



განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Higher Education Institution Authorisation Experts' Report Sokhumi State University

Expert Panel Members

Chair: Terence Clifford-Amos, International Higher Education Consultant, UK, formerly of the Catholic University of Lille, France and Vice-Chair with the European Commission.

Members:

Magda Memanishvili, Head of the Journalism Undergraduate Program and Associate Professor, International Black Sea University, Republic of Georgia.

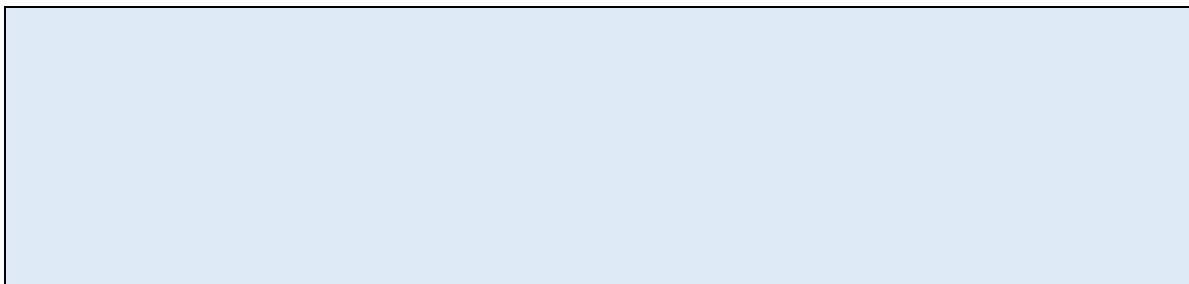
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Tamar Dzvelaia, Assistant Professor, Batumi Art Teaching University, Republic of Georgia.

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Tbilisi
2024

Authorisation Report Resume

General information on the educational institution

Sokhumi State University history started on 7 February 1932, when by the decision of the Government of Georgia in Sokhumi was established a Pedagogical Institute. Initially, Sokhumi Pedagogical Institute had two academic departments which mostly prepared pedagogic staff. In the following years other specialties were added to the Institute as well, and by the early 1960s the Pedagogical Institute became the leading educational and scientific center, where the educational process was conducted in the Georgian, Abkhaz and Russian languages. In 1979 the Sokhumi Pedagogical Institute was formed as the State University of Abkhazia.

After the famous political events of 1989, the Georgian part was separated from the Abkhazian State University that united the majority of the professors and students of the University of Abkhazia. On May 14, 1989 on basis of the Georgian part of the University was established the Sokhumi Branch of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, which continued functioning in Tbilisi since 1993.

On July 31, 2007, by the decree of the Georgian Government on the basis of TSU Sokhumi branch was founded a legal entity of public law - Sokhumi University. On January 4, 2008, the University received a state license to conduct educational activities, and on 8 January 2008 - State Accreditation (for 5 years).

On December 10, 2008, the Government of Georgia made amendments to decree No. 239 of the Government of Georgia. According to the decree, legal entity of public law Sokhumi University was named "Legal Entity of Public Law - Sokhumi State University". By the Decree # 292 of September 18, 2012, of the Educational Institutions Authorization Board, Sokhumi State University was awarded the status of a Higher Education Institution (University) and the maximum number of students was determined by 2871 students.

According to the decision of the Council of Authorization of Educational Institutions #95 of December 8, 2018, Sukhumi State University was granted the status of a higher educational institution (university) for a period of 6 years, and the maximum number of students was determined at 3340 students. At the same session, by decision #96, the university was granted the right to implement professional educational programs, and the maximum number of professional students was set at 160. It should be noted that the council has given the university 1 year to submit a report on the implementation of the recommendations.

During one year, the university implemented certain measures in the direction of the implementation of the recommendations established by the Council and presented the relevant report at the end of the year.

At the session of the Authorization Council of Higher Educational Institutions on March 23, 2020, the presented report was discussed and the Council unanimously accepted the report on the implementation of the authorization recommendations (meeting protocol No. 4).

At this stage, the university implements 56 educational programs of all three levels of higher education (including 45 - accredited), the educational program of teacher training (60 ECTS) and the educational program of training in the Georgian language (60 ECTS). The number of active students is 3134

students, six of whom are designated as 'special educational needs'. The total number of employed staff at the university (including academic, scientific, invited, administrative, support staff) is 470.

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

Under the Order # 15/ 01-07-16 of the Rector of Sokhumi State University, a group of self-evaluation was created, consisting of the heads of the relevant structural units and other responsible persons. In this group the responsibilities of each standard are defined. Based on the information provided by them, the self-evaluation report was prepared and presented to the National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement in 15 October 2024.

Regular meetings were held within the framework of the process, information was specified, and changes were made considering different circumstances. The final version was reviewed by the main group of self-evaluation and submitted to the Rector of the university, the Head of the Administration and the quality assurance service. The final version with the appropriate appendices was presented to the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement.

The last evaluation of Sokhumi State University was held in October 2018.

An on-line initial planning meeting was held on 16th September 2024 at 1600 with involved NCEQE staff, during which timelines were discussed and distribution of the workload decided, in preparation for a face-to-face meeting on the morning of Tuesday 19th. Agendas for the three days were assembled and subsequently revised several times to accommodate the needs of the expert team during a very intense authorization visit – 19th – 21st.

The evaluation expert panel was appointed on 17th 18th and 19th of September comprising six members, five of whom are Georgian academics of distinction. Due to personal circumstances, a seventh Georgian member withdrew before the interviewing procedures commenced. The Chair, a UK appointed expert, took on the additional workload.

The expert team found the supporting documents helpful and accurate according to professional practice at SSU. The SER was an improvement on the 2018 document in that it was more analytical and self-critical. Supporting documentation was not too copious nor overbearing. Most documents were made available in both Georgian and English.

There were twenty-two interview sessions, including an additional meeting and the initial findings' feedback, held across three days. During the course of the visit, the panel met senior staff of the University on several occasions. These included: full-time and invited academic staff; administrative and student support staff; undergraduate postgraduate and research students; and external stakeholders, including alumni. Meetings between the panel and university members and stakeholders were conducted largely in Georgian. Bespoke English translation for the Chair was provided by NCEQE. The expert team split into two groups for tours of both university buildings, situated in Politkovskaya Street, Tbilisi.

The panel is grateful to the university and all colleagues who gave time to the expert team, towards strengthening its understanding of the higher-education provision at SSU. The panel is grateful to those staff, students, alumni, employers and other stakeholders who visited the university specifically for the authorization process. All colleagues and visitors acquitted themselves professionally, diligently and respectfully. Interview exchanges were frank, comprehensive and incisive, in-keeping with the university's desire to grow and further develop. Particular thanks are expressed to the Rector of SSU and Mr Kakhi Kenkadze, (NCEQE) for his excellent translations and post-visit explanations.

The panel wishes the university success for the future, following its engagements with the findings and detailed outcomes of this report.

Overview of the HEI's compliance with standards

Summary of Recommendations

Standard 1 is fully compliant in its two subheadings (1.1; 1.2);

Standard 2 is fully compliant in one subheading (2.3) and substantially compliant in two subheadings (2.1; 2.2);

Standard 3 is fully compliant in two subheadings (3.1; 3.2) and substantially compliant in one subheading (3.3);

Standard 4 is fully compliant in its two subheadings (4.1; 4.2);
Standard 5 is substantially compliant in its two subheadings (5.1; 5.2);
Standard 6 is fully compliant in two subheadings (6.2; 6.3) and substantially compliant in one subheading (6.1);
Standard 7 is substantially compliant across all subheadings (7.1 – 7.4).

It is recommended that:

the 'General Principles of Personnel Management Policy' document should be divided into university-level and faculty-level mechanisms;

the mechanisms (above) should be formulated with stronger international focus;

key indicators should be pinpointed in referring to each mechanism. For example:

Mechanism: Engaging teachers, scientists and administrative staff in exchange programs.

Evaluation Indicator: Number of the exchange programs in which teachers, scientists and administrative staff were involved. (Standard 2.1.);

the internal quality-assurance document, "The mechanisms for Evaluation for Quality-Assurance Capacities" dated 2018, which includes crucial features of QA, should be re-organized as described in the main text under 2.2;

there should be some correlation between the 'Capacities' document above with the document, 'The Mechanism of Planning Student Contingent Methodology and Target Marks';

existing 'external' QA mechanisms should be profiled and developed to ensure that internal and external mechanisms are always development-oriented;

more specific details of QA procedures, including questionnaire analysis, frequency of the process, feedback, annual report writing, some examples of loop closure and some examples of loops, which for good quality reasons, tend not to close, should be provided;

SSU should also consider continuing and developing the one-to-one academic practice of peer-review and extend and develop it for administrative staff. (Standard 2.2);

concerning the curriculum, academic programs should align with the university's methodology for planning and developing educational programs and include Annex 2 and Annex 3, together with Annex 1. The evaluation of learning outcomes developed by the university should be used more effectively to evaluate the particular learning outcomes of educational programs;

the administration of SSU should comply with the instructions issued during the 2018 authorization and develop a unified policy document for establishing and developing educational programs;

as students' language competence is deemed to be low and often not at B2, which is a formal admission requirement, SSU should address this as soon as possible. (Standard 5.1);

the university should strengthen practical studies to enhance students' practical experience and better equip them with the necessary skills for career development. Standard 5.2);

SSU should ensure that the internal floor refurbishments are completed by the start of January 2025 and pursue further progress in the provision for students with disabilities and special needs, in line with the university's growing interest in recruiting more such students. Spaces, variously, for students should be increased as soon as possible. (Standard 7.1);

investment in Library Infrastructure should be made. The university should continue its efforts to improve library infrastructure, particularly in terms of expanding space and upgrading facilities for study and research. (Standard 7.2);

the highest standards in digital education should be developed, so that students are at the cutting edge of technology to the benefit of themselves and their employers - whose expectations are high. These should include: increased IT technologies, smart desks and highest-level digitalization training. (Standard 7.3);

SSU should appoint an external auditor for finance. (Standard 7.4).

Summary of Suggestions

It is suggested that:

SS involve students in the creation of new programs. Alumni already have such involvement. Standard 2.1;

even though the Ethics Commission meets rarely, it should consider producing an annual report on 'General Trends in Ethics in European Higher Education', or similar, to keep the Commission alive and proactive in the eyes of university personnel. Standard 2.3);

it is desirable to develop a flexible mechanism for the promotion of invited young staff - staff not affiliated with other universities, continue the sharing of best practices internationally and foster partnerships within a broader, sustainable strategy;

as many of the academic and invited staff do not speak English, it is desirable to prepare and retrain them, especially since the institution plans to implement more international projects and programs. (Standard 4.1);

SSU reflects the affiliate terms and conditions in all agreements and use the higher-education management information system and internal monitoring mechanisms to monitor the workload of academic staff outside of the university. Standard 4.2);

for all doctoral students - that at least one article is published in a journal indexed in the Web of Science (Clarivate Analytics), ERIH PLUS (European Reference Index of the Humanities), or Scopus databases, which would set high standards of composing research articles and contribute further enhancements for research quality. (Standard 6.1);

improvement should be made to the frontage of both buildings, so that they appeal more as institutions of university status, and also SSU should provide attractive and professional general reception facilities within the main foyer areas. (Standard 7.1);

as a means of achieving cutting-edge digital education, consider organizing SSU's Information Technology Management and Development Policies and Procedures(# Appendix 7.8) to include the FIBAA (Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation) - their 5 Standards: digitalization strategy, staffing, technology, didactic strategy and QA. By mid-point of the current authorization, the university should consider making plans to apply for the FIBAA Quality Seal, "Excellence in Digital Education". Standard 7.3);

given the plans to increase student numbers, SSU should redouble its efforts in fundraising. (Standard 7.4).

Summary of the Best Practice

The relatively new psychological centre, borne out of need, has become a considerable success across the university. (Standard 4.1)

To enhance the development of educational programs, the university has implemented a mechanism to ensure the integration of practical components, utilizing opportunities from both international projects and local businesses (including the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Supreme Council of the Republic of Abkhazia, Rustavi Court, Ilia Vekua Institute of Physics and Technology of Sukhumi, Pharmadepo.) (Standard 3.1).

Summary Table of Compliance of HEI with Standards and Standard Components

	Standard	Complie s with Re qui re me nts	Sub sta ntia lly com plie s with req uire me nts	Part ially Com plie s with Req uire me nts	Does not Comp ly with Requi reme nts
1.	Mission and strategic development of HEI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.1	Mission of HEI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	Strategic development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.	Organisational structure and management of HEI	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.1	Organisational structure and management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2	Internal quality assurance mechanisms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3	Observing principles of ethics and integrity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Educational Programmes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1	Design and development of educational programmes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2	Structure and content of educational programmes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.3	Assessment of learning outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Staff of the HEI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1	Staff management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2	Academic/Scientific and invited Staff workload	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Students and their support services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.1	The Rule for obtaining and changing student status, the recognition of education, and student rights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.2	Student support services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Research, development and/or other creative work	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.1	Research activities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.2	Research support and internationalization	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.3	Evaluation of research activities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Material, information and financial resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.1	Material resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.2	Library resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.3	Information resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.4	Financial resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature of expert panel members

1. Name, Last Name (Chair) Terence Clifford-Amos



2. Name, Last Name (Member) Magda Memanishvili

3. ბენდელიანი

3. Name, Last Name (Member) Beka Bendeliani

3. ბენდელიანი

4. Name, Last Name (Member) Sophia Bazadze

S. Bazadze

5. Name, Last Name (Member) Ilia Botsvadze

ი. ბოტსვაძე

6. Name, Last Name (Member) Tamar dzvelaia

თ. დველაია

7. Name, Last Name (Member) Gizo Partskhaladze

გ. პარტსხალაძე

Compliance of the Applicant HEI with the Authorisation Standard Components

1. Mission and strategic development of HEI

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

1.1 Mission of HEI

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The expert panel conducted a detailed analysis of the Mission Statement of Sokhumi State University (SSU) to determine its alignment with the “Primary Goals of higher education in Georgia,” as outlined in the Law of Georgia on Higher Education. The Mission Statement was examined in terms of how it defines the University’s role and place within the higher education sector and society, both locally and internationally. The analysis was based on meetings with university stakeholders, the examination of institutional documents, and the evaluation of educational provisions.

SSU’s Mission Statement is aspirational, comprehensive, and clearly aligned with the primary goals of higher education in both Georgia and Europe. The panel found that the Mission Statement reflects the university’s role as a key institution in the development of educational, cultural, and diplomatic bridges, with specific emphasis on the following: the Mission Statement emphasizes the university’s commitment to building diplomatic, cultural, and educational bridges between the Georgian and Abkhazian communities. It promotes peaceful coexistence, addressing a unique socio-political issue in Georgia. This focus aligns with the national priority of fostering reconciliation and peace-building, using education as a critical tool; the university’s efforts contribute to the EHEA’s broader goals of promoting cultural understanding, conflict resolution, and social cohesion across borders. The university’s Mission Statement underscores its dedication to the advancement and dissemination of knowledge through education based on the latest scientific ideas. The commitment to training specialists with relevant, modern-world skills aligns with the Georgian higher education goal of producing globally competent graduates.

The university’s dedication to providing open and inclusive education for all, regardless of ethnicity, social background, political or religious beliefs, is an integral part of its Mission Statement. This commitment aligns with both Georgia’s and Europe’s goals of ensuring that higher education is accessible to a diverse population and that education promotes civic responsibility. The university aims to educate individuals for the labor market while fostering their moral and civic values, preparing students for integration into the global community and fostering global citizenship through education. The Mission Statement emphasizes the development of interdisciplinary studies, particularly in fields such as conflict resolution, peace studies, and regional politics. This interdisciplinary approach positions the university as a center of academic inquiry and societal change, contributing to both local and international dialogues on peace and reconciliation.

The Mission also highlights the university’s readiness to support special education students, reflecting its commitment to inclusivity and the broader goals of the Georgian and European education systems to ensure equal opportunities for all students.

The Mission also positions SSU as a key player in Georgia’s higher education landscape, with a special mission to foster peace and reconciliation between the Georgian and Abkhazian communities. The expert panel found that this role is crucial in promoting the national goals of peace-building, social stability, and the reintegration of historically divided communities.

Moreover, the university’s focus on inclusive education for students from socially deprived backgrounds, and its practical commitments in this regard (such as providing financial assistance and specialized courses), further strengthen its role as a driver of social mobility and inclusion. This local impact is essential for fulfilling the national objective of creating an equitable and accessible higher education system.

At the international level, the Mission Statement highlights the university’s alignment with the goals of the EHEA, particularly its focus on interdisciplinary research and its aim to become a regional hub for conflict studies. The establishment of the Center for Peace Education, which focuses on areas such as Abkhazia studies, university diplomacy, and conflict resolution reinforces the university’s international profile as an institution dedicated to research and education for peace.

This international role is further supported by the university’s efforts to train specialists who are prepared for integration into the global community, thus contributing to both national development and international cooperation in higher education.

Through the evaluation of the university’s educational provision, the panel found that SSU’s Mission Statement is reflected in its day-to-day activities and long-term strategies. The university’s commitment to its Mission is evident across the lives of staff and students. Concerning interdisciplinary education, the expert panel noted that the university has taken significant steps to promote interdisciplinary studies, particularly in conflict resolution and regional politics. This focus directly supports its mission to contribute to reconciliation and peace-building internationally.

Inclusive policies and support for Special Needs Students have encouraged the university to implement various measures to support students with special educational needs, ensuring that its resources are used effectively to provide an inclusive learning environment. This practical commitment aligns with the Mission Statement’s emphasis on education for all and supports both national and European goals of inclusivity.

<p>Concerning stakeholder engagement, during the panel's meetings with staff and students, it was clear to the expert panel that the university's Mission is widely embraced by the community. Stakeholders confirmed that they were consulted during the development of the Mission Statement and that its values are reflected in their daily work. This widespread engagement further demonstrates the alignment between the university's ethos and its practical commitments.</p> <p>The expert panel concludes that SSU's Mission Statement is comprehensive and forward-looking, aligning closely with the goals of higher education in Georgia and the European Higher Education Area. The Mission Statement is very well-integrated into the university's educational provision, research focus, and community engagement, positioning the institution as a leader in interdisciplinary studies and conflict resolution. Its emphasis on inclusive education and civic responsibility ensures that the university contributes meaningfully to the development of both Georgia's higher education system and the broader European academic community.</p> <p>The university's Mission Statement also reflects its aspirations to serve as a bridge between divided communities, to provide high-quality education, and to contribute to global knowledge and peace efforts.</p> <p>The panel recommends that the Mission continues to guide the university's future development, ensuring that it remains aligned with both national and European higher education priorities. The Mission has become a pervasive message amongst interested audiences in Georgia.</p>
Evidences/indicators
Recommendations: Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standard component
Suggestions: Non-binding suggestions for further development
Best Practices (if applicable): Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions
Evaluation Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements
1.2 Strategic Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ HEI has a strategic development (7-year) and an action plans (3-year) in place. ○ HEI contributes to the development of the society, shares with the society the knowledge gathered in the institution, and facilitates lifelong learning ○ HEI evaluates implementation of strategic and action plans, and duly acts on evaluation results.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements The expert panel reviewed SSU's Strategic Development Plan (2018–2025), the associated three-year Action Plan (2018–2020), Action Plan (2021–2023), project of the Strategic Development Plan (2025–2031) and Action Plan (2025–2027), to assess their alignment with the institution's mission and the Authorization Standards. The focus was on whether the Strategic Plan corresponds to the

university's mission, the means for achieving its goals, and how the institution contributes to societal development. The expert panel also evaluated the processes for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of these plans and the university's engagement with society through various social, cultural, economic, and environmental initiatives.

SSU has a well-structured Strategic Development Plan, with six key strands (2018-2025) and seven strands (2025-2031) that directly reflect the university's Mission. The six key strands are: improvement of study quality and international standards; scientific and Research Activity; internationalization and expansion of relations; student services; further improvement of management; and financial and material security.

These strands align with the university's commitment to promoting academic excellence, supporting research, expanding international relations, and contributing to societal development. The Strategic Plan also emphasizes the importance of inclusivity, fostering peaceful coexistence between communities, and advancing interdisciplinary research, which are core elements of the university's mission.

The panel confirmed that the Strategic Plan was developed through institution-wide consultations, including input from the university's Representative Council, Academic Council, and Faculties. The university utilized a SWOT analysis, critically to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses; the plan reflects a candid assessment of the challenges the university faces. This demonstrates that the Strategic Plan is not only aspirational but also grounded in a realistic understanding of the university's current position in higher education.

The expert panel acknowledged that the university had strengthened its action plans by introducing concrete performance indicators (PIs). These indicators provide measurable targets, ensuring that progress towards each objective is monitored and evaluated effectively. This allows the university's Representative and Academic Councils to track the success of the plans more rigorously and adjust strategies as needed.

The university's contribution to societal development is evident through its involvement in various social, cultural, economic, and environmental initiatives. The expert panel found that the university actively participates in discussions on significant societal topics with academic and scientific staff engaging in research and projects that address important issues for the community and beyond. These initiatives are in line with the university's mission to contribute to the public good and foster lifelong learning.

The university's efforts to share knowledge with society and facilitate lifelong learning are commendable, and the expert panel encourages continued engagement in such activities. The university's strategic focus on community involvement is a positive step toward fulfilling its mission of social responsibility.

The expert panel concluded that the SSU Strategic Development Plan and Action Plans are aligned with the university's mission and correspond to the goals of higher education in Georgia. The Strategic Plan outlines a clear path for achieving the university's objectives. The institution's commitment to societal development is evident through its various curricular and research initiatives.

The University has developed mechanisms for assessing the implementation of the strategic and action plan and a monitoring system that involves quarterly regular meetings, where people who are responsible for strategic and action plans gather and consider the issues of accomplishing the tasks that are defined in this plan. Monitoring carried out regularly and helped the process of implementation of the strategic and action plan.

Evidences/indicators

Recommendations:

Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standard component

Suggestions:

Non-binding suggestions for further development

Best Practices (if applicable):

Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

- ☒ 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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

SSU has submitted the Charter of the University, along with the Statutes of its structural units. The Charter of the University also includes the management principles of the university.

The Charter defines the management bodies of the university as follows: Academic Council, Representative Council; Rector; Head of Administration; QA Service. Regarding the Faculty, the management bodies are: Faculty Council; Dean and QA Service of the Faculty. The management bodies of the independent scientific-research units are Scientific Council and Director of the Scientific-Research Unit. The Charter sets out the detailed description of the functions of each management body, the principles of its formation, key duties and responsibilities of the chairs and members, rules and terms of their selection, appointment and termination.

The Academic Council is the highest representative body of the university, chaired by the Rector. The members of the Academic Council are selected through free and equal elections from all members of the academic staff of the faculties, all members of the scientific staff of independent research units, and the representatives of student self-government in the faculty councils. The Academic Council is responsible for the development and approval of the strategic plan of the university's educational and scientific-research programs and the strategic development plan of the faculty (upon the proposal of the faculty).

The Academic Council: promotes the integration into the European Higher Education Area by fostering mobility, cooperation and joint research-scientific programs; elects the Rector as a Chair of the Council; submits the candidate selected through the open competition for the position of the Head of Administration to the Representative Council, and is enabled to submit the motivated proposal to the Representative Council for the early termination of that post.

The Academic Council participates with the Representative Council in discussing the university Charter, the regulations of the structural units, budget and the annual reports of the Head of the Administration. The Academic Council adopts the regulation of the auxiliary educational units and auxiliary scientific units for submission to the Representative Council. The full description of the functions and responsibilities of the Academic Council and its members are defined in the Charter (Articles 7, 8 and 9).

The Representative Council incorporates students, academics and scientific representatives and the Director of the Library. A representative from the scientific unit is responsible for developing the Charter in collaboration with the Academic Council, and submits it to the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia. The Representative Council develops and approves the internal regulations, code of ethics and disciplinary responsibility norms, and approves the procedure for budget drafting and the statutes of the structural units. Based on Faculty proposals, the Representative Council approves the statute of the faculty, based on the proposal of the Academic Council.

The Representative Council approves the regulations of the auxiliary educational units, auxiliary scientific units and independent research units. Other functions, and the division of the responsibilities between the Academic Council and the Representative Council, are presented in Articles 10, 11 and 12 of the Charter.

The Charter also includes the detailed description of the role, function and responsibilities of other management bodies – Rector, Head of Administration and the QA Service. In the statutes of the university structural units, the functions and responsibilities of each of them are clearly defined and divided.

The procedures for election/appointment of the management bodies of the university are well-defined, are transparent, and in line with the internal regulations and Georgian legislation. There are pre-defined procedural requirements for the election/appointment of the management bodies of the university.

As stated in the Charter:

The Academic Council is elected for a 4-year period, incorporating 2 representatives from each faculty and 1 representative from an independent scientific-research institute. The members of the Academic Council shall be elected by all members of academic staff and representatives of student self-governments. A person can be elected as a member of the Academic Council for no more than two consecutive terms. A member of the Academic Council can be a professor or associate-professor. The grounds for the early termination of the Academic Council member are also defined in the Charter (Article 7).

The Representative Council is elected for a 4-year period, from the university faculties, based on representatives of students and academic staff separately, in proportion to the number of faculties at the time of election. It includes one scientific member from each independent scientific-research structural unit, and the Director of the Library. The member students must be 1/3 of the total number

of the members. The details of the appointment and status termination are defined in the Charter (Article 10).

The Rector is elected for a 4-year period by the Academic Council. All the procedural issues and the qualification requirements are defined in the Charter (Article 14). Before the election, the Academic Council evaluates the action plan submitted by each candidate.

The Head of Administration is elected for a 4-year period by the Representative Council. The same candidate could be elected twice. All the related procedures are outlined in the Charter (Article 15).

The Head of QA Service is elected by the Representative Council upon the nomination by the Academic Council. The Head of QA Service is appointed for a 4-year period, and the requirement for this position is determined by the Academic Council.

The procedures for selection/appointment and the related requirements for the management bodies of the faculties are also determined.

All the procedures discussed above are transparent, equitable, and compliant with the Georgian legislation and the internal regulations of the university. The management bodies of the university cover all academic, scientific and administrative issues at university and faculty levels, and decisions of the management body related to academic, scientific and administrative issues, are made in timely and effective manner.

SSU maintains a registry of educational institutions, as described in current legislation, has an effective plan, which ensures continuity of all major business processes taking place at the institution and takes into account all possible risks, mechanisms for their prevention and risk mitigation. The electronic platform StudLab is purposed to undertake the electronic management of resources and An interface has been created to work with the database, allowing users to enter information easily into the database and equally easy to receive information. The Information Technology Department provides information technology infrastructure administration and availability. (See also Standard 7.3)

The university's 'General Principles of Personnel Management Policy' document aims at implementing the activities defined by the educational process and strategic plan. This policy which directly engages the structural units and staff schedule, as approved by the Representative Council, ensures the effective management of the university. This policy brings the university together in professional practice: Justice and honesty; Teamwork; Publicity and Equality (Appendix # 4.1), 1. To give one example of effectiveness, the particular thoroughness in SSU's risk management strategy: 'the avoidance of delays and protection of property; procedures to be implemented during risk realization; and planned response to incidents' (Business Continuity Plan, 4) reveals a keen, proactive mindset towards achieving efficient and effective management.

The structural units speak to each other and work together as one body, towards the university's developmental future and continued achievements.

SSU strongly supports internationalization and has elaborated its Internationalization Policy to strengthen institutional cooperation. This policy has been approved by the Academic Council, and the university has been following it since 2018. The policy defines the mechanisms of internationalization that cover all crucial aspects supporting the internationalization process (Annex 2.6. – Internationalization Policy). A representative list of the international mechanisms are illustrated, below, which inter alia are:

creation of the conditions for socio-cultural adaptation for foreign students; involvement of foreign professors in the academic and scientific processes; organization of internationally-wide student events; development and publication of textbooks and other auxiliary literature in foreign languages; joining existing international educational and scientific networks; signing agreements with foreign educational institutions; strengthening relations with international organizations and foundations; strengthening international cooperation at the faculty level; engaging teachers, scientists and administrative staff in exchange programs; evaluation of the unified system of foreign language skills in internship students abroad; increasing the number of scholarship programs to support international academic mobility; promotion of international programs, foreign language programs and dual diploma programs; increasing the number of foreign professors; and strengthening the university's authority in increasing the number of publications of university professors in foreign publications in the field of scientific research.

Concerning the Strategic Plan of SSU (2018-2025), internationalization and expansion of its relations as major strategic directions of the university, are expressed in 4 related tasks: to increase awareness of the university in the international arena; deepen cooperation with educational and scientific-research institutions; the internationalization of educational programs and establishment of joint and dual programs; and support for students, academic and administrative staff towards integration in the European educational environment. Under these tasks, the dedicated departments are defined:

International Relations; Intercultural Relations Service; Public Relations Office; Department of Scientific Research and Development; the Legal office and the QA Service. Together with Faculties, these are considered as the key responsible bodies ensuring strategic direction.

However, the Internationalization Policy (which sets out more mechanisms of internalization) and the strategic plans (2018- 2025; 2025-2031) should speak more closely to each other. Greater clarity would be achieved if the 'General Principles of Personnel Management Policy' document was divided into university-level and faculty-level mechanisms. This will clarify the specific actions that the university and faculty management should take, and also simplify the monitoring and evaluation process of the responsibilities and obligations.

Some of the mechanisms could be formulated with stronger international focus. For example, in the internationalization context, it would be better expressed to state the organization of internationally-wide student events. Other examples include the increasing of the qualification level of staff in international project management, and the development of the university's brand to attract foreign students.

The document includes the key indicators to evaluate internationalization. To ensure the greater accuracy, it would be advisable to pinpoint these indicators in referring to each mechanism. For example:

Mechanism: Engaging teachers, scientists and administrative staff in exchange programs.

Evaluation Indicator: Number of the exchange programs in which teachers, scientists and administrative staff were involved.

Such arrangement of the text would ensure the explanation and function of all mechanisms. Moreover, indicating the specific departments or services responsible for implementing the various aspects of the internationalization policy, would make it easier to monitor and measure the outcomes.

According to standard requirements, HEIs must integrate the results of internationalization into the institution's activities. While the Internationalization Policy document outlines the evaluation indicators for the institution's internationalization, it does not explain the procedure for using this data in further development.

The Internationalization Policy is currently accessible to both staff and students. Greater competence in English language would undoubtedly be enhancing.

Nevertheless, internationalization at SUU has become its particular brand.

<p>Evidence/indicators</p>
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>Divide the 'General Principles of Personnel Management Policy' document into university-level and faculty-level mechanisms.</p> <p>Formulate the mechanisms (above) with stronger international focus.</p> <p>The Policy document includes the key indicators to evaluate internationalization. Pinpoint these indicators in referring to each mechanism. For example:</p> <p>Mechanism: Engaging teachers, scientists and administrative staff in exchange programs.</p> <p>Evaluation Indicator: Number of the exchange programs in which teachers, scientists and administrative staff were in</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>Involve students in the creation of new programs. Alumni already have such involvement.</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="radio"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements </p>
<p>2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms</p>

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

The University has submitted the QA document titled: Mechanisms for evaluation for Quality-Assurance Capacities." The QA system is grounded on the evaluation of the educational programs; evaluation of the learning process; evaluation of the scientific work ; evaluation of the staff ; and evaluation of the stakeholders' attitudes. The evaluation of each direction includes the specific criteria (Annex 2.7):

Evaluation of the educational programs involves assessing the curricula and their structural elements, such as modules or study courses. The qualitative and quantitative indicators for this evaluation are defined in the above document, and the outcomes are subsequently used for the further improvement of the programs. Relevant recommendations are developed and submitted to the Academic and Faculty Councils for further consideration.

Evaluation of the learning process includes assessing the adequacy of the study process and the academic performance of all parties involved; evaluation of the scientific work includes the evaluation of scientific competence and productivity of scientific staff; evaluation of the scientific infrastructure; evaluation of the staff includes the evaluation of teaching and scientific competence of staff; evaluation of the stakeholders' attitudes involves the evaluation of the students, academic staff, employers and alumni.

The quality-assurance policy document (Capacities above) includes crucial features of QA; however, the document itself could be better organized and should be clearly structured around the following fundamentals: an outline the areas (core directions) of quality assurance. For instance: academic, scientific or administrative; the narrowing down of direction - for example: under academic umbrella – educational programs, under scientific umbrella – scientific-research work. Then identify the specific mechanisms of QA and specify the concrete criteria of evaluation associated with this mechanism. For example: evaluation of the major courses (mechanism) and academic performance of students enrolled on the major course (criteria).

The evaluation tools can then be defined (qualitative/quantitative) under each criterion. For example: first evaluate the quantitative indicators of the academic performance of the students enrolled on the course, then use qualitative tools (interviews, focus groups) with students to clarify the reasons behind poor academic performance.

It then should be decided how these data are used; what concrete actions are taken based on this evaluation. The document must also identify which services, in addition to the QA Service, are involved in the QA process. Additionally, there should be a timeline for conducting evaluations in the various areas of QA; this means the frequencies of evidence-gathering surveys and reporting. In this format, the information will be well-structured, eliminating the need for additional search.

As it currently stands, The Quality Assurance Service operates the "Plan - implement- check - Develop" cycle and does take into account all recommendations, documents, developed by European and International Agencies of Quality Assurance and local and international organizations and experts. Internally, the service activities systematically provide guidance across the university and produce documents that are recommended to all academic structures of the University, enabling each to carry out goals and tasks of the university.

The results of systematic assessments carried out by the service are made available across the university and are also publicly available to any interested persons and parties

Two quality representatives in each faculty co-ordinate a range of faculty evaluations. They act as a faculty bridge between their Faculty Deans and the University Quality-Assurance Service. The reps analyse the results of questionnaires and face-to-face information from students. Teaching staff are invited to make their own responses on the quality-assurance of programs, teaching and learning. These are analyzed, processed and handed to the Head of QA who feeds back to senior staff and each faculty in preparing an overall annual report for Faculty Deans specifically. According to the Statute of the Quality Assurance Service, faculties are obliged to prepare periodic records and

submit them to the University Quality Assurance Service. During the interview process, the Head of QA explained how the full program structures are evaluated: Bachelor programs every 5 years; Master programs every 3 years and Doctoral programs every 4 years. The overall operational quality mechanisms were described as being premised on a healthy interchange between students and teaching staff.

According to the above statute, in promoting the quality of teaching and research in the University, the leadership of the institution makes decisions based on the results of quality assurance. Evaluation results are used for further university and faculty developments.

In the above ways, the "Plan - implement- check - Develop" cycle of co-ordinated quality-assurance mechanisms ensures the continuous assessment of the university's activities and its resources and enables regular and determined liaison between the faculty and university quality-assurance systems.

In the Self-Evaluation Report (2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms), it is mentioned that the university has recently updated its approach by introducing modern online technologies for evaluation and a more comprehensive data analysis. Supportive documents have also been developed to ensure effective involvement of all structural units in QA. However, the policy document (Capacities above) presented to the panel is dated 2018 and does not clearly indicate any additional changes.

The university also has a document for planning student body titled "Mechanisms, Methodology and Target Benchmarks for Student Body Planning". However, apart from the internal QA mechanisms, the university should identify the 'external' mechanisms. Internal and external mechanisms should always development-oriented.

Students reported that quality loops are usually closed as answers to their recommendations on programs and teaching and learning are always given. Employers all responded affirmatively to their involvement in QA. Evaluatively, they had been involved in requests for the highest levels of digital education and training and in their calls for more practical experience to supplement students' academic emphasis. One stakeholder-employer considered it a quality matter to call for greater levels of student interest in specific history books, acknowledging that the University had created such books for good political reasons. He believed that as the Abkhazs and the Georgians share the same history, such culture should be impartially reflected in books that will contribute to the political settlement of this conflict. Alumni also reported positively on quality matters, stating they are contacted for involvement in developing new programs.

During interviews with the Head of the QA Service and other quality personnel, the frequency of surveys was not stated, nor was the appraisal of admin and support staff, even though the Capacities document recommends the assessment of such staff. The "Capacities" document above does outline the methods available for the appraisal of teaching staff, which take the following forms: self-assessment; assessment by colleagues; assessment by students; outcomes of students' academic achievement; checking of Syllabi; and attendance to learning. Concerning, the appraisal of admin and support staff, the expert team recommends that the university adopts the currently developing one-to-one peer review method in operation with some academic personnel.

The internal quality-assurance document, "The mechanisms for Evaluation for Quality-Assurance Capacities" includes crucial features of QA; however, the document should be organized as stated above.

The university has a further document titled: 'The Mechanism of Planning of Student Contingent, Methodology and Target Marks'. This document should, where appropriate, correlate with the 'Capacities' document above. Apart from the 'internal' quality assurance mechanisms, which have been very well described in 'Capacities', the Head of the Quality-Assurance Service should develop and profile the existing 'external' QA mechanisms and also ensure that internal and external mechanisms are always development-oriented.

Regarding quality loop closure, some examples of these should be given, together with examples of loops, which for good quality reasons, tend not to close, as discussed during interview with the Head of QA.

Even without the above recommendations, the document: "The mechanisms for Evaluation for Quality-Assurance Capacities" expresses many excellent QA concepts, practices, confident direction and steering.

Quality-assurance is taken seriously at SSU by both staff and students. Because there is so much care and collective responsibility for students and their development, this is the principal reason why the University asserts that each individual student has the opportunity to receive a high-quality education.

Other than this broad and laudable quality service (stated in preceding paragraph), SSU does not outline a 'specific mechanism' for the student body towards providing an opportunity for each one to receive a high-quality education

Evidences/ indicators

Recommendations:

The internal quality-assurance document, "The mechanisms for Evaluation for Quality-Assurance Capacities" dated 2018, includes crucial features of QA. Organise and structure the document as outlined in the above narrative.

Correlate the 'Capacities' document above with the document 'The Mechanism of Planning Student Contingent Methodology and Target Marks'.

Develop and profile the existing 'external' QA mechanisms and also ensure that internal and external mechanisms are always development-oriented.

Provide some examples of loop closure and some examples of loops, which for good quality reasons, tend not to close, as discussed during interview with the Head of QA.

SSU should consider continuing and developing the one-to-one academic practice of peer-review and extend and develop it for administrative staff.

Suggestions:

Non-binding suggestions for further development

Best Practices (if applicable):

A healthy, confident institutional interchange in quality assurance.

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

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

2.3. Observing Principles of Ethics and Integrity

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The university has a Code of Ethics, intended for the academic, administrative, and support staff, as well as invited lecturers and students. In accordance with university values, legislation, and other normative acts, it establishes the behavioral norms for academic, administrative, and support staff, invited lecturers, and the student body, including possible ways to address arising ethical issues. As indicated in the Code, the structure has been elaborated through the consultations and exchange of ideas with all interested parties. The Code was approved by decision N4/2 of the 4th session of the SSU Representative Council on March 7, 2014. The Code states that 'The University, through the Ethics Commission - a special group of members nominated by the Academic Council and approved by the Representative Council - will regularly monitor the implementation of the norms established by the Code and will take adequate measures in case of any unethical actions'. (1e)

As stated in the Code, any violations of ethical norms by academic staff and invited lecturers are subject to measures established by the SSU's statute, internal regulations, and disciplinary responsibility norms. In the part of the Code stated under (3.5.1), it is indicated that an 'individual's responsibility increases proportionally with repeated violations of the norms established by the Code of Ethics, or the severity of disciplinary infractions'. (This statement lacks clarity on how the level of misconduct will be measured to determine proportional responsibility, as well as which types of disciplinary infractions are defined and under what circumstances). However, as stated in the narrative part of the self-evaluation report (SER), this Code is enforced in conjunction with other documents that deal with internal regulation, where disciplinary infractions are defined (Article 35, internal regulation).

The university has a mechanism for academic ethics and academic discipline. Plagiarism and falsification are considered forms of academic ethics infringement. To avoid such actions, the university maintains respective procedures and mechanisms contained in the Code, including an antiplagiarism program (Annex 2.12). QA personnel oversee the scrutiny of students' work with respect to plagiarism detection.

SSU has declared in its relevant documents (mission and statutes) the principles of protecting academic freedoms and ensuring education as a fundamental value of humanity.

The issue of academic freedom was, by the Panel, put before all interviewees, including students, who concurred with the principle in declaring their absolute academic freedoms. The Ethics Commission has never heard a case relating to academic freedom.

The Ethics Commission meets only when there are cases to be heard. The Code of Ethics is published on the university's Website.

Evidence/indicators

Recommendations:

<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>Even though the Ethics Commission meets rarely, it should consider producing an annual report on 'General Trends in Ethics in European Higher Education', or similar topic, to keep the Commission alive and proactive in the eyes of university personnel.</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>SSU rigorously and universally upholds the principle of academic freedom</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard</p> <p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements </p>

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

<p>3.1 Design and Development of Educational Programmes</p>
<p>HEI has a policy for planning, designing, implementing and developing educational programmes.</p>

SSU implements educational programs at all three levels of higher education, which correspond to the university's mission, goals, and vision. Currently, the University has 56 educational programs, of which 46 - programs are accredited, including 24 bachelor's (all accredited) 20 master's (11 accredited) and 10 doctoral (all accredited) programs. SSU has 5 faculties that implement 56 educational programs at the bachelor, master, and doctoral levels, one, an educational program of teacher training (60 ECTS - accredited) and another an educational program of training in the Georgian language (60 ECTS - accredited).

The higher education institution has a "Methodology of Planning, Development, Approval, Development and Cancellation of Programs at all three levels (Bachelor/Master/PhD)". These describe the structure of the curriculum; semester plan; program; methodology for the development of the individual curriculum; and the procedure for the operation of mechanisms for the renewal of educational programs. The university has developed mechanisms to protect the legal interests of students in case of changing/cancelling the program, which gives the student the opportunity to complete the program efficiently.

The rule also includes mechanisms for the direct and indirect assessment of educational programs. The institution employs both quantitative and qualitative labor market research methodologies in the initial implementation and subsequent execution of educational programs. The programs are developed primarily on international analogs.

The university has implemented an electronic platform for managing the educational process: StudLab.sou.ge for students, and for faculty and administrative staff. The electronic platform contains databases of students and university staff, as well as information about educational programs, research components, and other educational resources. Through this platform, students have the opportunity to complete academic registration from the platform and receive various information related to the educational process. Professors and administration have the opportunity to participate in managing the learning process. Students are surveyed and analyzed using this platform.

The university implements educational programs that have won funding from the competitive innovation fund, the Shota Rustaveli National Science Fund, and other grant projects. These projects are used to develop programs, establish scientific research laboratories, rehabilitate the technical infrastructure, and more. Additionally, the university actively participates in Erasmus+ grant projects, which help introduce new courses into the curriculum and develop various skills for both professors and students.

In accordance with current legislation, the university has developed regulations and procedures for making changes to or cancelling educational programs. To enhance the development of educational programs, the university has implemented a mechanism to ensure the integration of practical components, utilizing opportunities from both international projects and local businesses (including the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Supreme Council of the Republic of Abkhazia, Rustavi Court, Ilia Vekua Institute of Physics and Technology of Sukhumi, Pharmadepo). The university has mechanisms for program development taking into account cluster approaches – specifically 1 CLUSTER – Georgian Philology. Abkhazian Philology; II CLUSTER – English philology, German philology, Russian philology; III CLUSTER – History, Archeology. Students and stakeholders are involved in these processes.

Evidences/Indicators

Recommendations:

Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standard component

<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>Non-binding suggestions for further development</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>The enhancing mechanism for the development of educational programs as indicated in this standard above.</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard</p> <p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="radio"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements </p>
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standard component</p>
<p>3.2 Structure and Content of Educational Programmes</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Programme learning outcomes are clearly stated and are in line with higher education level and qualification to be granted ○ With the help of individualized education programmes, HEI takes into consideration various requirements, needs and academic readiness of students, and ensures their unhindered involvement into the educational process.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

When developing the program, the university considers the basic principles of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), as well as the legislation of Georgia and the university's regulations. The learning outcomes of the programs are formulated to correspond with the qualifications awarded at higher education level. The learning outcomes of a specific field are based on the descriptions of the detailed field and are developed in accordance with the qualifications' framework.

The structure and content of the program ensure the logical connection of its components and take into account the features and requirements of each component. Planned learning outcomes and student workload are based on the principle that a student with average academic achievements should achieve the results determined by the program within a reasonable timeframe, which is verified by analyzing the student's academic performance. The volume of components in the programs is determined with regard to their content, learning outcomes, and field specificity.

Teaching and learning methods consider the specific characteristics of the field to ensure the achievement of the program's learning outcomes within a specified time frame. Educational programs in the field of law and educational programs in the field of business administration are built according to the relevant field characteristics. In 2023, academic programs in the humanitarian field were accredited in a cluster, based on the relevant sectoral characteristics.

SSU implements 56 higher education programs, of which 45 are accredited. Accreditation of programs is planned taking into account the deadlines of the cluster. In its programs, besides major programs and minor programs, SSU offers students elective courses, compulsory elective courses, elective courses from the major field, and free components. Bachelor's programs, except for law and pharmacy, are built by a combination of major and minor programs and free components, which in turn include mandatory specialty, specialty optional, and free study courses. Regarding their chosen courses, students benefit from consultation at the faculty's dean's offices and academic departments.

The teaching-learning methods described in various programs consider the field characteristics and ensure the achievement of the program's learning outcomes. Depending on the educational system, each student has an individual study plan. SSU provides access to information about programs. The catalog of educational programs serves the purpose of informing interested persons about the educational activities of the institution. The catalog is updated, in accordance with changes in the program. It is available to all interested parties and is published on the institution's web page. As can be seen from the conducted interviews and the presented materials, personalized education programs offer appropriate formats and conditions of teaching-learning and assessment to students with different requirements. These include: special educational needs; different academic readiness as well as opportunities for an adapted environment and appropriate human resources, where required.

The university recognizes student diversity and is committed to providing a flexible and adaptive educational environment. Information about the university's educational programs is public and available to interested individuals. The catalog of educational programs is updated to reflect any changes and is posted on the website www.sou.edu.ge in both Georgian and English.

Evidences/indicators**Evidences/Indicators****Recommendations:**

Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standard component

<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>Non-binding suggestions for further development</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard</p> <p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="radio"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements </p>
<p>3.3 Assessment of Learning Outcomes</p>
<p>HEI has a law-compliant, transparent and fair system of learning outcomes assessment, which proves the improvement of students' academic performance.</p>

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the component requirements standard

The university has a system of evaluation of learning outcomes, and the document on the rules of regulation of the educational process describes assessment methodologies. The evaluation system described in the syllabi of the study components is in line with the university's general rules. A student can earn a maximum of 100 points in the study component. According to the university rule, the upper limit of the midterm assessment is 60 points, and the minimum competence limit is -11 points. In the case of the final examination, the maximum score is 40, and the minimum competence limit may vary from 18 to 24 points. Considering the goals of educational programs, learning outcomes' specificity, and minimum competence limits, SSU is authorized to determine a different minimum positive grade, which should not be less than 51 points and not more than 60 points. The regulatory rule also describes the limits for conducting combined exams (oral and written); in particular, in the case of a combined examination, the evaluation of the oral part of the exam should not exceed 50% of the overall examination evaluation.

The regulation document of the educational process describes an evaluation of the student in the scientific research component. According to this source, "the master's thesis and dissertation submitted for the awarding of an academic degree are evaluated as a whole, with the final evaluation, which includes the evaluations of the persons determined by the higher educational institution and the evaluation received at the defense." The rules for evaluating the master's thesis and doctoral dissertation are clearly described in the regulation document of the educational process, teaching programs, and syllabi.

The learning outcomes of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral educational programs are assessed following Georgia's legislative regulation.

Teaching procedures and at the doctoral level are outlined in the Doctoral Minimum Standard. The maximum educational component in the doctoral program is 60 credits, and the rest are devoted to the doctoral thesis.

The norms of the structure of doctoral programs are described in the regulatory document of Sukhumi State University - "Minimum standard of doctoral studies". According to the mentioned document, the teaching and research components of doctoral studies are aimed at sectoral and methodological skills of the doctoral student; the doctoral candidate is assisted in the completion of the Ph.D. thesis: and prepare her/ him for future pedagogical and scientific activities. The educational component of the doctoral program situates the following recommended activities: modern teaching methods;

- Academic Writing with Research Methods Components/Dissertation Writing;
- Seminar;
- Assisting Professor;
- Sectoral mandatory and optional training courses;
- practice ;
- The mandatory research component of the doctoral program involves working on a thesis, its design, and public defense.

Dissertation councils are authorized to determine teaching and research components, the ratio of constituent elements, and their status for this or that training course.

In the syllabi of the educational components of doctoral programs, the learning outcomes are clearly described, and the evaluation criteria are clearly and transparently described, which ensures a transparent and objective evaluation of the learning content within the framework of a specific course.

The procedure for evaluating the doctoral thesis is unified and described in the SSU Doctoral Minimum Standard document, namely in Articles 9,10 and 11. According to the regulation, the formative evaluation of the doctoral thesis is completed periodically. After the thesis is fully completed, two experts evaluate the thesis - one external expert and one member of the dissertation council. If both experts positively assess the thesis, the Dissertation Board will appoint at least two reviewers. One reviewer must be an external expert. Reviewers have to assess the thesis within a month. In case of a positive expert assessment, the Dissertation Council designates the date of defense of the doctoral topic. According to pre-written criteria, each member of the dissertation council writes a final evaluation of the dissertation individually, with a 100-point system. For the dissertation assessment, the vote counting commission selected by the Dissertation Council allocates the arithmetic average of the points.

After becoming acquainted with the syllabi of the educational programs, it became clear to the expert panel that the authors of the study courses enjoy complete academic freedom and use various teaching method seminar surveys, homework, presentations, abstracts, and group

projects. Assessment methods and ways of achieving learning outcomes are derived from the specifics of each educational course (specifically) and contribute to the achievement of learning outcomes of the academic program (more broadly). The scoring system for the assessment components in the syllabi is transparent, and the scoring ranking is adequately explained. Thus, the assessment system ensures equal and fair approaches.

The expert panel noted that all three documents of the university's bachelor's, master's, and doctoral educational programs planning and development methodology, indicate that the academic program must consist of not only Appendix 1 (program structure) but also Appendix 2 (map of educational program goals and learning outcomes) and Appendix 3 (study course learning Mapping Outcomes and Program Learning Outcomes - Acquaintance-1, deepening-2, strengthening-3). Regardless of the methodology, most educational programs do not have Annex 2; and all educational programs do not have Annex 3. The expert panel requests that the academic programs should align with the university methodology for planning and developing educational programs, and should include Annex 2 and Annex 3 together with Annex 1.

Panel experts reviewed the university's evidences related to Standard 3.3. In the case of several programs, the evaluation of the program's learning outcomes is considered only through a student survey. For example, a survey of students is presented to evaluate the learning outcomes of the Humanities Faculty educational programs. This cannot be regarded as a full-fledged evaluation of the learning outcomes of academic programs. The same applies to some undergraduate programs of the exact and Natural Sciences faculty (informatics, ecology, geography, chemistry). In particular, student surveys are presented in these programs as evidence of evaluating academic programs' learning outcomes. At the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences, student surveys are presented to assess the learning outcomes of all educational programs. Only a few educational programs submitted for authorization have a learning outcomes' assessment document.

In particular, there is a learning outcome assessment document for the exact and Natural Science Faculty - biology, mathematics, and physics undergraduate programs and the Law Faculty - law master's program. However, even in these learning outcome assessment documents, learning outcomes are evaluated using a unified approach, namely using four indicators. These indicators are: quantitative rate of graduates of the program; qualitative indicator of program graduates; the rate of scientific employment of program graduates (continuation of studies in a similar specialty at the succeeding levels of education in the same or another higher educational institution). In the case of a bachelor's program, this is: - the rate of inclusion of graduates from the bachelor's program into the master's program; and the rate of employment of program graduates by the assigned qualification.

From the point of view of the expert panel, more than these four unified indicators are needed to evaluate the achievement of learning outcomes of educational programs. By the standards of higher education, the specifics and features of the field should be taken into account when achieving learning outcomes. In order to achieve this goal, it is crucial to observe the learning outcomes of those compulsory subjects in each educational program, which ensure the achievement of the program's learning outcomes. According to the regulation of SSU, the list of such subjects should be given in the 3rd appendix of the educational programs, which, as we mentioned above, needs to be presented in the academic programs.

The expert panel, while requesting additional documents, asked for a mechanism for evaluating the learning outcomes of educational programs. The HEI administration provided the expert panel with the requested document, which describes the scheme for monitoring and assessing the learning outcomes of educational programs. The document states that "learning outcomes of the program are assessed using both direct and indirect methods." Direct assessment methods are tasks of various types and content, papers, and writings performed by students - through which it is checked whether the student has achieved the learning outcome of the program (test, presentation, essay, qualifying paper, essay, exam, practice report, and open/closed reading, etc.).

Indirect methods include self-assessment/survey of students through particular questionnaires and surveys of graduates and employers. Students will receive feedback on how far they have achieved the program's learning outcomes, which also means that the program objectives have also been achieved, as each program objective is linked to the program's learning outcome(s).

The evaluation mechanism of academic programs' learning outcomes also consists of the table of the observation plan for mandatory subjects, which ensures the achievement of the program's learning outcomes. Therefore, the university has a mechanism for evaluating educational programs that align with higher education standards. However, faculties do not effectively use this mechanism to assess the learning outcomes of educational programs because, as has been mentioned above, in some cases only student surveys are presented as evidence for evaluating the learning outcomes of several educational programs.

The expert panel recommends more effective use of the learning outcomes evaluation mechanism developed by the university to evaluate the learning outcomes of educational programs.

For some educational programs with a learning outcomes assessment document, indirect methods of learning outcomes assessment are used as well (by surveying students, graduates, and employers).

Students of SSU are informed that they can appeal the received grade. Several students indicated they had appealed the midterm or final exam during the interviews. Although there are methods for appeal, the regulation of the HEI educational process (No. 05/01-172, 5.08.2014 - the last amendment on 31 January 2022) - does not describe appeals procedures. The expert panel recommends that the university administration describes the student's assessment appeal procedures and add the description to the document for Regulation of the educational process.

The 2018 expert panel issued a recommendation regarding the 3rd standard, according to which, "The university should extract from its three methodology documents for planning designing and developing programs the general principles that underlie them, to produce a policy statement that sets out its approach to designing and developing educational programs for presentation to the Academic Council and the Representative Council."

In the 2024 authorization package, SSU has again presented three documents on the methodology of planning and developing educational programs for all levels of higher education (bachelor's, master's, doctoral).

During the visit, the expert panel requested a unified policy document from the HEI for establishing and developing educational programs; however, the institution still needs to submit the document. The expert panel recommends that the administration of SSU comply with the instructions issued during the 2018 authorization and develop a unified document for establishing and developing educational programs.

The university has a procedure for the review and appeal of examination papers. Specifically, students have the right to apply to the examination center within two working days of the publication of their results to request a review of their paper and a revision of the results. The examination center will provide the student with their thesis and forward it to the authorized representative of the relevant faculty within two working days. The authorized faculty employee must submit the paper to the specially established appeal commission within one day. The commission is then required to prepare the appeal report within two days. The paper and appeal report are sent back to the examination center, which will inform the student of the final results.

Evidences/indicators

<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>Concerning the curriculum, it is recommended that the academic programs align with the university's methodology for planning and developing educational programs and include Annex 2 and Annex 3 together with Annex 1. The evaluation of learning outcomes developed by the university should be used more effectively to evaluate the particular learning outcomes of educational programs.</p> <p>It is recommended that the administration of SSU comply with the instructions issued during the 2018 authorization and develop a unified policy document for establishing and developing educational programs.</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="radio"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements </p>

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.

<p>4.1. Staff Management</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ HEI has staff management policy and procedures that ensure the implementation of educational process and other activities defined in its strategic plan. ○ HEI ensures the employment of qualified academic/scientific/invited/administrative/ support staff.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The management policy of SSU is presented in the document "General Principles of Personnel Management Policy" approved by the Academic Council. The document is an important tool for attracting, selecting, recruiting and maintaining personnel in the university, the purpose of which is to manage effectively and develop personnel. The document describes: objectives of personnel management policy; determining the need for personnel and forms of recruitment; personnel selection, tenure and labor relations; termination of employment contract; adaptation of a new employee; staff evaluation and satisfaction monitoring; staff retention and motivation; and staff development.

Personnel management is regulated by the following documents: "Procedure of holding a competition for an academic position at the Sukhumi State University and the list of documents" and "Rule of Recruitment of Auxiliary Personnel of Sukhumi State University".

The above-mentioned documentation is posted on the university's website, and detailed information about the vacancy, the university's statutes, and application forms are available to the applicant. The university attracts and employs qualified employees by posting vacancies both on jobs.ge and on the university's website. Hiring procedures for academic, scientific, invited, administrative and support staff are transparent and ensure the attraction of qualified employees. The institution's administrative unit maintains staff employment information and ensures a balanced ratio between academic and administrative/support staff, which is critical to the efficient functioning of the institution. The institution spares no effort in smoothly integrating new employees into the work environment and effectively involve them in institutional processes.

Academic and scientific personnel of the university are involved in educational, research, creative processes. The majority of conferences, workshops and other events are initiated, financed and organized by external actors (Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia, Erasmus+, Rustaveli Foundation, etc.). However, interviews with academic and invited staff revealed that the institution has the financial resources to plan and implement staff and student-oriented and development-oriented activities, as evidenced by relevant documentation. For example, in the regulations of the Faculty of Humanities, we read: the budget of the Faculty is a constituent part of the budget of SOU. According to the rules established by the statute of SOU, the faculty participates in the process of developing the university's budget." This document is created for all faculties.

Regarding the involvement of students in projects and other educational or research activities, we rely on an interview process and a self-assessment document. Students have the opportunity, depending on their specialization, to conduct research and practical work in a variety of laboratories located in the second building of the university, with its new, necessary equipment. While looking at the infrastructure, the expert team studied the mentioned laboratories, in physics, chemistry, pharmacy, biology and other directions, where students actively work and the development of their practical and research skills is facilitated.

Concerning the administrative service staff of HEI – such as the International Relations Service (IRO); Public Relations (PR); Quality Assurance (QA); Sports, Culture and Youth Service - there is no shortage of personnel in these services; and, accordingly, the support for the development of the institution is efficient.

An auxiliary scientific unit, the Center for Peace Education, operates in the HEI, where research is carried out in three directions: conflictology and regional politics; studies of Abkhazia; and directions of university diplomacy. This service has freelance employees: scientific head, assistant head, principal researchers, researchers, associate and assistant researchers. The rights and duties of each employee are spelled out in the regulations of the center. The regulation of the center is approved by the head of administration at the representative council.

The university is distinguished by exceptionally qualified and dedicated academic, invited, administrative and support staff. This team knows and shares the university's mission, and is proud of its history, traditions, and heritage. As they themselves noted: "Our concern is to produce successful graduates who will gain recognition both nationally and internationally." However, during the interview process, it was revealed that the majority of the staff does not know the English language, which is so important for establishing international connections, processing the necessary and diverse literature, etc. They noted that there is a foreign language learning center in the institution, and if a program is created that will teach and retrain the staff in the English language, they will definitely be involved in this initiative.

The guiding force of the educational process is the affiliated professorship of the university. One professor is calculated as a ratio of twelve students. On this subject of staff-student ratios, the University QA Service is currently working on a specific document both for immediate and future use. Stan (see also Standard 7.1) The invited staff is small; however, the university takes care of

their adaptation in the working environment, with constant professional support and has transparent and well-defined criteria for evaluating invited staff.

The University systematically conducts stakeholder surveys. Regular monitoring of staff activities helps to identify strengths and weaknesses, as well as identifying staff professional development needs. Monitoring results represent an important information base in the process of planning professional development activities. In the "Staff Satisfaction Survey Analysis" document, we read that the purpose of staff evaluation is to provide an objective assessment of the professional skills and competencies of the university's academic and support staff and, based on it, to determine appropriate activities to encourage and motivate staff. The personnel evaluation system involves qualitative and quantitative evaluation and includes evaluation of the quality of the work performed during the academic year. Monitoring university staff satisfaction is critical to identifying staff development needs. The satisfaction survey system contributes to the development of a quality culture in the university and creates a real opportunity to determine how the university can attract, retain and develop competent and motivated staff. It should be noted that despite the awareness, 72.8% of the interviewed personnel did not participate in various international or exchange projects, they did not benefit from business trips - 73.2%. There are negative comments regarding the remuneration, which the invited staff talked about with particular heartbreak during the interview process. However, it was confirmed that, like academic staff, visiting staff are informed and willingly involved in national and international events.

In addition to the salaries offered by the institution, among the mechanisms for motivating the staff are monetary bonuses, which are given according to various needs.

The institution has a personal data protection officer - which means that the university has a structured approach to protecting personal data.

An important service is the "Student Practice and Career Management Service", which plays a leading role in the transition of students from education to employment. This service offers students career counseling, job search services, and internship opportunities. The career development office provides support in the process of preparing a resume, writing an application, interviews, interviews, meetings, and also offers career counseling.

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Evidence of the above, described by staff and students during the interview process, reflects the university's support and commitment to development.

Educational and scientific books, prepared by the academic staff, are printed with the budget of the faculties. Lecturers are sponsored for activities/business trips abroad. If necessary, they can take a six-month vacation without stopping their salary.

On meeting the needs of students: a practical expedition of students was financed. The university has its own transport. The expedition in the highland region was financed for 12 students and three supervisors with the expenses of the road, hotel and food. A flexible fee payment mechanism (postponement, distribution of money) was implemented for students.

Sports, Culture and Youth Service takes care of diversity of sports and cultural life of students. In the nearby area, they have leased several stadiums, the university has an assembly hall. Students' victory in sports activities is encouraged in the form of certificates and cash awards. The university has a music group that participates in university events. Students of all three levels can participate in these activities.

The Psychological Center, which is an international project of the university with the help of the European Council, during 2020-24, will ensure the solution of students' cognitive issues. The center is staffed by a group of visiting psychologists.

International conferences take place according to faculties. Among them, the participants of the conference on Food Technologies were involved from 18 countries.

HEI has foreign guest lecturers and program leaders. Within the framework of the memorandums, they cooperate with leading European universities. In relation to the development of a project on Soft Skills, the experience of several foreign universities was shared and changes were reflected in the curricula.

The university has scientist-collaborators of international importance. The doctoral dissertation "Mathematical model of conflict resolution" defended in the direction of applied mathematics was highlighted, the reviewers of which were American and Portuguese experts. SSU is proud to announce that they are the absolute leaders in the field of applied mathematics in the Georgian university space.

The Head of the Biology Program noted that a bio-organic chemistry laboratory was opened at the HEI, where tools and equipment were purchased within three hundred thousand GEL. The head of the applied geography program confirmed that the teaching resources are created by him and the printing of literature is financed from the budget of the faculty. 39 study guides have been published.

In the pharmacy program, a laboratory has been created, where they prepare drugs that are on sale. They have memorandums with pharmacies and factories. (see also 7.1)

The Faculty of Education has a 300-credit bachelor's-master's program, which includes an educational program for teacher training. This program is especially important for incoming teachers. A graduate of this program does not need to confirm the competence of the subject by an examination organized by the examination center. There can be additional activities for granting the status.

The university has developed a policy to encourage its academic and research staff to actively participate in research, creative processes and creates funding opportunities for them.

The university, in relation to personnel management, has developed pre-determined principles of remuneration and incentives, as well as the results of employee performance evaluation. The university takes care and has developed a procedure to integrate new employees into the work environment and ensure their effective involvement in the work process. In the process of personnel management, the university uses the results of the evaluation and satisfaction survey of academic, visiting and administrative personnel.

The university has enhanced access to regulations related to personnel management policies, so that interested parties have information about said policies and regulations. A target benchmark has been developed regarding the age and gender distribution of academic, scientific and administrative staff.

Evidences/indicators
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standard component</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>It is desirable to develop a flexible mechanism for the promotion of invited young staff - staff not affiliated with other universities. Continue the sharing of best practices internationally and foster partnerships within a broader, sustainable strategy.</p> <p>Many of the academic and invited staff do not speak English. It is desirable to prepare and retrain them, especially since the institution has a plan to implement more international projects and programs.</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard</p> <p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements </p>
4.2. Academic/Scientific and Invited Staff Workload
<p>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</p>

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The university has different types of academic and invited staff who are recruited, keeping in mind the objectives of the university. There is a load chart for academic staff. It helps to monitor the efforts and achievements of professors in several areas, namely: teaching, practical work, research and administrative activities.

The administration of the faculties plans the number of academic, scientific and invited staff based on the requirements of the program and its content, workload and budgetary possibilities. The relevant ratios seem to adequately meet the university's requirements: - ratio of academic, scientific and invited staff and programs (5/1); - ratio of academic, scientific and invited staff and students (1/10); - the ratio of academic and scientific staff - invited staff (3/1); - the ratio of affiliated academic staff to total academic and invited staff (1/2); - ratio of affiliated academic staff and students (1/12). According to the SER, 187 out of 190 academic staff members are affiliated. (See 7.1 for SSU's latest position on ratios)

The budget of the university, the salary rate, the number of educational programs and students, the number of contact hours within the educational programs are proportional to the academic staff, which contributes to the implementation of educational programs, the timely performance of research and other functions assigned to them, and ensures the sustainability of the program.

On the evidence provided by the University and Interviews with academic, administrative staff and students Based on this, the expert group believes that currently, academic and invited the workload of the staff is adequate for the educational programs of the university to implement. During the meeting with the academic and invited staff, it was explained to the group of experts, that they are involved in planning new educational programs or in the improvement of the existing, where special attention is paid to the future student enrolment and specific needs and program specific fields.

Staff expressed full confidence in the university and links their pedagogical and scientific-research activities to this institution. During the interview process, it was noted that the staff have support to publish their articles in international journals; to take care of professional development through various activities, to print the manuals created by them; to promote research activities; and to finance expeditions and other field and laboratory experiments. The terms and conditions of affiliation are known to the staff and they fully understand the University's requirements regarding affiliation.

During interview, the academic staff explained that the affiliation obliges them to be primarily employed at the given institution (in terms of workload), and there are limits to holding an academic position at any other university. They also link their scientific or practical works to the university. In addition, affiliated professors stated that they are given priority in funding various activities such as participation in workshops, master classes, conferences and seminars.

The standards set by the university for its personnel are in line with the current operational circumstances and are clearly adequate for carrying out educational and scientific activities.

Evidences/indicators**Recommendations:**

Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standard component

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

Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions.

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

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

5. Students and Their Support Services

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

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

- 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

The assignment, suspension, and termination of student status, along with mobility, qualification awarding, issuance of educational documents, and recognition of education during the learning period, are regulated at SSU in accordance with Georgian law. By Resolution #05/01-172, dated August 5, 2014, the university approved the procedure for regulating the learning process. This procedure outlines the specific guidelines for each educational level regarding the acquisition, suspension, and termination of student status, mobility, qualification awarding, issuance of educational documents, and recognition of knowledge obtained during the learning period.

The university ensures the protection of students' rights and legitimate interests. The Statute of SSU, approved by Order No. 123/n of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia on September 3, 2013, outlines students' rights and obligations, as well as matters of disciplinary responsibility. Upon obtaining student status, a contract is established between the university and the student to protect their rights and interests. The university's legal acts are reviewed and published to safeguard these rights and interests. The Department of Sport, Culture, and Youth Affairs is responsible for protecting student rights, resolving conflicts, and addressing issues faced by students. Additionally, the Code of Ethics and regulations, approved by the Representative Council on March 7, 2014, includes provisions for protecting student's rights and legitimate interests.

The university has a Student Self-Governance body, which, in line with its responsibilities, works to strengthen the protection of student's rights and their involvement in university management. It is empowered to develop proposals for improving the faculty or university management system and enhancing the quality of education. The election of the Student Self-Governance is conducted in a democratic and transparent manner and is conducted through a secret ballot based on universal, equal, and direct elections at the university. According to its provisions, this guarantees students' participation in university management.

Interviews with students of SSU revealed that the university effectively protects their rights and ensures their voices are always heard. Students emphasized that their academic freedom is upheld, allowing them to express their preferences without fear of retribution or censorship from the university. They also highlighted the importance of the Student Self-Government body, viewing it as an essential and respected mechanism for raising concerns or addressing issues that may disrupt their learning experience at SSU. Students receive information about their rights through presentations and meetings conducted by the university. They can also access this information from the university's website, where the legal acts of SSU are publicly available.

Obtaining student status in an undergraduate educational program is based on the results of the Unified National Examinations, except in cases specified by law. The basis for obtaining student status at the master's level is the results of the Master's Degree Examination, which includes the general master's examination and the internal university admission examination. The procedure for admission to the doctoral program is determined by the minimum standards of the doctoral program at SSU. Student's English language proficiency at the university is assessed through testing at the B2 level.

Evidences/indicators

<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>As students' language competence is deemed to be low and often not at B2, which is a formal admission requirement, SSU should address this as soon as possible.</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>Non-binding suggestions for further development</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements </p>
<p>5.2 Student Support Services</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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

SSU places great emphasis on promoting a healthy and balanced student life. Over the years, the university has established important services to support students' academic and career development, while raising their awareness of university-level, local, and international initiatives and projects. These opportunities are inclusive of all students, regardless of their ethnicity and gender. SSU has established rules for individual curriculum development, which comprise a set of study courses tailored to the diverse requirements, needs, and academic preparation levels of students. The following individuals can participate in the creation of an individual curriculum: students; heads or leaders of the relevant educational program; lecturers implementing the courses; faculty members involved in the teaching process; and representatives from management and QA services.

A significant finding during interviews with university staff was that SSU has developed a service that integrates psychological support into academic life. This service, which has been implemented not only at SSU but also in other universities across Georgia, provides cognitive health support, ensuring that students have the emotional and psychological assistance they need to thrive academically and personally.

At SSU, the Student Practice and Career Management Service is responsible for assisting students in developing the necessary general skills and abilities for employment, informing them about labor market possibilities and perspectives, and helping them build relationships with employers. This includes organizing employment forums, subject-specific conferences, and providing individual and group consultations to enhance their competitiveness. Additionally, the service keeps students informed about available job vacancies. Students, stakeholders and alumni interviews revealed that the employment rate of students who graduated from SSU is high. According to the students, these services have had a significant impact on helping them find suitable internships and jobs.

However, during interviews with employer representatives, great emphasis was placed on the need for students to gain more practical experience. Students also highlighted the need for more practical studies to become more competitive in the labor market. Therefore, the expert panel recommends that the university strengthen practical studies to enhance the practical skills of students at SSU.

The university's Sport, Culture, and Youth Affairs Service is responsible for overseeing activities related to sports and culture. It collaborates with governmental, non-governmental, and student organizations to enhance student life. Key objectives and functions include promoting university sports, organizing events for students and staff, and encouraging active student participation. The service also facilitates student involvement in national sports and cultural events; identifies and supports talented students for participation in local and international competitions (providing both financial and moral support); and supports student self-governance while coordinating projects and innovative initiatives. Moreover, it enhances students' knowledge through training, seminars, and informal education, whilst protecting their rights, resolving conflicts, and addressing concerns promptly.

The university provides information about the employment rates of alumni based on their qualifications. This data, known as the Alumni Employment Indicator, provided by the university, was conducted by the Students Career Development Service and the Quality Assurance Service. It includes detailed information about alumni, their qualifications, and their employment rates following graduation from SSU. Detailed information of the data is available in Self-Evaluation Report. Additionally, information on employed students is available on the SSU website, which suggests that a substantial number of students have successfully secured employment.

The university has provided documents detailing completed and ongoing exchange programs for both academic and administrative staff. These exchange projects and programs are primarily conducted under the Erasmus+ and Erasmus Mundus frameworks. The high number of participants highlights the university's strong emphasis on international partnerships and development. Information about internship programs is available on the official website of Sokhumi State University (Sou.edu.ge). These programs include opportunities offered by the university's partners, such as Evex, National Agency of Public Registry and more. Additionally, information about international mobility and other activities related to student's academic and career development is communicated through various channels, such as information meetings, the internet, SMS, and news boards in both buildings of Sokhumi State University. The effectiveness of communication channels was outlined during a panel meeting with students.

SSU has been actively involved in a wide range of projects and programs, including scientific research activities, exchange programs with partner universities, and international collaborations. The university has established strong communication with students to inform and encourage them to

participate in local initiatives, activities, and exchange programs, both online and in person, providing all the necessary information regarding the procedures students need to follow. Data provided by the university indicates that student participation in these initiatives is substantial.

The university has established partnership with several universities in Europe and Asia. Through Erasmus+ and exchange programs, undergraduate, masters' and doctoral students have the opportunity to study at partner universities for one or two semesters. While these programs do not include scholarships, students are exempt from tuition fees at the partner universities. At national level, the university has partnerships with several companies. These partnerships provide students with opportunities to gain practical experience through internships, employment, and other initiatives.

According to results from interviews, the university strongly supports low SES students, providing exceptional services to ensure that their social status does not hinder their academic progress. These services include financial and academic support.

Evidences/indicators
Recommendations: The panel recommends that the university strengthen practical studies by cooperating with stakeholders to enhance student's practical experience and better equip them with the necessary skills for career development.
Suggestions: Non-binding suggestions for further development.
Best Practices (if applicable): The relatively new psychological centre, borne out of need, has become a considerable success across the university.
Evaluation Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard <input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements

6. Research, development and/or other creative work

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

6.1 Research Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ HEI, based on its type and specifics of its fields, carries out research/creative activities. ○ Ensuring the effectiveness of doctoral research supervision ○ HEI has public, transparent and fair procedures for the assessment and defense of dissertations which are relevant to the specifics of the field

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

SSU's scientific-research policy aligns with the university's mission priorities. It conducts both fundamental and applied research, encompassing the topics explored by its faculties, centers, and institutes. It is a centuries-old school that carries the Georgian educational traditions, the highest educational and research center, which is based on the spiritual and intellectual values of Georgians and Abkhazians, national and universally recognized values that determine the firmness of multicultural systems; it has a special function that connects ethnic, mental and sociocultural values - to solve the problem of mental alienation between Georgians and Abkhazians, created in recent decades and to help renew the historical cohabitation of Georgians and Abkhazians in Abkhazia. This basic mission, which together with the authority, is a historical and special responsibility, and reveals the possibility that the university, together with the educational hearth, can become a regional center for the study of conflicts.

The expert panel visited some of the research centers and had a chance to observe the facilities on site. Among them are: Center for Peace Education, is a research center; Molecular diagnostics and biotechnological scientific-research center, is a scientific-practical center; Center for Multicultural Education and Cultural Studies is a research and educational center; Center for Children's Rights is a research and educational center. These centers are engaged in purposeful and fruitful scientific-research and practical-educational activities in various fields. Especially important the activities of the Center for Peace Education, which, in turn, integrates research related to Abkhazia and contributes to the further expansion of the research area of this direction.

The Peace Education Center explores issues of Abkhazian language, literature, folklore, ethnicity and traditions. The center's direction of Abkhazian studies, in a short period of time, has implemented a number of important scientific and educational-scientific projects, among them the translations from the Abkhazian language into the Georgian language of important studies about Abkhazia, which were financed by the Rustaveli National Science Foundation. Among the monographs published by the center, the one published in 2021 is noteworthy "Georgian Paradigm of Peace", which presents a new conceptual approach to the struggle for peace. According to the author, it is necessary to use university diplomacy to solve conflicts.

SSU's Department of Scientific Research and Development together with the faculties based on the department's regulation, carries out creative scientific-research activities and promotes the development of academic staff and involvement in the international academic system. For the reporting years 2018-2024, both the quantity and quality of research have been 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.

In order to increase the visibility of the scientific work in the international academic system, an international DOI identifier was purchased in 2021, which required the works to be modified to international standards. From 2021, each article in the SSU proceedings will be peer-reviewed and only then assigned a DOI digital identifier code. For this purpose, an agreement was signed with the "Association for Science"; a special space has been, allocated, where not only works, but also other publications of the university, collections of conferences and collections of theses will be uploaded. The assignment of the DOI digital identifier code has increased the visibility of the university's works in the international academic system. The SER describes the number of the publications in the journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science; in both cases a significant increase in the recent years has resulted in 220 publications (<https://www.scopus.com/pages/organization/60110406>).

Furthermore, University funded more than 20 domestic targeted grant projects relate to experiments and researches, including for young researchers. These grants support the Studies of Peace Education and ensure the connection with the third mission, as well serve as a foundation for securing national and international grants.

The site visit with the presented documentation, confirmed that the university incorporates its research efforts into teaching and learning (research-informed teaching). This strategy assures that students benefit from the most recent scientific advances and approaches. Faculty members incorporate current research findings into courses, giving students hands-on experience and a better grasp of their respective professions. Students who participate in research projects improve critical thinking skills and practical knowledge, equipping them for future academic and professional success.

SSU implements ten accredited doctoral programs covering wide range of fields: humanities, natural sciences and social sciences. Programs are led by well-known scientists from the national and international academic communities. They collaborate with branch scientific research centers and publish monographs and articles in internationally and nationally recognized scientific journals. Doctoral programs are staffed by highly-qualified academic and invited personnel who provide scientific advances in specialized fields. The "Minimum Doctoral Standard" and other regulative documents outline the major responsibilities of the scientific supervisor. These responsibilities include delivering regular consultations targeted to the peculiarities of the study topic, which encompass topics

such as research design, seminars, scientific research publications, and dissertations. Supervisors also help doctoral students connect with local and worldwide scientific networks, encourage participation in scientific events, and assist the presentation and publication of research findings. They also monitor the educational and research components of each PhD student following the study plan and evaluate their progress on a regular basis. Pre-approved workload of academic and scientific staff enables them to effectively supervise PhD dissertations and scientific works and projects.

1. The evaluation and defense of dissertation is ensured through public, transparent, and fair procedures and by the involvement of highly-prepared academic and scientific staff in the process. The procedures for the thesis defense involve the student's scientific supervisor, who presents to the university dissertation council, stating that the doctoral dissertation is ready to be presented for public defense. This is a process, which requires that the PhD student must meet at least one of the following:

A doctoral student in parallel to the local supervisor has also a foreigner co-supervisor while working on a thesis; the decision of the Dissertation Council, the dissertation work completed by the PhD student has a foreign evaluator (expert and/or reviewer) with a doctor's academic degree and the relevant field qualifications. The doctoral student makes a speech at least at one international conference, which is confirmed by the relevant program/conference materials; the doctoral student's scientific article on the topic of doctoral dissertation has already been published or is being published in a peer-reviewed journal with impact factor; or in referenced electronic and/or printed journals; or in international scientific journals published abroad; or in the international conference materials issued abroad (so called Proceedings). This is confirmed by the relevant international classification or other international document.

The provisions of the Dissertation Council may determine additional requirements related to the particular dissertation.

SSU's QA Service implements dissertation plagiarism software. After the supervisor's positive conclusion on the thesis, the thesis is checked for plagiarism. It is not allowed to pass the thesis without a positive conclusion on plagiarism. From 2022, the plagiarism software has been implemented in SSU, not only for doctoral, but also for master's and bachelor's humanitarian direction/theses.

Following dissertation submission, the Dissertation Council appoints two experts to evaluate the thesis; one will be an invited professor and the other a member of the Dissertation Council. The experts are required to submit conclusions within a month. The Dissertation Council will designate a third expert to assess the work if the assessment from one expert is negative. Two negative assessments lead to the thesis being returned to the student with no further processing. If the experts' conclusions are positive, the doctoral student's dissertation work is submitted to the procedural process, and the Dissertation Council will appoint at least two reviewers (one invited/external) who must produce the required reviews within a month.

If one reviewer rates the dissertation negatively, the Dissertation Council will select a third reviewer to assess the work. If the dissertation has two negative reviews, the defense procedure will not be continued and thesis will be returned to the doctoral student for revision. If the reviewers reach positive findings, the Dissertation Council will set the final defense date for the dissertation work. The defense of the dissertation is public. The information is published on the University website at least two weeks before the dissertation defense. The doctoral student is obliged to present one copy of the dissertation work two weeks before the dissertation defense to the SSU library. The defense process considers the presentation of the thesis by the doctoral student; scientific debate/ discussions between the members of the Dissertation Council and the postgraduate candidate, followed by assessment and conclusion of the Dissertation Council. The final evaluation of the thesis by the Dissertation Council takes place individually for evaluation of the dissertation by 100-point system. The Voice Counting Commission elected by the Dissertation Council will calculate an average arithmetic of points. Final evaluation is conducted according to the legislation.

PhD students and graduates in interview with the expert panel declared that most of them are satisfied with support and opportunities they received. However, the panel identified English language issues. As students actively use English literature in studying and publish in international journals, it is deemed a necessity to enhance the English language proficiency of the students (please see: standard 5).

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. However, articles in the Scopus database is required only for students of the doctoral program in mathematics. The expert panel expressed its preference that for all doctoral students, at least one of these articles should be published in a journal indexed in Web of Science (Clarivate Analytics), ERIH PLUS (European Reference Index of the Humanities), or Scopus databases, which would set high standards of composing research articles and contribute further enhancements for research quality in educational programs.

Recommendations:
Suggestions: It is preferred - for all doctoral students - that at least one article is published in a journal indexed in Web of Science (Clarivate Analytics), ERIH PLUS (European Reference Index of the Humanities), or Scopus databases, which would set high standards of composing research articles and contribute further enhancements for research quality at educational programs.
Best Practices (if applicable): Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions
Evaluation Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements
6.2. Research Support and Internationalisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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

SSU Department of Scientific Research and Development has developed a research policy aimed defining key research directions: increasing involvement in the international academic system, implementing scientific research on innovative knowledge, attracting various international organizations and state scientific grants in order to maximize active participation in international and local scientific projects for university staff. It establishes business contacts with foreign universities and non-university scientific centers, state and private structures in order to stimulate scientific research and implement innovative projects.

The department creates independent scientific-research units (Centers, Institutes, Laboratories, etc.), integrating independent and supportive research units (centers, institutions) in university research and training. It also creates a university funding system of internal grants and researches in order to encourage research work of academic and scientific staff. A post-doctoral system and integration of post-doctoral students in the teaching and research has been introduced to encourage young scientists' research work, promoting and implementation of professional development and professional research programs of young specialists (internship, training, joint scientific research.).

Authoritative scholars of different disciplines have also been invited for conducting lectures and seminars. In partnership with foreign universities and scientific centers, research quality has been enhanced through the integration of teaching and research (another example of research-informed teaching) and fostering an environment that upholds research ethics and internationalization.

The submitted documents indicate that the annual budget for scientific-research activities almost has been doubled from 2018 to 2024 years. From 221 000 Gel in 2018, financing reached 350 000 Gel in 2024. From 2018 to 2024, SSU had a policy for financing the participation of academic and scientific staff in conferences, seminars, congresses, forums, and other events. Under this policy, faculty councils decided on funding allocations based on the faculties' budgets. Due to the growing number of applicants for funding, competitive funding became necessary. Consequently, in 2022, a new policy was introduced to support the professional development of SSU staff and encourage article publications.

This new policy finances training for academic and scientific officials, participation in scientific events, and the publication of articles in high-rated scientific databases. Mechanisms for supporting scientific-research activities at SSU, include financing projects from independent research units and targeted internal university projects, funding participation in national and international scientific events, and encouraging publications in high-rated journals. During the interviews with stakeholders, they confirmed that they had already had benefited from the above-mentioned schemes; some of them received financial support after publication in high-ranked journals, while others were successful in receiving internal research support. Academics benefit from 6-month academic leave once every 5 years for research purposes, which is fully paid; plus, they can receive financial bonuses four times a year.

The university utilizes an effective system for attracting and supporting new staff in research activities and fosters MA, PhD, and postdoctoral students' involvement in the university's scientific-research activities and actively supports their initiatives. Since 2018, the university's Department of Scientific Research and Development has promoted the integration of educational and research activities, and organized scientific events, seminars, conferences, and congresses. Selected details on conferencing is presented below:

International student scientific conferences:

June 17, 2024. The Second International Conference of Young Scientists and PhD Candidates History, Culture, Education, Interdisciplinary Studies; 2023, July 26-27 National Student Conference "Human Rights Protection Mechanisms" is dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Human Rights; 2023 International Student Conference - Challenges of Holocaust, Genocide Crime Punishment and Human Rights Protection; 2022, June 13-14. International scientific-practical conference of students "European integration - protection of human rights"; December 23-24, 2020. International Scientific Conference of Young Scientists and PhD Candidates History, Culture, Education, Interdisciplinary Studies.

National scientific conferences of students include:

2023, July 26-27. The national student conference "Mechanisms of Human Rights Protection", dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Human Rights; National scientific conference of masters and students "The Chronometer". Since 2015, nine national scientific conferences have been held at SSU. The report presents only the national scientific conferences of students held in the academic period 2018-2024 (<https://www.sou.edu.ge/content/3/11/147/86/49>).

June 27, 2024. National Scientific Conference of Masters and Students - Chronicler IX.

June 23-24, 2023. National Scientific Conference of Masters and Students - Chronicler VIII.

June 22-23, 2022. National scientific conference of masters and students - Chronometer VII.
July 3, 4, 6, 2020. National scientific conference of masters and students - Chronicle VI.
June 18-20, 2019. National Scientific Conference of Masters and Students - Chronicle V.
June 13-14, 2018. National Scientific Conference of Masters and Students - Chronometer IV.

During 2020-2024 years University conducted 16 faculty based conferences(<https://www.sou.edu.ge/content/3/11/147/86/17>).

The university also advises students and staff on conducting research, familiarizes them with state and university grant projects, and provides consultations on project management. Additionally, it facilitates participation in scientific grant competitions by assisting with the preparation of necessary documentation. Receiving funding for research projects from international and national scientific foundations continue to offer a high-quality scientific product to the public. During 2020 to 2024, there were very many such activities

The university implements joint research activities with international partners. It is involved in EU scientific-research programs, and has institutional cooperation with international research. As a result of international cooperation fifty professors from abroad visited University during 2018-24 years within the framework of various projects. SSU finances and supports the identification and development of intra-university projects. It finances joint projects of SSU and other scientific research centers. During the reporting period, four joint projects were implemented - together with the Ministry of Education and Culture of Abkhazia, the Historical Society of Turkey and the National Center of Georgian Manuscripts, named after Korneli Kekelidze.

University publications, in which the works of foreign colleagues are printed along with the publications of the university academics, can be considered as promotion of intra-university projects. SSU, together with foreign partner universities has established an international periodical scientific publication "global world". In addition, on the basis of SSU, and under the auspices of the higher education institution, international scientific journals from the field are published: Yearbook "Historical Research"; "Intercultural Communications"; "Education" and others.

The expert panel found that a number of PhD students benefited from various national and international funding and projects. The university plans to enhance the support of PhD candidates and students by promoting the existing financial schemes and establishing additional ones: the Giorgi Sharvashidze Foundation and Ilia Vekua Foundation will start operating soon. This will have a positive impact on the research projects themselves.

The main office of Horizon Europe is located in SSU and is expected to stimulate participation in European projects. Parallel to this, there is a policy to stimulate international staff mobility as well as good use of the Jean Monnet program. The university supports joint supervision practices by international and local professors.

Evidences/indicators
Recommendations: Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standard component
Suggestions: Non-binding suggestions for further development
Best Practices (if applicable): Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions
Evaluation Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> 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

SSU regularly evaluates and analyses the quality of research activities and the effectiveness of scientific-research units; The Department of Scientific Research and Development of Sokhumi State University ensures monitoring and evaluation of the university's scientific activities. The department submits the annual scientific report of SSU academic staff to the National Academy of Sciences of Georgia for external monitoring and evaluation, which divides the scientific reports according to fields for evaluation. The mentioned assessment is sent to the department of SSU according to directions, which discusses any existing problems.

The overall picture of monitoring evaluations of the National Academy of Sciences of Georgia is high, although there are satisfactory and average evaluations in individual fields. Internal monitoring of scientific activities is carried out by the Department of Scientific Research and Development of the University, based on the decisions and resolutions of the Academic Council.

The Academic Council has approved "Learning Quality Development Evaluation Mechanisms", in which special importance is given to the assessment of scientific work, the main criteria of which is: research output, publications (citation coefficients) and patents. Assessment of specific activities is rule based, with set marks for each category. PhD students in some cases may be considered masters as well. Student participation in research activities, and the existence of young research staff are also of importance, as well as research income - local and/or international grants or direct orders – as are conferences and also the research environment – the proper infrastructure (laboratories, equipment and field work.).

At the same time, in staff assessment, significant achievement includes scientific competence - relevant academic degree, publications, involvement in scientific conferences, membership and activities of professional organizations. The amount of finance attracted or received from local or international donor organizations for granting scientific projects is an important factor.

It is important for the university to consider collaboration projects - that is, whether the grant is accepted with other working groups such as membership of field commissions; membership of editorial board of field scientific journals; and the number of PhD students/dissertations defended by direct supervision.

It is also important that academic staff annually report to the Scientific Research and Development Department about their scientific research activities, which is then sent to the Academy of Sciences of Georgia. Other than staff self-evaluation reporting, there are periodic interviews with academic staff on their performance and future plans. The university collects the qualitative data as well by interviewing researchers and academic staff periodically. Evaluation results are used for the further development of research activities. SSU regularly publishes reports on implemented research activities on the University website.

However, the expert panel sees here a challenge for the low degree use of electronic/digital technology in evaluation processes. An electronic system used, where responsible individuals assessed by staff based on established criteria and staff self-assessments would contribute to cost-effectiveness and economy of time. In this system, responsible individuals would verify and confirm information provided in self-evaluations rather than directly evaluating personnel. The system would then automatically generate assessments based on the confirmed information.

This new system would enhance analysis of academic staff performance evaluations and facilitate implementation of incentive measures for the relevant staff as outlined in the regulations.

Evidences/indicators

<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>Proposal(s), which should be considered by the institution to comply with requirements of the standard component</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>Non-binding suggestions for further development</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard</p> <p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements </p>

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.

<p>7.1 Material Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The institution possesses or owns material resources (fixed and current assets) that are used for achieving goals stated in the mission statement, adequately responds to the requirements of educational programmes and research activities, and corresponds to the existing number of students and planned enrolment. ○ HEI offers environment necessary for implementing educational activities: sanitary units, natural light possibilities, and central heating system. ○ Health and safety of students and staff is protected within the institution. ○ HEI has adapted environment for people with special needs

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Material resources (fixed and liquid assets) under the ownership or lawful possession of the institution serve the educational purposes of the institution and correspond to the requirements for implementing educational programs and research/creative/performing activities, and the number of existing and/or planned student body.

As of 2024, SSU has two educational buildings (Tbilisi, Politkovskaya 61; Politkovskaya 26) With legally-established ownership. Tbilisi 26 is under temporary ownership. It will be returned back to the State as soon as the Ethnic conflict with the Abkhazs is over and SSU goes back to Sukhumi - the capital of the the separatist Abkhazian region of Georgia.

The main building which is fully owned, has the following sections: foyer, recreation spaces, classroom(s) for theoretical teaching, administrative office(s), space for group work, sanitary/hygienic units, library, laboratory appropriate to the specifics of the field, learning classrooms and archive. The distribution of various units supports the effective implementation of the educational and administrative process. The total area for both buildings is 14808.01 sq. M, of which 7,227.19 sq.m is educational space and 7,385.82 sq. M is auxiliary space.

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

Real estate is registered by the National Agency of Public Registry and has been assigned relevant cadastral codes. (c/c 01.14.05.005.003; c/c 01.14.05.005.134). Measurement drawings illustrate study and supporting spaces as separate entities. Recent years have witnessed renovations and new resources, furniture and equipment with training auditoriums and foyers. The number of auditoriums at this stage is sufficient for the number of students, which is 3,134.

There are eight laboratories across both buildings which are available to all students. Due to open for the first time is a purpose-built (by the university) laboratory, available to all science-orientated students and students interested in science.

In both buildings of SSU there is a foyer, study and lecture auditoriums, study cabinets, conference and presentation halls and library. Additionally, there is an examination center, group work spaces, administrative spaces and sanitary units. Infrastructure and supporting resources have been improved since the last authorization in 2018 to meet the requirements of staff and students. Both natural and artificial lighting have been provided for academic audiences. There is a central heating system.

The environment of the SSU is deemed to be adequate for carrying out educational activities, but is still in need of enhancement. Since September 2008, SSU has been an independent customer of JSC "Telmico". All floors are provided with bathrooms, central water supply, sewage and electrical network. Sanitary hygiene norms are protected. During the last few years, periodically, the bathrooms have been renewed and renovated. They have continuous lighting. However, the expert panel found the latrines and toilet systems in the main building are in need of renovation and considerable upgrade. Concerning some of them, in the opinion of the expert panel, there could be a possible health risk.

Conference halls, presentation and reading halls, group-work spaces and the essential part of the administrative space are air-conditioned.

Medical assistance is provided in both academic buildings. An agreement on state procurement has been signed between the institution and the insurance company "GPI Holding", to enable the running of a medical center which operates at 26 Politkovskaya Street. Access to doctors and the provision of first aid to staff and students is assured.

Full security at both buildings of SSU is maintained, both inner and outer. In both educational buildings, video surveillance cameras are installed on the outer perimeter of the building and also on the first floors of both educational buildings. The plan is to install video surveillance cameras on all floors. Complete control of the internal and external perimeter of the educational buildings of the SSU has been achieved. An agreement on state procurement has been signed between SSU and "Magister" LLC, to secure alarm protection for the university buildings.

SSU sustains an adapted environment for people with special needs. The entrances of the University are equipped with a special ramp together with a vertical crane/platform installed in the second study building (Politkovskaya 26). Additionally, there are elevators in both buildings of the university and on the first floor the bathrooms have been modified accordingly. There is ease of access to the library and computer class, as well as access to administration and relevant services and to all other service areas. The employees of the SSU Security Service are obliged to provide reliable assistance to special- needs' persons so that their uninterrupted and comfortable relocation in the buildings and adjacent areas of the university is guaranteed without toil or difficulty.

Educational and auxiliary spaces of HEI can be separated based on the measurement drawings of the building. Educational space, approximately 50% is the one used for teaching and learning

purposes, namely: teaching classrooms; conference halls; professors' offices (where professors provide counselling to students); teaching/scientific-research laboratories; library (except for book depository); and other spaces based on the specifics of an educational program.

SSU is currently refurbishing a floor in the main building at 61 Politkovskaya St., Tbilisi and two floors in the temporary building at 26, to create more space for students and more teaching space.

A significant omission in SU's provision – and to its own admission – is its lack of dormitories. However, to mitigate this situation, the Georgian government is building dormitories for two main state universities, and those two universities will be obliged to allocate 10 % of their dormitory rooms to SSU.

Concerning growth and expansion, the current no. of active students is 3,134 and the total number of suspended students is 1,698. The future threshold for student intake is stated to be 4,500. Regarding this threshold, the expert panel held probing discussions across a range of professional staff. Most colleagues expressed enthusiasm towards achieving this threshold, though some preferred a graduated increase, which is the likeliest process anyway for the future of SSU.

The expert panel formed the view that all refurbishments and additional space creation should be completed prior to any graduated student increase. Regarding professorial additions to meet any increased student intake, the expert panel learned that the University Quality Assurance Service is currently working on a staff-student ratio document which should provide answers to these questions for immediate and future planning.

Both academic and administrative staff were confident that SSU has the material and economic possibilities now and in the future to provide quality education to all students, to a threshold of 4500.

<p>Evidences/indicators</p>
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>Ensure that the internal floor refurbishments are completed by the start of January 2025. Pursue further progress in the provision for students with disabilities and special needs, in line with the university's growing interest in recruiting more such students.</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>Improve the frontage of both buildings, so that they appeal more as institutions of university status, and also provide attractive and professional general reception facilities within the main foyer areas.</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements </p>
<p>7.2. Library Resources</p>
<p>Library environment, resources and service support effective implementation of educational and research activities, and HEI constantly works for its improvement.</p>

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

SSU has developed a comprehensive library system that supports the effective implementation of educational and research activities. The university's library infrastructure includes physical and digital resources, complemented by a dedicated staff with appropriate qualifications. SSU operates libraries across its two educational buildings. Both libraries have been developed to modern standards, featuring updated facilities and digital resources that support students and staff in their educational and research activities.

At Politkovskaya Street No. 26, the first floor houses a newly established reading room with 84 seats. This room includes a designated area for academic and invited staff, equipped with 14 computers connected to the internet. Wireless internet access, as well as printing, photocopying, and scanning services, are available to all users.

At Politkovskaya Street No. 61, there is a reading room with 50 seats, set up on the first floor, including a free computer space with 15 computers connected to the internet. Wireless access and facilities for printing, photocopying, and scanning are also provided.

Both library locations offer sufficient working hours, being open six days a week (Monday-Friday from 09:00 to 20:00, and Saturday from 09:00 to 14:00). This schedule allows both students and staff ample access to resources for academic purposes.

SSU's library collection includes approximately 43,885 printed books and about 1,000 digital manuals, textbooks, lecture courses, and readers. The library maintains an electronic catalog and has a dedicated website for its E-Library. All key literature outlined in the university syllabuses is available to support the academic programs, ensuring that students have access to the necessary resources for their coursework and research. Additionally, the library collaborates with Planet Forte LLC for the supply of magazines and newspapers, ensuring access to current periodicals.

The university is integrated into the national research library network, ensuring access to scientific resources through a contract with Innovative System Management Ltd. SSU is also part of the Integrated Information Network Consortium of Libraries of Georgia, which allows the institution to utilize a wide range of international electronic resources, including: ACM Digital Library; Cambridge Journals Online; e-Duke Journals Scholarly Collection; Edward Elgar Publishing; Journals and Development Studies e-books; European Respiratory Journal; IMechE Journals; Mathematical Sciences Publishers Journals; OpenEdition Journals; Royal Society Journals Collection; SAGE Journals; The Company of Biologist Journal.

These partnerships ensure that students and staff can access a variety of high-quality academic and research materials, supporting the institution's commitment to research and development.

The university has expanded its access to resources through a Memorandum of Cooperation with the National Library of Georgia, which allows staff and students to use its facilities. Additionally, the university participates in an inter-library loan service with other higher-education institutions, but the panel found that many students were unaware of this service. The university has also signed contracts with multiple international digital resource providers, including Thomson-Reuters, JSTOR, and EBSCO, to enhance access to scientific and academic publications.

The expert panel found that the library staff are well-qualified, regularly participating in training sessions to stay updated on the latest developments in library management and digital resource use. They are actively engaged in providing consultations and guiding students and staff in locating relevant resources for their academic work. The library team also conducts training sessions and meetings to raise awareness about the available resources and digital tools.

SSU consistently conducts surveys to evaluate student satisfaction with library services and resources. The results from recent surveys indicate an increase in student satisfaction compared to 2018, reflecting improvements in both the services offered and the material-technical base. This suggests that the university's efforts to upgrade its infrastructure and library resources have had a positive impact on user experience.

The survey of 2023 highlights: increased satisfaction with library services and resources; positive response to the availability of modern reading rooms and internet access; and continued demand for further improvements in terms of space and resource availability.

The university allocates budgetary funds for the continuous upgrading of library resources and services. This aligns with its strategic plan, where the development of library infrastructure is prioritized.

The university library plays a significant role in supporting both undergraduate and graduate students, as well as academic staff, in their educational and research endeavors. The library's resources, particularly the digital databases, are crucial for maintaining up-to-date knowledge across various disciplines. The university actively contributes to the social, cultural, and academic

development of its community through various initiatives, with the library serving as a key component of this effort.

SSU's library system meets the requirements for supporting both educational and research activities through modern facilities, a comprehensive collection of print and digital resources, and access to international academic databases. The university is committed to ongoing development in line with user feedback, as reflected in its strategic plan and recent improvements to library services. Continuous investment in infrastructure and resources will ensure that the library continues to serve as a critical support system for the institution's academic goals.

The expert panel encourages the university to continue this engagement, promoting the use of its resources and encouraging broader participation in lifelong learning initiatives.

<p>Evidences/indicators</p>
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>Invest in Library Infrastructure: The university should continue its efforts to improve library infrastructure, particularly in terms of expanding space and upgrading facilities for study and research.</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements </p>
<p>7.3 Information Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ HEI has created infrastructure for information technologies and its administration and accessibility are ensured ○ Electronic services and electronic management systems are implemented and mechanisms for their constant improvement are in place ○ HEI ensures business continuity ○ HEI has a functional web-page in Georgian and English languages.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

According to the Statute of the IT Department: 'The main area of department activity is to provide relevant studying, working and scientific research conditions for the university students and staff using technologies, to establish the university's common information area with its further connecting to the global information area, resulting in introduction of progressive information technologies'.

SSU makes extensive use of a variety communication technologies which includes up to 500 software units. Computers and Internet (in both buildings) access are available for all students and academic staff. There are 9 computer classes (125 computers) in the institution.

Information and communication technologies are valuable in educational and research activities and the administration and management of the institution. In complement, there are projectors, copiers, printers and scanners, Time and "Erasmus + Auditoriums are also equipped with video-conferencing equipment and with smart board facilities.

Electronic services are in operation, and SSU is in the process of developing and piloting new services. Intra-university (a learning process management system) is also in operation. "Elgon", serves all active staff and students. The Learning Process Management System extensively includes:

Learning process management module;

Academic/Administrative Registration;

Student Finance Module;

Chancellery module (production/management of document circulation in the university).

The electronic platform StudLab is purposed to undertake the electronic management of resources, including: a unified electronic database of students and professors; independent 60-credit teacher training; Georgian language training; subjects aligned with bachelor's, master's and doctoral programs; and a range of related processes, inter-alia, subject choices; student evaluations, change of student status.

An interface has been created to work with the database, allowing users to enter information easily into the database and equally easy to receive information. The Information Technology Department provides information technology infrastructure administration and availability.

SSU has an official website: www.sou.edu.ge which provides a vital communication and information hub. At this time, there is a new website in development with stronger performance. It is gradually being populated with information in the Georgian and English languages. The very full battery of information has ten links which include: the HEI Mission; strategic plans and action plans; staff; structure of the university; policies; authorization reports; divisions; faculties and programs; research and projects; international partners.

There is also further information on: criteria for selecting students; expected learning outcomes of the programs; exit qualifications to be awarded; teaching and learning strategies; evaluation procedures administrative/academic/research personnel; electronic library catalog; regulatory documents; strategic development plans; annual reports of the institution; financial statements; general statistics; available services; employment opportunities. Information on the website is updated regularly. The expert team found the website impressive in its comprehensiveness of information and practical application. All major SSU academic and support activities are conveyed accurately and confidently.

Concerning risk mitigation, the information technology department has a sound support structure, bolstered by an established "Information Technology Management and Development Policy". Cyber security and its effective implementation mechanisms are clearly in place. The university's "Business Process Continuity Plan", is pre-eminently dutiful in information technology and the prevention of possible risks. The expert team found no examples of breaches in IT security and confidence, and were satisfied that the functions of IT are risk averse.

SSU employs personal data protection officer. The expert team were satisfied with the structured approach to this and that personal data was being protected. There is nothing on the website indicating how data protection is being evaluated.

SSU takes care of all supportive technologies and ensures the institution remains smooth-running and updated.

Evidences/indicators

Evaluation

Please mark the checkbox which mostly describes your position related to the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard

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

Recommendations:

Develop the highest standards in digital education, so that students are at the cutting edge of technology, to the benefit of themselves and their employers, whose expectations are high.

Suggestions:

As a means of achieving the highest standards in digital education, consider organising SSU's Information Technology Management and Development Policies and Procedures(# Appendix 7.8) to include the FIBAA: (Foundation For International Business Administration Accreditation) 5 Standards: digitalization strategy; staffing; technology; didactic strategy and QA. Then, by midpoint of the current authorization, make plans to apply for the FIBAA Quality Seal "Excellence in Digital Education".

Best Practices (if applicable):

Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions

7.4 Financial Resources

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The financial resources provided by the budget of the institutions are economically viable.

Financial sources of the university are: fees from educational programs; training and Research Grants of National and International Funds; other permitted incomes received via economic activity. SSU is confident in reporting that through what is permissible by the Georgian State, all types of revenue continue to increase year after year.

During the whole period of the functioning of SSU, except for projects financed by the Educational and Scientific Infrastructure Development Agency for the promotion of infrastructure development, the university has not always received funds from the state budget.

The latest years' income data shows that the diversified sources of financing provides an opportunity for finances to be efficiently distributed. The institution continues to seek out ways of achieving diversified income nationally and internationally and to maximize its use of human and material resources. Through careful implementation of activities in the Strategic Development and Action Plan, finances are stable.

Taking into consideration all the above mentioned, the 2024 budget serves to facilitate the fulfilment of the University Mission. During interviews with senior staff discussing the balance calculated for the close of 2024 2, 927.000.00 GEL, it was explained to the expert panel how these funds were to be spent - via student needs and resources. Planning of expenses is in parallel with budget revenue allocation across the institution. The expert panel were satisfied with the soundness of the explanation.

The cost of all expenditure, which is required by the university is in accordance with the normative acts adopted by the applicable legislation in the country and the authorized bodies - to include: state taxes and fees; execution obligations undertaken by staff and contractual obligations; settlement with valuables and services providers; payment of membership fees; academic personnel; student mobility and research financing.

Budgetary priorities of SSU in 2024 include library funding; international relations; scientific research; infrastructural projects; the learning environment; staff development; support for publications; and other forms of support.

SSU declares that the annual budget is permanently proficient ensuring that all expenditures for the implementation of the priorities are met and financed on time. The university also asserts that there is a firm material and financial base for both the current and long-term financing. The financing of the library and research activities is secure and progressive. They are in line with the strategic plan and action planning. The illustrated financial planning is set out in the SER, (7.4) where the revenue-income dynamics are shown to be escalating (2019-2024).

In terms of management and control, an Internal Audit Office has been established for monitoring, evaluation and lawfulness. Through this office, the management and protection of financial and material resources; checking and analyzing financial statements and developing recommendations through subsequent analysis, are ensured and subject to accountability by this internal office.

The Internal Audit Service has developed its own strategic plan for 2021-2024. It has been designed to become the basis for the development of annual plans. Internal audit findings have been published in accordance with strategic planning for the years 2021-2023. A prime function of the Service is 'Monitoring and estimating the legality of distribution and spending of university assignments, their targeted disposal, targeted use of tangible values. Defining the risks of possible violation and error'. (Statute of the Internal Audit Office).

The expert team could not locate any arrangements for external audit.

SSU has over a period of years developed functional managerial accountability, principally by establishing and maintaining a high-degree of viability across the institution. Its financial management and control system are supported by the university's Internal Audit Service, which ensures lawful and transparent accountability. Across its corporate financial obligations, the expert team found that the university has a firm and sustainable material and financial base both for ongoing and future long-term planning.

The expert team found SSU economically, efficient in the productive use of resources for the achievement of short and long-term HEI goals. The institution is constantly monitoring finance and actively seeking ways to secure alternative funding. Tuition fees and other incomes are considered to be high risk (as stated in the Business Continuity Plan) but identified risks are within the capacities of the financial provision department and its related internal structures, in current and forward planning.

The expert team found excellence in the senior support personnel of Chancery, Human Resources and Legal Office.

Evidences/indicators

<p>Recommendations</p> <p>SSU should appoint an external auditor for finance.</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>In view of the plans to increase student numbers, SSU should redouble its efforts in fundraising.</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>Practices, which prove to be exceptionally effective and which may become a benchmark or a model for other higher education institutions</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements </p>