learning outcomes during the implementation of the educational programme is assessed based on the assessment system approved by the Order N3 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia "On Approval of the Rule of Calculation of Higher Education Programmes with Credits" of January 5, 2007. The credits corresponding to the course will be awarded to the student if they are assessed positively upon completion of the course. The student's knowledge is evaluated through intermediate assessments and a final exam, with a 100-point system:

The points and components of the assessment, their number and criteria vary depending on the specifics of the programmes and subjects and are defined individually in the courses' syllabi.

To ensure appropriate assessment of learning outcomes in the medical education programmes, written (MCQ, open questions), oral/combined and structured exams (OSPE, OSCE, SOE) are used. To ensure objectivity, oral exams are assessed using pre-developed criteria (Check list) and/or rubrics.

At the stage of teaching basic disciplines, practical skills are evaluated through objectively structured practical examinations (OSPE). In 2020-23, based on the experience gained through the SAFEMED+ project, the evaluation of clinical competencies through objectively structured clinical examinations (OSCE) was gradually modified. In particular, the number of OSCE stations was increased to 13 and a virtual OSCE format was added to the clinical skills exam. From 2024, it is planned to increase the number of stations to 15.

With the CIMED initiative and support, from 2022, formative growth-oriented tests (GOTs) have been added to the assessment methods within the first year. From 2022 onwards, the Structured Oral Examination (SOE) is also introduced for the first study year. Also, in 2022, to promote competency-based learning, learning outcomes for each topic were put down in the syllabi of the base-stage courses/modules. At both stages of training, a portfolio is used as a method of continuous assessment of professionalism. Since 2023, a new tool – the student's Logbook, which reflects the development of students' professional skills, has been added to the portfolio in the 7th semester, as a mandatory component. From 2023, as a portfolio assignment in clinical disciplines has been introduced the self-reflection based on the experience of entrustable professional activity (EPA). Early 2024, the selected formats of workplace-based assessment were piloted. To date, the outcome of these pilots is unclear and need further follow-up.

For an objective assessment of student knowledge, exams are held in the Examination Center using the Moodle platform, for which a database of exam questions has been developed.

Joint MPH programme

The MPH programme uses a variety of assessment methods, such as essay, presentation, paper, literature review, drafting project application proposal and presentation, article critique.

The evaluation of the compulsory research component of the master's programme is regulated by the "Procedure for planning, implementing, evaluating and appealing the research component of the joint higher education programme". The evaluation of the master's thesis is carried out based on the assessments by the reviewer and master's thesis defence commission.

PhD programme

For the doctoral programme, presentations are used for the interim assessment and as the final component, based on the course specifics, scientific work - an analytical essay, a scientific project, a scientific report, a scientific publication.

The evaluation of the dissertation and the defence of the dissertation of the doctoral programme are based on the standards and procedures defined by the "Regulations of the Department of Scientific Research and Doctoral Studies and the Dissertation Board". The dissertation paper and the dissertation defence are evaluated once, with a final assessment. This process involves the evaluation of the dissertation by each member of the Dissertation Defense Commission, with a 100-point system, based on the predefined approaches and criteria. The public defence of the dissertation is held before the Dissertation Defense Commission, which is authorised to make the decision on final evaluation.

The assessment of students is carried out based on the established procedures, observing the principles of fairness and transparency. If the student does not agree with the result, they have the right to appeal. In the case of the MD programmes, evaluation complaints are considered by an Appeals Commission, which includes the coordinator of the Examination Center, a representative of the Quality Assurance Office, an alternative teacher delivering the relevant course and/or programme co-supervisor.

The assessment received in the educational component/master's thesis of the MPH programme is appealed in writing with the programme head. In case of accepting the appeal, the academic/invited staff or other experts/experts in the field will be determined from the partner higher educational institution, to whom the paper will be shared for re-evaluation.

In the case of the PhD programme, any issues arising in the studying process will be considered by the Scientific Research and PhD Department based on a written application, and thereafter by the Dissertation Defense Commission after submission of a dissertation paper. The evaluation received for the second time is final and is not subject to appeal.

Every semester, the Quality Assurance Office evaluates the examination process and the quality of the assessment tools through anonymous student surveys. With the results obtained, for each course, based on their specificity, it is determined how adequately is selected the assessment method and time allotted for the exam. The analytical findings are deliberated with the co-heads of the programme and the lecturers of the respective subject/module, based on which, the quality of the examination questions and duration of the exam, along with teaching-learning and assessment methods will be reviewed as necessary, which in its turn will enhance achievement and objective assessment of intended learning outcomes.

The panel concludes that TMA complies with the requirements for standard 3.3 on assessment. The assessment of students in all programmes is carried out based on the established procedures, observing the principles of fairness and transparency.

Evidence/indicators

- TMA Study Process Regulatory Rules
- Regulatory Rule for the Educational Process of the Joint Higher Education Programme in Applied Public Health by GIPA - Georgian Institute of Public Affairs NNLE and TMA LLC
- TMA Regulations of the Department for Research and Doctoral Studies and the Dissertation Board
- Procedure for Planning, Implementing, Assessing and Appealing the Research Component of the Joint Higher Educational Programme in Applied Public Health Implemented by GIPA - Georgian Institute of Public Affairs NNLE and TMA LLC
- TMA Academic calendar
- Institution Web-portal – TMA@EDU.GE
- Interviews during TMA site visit

Recommendations:

-

Suggestions:

ST 3 - Follow-up on the outcomes of the pilots for workplace-based assessment in the MD programme.

Best Practices:

-

Evaluation

x Complies with requirements

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

4. Staff of the HEI

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

4.1. Staff Management

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Policy and procedures

The analysis of TMA's internal policies and regulations confirms that the higher education institution has a sufficient, solid and development-focused personnel management policy. The Internal Labor Regulations document includes provisions on recruitment, working hours, leave, remuneration, ethical conduct, and the responsibilities and rights of employees. It is a comprehensive and structured framework designed to govern all aspects of labour relations within the institution. Moreover, it demonstrates TMA's commitment to creating a fair, transparent, and efficient work environment for its staff. General Policy, Principles and Regulations of the HR Department also provide a thorough outline for managing human resources at TMA, focusing on alignment with institutional goals, continuous improvement, and cultivating a supportive and equitable work environment. It underscores the importance of fair recruitment practices, professional development, and staff motivation, aiming to create a dynamic and committed workforce.

TMA's staff hiring and recruitment process is conducted in an open and transparent manner, which is regulated by the document Management of Vacant Positions for the Personnel at TMA. The document outlines the procedures on identifying vacancies, recruitment processes, candidate selection, attestation, and other related activities. First, the need for a vacancy is determined, followed by candidate selection through internal or external recruitment. Internal selection includes choosing candidates for vacant positions at TMA from the existing staff and/or alumni base, while external recruitment involves selecting candidates for vacant positions based on an open competition. In an open competition, the vacancy is posted on different vacancy management online platforms and social networks for a predetermined period, which is followed by initial selection of applications, interviews, and testing of applicants. The institution has a practice of hiring staff for a trial period of 3-6 months, giving both the employer and the employee the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities, collaborate effectively, and share labour practices. Moreover, to ensure the quick adaptation and effective integration of new employees into the working process, the institution has introduced appropriate mechanisms that are performed under the mentorship of the HR department and the direct supervisor of the new employee. Interviews conducted during the visit showed that recruiting competitive staff is one of the institution's priorities, and it always strives to attract individuals with international experience. During the interviews with the top management and academic and invited staff, it became clear that the academic environment provided by the institution, the mechanisms of staff encouragement and support, and the quality of teaching make TMA a desirable employer for qualified

staff, who ensure the implementation of quality educational process and other activities in line with the institution's strategic plan.

The institution has established rules and conditions for academic staff affiliation, regulated by Academic Personnel Affiliation Procedure, Workload of Academic and Invited Personnel approved in 2023 by the Rector's council. This is designed to fully support and enable them to realise their potential within the institution. This document besides the affiliated academic staff labour contract determines and regulates the terms and conditions of affiliation of academic staff, affiliation procedures, rights and responsibilities of the institution towards the affiliated academic staff or vice versa. Currently, approximately 96% of all academic staff are affiliated, with 68 out of 71 personnel meeting this status.

Interviews conducted during the site visit confirmed that academic personnel are aware of the internal policies and regulations. They declared that, if necessary, they can resort to the assistance of the administration to clarify certain aspects related to the internal policies of the institution. They use the opportunities and benefits offered by TMA and participate in the programme development process. They also attend and engage in school board sessions, they are involved in curriculum, ethics, scientific grants committees, international projects, participate in public development activities or any other decision-making process determined for the academic staff. However, it would be beneficial if future staff satisfaction surveys included questions about staff involvement in the decision-making process. This would allow TMA to assess staff opinions and gather statistics on this aspect. Consequently, this would enable the institution to strengthen measures to ensure staff participation in the management process, fostering a more inclusive and collaborative decision-making environment.

Staff development

TMA is committed to supporting the professional development of its academic and invited staff, a clear example of which is the establishment of the Faculty Development Department in 2019. Since its creation, this department has organised many training sessions and activities, providing valuable insights into teaching and learning methodologies in medical education. These include topics such as General Principles of Medical Education Methodology, Curriculum Development and Advanced Assessment Methods in Medical Education, Flipped Classroom, Creating Standardized Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQs), Team-Based Learning (TBL), Key Principles of Organization for Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE), etc. all aligned with the national medical sector benchmark and WFME standards. The success of the training sessions is measured through evaluation questionnaires and self-reflective looks completed by participants.

Besides training and supportive activities, the institution also actively utilises staff evaluation and satisfaction survey results in the process of staff management. Staff are evaluated by the students according to the predetermined questionnaires. The analysis of the latter enables TMA to issue specific recommendations to the staff for the improvement of the educational process. The academic personnel also participated in staff satisfaction questionnaires evaluating different aspects of resources and educational processes.

Based on the Strategic Development Plan, the institution establishes benchmarks for its staff and their work to efficiently manage its activities. Moreover, in some cases, the institution's actual performance indicators surpass the target benchmark indicators. For example, the institutions target benchmark about administrative staff expressing satisfaction with their job and the workplace environment at TMA for 2023-24 was 50% and for 2027-28 75%, in the recent survey (March 2024) 84% of the staff express satisfaction in the aforementioned direction. Additionally, it continuously strives to enhance these benchmarks. It is impressive that 91% of the respondents say that they would resubmit the documents in TMA to their position if they had a chance again and 96% of the respondents say that they would recommend to their acquaintances to work in TMA.

Qualified staff

The panel found that TMA has successfully created an inviting and stimulating teaching and learning community. Staff are deeply committed to providing high-quality education and dedicated to their roles, and as a result students feel well catered for. At the same time, the number of academics engaged in research activities and their visibility remains relatively modest. The panel will discuss the research capacity of the TMA staff under standard 6.

The scrutiny of the academic, invited/ administrative staff resumes demonstrated that TMA staff is highly competitive and qualified. They have relevant degrees in the relevant fields, engage in academic and scientific work as per the institution's policies and regulations. However, according to

the Subject Benchmark Statement of Higher Education in Medicine and the Management of Vacant Positions for Personnel of Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy (Annex 2.4), which defines the minimal criteria of clinical experience for each academic position in clinical disciplines, the personal files of TMA academic staff in clinical disciplines in addition to the clinical experience mentioned in their CVs, could also include relevant clinical work experience notices from clinics/hospitals as a means of monitoring compliance with legislation regarding their appropriate clinical experience.

TMA complies with the requirements of standard 4.1. The panel determined that TMA's policies and regulations clearly demonstrate a solid, transparent and development-focused personnel management. Above all, it enables TMA to attract qualified and highly motivated staff.

Evidence/indicators

- TMA Strategic Development Plan 2021-2028
- Analysis of survey results and related reports
- TMA LLC Internal Labor Regulations
- Management of Vacant Positions for the Personnel at TMA
- TMA General Policy, Principles and Regulations of the Human Resource (HR) Department
- Methodology of Academic and Invited Teaching Staff's Development
- Staff CVs
- Planned and conducted activities for the Faculty Development
- System for work performance evaluation of the administrative personnel
- The results of the staff performance evaluation and satisfaction survey and their usage
- Evaluation and Encouragement Guide for Staff involved in Teaching Process
- Academic personnel affiliation procedure, workload of academic and invited personnel
- Institution website - <https://tma.edu.ge>.
- Interviews during TMA site visit

Recommendations:

-

Suggestions:

ST 4 - Consider including questions about staff involvement in the decision-making process in future staff satisfaction surveys. This addition could yield valuable insights into staff opinions and enable TMA to collect pertinent data for fostering a more participatory approach to decision-making.

ST 4 - Include notices of relevant clinical work experience from clinics/hospitals in the personal files of TMA academic staff in clinical disciplines, in addition to the clinical experience listed in their CVs. This would help monitor compliance with legislation concerning their required clinical experience.

Best Practices:

ST 4 - TMA staff's deep commitment to providing high-quality education and dedication to their roles ensures that students feel well supported and catered to.

Evaluation

x 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

Number of staff

The number of academic personnel, invited lecturers, and administrative staff is proportional to the current student enrolment at the institution. The methodology for determining the number of academic and invited staff involved in TMA's educational programmes follows the Law on Higher Education, the Labor Code of Georgia, the Subject Benchmark Statement of Higher Education in Medicine, and the academic personnel affiliation procedure and workload detailed in Annex 4.9. This methodology, applied to one-cycle higher educational programmes in medicine, defines the minimum required number of academic and invited staff for educational and research purposes, as well as target benchmarks.

When determining the number of staff, the methodology takes into account the structure of the educational programme, the contact hours assigned to each course, the student admission limits set by TMA, the maximum number of students per group and the number of groups per course, the number of weeks per academic year for each course as specified by TMA regulations, the weekly workload limits for staff members, and the scientific research priorities set by TMA.

The SER states that the total number of institution staff is 265, including 71 academic staff, of which 68 are affiliated (96% of the academic staff), 132 invited staff involved in teaching, and 62 administrative and support staff. This information is corroborated by the number of resumes submitted by the institution. Based on the Strategic Development Plan, the institutions target benchmark about affiliated academic staff with TMA for 2023-24 was 85% and for 2027-28 90%, its actual rate nowadays is 96%, which overweighs the target benchmark indicators.

Staff workload

The Academic Personnel Affiliation Procedure, workload guidelines for academic and invited personnel, and the SER indicate that academic workload is based on three mandatory components for academic staff: 1. Educational Activities: These include implementing the study process, developing, updating, and promoting programmes/courses, and preparing learning and examination materials. 2. Scientific and Research Activities: These involve publishing research, preparing and submitting grant projects, participating in scientific events as speakers on behalf of TMA, and supervising projects of young scholars and students. 3. Administrative Activities: These encompass participating in councils, commissions, and committees, promoting institutional and interpersonal connections both locally and internationally, and being involved in peer reviews of personnel.

The TMA policy sets the maximum weekly workload for educational activities at 24 hours. The required hours for scientific and research activities vary by academic rank: a minimum of 8 hours for professors, 6 hours for associate professors, and 4 hours for assistant professors. Administrative activities require a minimum of 3 hours per week. The teaching and consulting workload for invited staff is determined at the beginning of each semester based on individual agreements.

The workload report from the QMS system, requested during the visit, shows that in some cases, the overall workload of academic staff exceeds the 40-hour weekly limit stipulated by the Labour Code of Georgia. However, their workload for educational activities does not surpass the institution's policy maximum of 24 hours per week. For example, one staff member's total weekly workload is 76 hours, with 20 hours allocated for educational activities at TMA and the remaining 56 hours at other institutions. Another staff member's total weekly workload is 46 hours, with 20 hours for educational activities and 26 hours for research activities at TMA. Consequently, an excessive workload for academic staff might impact their work-life balance and jeopardise the quality of teaching at the institution. Also, the envisaged increase of student numbers should have no impact on the staff's workload. It would be beneficial for the institution to consider developing additional mechanisms to prevent work overloading its academic staff, thereby maintaining the appropriate quality of teaching.

The panel concludes that the number and workload of staff are adequate, thus meeting standard 4.2. However, the panel noted some discrepancies between the allocated time and the actual workload. Therefore, TMA should closely monitor the risk of excessive workload to maintain the quality of teaching and ensure a healthy work-life balance.

Evidence/indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Analysis of survey results and related reports ● Staff CVs ● Academic personnel affiliation procedure, workload of academic and invited personnel ● Methodology for determining the number of teaching staff involved in TMA educational programme- Medicine (Taught in Georgian and English) ● Reports from QMS system ● Interviews during TMA site visit
Recommendations: -
Suggestions: ST 4 - Monitor the risk of the staff's excessive workload to uphold the quality of teaching and ensure a healthy work-life balance.
Best Practices: -
Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> x Complies with requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements

5. Students and Their Support Services

HEI ensures the development of a 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 utilises 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For each of the educational levels, HEI has developed regulations for assignment, suspension and termination of student status, mobility, qualification granting, issuing educational documents as well as recognition of education received during the learning period. ○ HEI ensures the protection of student rights and lawful interests.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements <p>TMA has established a comprehensive framework to ensure the quality and regulation of its educational processes. This framework is aligned with Georgian legislation and the Sectoral Benchmark Statement of Higher Education in Medicine. The following analysis outlines TMA's approach to managing student status, mobility, qualification granting, issuing educational documents, and the recognition of prior learning for different educational levels. Additionally, it examines TMA's commitment to protecting student rights and lawful interests.</p> <p>For each educational level, TMA has developed regulations for obtaining, suspending, and terminating student status. These regulations are transparent and clearly defined in the relevant documents: 1. One-Step Educational Programmes in Medicine: Governed by the "Procedure for Regulation of the Educational Process in TMA's School of Medicine." 2. Joint Master's Programme: Regulated by the "Regulatory Rule for the Educational Process of the Joint Higher Education Programme in Applied Public Health" by GIPA and TMA. 3. Doctoral Programme: Managed by the "Regulations of Scientific-Research and PhD Department and Dissertation Board."</p> <p>Regulated by Georgian legislation, TMA allows both internal and external mobility. Internal mobility is unlimited, while external mobility spots are determined by the Rector's decree. Recognition of prior learning outcomes is determined through a comparison of the applicant's previous achievements with</p>

the desired programme's outcomes. TMA provides recognition of learning outcomes from foreign institutions following the NCEQE guidelines. The methodology and procedures for credit recognition are detailed in the relevant regulatory rules. TMA is dedicated to ensuring a safe, healthy, and student-centred environment through the "Mechanism for Upholding the Students' Rights and Legitimate Interests." This mechanism is based on Georgian legislation and internationally recognized principles. Additionally, TMA prioritises protecting student rights and lawful interests, creating a supportive and legally sound educational environment. TMA is committed to upholding student rights and lawful interests in accordance with Georgian legislation and internationally recognized principles. This document outlines TMA's approach to ensuring a safe, sound, and student-centred environment, emphasising the institution's core values, e.g. 1. Freedom of expression, TMA fosters an environment where students can voice their thoughts without restrictions, this encourages a culture of open dialogue and critical thinking; 2. Freedom from Discrimination, TMA prohibits any form of discrimination. The institution ensures that no student is discriminated against based on race, skin colour, language, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, religion, belief, political views, political affiliation, disability, citizenship, national, cultural belonging, ethnic or social belonging, origin, family, property, title, place of residence, health, lifestyle, place of birth, or any other characteristic. This creates an inclusive and respectful learning environment.

The panel established that TMA fully complies with the requirements under standard 5.1. The institution has effectively established and executed the processes for acquiring and altering student status, recognizing educational achievements, and safeguarding student rights.

Evidence/indicators

- Mechanisms for Upholding Student Rights and Legal Interests
- Samples of the contract between TMA and MD students
- Interviews during TMA site visit

Recommendations:

-

Suggestions:

-

Best Practices:

-

Evaluation

x Complies with requirements

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

5.2 Student Support Services

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Consulting and support services

The HEI's regulations and practices as described align well with the standard's requirements. By providing individual learning plans for transfer students, actively employing peer-tutoring for students with special needs, and utilising semester coordinators to enhance communication and understanding, the institution ensures that students' academic journeys are well-supported and optimised. These measures not only comply with the standard but also contribute to a more inclusive, supportive, and effective educational environment.

Orientation Week: This event introduces first-year students to TMA's mission, values, legal rights, code of conduct, and available student services, including consulting, career support, and financial aid.

Portfolio Mentor System: Implemented in the 2020-21 academic year, this system provides individual and small-group feedback on self-reflections, helping students identify strengths, areas for improvement, and offering psychological counselling, if needed.

TMA provides tailored support for transfer students through the development of individual learning plans. These plans consider the prerequisites of the courses, and the previous education received by the students. This approach ensures that transfer students can seamlessly integrate into the new academic environment without redundant coursework, thereby enhancing their academic progression and overall experience. Key Points of the individualised plan: a. Prerequisite Consideration: Ensures that the students' prior learning is recognized and builds on their existing knowledge. b. Tailored Plans: Individual learning plans cater to the specific academic needs of each transfer student, facilitating their smooth transition.

Peer-tutoring is actively employed in both individual/personalised plans, particularly for students with special needs. This method leverages the knowledge and experience of peers to provide additional support, promoting an inclusive learning environment and improving the academic outcomes of students requiring extra assistance, e.g. this programme involves senior students tutoring younger peers, helping with exam preparation and providing a supportive learning environment.

Semester coordinators play a crucial role in bridging the communication gap between students and lecturers. They are instrumental in explaining learning outcomes and objectives, integrating students into the academic system, and ensuring that students understand how each course fits into their overall educational goals.

Student involvement

TMA ensures students' awareness and involvement in various institution-level, local, and international projects and events. One such initiative is the project "6 Days of the Village Doctor" aiming to raise students' awareness about the doctors residing in the mountainous region of Georgia and to develop professionalism in students. The panel fully supports such projects but encourages TMA to also engage international students.

The institution supports student initiatives, fostering a strong and close involvement of students at different levels of management and initiatives. This includes participation in the Academic Council and the Board of Advisors. Students are elected to these roles through institution elections, a process designed to ensure anonymity and transparency. Once elected, students actively engage in discussions on various topics and issues. They play a significant role in raising and addressing student-oriented issues and contribute to the budgeting process. This involvement ensures that student voices are heard and considered in the institution's decision-making processes. And as already mentioned under standard 2, the panel suggests making a student a permanent member of the Library Committee.

Students with the support of TMA are also engaged into the Student Science Club, where they participate in scientific discussions and activities, promoting research and scientific development.

TMA has developed mechanisms to support low socioeconomic status (SES) students through financial aid and scholarships: 1. Funding Opportunities: First-year students receive tuition fee exemptions based on national grant results and high academic performance. 2. Tuition Fee Exemption: Based on semester outcomes, social activities, cultural contributions, and scientific research involvement. 3. Students' Funding Committee: Considers and resolves student applications for financial support, offering diverse funding opportunities tailored to socio-economic status. 4. Special Grant Committee

<p>for Social and Cultural Projects: Promotes interdisciplinary initiatives, supporting complex healthcare issues.</p> <p>TMA's comprehensive approach to supporting students through consulting services, career support, project involvement, and financial aid mechanisms ensures that students receive holistic support tailored to their academic, psychological, and socio-economic needs. These initiatives align with the accreditation standards, demonstrating TMA's commitment to creating a student-centred learning environment that promotes academic excellence, career readiness, and active involvement in various projects and events.</p> <p>The panel concludes that TMA fully complies with standard 5.2. The institution displays a solid and effective system of student support services as confirmed by the students during the site visit. Additionally, it features a well-established culture of student involvement at both the institutional level and in local and international projects and events. Even so, TMA can encourage international students to participate more frequently in patient care projects in the local community. Also, the further integration of the local and international student groups should be stimulated.</p>
<p>Evidence/indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Student Consultancy Services and Mechanisms for Student Support • Results of the survey of graduates regarding their career and academic development; • TMA Procedure for Financial Support and Incentivization of Students • Interviews during TMA site visit
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>-</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>ST 5 - Explore ways to engage more international MD students in patient care projects in the local community.</p> <p>ST 5 - Encourage the further integration of local and international student groups.</p>
<p>Best Practices:</p> <p>ST 5 - Student involvement at the institutional level, as well as in local and international projects and events, is well-established.</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>

6. Research, development and/or other creative work

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

<p>6.1 Research Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ HEI, based on its type and specifics of its fields, carries out research/creative activities. ○ Ensuring the effectiveness of doctoral research supervision ○ HEI has public, transparent and fair procedures for the assessment and defence of dissertations which are relevant to the specifics of the field
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>Research policy and activities</p> <p>According to the submitted documents current scientific research at TMA aligns with the institution's mission priorities. Following the minimum scientific standards and supportive measures outlined by</p>

TMA research policy, both the quantity and quality of research have markedly improved. This improvement is evidenced by the publication of research results from international, national, and university grant projects in various high-rated journals indexed in international scientific databases. The SER describes the number of the publications in the journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science. In both cases there is a significant increase in the recent six years. In addition to this, the institution owns some laboratories and specialised equipment, which are accessible to external stakeholders.

The site visit together with the submitted documents confirmed that the institution integrates its research activities into teaching and learning. This approach ensures that students benefit from the latest scientific advancements and methodologies. Faculty members incorporate current research findings into curricula, providing students with hands-on experience and a deeper understanding of their fields. By engaging in research projects, students develop critical thinking skills and gain practical knowledge, preparing them for future academic and professional success.

It is evident that although research is a well-established function at TMA, there is still quite a way to go in view of its ambitions. The international component of research work and publications requires constant stimulation and support. TMA is ready to exercise these influences. Success will, however, take time and require constant care. As mentioned under standard 4, the portion of academics internationally active and visible is still relatively limited in size. So, both professional development of present staff and clear directives for recruitment are called for. The incentives awarded to internationally publishing academics are a clear sign that TMA actively stimulates international reach and visibility for its research programmes and results. As the interview results show, the professional development of the academic staff's scientific research capacity is carried out intensively. TMA constantly provides the academic staff with information on international fellowship programmes, which facilitates the internationalisation of scientific research and at the same time professional development of the personnel.

Doctoral research

The submitted documents describe the primary responsibilities of the scientific supervisor. These duties include providing regular consultations tailored to the specifics of the research topic, covering aspects such as research design, seminars, colloquia, scientific-research papers, and dissertations. Supervisors also facilitate the integration of doctoral students into local and international scientific networks, encourage participation in scientific events, and support the presentation and publication of research findings. Additionally, they oversee the educational and research components of the doctoral student's individual plan, guide their preparation to assist professors, and periodically evaluate their progress. Graduates declared themselves satisfied with the support and opportunities they received.

Publication in international journals is mandatory and international reviewers give feedback on dissertation summary drafts. According to the existing regulations the doctoral student must have at least three publications (papers/articles) related to their thesis. These should be published or accepted for publication either abroad or in Georgia, in peer-reviewed journals indexed in relevant international scientific databases, or in reputable international scientific journals or conference materials. At least one of these articles must be published in a journal indexed in Web of Science (Clarivate Analytics), ERIH PLUS (European Reference Index of the Humanities), or Scopus databases.

The procedures of the thesis defence describe that the chair of the Dissertation Council submits the doctoral student's thesis to the Scientific Research Service for technical review, including verifying the compliance of student publications with existing requirements. To ensure transparent and fair evaluation, the process includes either a foreign co-supervisor or a foreign evaluator. Negative evaluations by foreign experts result in further reviews, and two negative assessments lead to the thesis being returned to the student. After receiving evaluations, the chair selects three evaluators, approved by the Dissertation Council, who must be experts in the relevant field but not involved with the thesis. If two evaluators give negative assessments, the thesis is not accepted for public defence. Evaluators submit their conclusions within a month, assessing various criteria, and recommend whether the thesis should proceed to defence. The student is informed of the decision and, if approved, given at least 15 days to prepare for the defence. The Field Dissertation Commission, comprising at least seven experts, evaluates the thesis during the public defence, using a confidential assessment method with specific evaluation criteria.

The panel concludes that TMA meets standard 6.1. The institution conducts research activities that align with its strategic priorities. Furthermore, the panel determined that the supervision of doctoral research, as well as the assessment and defence of dissertations, are adequate.

Evidence/indicators

- TMA Procedure for Financial Support and Incentivisation of Students
- Strategic Development Plan in the Field of Research 2023-2028
- Realised and Ongoing Projects
- Memoranda in the direction of research
- TMA Regulations of the Department for Research and Doctoral Studies and the Dissertation Board
- Interviews during TMA site visit

Recommendations:

-

Suggestions:

-

Best Practices:

-

Evaluation

x Complies with requirements

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

6.2. Research Support and Internationalisation

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

According to the submitted documents to support and promote scientific research, TMA has developed a research policy aimed at defining key research directions, enhancing research quality, involving young scientists, integrating teaching and research, and fostering an environment that upholds research ethics and internationalisation. The core principles of this policy include a culture of research ethics and integrity, academic and intellectual freedom, a competitive environment, and the integration of teaching and research with an international perspective. The policy is implemented through several measures: an evaluation system for research activities, identification of primary research areas, promotion of scientific research, support for young scientists, encouragement of research-teaching integration, internationalisation of research, and the development of research ethics and culture. Providing support and strengthening research capacity is one of the strategic priorities of the institution and this priority is reflected in all of its activities. To promote scientific research among its students and staff, the TMA has a Research Support Center. Its activities centre around the core competences for the research grants, funding meetings with the National Science Foundation of Georgia, writing research grant projects, conducting research for academic staff, invited staff and researchers to strengthen their research skills.

TMA has fair and transparent procedures for funding research. The Rule of Funding Research is a key document governing selection and implementation of research projects. It regulates issues such as the sources of funding, eligibility, evaluation criteria, etc. A recently launched Horizon Europe Grant Office is expected to stimulate participation in European projects. TMA provides support for conferences and publications to the affiliated and invited staff. Affiliated and invited staff as well as

researchers have an opportunity to support their activities through various funding schemes. Participation in international and local conferences, publication of scientific articles and other scientific publications, publication of textbooks and monographs, membership of scientific and research associations are funded by the institution. The faculties organise student conferences, fund their participation in international conferences, and promote the publication of student led journals. Interviews with students confirm this.

The panel strongly supports TMA's investments in research and wants to emphasise the importance of actively involving all students in research activities. This includes every MD and every MPH student, not just two or three selected students or those who participate on a voluntary basis. Research is an essential part of higher education, it is part of the Bologna process, and therefore part of every European framework. Therefore, each educational programme should prominently feature research as a core element. Reading scientific papers and using research-based literature is not what one defines as being actively engaged in research. During the site visit, the panel saw numerous opportunities to increase student involvement in research, such as through international projects within the newly initiated PhD programme. Therefore, the panel encourages TMA to embrace these opportunities to enrich its students' educational experience and enhance their academic development. Also, TMA's strong network is essential for higher education, and its research activities, in particular, will benefit from this international collaboration.

The panel concludes that TMA meets the requirements under standard 6.2. The institution has an aspiration towards a vibrant research culture and has a potential to achieve it in the long run.

Evidence/indicators

- TMA grant programme "Facilitation of scientific-research activities"
- Joint research/creative activities and cooperation with international partners
- Site visit of laboratories on campus
- Interviews during TMA site visit

Recommendations:

-

Suggestions:

ST 6 - Encourage and support collaborative research projects with local and foreign institutions with the involvement of the academic staff.

ST 6 - Enhance student engagement in research activities and embrace international opportunities to enrich each student's educational experience and foster academic development.

Best Practices:

-

Evaluation

x 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

To ensure the evaluation of the quality of scientific research activities as well as the effectiveness of academic / scientific staff, TMA has established mechanisms for protecting academic integrity, including plagiarism detection and prevention procedures. The institution annually evaluates the scientific-research activities of the academic staff and based on the results, carries out further activities. This issue is regulated by the internal legal act of the academy "Rule of Evaluation of Scientific-Research and Academic Activities of the Personnel".

Financial support for the scientific-research activities is regulated by the "Rule of Research Funding", which has been developed by the Center for Support of Scientific-Research Activities. According to the SER, the projects are funded by various international and local donors (PH International Georgia, European Commission: Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility, Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation), as well as with internal TMA funding. The affiliated academic staff of the TMA is eligible to apply for the research project. Non-affiliated academic staff are eligible to apply for the competition only if they agree to implement the project on behalf of the TMA.

The Commission decides on the financing of the submitted project by evaluating the following criteria: significance of the research problems (scale, scientific novelty; inter/multidisciplinarity); goals and objectives (hypotheses and research questions; achievability); research methodology (relevance of the selected method; data analysis methods; ethics issues); the scientific value and impact of the results; rationality and effectiveness of the work plan (procedures, risk management, monitoring and evaluation); budget and profitability; project staff (qualifications, quantity of the involved researchers, involvement of students and / or young scientists); institutional environment (affordable relevant material, technical and intellectual resources, adequacy of partner organisations); communication and dissemination of the results (a communication strategy with target audiences to disseminate results, publication plans).

The panel concludes that the TMA system for evaluating research is effective, taking into account the up-to-date character and scientific novelty of the research projects, as well as their interdisciplinarity. In addition, the existing funding procedure encourages involvement of both academic staff and students in scientific research activities. The requirements of standard 6.3 are thus met.

Evidence/indicators

- Research Component Planning and Evaluation - Principles and Methodology
- TMA grant programme "Facilitation of scientific-research activities"
- Rules of ethics and conduct and procedures for responding to violations TMA LLC Internal Labor Regulations
- Interviews during TMA site visit

Recommendations:

-

Suggestions:

-

Best Practices:

-

Evaluation

x Complies with requirements

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

7. Material, Information and Financial Resources

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

7.1 Material Resources

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

- Health and safety of students and staff is protected within the institution.
- HEI has adapted environment for people with special needs

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The substantial property ownership, both immovable and movable, demonstrates TMA's commitment to long-term stability and growth, aligning with its strategic goals. TMA owns the immovable property of a 4,107.8 square metre two-building complex located on a 1,463 square metre land plot at Ketevan Tsamebuli Avenue #51/2, Tbilisi. Additionally, TMA acquired a 2,307 square metre land plot for future expansion, particularly for building a multifunctional outpatient university clinic. TMA's ownership of movable assets is well-documented and compliant with relevant legislation.

Educational facilities

TMA's facilities and equipment are well-suited to meet the educational and research needs of its programmes. The infrastructure supports a comprehensive learning environment, and partnerships with clinical and research institutions enhance practical training.

The institution has lecture halls, seminar classrooms with Smart Boards, conference halls with audio-video equipment for hybrid meetings, and modern laboratories, particularly the laboratories are equipped with inventory and modern equipment that comply with biosafety norms. There are also digital and virtual learning tools (e.g., Anatomage, VR), histology rooms with microscopes, and simulators for clinical skills training. TMA has a centre for clinical skills and examinations, a library, administrative and academic workspaces, cafeteria, archive, and sanitary facilities.

In case of clinical and practical training, TMA has signed cooperation agreements with multi-profile clinical facilities and is continuously updating these agreements to meet sectoral benchmarks. It collaborates with various practice and research institutions to support master's and doctoral programmes.

Anatomy lab

One specific observation concerns the lack of practice on cadavers, which remains an essential part of medical education despite some arguments that modern training no longer necessitates the study and dissection of human bodies. From a scientific standpoint, cadaver practice holds significant value for several reasons, including anatomical knowledge, hands-on experience, a three-dimensional perspective, and exposure to anatomical variations. Under a recently adopted law, medical schools in Georgia now have the opportunity to work with cadavers in anatomy labs. Despite some reluctance among TMA staff (and panel members), the institution's leadership is open to this suggestion, recognizing its relevance to international medical education standards as a fundamental component of comprehensive medical training. While modern technologies such as virtual dissection tables and 3D models are valuable educational tools, they complement rather than replace the unique benefits provided by cadaver dissection. The panel invites TMA to consider the possibility of establishing an anatomy lab and potentially collaborating with other medical schools to share resources and funding. Additionally, there are challenges and considerations, such as ethical concerns regarding the use of human bodies, the cost of maintaining cadaver labs, and the need for appropriate safety measures. TMA could initiate discussions with other medical schools in Tbilisi to address these issues.

Secure environment

TMA's emphasis on safety, accessibility, and maintenance underlines its commitment to providing a secure and supportive environment for students and staff. TMA's sanitary units are well-maintained, accessible, and meet all necessary sanitary and hygienic standards, providing a healthy and safe environment for students and staff. TMA's building design effectively incorporates natural light, which is crucial for a healthy and productive educational environment. The availability of both natural and artificial lighting ensures flexibility and adequacy in illumination. The central heating system in TMA ensures a stable and comfortable indoor climate, which is essential for maintaining a suitable environment for educational activities throughout the year. Additionally, the uninterrupted power supply, solid safety measures, and first aid facilities further enhance the overall quality and safety of the educational environment. TMA has implemented robust measures to ensure the health and safety of its students and staff. These include comprehensive security, fire safety, labour safety protocols,

and a well-equipped first aid facility. The uninterrupted power supply further enhances the safety and reliability of the institution's operations. TMA's facilities are well-adapted to accommodate people with special needs. The availability of ramps and elevators ensure that individuals with disabilities have full access to the institution's facilities.

The panel concludes that TMA meets the standard requirements for providing an environment necessary for implementing (medical) educational activities, thus meeting standard 7.1.

Evidence/indicators

- Inventory records for movable property (including Fire safety protection mechanism; Mechanism of providing First Aid medical assistance; Mechanism for maintaining order and security; Labor safety system)
- Documentation confirming possession of real estate, extraction from public registry
- Contracts signed with clinics
- Memoranda of cooperation with practice facilities
- Interviews during TMA site visit and visiting the Campus, research and clinical facilities

Recommendations:

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Suggestions:

ST 7 - Consider introducing cadaver practice as a fundamental component of comprehensive medical training by establishing an anatomy lab and potentially collaborating with other medical schools to share resources and funding.

Best Practices:

-

Evaluation

x 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 TMA constantly works for its improvement.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

At TMA, the library environment is well-designed to support both individual study and group work (e.g. TBL, Team-based learning), with adequate facilities and equipment. The extended operating hours further enhance its accessibility, ensuring students and staff have ample opportunity to utilise library resources.

TMA's library offers a comprehensive collection of physical and digital resources, covering a wide range of educational and research needs. The combination of on-site and remote access ensures that students and staff can conveniently access these resources, promoting a flexible learning environment.

The library services at TMA are comprehensive and proactive. These include advanced management systems (e.g. library management system "KOHA"), a dedicated Library Committee for resource development, and continuous academic integrity campaigns. Additionally, the library provides training and orientation services to help users effectively utilise its resources. TMA demonstrates a strong commitment to continuous improvement through a systematic approach to resource acquisition, the development of new tools like the repository, and regular satisfaction surveys. This ensures the library evolves in line with user needs and institutional priorities. The library environment, resources, and services at TMA effectively support the implementation of educational and research activities. The institution ensures that the main literature listed in the syllabi is readily available in its library, thereby enabling students and faculty to access essential academic materials. Furthermore, TMA is committed

to providing students and staff with access to international library databases, which significantly enhances the scope and depth of research capabilities. The continuous improvement efforts by TMA in its library services reflect a dedication to maintaining high standards in both education and research support. This commitment ensures that the library remains a pivotal resource for the academic community, fostering an environment conducive to learning and scholarly pursuits.

The panel concludes that TMA meets standard 7.2. TMA's library environment, resources, and services effectively support the implementation of educational and research activities. The institution's proactive approach to continuous improvement ensures that the library remains relevant and responsive to the needs of its users. The combination of comprehensive physical and digital collections, advanced management systems, and user-focused services creates a conducive environment for learning and research.

Evidence/indicators

- Documentation certifying possession of books/inventory records
- Statistics for use of electronic library databases
- TMA Library Resource Acquisition Procedures
- Interviews during TMA site visit and visiting the library on Campus

Recommendations:

-

Suggestions:

-

Best Practices:

-

Evaluation

x Complies with requirements

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

7.3 Information Resources

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The infrastructure for information technologies at TMA is well-established and supports both educational and administrative processes. This includes a range of hardware and software components essential for a medical educational facility. The administration and accessibility of these technologies are ensured through a dedicated IT Service responsible for maintaining and upgrading the infrastructure as per the "Technology Management Policy and Procedures" and the Academy's Business Continuity Plan. The aforementioned components include the computers, Wi-Fi access points, printers, scanners, CCTV systems, conference systems, smart boards, and various electronic resources. Both students and staff have access to high-speed WPA2 wireless internet, which facilitates smooth communication and access to digital resources. Everyone has a personal academic email account connected to essential platforms like Google Workspace, KOHA, Moodle, Nextcloud, and SPSS, ensuring seamless access to educational and administrative services.

TMA has implemented various electronic services and management systems that streamline both educational and administrative functions. The continuous improvement of these systems is ensured through regular updates and daily backups, which enhance reliability and efficiency. Examples of the aforementioned: 1. Moodle: Used as the Learning Management System (LMS) for educational purposes, including resource uploading, quizzes, assignments, and exam processes. Data is backed up daily; 2. emis.tma.edu.ge and students.tma.edu.ge: Learning Management Systems facilitating academic administration; 3. ORIS: Financial and organisational management toolkit; etc.

The official website of TMA (www.tma.edu.ge) is a comprehensive and user-friendly platform that provides updated information in both Georgian and English. It serves as one of the communication tools for the institution, offering information to current and prospective students, general visitors, and other stakeholders. The panel suggests creating distinct webpages for (1) student affairs and (2) quality assurance to facilitate convenient access.

The panel concludes that TMA meets the requirements for standard 7.3. TMA demonstrates an integrated framework for managing information technologies and electronic services. The infrastructure is comprehensive, regularly updated, and accessible to all users. Electronic management systems are well-integrated and continuously improved to ensure efficiency.

Evidence/indicators

- Information Technology Management Policy and Procedures
- Interviews during TMA site visit and visiting the Campus

Evaluation

x Fully complies with requirements

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

Recommendations:

-

Suggestions:

ST 7 - Consider creating distinct webpages for (1) student affairs and (2) quality assurance to facilitate convenient access.

Best Practices:

-

7.4 Financial Resources

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

TMA has a well-structured financial policy that ensures the economic feasibility of its budget allocations. The budgeting process is inclusive, involving all structural units and employing both "bottom-up" and "top-down" approaches. This participative process helps in creating realistic and achievable financial plans. The budget for the upcoming year is prepared in detail, while the budgets for the second and third years cover larger items. Quarterly budget reviews allow for early identification and mitigation of financial risks. TMA maintains financial reserves to cover expenses for at least three months, ensuring economic stability.

TMA's financial standing is stable, with increasing revenues and stable financial profitability. This financial stability supports the effective performance of activities outlined in both strategic and mid-

term action plans. TMA's annual net revenue has shown positive dynamics over the past three years. The institution's financial resources are allocated towards priority areas such as research development, library resource enhancement, and clinical teaching improvements. Investment in facilities, including the construction of TMA's own Outpatient Clinic, is part of the strategic development plan. The panel fully supports this plan.

TMA ensures that its financial resources are directed towards the core activities that support its mission and strategic goals. This includes significant investments in research, library resources, and clinical teaching facilities. By 2023, TMA allocated 4% of its total annual budget for scientific and research activities, which will increase to 6% with the launch of doctoral programmes. Investments in clinical services facilities are planned to grow from 0.5% in 2023 to 2.3% in 2025. The budget for library resources is set to increase from 0.9% in 2023 to 2.9% in 2025. The panel considers these budget allocations adequate. TMA's financial strategy and allocation are well-aligned with the authorization standards, demonstrating a strong commitment to economic feasibility, strategic goal achievement, core activity support, and effective financial management.

TMA's budget allocation for scientific research and library development is significant and growing. This focus on research and library resources is crucial for supporting the institution's academic and educational missions.

TMA has a comprehensive and effective system of financial management and control. This system is overseen by the Supervisory Board and the Rector, with support from a Financial Advisor. Independent audits and monthly financial reporting ensure transparency and accountability. Financial statements are prepared monthly, and a digital online report on Power BI (Dashboard) is updated systematically, providing a clear overview of key financial parameters. Monthly discussions with the Rector and Financial Advisor help in detecting financial risks and formulating appropriate action plans. The panel concludes that TMA complies with standard 7.4. TMA demonstrates strong financial management, with economically achievable budget allocations, a stable financial standing, and focused financial resources that support core institutional activities. The budgeting process is participative and inclusive, ensuring comprehensive planning and early risk identification. The academy's commitment to funding scientific research and library development, along with an effective system of accountability and financial control, underscores its financial sustainability and strategic growth.

Evidence/indicators

- Financial Policy
- Profit and Loss Statement
- Financing Dynamics
- TMA Budget
- Interviews during TMA site visit

Recommendations:

-

Suggestions:

-

Best Practices:

-

Evaluation

☒ **Complies with requirements**

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements