



განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Higher Education Institution Authorisation Experts' Report [LLC International Black Sea University]

Expert Panel Members

Chair: Matthew Kitching, Buckinghamshire New University, UK

Co-Chair Shadi Hamouri, Al-Balqa Applied University, Jordan

Members

Khatuna Saganelidze, New Vision University, Georgia

Ia Natsvlshvili, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia

Nino Parsadanishvili, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia

Vakhtang Beroshvili, Tbilisi State Medical University, Georgia

Giorgi Pareishishvili, Caucasus International University, Georgia

Tbilisi
2024

Authorisation Report Resume

General information on the educational institution

The International Black Sea University (heinafter: IBSU or the University) has been engaged in educational and scientific activities since 1995. It is the first higher education institution in Georgia to offer English-language educational programmes to students. Currently, the university provides educational programmes in both Georgian and English languages across all three levels of study.

Five schools operate in the university:

- School of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences
- School of Law and State Governance
- School of Business
- School of Computer Science and Architecture
- School of Medicine

These schools deliver 41 educational programmes, including a Medical Doctor one-cycle programme and teacher training.

In 2011, the university underwent an external quality assurance process (authorization) and was granted the status of a higher education institution for a period of five years, starting from the 2012-2013 academic year, based on decision No. 71 of June 21, 2011, by the Authorization Council of Educational Institutions.

In 2018, the university underwent reauthorization and was granted the status of a higher education institution (university) for a period of six years, based on decision No. 93 of December 8, 2018, by the Authorization Council of Higher Education Institutions.

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

The site visit took place in September 2024, with a visit to the IBSU campus in Tbilisi. During the site visits the team held meetings with the administration, self-evaluation team, academic and invited staff, as well as students and alumni, employers and representative of the quality assurance office. The team also conducted an inspection of the facilities, clinical bases and resources. The team would like to place their thanks on record to the institution for their open and productive engagement with the process, including the interviews during the site visit and for the considerable hospitality shown to the team.

Following submission of the draft report, the team received the University's argumentative position and gave this full and detailed consideration. In various places the institution's position referenced the existence of additional evidence that the team did not request. The team would stress that the University was free to provide any and all evidence that it considered demonstrated its compliance with the standards. As was evident in the team's line of questioning and the request of the University itself to hold a meeting to discuss its strategic planning and growth plans, it was clear that the team considered there to be some issues present in the related standards. The team cannot comment on evidence that it has not been provided as part of the process.

However, specifically, while the augmentative position of the institution references action plans at departmental level with respect to 1.2 Strategic Development, this fails to recognise the deficiencies present in the 7-year and 3-year action plans that the team has viewed and that are required by the standard. These do not contain sufficiently SMART objectives or provide a suitably comprehensive framework for the institution's significant intended growth. Furthermore, the team asked many questions of colleagues, including at department level, about staff understanding of the plans for growth and staff at this level were largely unaware of any extant plans and unable to provide satisfactory answers (for instance in relation to the library). Therefore, the team considers that this recommendation stands.

With respect to the recommendation under 3.1, this pertains to the syllabi of the courses, not the programme or curriculum as a whole. From the team's interviews, we were informed the syllabi are not revised on an annual basis and no evidence was provided to the contrary. Therefore, the recommendation remains unchanged.

The team does however accept the institution's comments regarding the recommendation surrounding the establishment of a programme of ongoing professional development for staff on assessment under Standard 3.2 and has revised this to become a suggestion accordingly.

In terms of the recommendation under 3.3 to develop a structured feedback mechanism for students. This point refers to comprehensive, structured feedback that encompasses more than just exam results. It should include discussions about the exam questions, model answers, areas for improvement, and any topics that were not covered. Therefore, the recommendation stands.

In its response the institution has somewhat mischaracterized the basis of the recommendation in Standard 4.1, which is that the University's management controls, through appointment, the eventual academic members of decision-making bodies. Based on the information the team received it does not consider this to be factually inaccurate and the team

consider that decision-making has the potential to be strengthened through the democratic participation of academic staff as a key stakeholder group in the institution's governance structure. For example, it is noteworthy that no elected representative of the academic staff is in the School Council. Instead, Deans decide who from academic staff will become the member of the School Council. The recommendation therefore stands.

While the institution has stated that the clinical courses offered at IBSU are only taught by staff with relevant clinical experience the team heard contradictory evidence during the site visit. When senior staff were asked about the oral testimony in earlier meetings the response provided was that clinical experience pre-registration (i.e. accumulated as a student) could be counted. Given this response, and the fact team are not in a position to confirm the subsequent statement provided in the argumentative response, the recommendation stands.

The team has also determined that the recommendation to integrate international best practice in personnel planning methodologies to improve staff benchmarks stands as the standard explicitly requires institutions to make use of best international practices.

With respect to student governance and the appointment of the Ombudsman, the team has also determined that these recommendations should stand. Although students may be invited to attend the extended governing board this group meets on an ad hoc basis, when called to session by management, rather than being a standing committee with a minimum frequency of meetings on an annual basis. This does not afford the same level of protections and opportunity to provide direct student impact into decision-making at University level. Furthermore, the fact the Ombudsman has seen an increase in demand has no bearing on any conflict of interest, it is the nature of the appointment that introduces this potential and any risk.

The team have revised the report text and recommendation in Standard 7.1 relating to managing the large planned influx of medical students. The change clarifies that the recommendation is not just aimed at timetabling and scheduling but rather the under-developed plans at institutional level for managing this growth (including support facilities) and changes in the strategic approach since the previous visit.

Finally, based on the institution's comments, the team have amended the report text and recommendation under Standard 7.4 to more clearly articulate weaknesses in strategic and financial planning processes as they relate to the growth of student numbers and the University's expanded medical provision.

Overview of the HEI's compliance with standards

Specific compliance for each standard is discussed in detail throughout this report. However, compliance can be summarised as follows:

- The first standard substantially complies with requirements
- The second standard complies with requirements
- The third standard substantially complies with requirements
- The fourth standard substantially complies with requirements
- The fifth standard complies with requirements
- The sixth standard complies with requirements
- The seventh standard partially complies with requirements

Summary of Recommendations

- Ensure that the strategic development plan provides comprehensive and credible means for achieving the institution's goals; (1.2)
- Strengthen the strategic planning process and resulting action plans to ensure they contain credible, specific, detailed and measurable actions linked to the strategic objectives; (1.2)
- Ensure the institution's student body planning methodology is fit-for-purpose (2.2)
- Ensure internal quality assurance processes places equal emphasis on scrutinising the credibility and sufficiency of future planned actions as part of the PDCA cycle; (2.2)
- Establish a systematic review process for course syllabi that requires faculty to update them at least once per academic year. In order to ensure that the content remains current, relevant, and aligned with evolving industry standards and educational best practice. (3.1)
- Develop a structured feedback mechanism that allows students to receive detailed insights on their performance. This could include personalized feedback on assignments, midterm results, and final assessments, helping students identify areas for improvement and promoting a growth mindset. (3.3)
- Ensure fairness and transparency where employers are involved in determining part of a student's assessment outcome. (3.3)
- Renew labor and affiliation contracts with academic staff according the recently adopted affiliation rule; (4.1)
- Ensure the involvement of academic staff in the decision-making process at all levels through the election of academic staff in governing bodies; (4.1)
- Ensure that only staff who hold at least 3 years clinical experience, post registration are appointed to teach clinical classes; (4.1)

- Increase the number of affiliated staff at the university level and for the program in medicine to ensure the sustainability of the educational programs; (4.1)
- Integrate international best practice in personnel planning methodologies to improve staff benchmarks; (4.2)
- Change the current appointment process of the Student Ombudsman from a Rector's appointment to a democratic election by the student body (5.1)
- Strengthen the involvement of student representation in university decision-making processes (5.1)
- Enhance the Simulation Centre and labs with additional equipment to continuously ensure the quality of the educational process and the achievement of learning outcomes. (7.1)
- Establish a clear, structured strategy for managing the educational process of 2,000 medical students. (7.1)
- Provide a dedicated workspace and meeting area for academic staff to prepare for teaching process and conduct individual meetings and consultations with students. (7.1)
- Repurpose rooms lacking adequate natural lighting for non-teaching activities, as they do not meet educational space standards. (7.1)
- Develop a comprehensive and credible plan for library expansion in accordance with the anticipated increase in student numbers (7.2)
- Ensure that specific objectives are detailed in University level strategic planning documents and clearly and explicitly linked to the University budget, including as they relate to the institution's medical provision (7.4)

Summary of Suggestions

- Establish a formal policy regulating the use, including acceptable use, of artificial intelligence in assessment (2.3)
- Expand the options for individualised learning plans by integrating more diverse learning pathways and resources. This could include online modules, internships, or project-based learning opportunities; tailored to students' interests and career goals. (3.1)
- Encourage collaboration between different departments to create interdisciplinary programmes or courses. This could help students gain a broader perspective and develop skills that are increasingly valued in a complex, interconnected job market. (3.1)
- Establish a programme of ongoing professional development for academic staff focused on effective assessment strategies and best practices. This could include training on formative assessment techniques, feedback mechanisms, and innovative evaluation tools to enhance teaching and learning outcomes. (3.2)
- Develop an online resource hub where students can access detailed information about assessment criteria, grading rubrics, and best practice for preparation. This hub could include example assessments, tips for success, and FAQs to help students better understand the evaluation process and expectation; (3.2)
- Increase transparency in the assessment process by creating a more user-friendly online resource that clearly outlines all assessment criteria, processes, and available resources. This could include video tutorials, FAQs,

and case studies showcasing successful assessments to further demystify the process for students; (3.3)

- Introduce peer assessment opportunities within courses to foster collaborative learning. In order to not only encourage students to engage critically with their peers' work but also enhance their understanding of assessment criteria and improve their own skills through the process of evaluating others; (3.3)
- Develop a more ambitious promotions policy in terms of the requirements and expectations that IBSU places on staff seeking advancement; (4.1)
- Refine and clearly articulate mechanisms for protecting students' rights; (5.1)
- Strengthen communication and information provided to students about the range of support mechanisms and activities implemented by the university. (5.2)

Summary of the Best Practices

- Extensive development and delivery of English language programmes (3.1)
- A commitment to innovative partnerships and the range of approaches deployed by the institution, including double and dual degrees, mobility partnerships and the role of English language provision, among others. (3.1)
- The range of financial support available for students (5.2)
- Financial and other support for staff engaged in research activities and continuing professional development (6.2)
- The architecture and media rooms and new Mac Lab (7.1)

Summary Table of Compliance of HEI with Standards and Standard Components

	Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
1.	Mission and strategic development of HEI	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.1	Mission of HEI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	Strategic development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Organisational structure and management of HEI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.1	Organisational structure and management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1	Design and development of educational programmes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2	Structure and content of educational programmes	<input 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1	Staff management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2	Academic/Scientific and invited Staff workload	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Students and their support services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.1	The Rule for obtaining and changing student status, the recognition of education, and student rights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.2	Student support services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 internationalisation	<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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.1	Material resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.2	Library resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.3	Information resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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. Matthew Kitching (Chair),



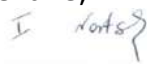
2. Shadi Hamouri (Co-Chair),



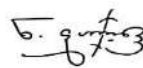
3. Khatuna Saganelidze,



4. Ia Natsvlashvili,



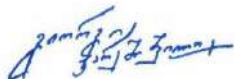
5. Nino Parsadanishvili,



6. Vakhtang Beroshvili,



7. Giorgi Pareshishvili,



Compliance of the Applicant HEI with the Authorisation Standard Components

1. Mission and strategic development of HEI

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

1.1 Mission of HEI

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The University's vision is to create a quality, innovative, international, modern learning and scientific environment based on diversity and equality, which will bring the university local and international recognition and its mission is to offer higher education based on the best practices of teaching, learning and research, as a result of which it prepares a qualified, competitive generation with democratic values in line with the requirements of the local and international labor market.

To help achieve this, the university has identified a series of values, which are:

1. Academic freedom - creates a free academic environment, promotes research, sharing of academic experience and its utilization in teaching.
2. Inclusivity - respects the unique abilities and values of each person as an individual, creates an inclusive learning environment for people with different needs, where education is equally accessible to all
3. Equality and diversity - respects people's rights and values, including different values of ethnic, cultural, religious, and international consciousness, creates an egalitarian environment; offers a wide selection of educational programs in Georgian and English, with the possibility of teaching foreign languages.
4. Transparency - focused on creating an effective governance, team-based, fair and transparent environment for both students and employees, promotes the involvement of stakeholders, their awareness and mutual respect, upholds the norms of ethics and integrity.
5. Innovation - taking into account local and international standards, it is focused on the introduction and internationalization of educational, scientific innovations, modern methods, new approaches.
6. Sustainable development - ensures sustainable, stable and efficient operation of the institution and takes into account the goals of sustainable development.
7. Social responsibility - respects democratic and ethical principles, contributes to the development of civil society and the country, taking into account social responsibility, community needs and lifelong learning.

The vision, mission statement and values of the university were last revised and in 2023, through a process that involved key stakeholders. This was overseen by the

Strategic Development Service who organised questionnaires and focus groups. The new versions were approved by the Governing Board and submitted to the Founders' meeting for final approval. During interviews, University stakeholders confirmed that they shared the mission of the institution and consider it was important in a national and regional context.

The panel concluded that the university has an appropriate mission statement in place that defines its role and place within higher education area and broader society. It also has a strategic development plan in place that broadly corresponds with the mission of the institution.

Evidences/indicators

- University vision, mission and values
- University website - www.ibsu.edu.ge
- Site visit interviews
- 1.2.1 – 2024-2031 strategic development plan;
- 1.2.2 – 2024-2027 action plan;
- 1.2.3 - strategic planning methodology;
- 1.2.4 - mechanisms for monitoring the execution of strategic development and action plans;
- 1.2.5 - monitoring reports on the implementation of strategic development and action plans of previous years;

Recommendations:

None

Suggestions:

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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

1.2 Strategic Development

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

IBSU developed a new 7-year strategic and 3-year action plan after a decision by the new owners and management in October 2023. The institution now has a strategic plan to cover the period 2024-2031 and an action plan spanning the period 2024-27. The development of these documents was preceded by the updating of the strategic planning methodology document, and the process was carried out in

accordance with the new policy. The strategic planning process in the university was led by the Vice-Rector for Administration, working together with the strategic development service and involves a wide range of stakeholders including staff, students and employers. As well as driving internal institutional improvements, the plan seeks to contribute to the social development of the country and support knowledge exchange.

The institution informed the panel that the document “clearly establishes the achievability of the university's strategic tasks, its goals and priorities with the relevant activities to be implemented, which are timetabled with the performance criteria in terms of time and the financial, material or human resources required to perform the activities.”

The panel recognises that the plan defines three main strategic directions, according to which the university will act in the next seven years, namely:

- Continuous development of the quality of education;
- strengthening of the scientific-research direction;
- Internationalisation.

Specifically, the plan states that IBSU will:

- increase in the number of students and diversity/development of student services;
- Promotion of teaching-learning, research/research projects and integration of research into the educational process;
- Development of internationalization policy at the administrative-academic level, increase in the number of exchange programs, increase in the participation of students, academic and administrative personnel in exchange programs;
- Providing human resources for the promotion of educational and research activities, in particular maintaining the number of administrative and academic staff, increasing and promoting their professional development; Also, provision of material and technical resources;
- Development of university infrastructure;
- Financial stability

The panel also recognises that to measure the performance of strategic tasks, the university has selected 4 main benchmarks, namely customer benchmark (C), process benchmark (P), resource benchmark (R) and financial benchmark (F).

However, crucially the panel determined that although the development plan is based on the goals of the institution it inadequately describes the means for achieving these goals, in particular as they relate to student number forecasts for the period of the strategic development plan and that they need to be strengthened to ensure credible, specific, detailed and measurable actions linked to the strategic objectives are in place.

The institution plans to grow student numbers to 8000 over a 6 to 7-year period. The panel considers that the current infrastructure, particularly physical infrastructure, is only just sufficient for the current student quota. In responding to the panel's concerns the institution stated that feasibility forecasts surrounding this growth were based on a mathematical model of audition utilisation. The panel found this to be overly simplistic and not in line with international standards and approaches. The panel consider that IBSU need to develop a broader strategic

perspective on how it plans to expand its infrastructure to accommodate a growth in student numbers while maintaining a high-quality student experience and that this should be evident in its Strategic Development Plan. While the panel recognise that auditoriums are part of this strategic approach, as are staff ratios that have also been considered by the university, though (as discussed later) potentially with insufficient flexibility surrounding benchmarks. However, the institution should also have firm plans for physical premises, including appropriate working spaces for staff, consultation spaces, social learning requirements and clinical facilities. The Strategic Development Plan should also take a view on library expansion, IT infrastructure and the required growth in student service, together with other factors, that are essential for supporting a growth in student numbers while maintaining a high-quality student experience. Current strategic plans viewed by the team do not address these issues in a comprehensive and sufficient manner.

While the customer benchmark includes a strategic objective to increase the number of students from 2891 at the time of producing the plan to 8000 in a 7-year period. In scrutinising the Strategic Development Plan, the panel found an absence of credible actions that would enable such growth to be managed effectively and a similar absence of measures to evaluate implementation of this strategy and any associated action plans. Given the panel's findings relating to infrastructure in the context of any growth in student numbers, which are discussed elsewhere in this report. The panel found deficiencies in the plan's objectives surrounding infrastructure. The 7-year plan states that IBSU will improve staff and student satisfaction rates but does not set out the actions the institution considers are necessary to serve a growing student population. This is especially important given that student satisfaction at the point of developing the plan only stood at 49.80% (Strategic Development Plan, p. 23). The 3-year plan, where you might expect more granular information only states that IBSU will upgrade IT infrastructure and improve university spaces (Annex 1.2.2 p. 42) without setting out exactly what will be done.

The panel also identified concerns surrounding the university's strategy for development of medical provision. The strategic position that the previous NCEQE accreditation panel for the Medical Degree programme understood to be true for was no longer accurate at the time of the most recent site visit. In that plans to develop a 120-150 bed clinic by 2026 and to move IBSU's medical provision to a newly refurbished site near the airport by the end of 2024 were no longer planned with any certainty. The previous panel only considered the university's infrastructure for this programme to be partially compliant when they considered these plans were in place. These changes in strategy therefore weakness IBSU's position with respect to infrastructure for its medical programme.

Therefore, and in summary, taking into account the university's ambitious strategic plans and intention to dramatically grow student numbers, the panel considers that current strategic development plans and the measures to evaluate implementation of strategic and action plans are inadequate.

Evidences/indicators

- 1.2.1 – 2024-2031 strategic development plan;
- 1.2.2 – 2024-2027 action plan;
- 1.2.3 - strategic planning methodology;
- 1.2.4 - mechanisms for monitoring the execution of strategic development and action plans;

- 1.2.5 - monitoring reports on the implementation of strategic development and action plans of previous years;
- 1.2.6 - third mission activity report;

Recommendations:

- Ensure that the strategic development plan provides comprehensive and credible means for achieving these the institution's goals.
- Strengthen the strategic planning process and resulting action plans to ensure they contain credible, specific, detailed and measurable actions linked to the strategic objectives

Suggestions:

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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

2. Organisational Structure and Management of HEI

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

2.1 Organisational Structure and Management

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The university informed the panel that it considers that its organisational structure effectively ensures the fulfilment of the university's mission and goals and is clearly linked to the implementation of the tasks provided by the strategic plan. Notwithstanding the deficiencies in strategic planning and their linkage to organisational goals described above, and elsewhere, in this report, the panel consider that the university's organisational structure is nevertheless appropriate given its areas of strategic focus.

The university ensures the establishment of a registry of educational regulations, specifically the management of the registry of higher educational regulations and corresponding processes, in accordance with applicable laws and the service of students and the registry. Responsible personnel designated on the registry ensure the fulfilment of relevant obligations, as defined by Georgian legislation and university regulations. The university confirmed that it operates under a unified regulation that is developed based on legal requirements and defines the system of organising university operations, specifying procedures for documents and announcements/applications/letters from residents/students. The university's regulatory documents provide mechanisms that ensure timely receipt, efficient management, and subsequent evaluation of academic, scientific, or administrative decisions, ensuring accountability.

The governing bodies of the university comprise the Founders Board, the Rector and the Governing Board. Their powers are described in detail in regulatory documents. The Rector is the highest official of the university and responsible for the full administrative functions of the university. The procedure for electing the Rector is set out Article 6, the appointee is elected for a 6-year term by the Founders Board. With respect to executive management, the Rector is supported by 5 Vice-Rectors in the fields of Administration, Finance, Education, Research and Quality. Vice-rectors are responsible for oversight of cognate structural units with appropriate reporting lines.

The main educational unit within the university is the School, each school being managed by a Dean, with the support of a School Board and School Dissertation Board. Again, the responsibilities and powers of each board are set out in university regulations.

IBSU state that the strategy of the institution is fully related to the organisational structure of the university and defines the target indicators in relation to each structural unit. The university also state that the formation of strategic goals and objectives was based on the action plans received from the structural units. That strategic plans lack sufficiently specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound goals is not owing to the university's structure or management arrangements but rather the requirements placed on these units as part of the strategic planning process.

IBSU has a risk management process in place, as set out in its Business Continuity Plan. The plan takes into account all possible risks, mitigation measures and a strategy for reducing losses. The university informed the panel that the plan is dynamic and responds to both structural and technological changes.

The university has also developed an Internationalisation Policy that aligned is aligned to the institution's mission and goals. This includes strategies for facilitating global mobility for students and staff, the implementation of joint programmes and projects, and participation in international research. Internationalisation is discussed extensively elsewhere in this report, however considering the mission and goals of the institution, the panel determined that implementation of this policy enables the leadership of IBSU to effectively support international cooperation of the institution and the process of internationalisation. The policy includes an emphasis of establishing active and effective communication with existing partners, increasing the number of new international partners by 10 percent each year, developing new English-language programmes, growing internationalisation research collaborations, dramatically increasing the number of international students within 8 years, joining more international organisations and improving IBSU's position in international ranking systems.

Evidences/indicators

- 2.1.1 –University Provision
- 2.1.2 - Provisions of schools
- 2.1.3 - Regulation of management efficiency monitoring and evaluation system
- 2.1.4 - unified rule of procedure and document storage terms
- 2.1.5 - Provisions of structural units of the university
- 2.1.6 - business process continuity plan
- 2.1.7 - Internationalization policy
- 2.1.8 - University structure
- 2.1.9 - Report of the Department of International Relations
- 2.1.10 - international memoranda
- 2.1.11 - Management effectiveness monitoring analysis
- 2.1.12 - Exchange program competition conditions and rules for announcing the competition for employees
- 2.1.13 - Competition conditions of exchange programs and rules for announcing the competition for students
- University website - www.ibsu.edu.ge

Recommendations:

None

<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>None</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>None</p>
<p>Evaluation</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>2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms</p> <p> <input type="radio"/> 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. <input type="radio"/> HEI has a mechanism for planning student body, which will give each student an opportunity to get a high-quality education. </p>
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>Quality assurance at IBSU is overseen by the Vice Rector for Quality Assurance. Operationally the Quality Assurance Service and Internal Quality Assurance Service implement the institution's arrangements in this area. Quality assurance management is carried out according to approved regulations, which the institution consider ensures the accuracy and transparency of all processes.</p> <p>The university's quality assurance system operates in accordance with the Plan, Do, Check Act (PDCA) model. Within this model the institution uses a wide variety of appropriate quality assurance mechanisms, including a formal programme quality assessment process, periodic programme evaluation by employers, students and graduates, annual report by programme leaders and periodic self-assessment for accreditation and/or authorisation. Staff evaluation procedures also contribute to the institution's internal quality assurance framework.</p> <p>The university were able to provide the team with examples of changes made in response to stakeholder feedback, including improvements to IT connectivity and infrastructure based on student feedback, as well as the establishment of an Academic Writing Centre to support masters and doctoral students.</p> <p>The institution has also developed a method for internal evaluation of the effectiveness of its quality assurance mechanisms that comprises:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-assessment (evaluation of the quality of service performance and function execution, the adequacy of material and human resources needed for activities, and the dynamics of meeting the planned deadlines for the functions assigned to the service). 2. Revision of quality assurance mechanisms based on the analysis of the evaluation of the results obtained by institutional studies and, if necessary, the development of appropriate changes; 3. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the changes implemented based on the response to the results obtained by institutional studies.

The panel considered that significant reliance on satisfaction data, gathered through feedback surveys and focus groups may contribute to weaker strategic planning. As this approach places a disproportionate emphasis for internal quality assurance on responding to feedback about existing provision, as opposed to quality assurance processes designed to scrutinize actions intended to meet future plans.

While the institution has a mechanism in place, as required by this standard, for planning the student body according to a prescribed institutional methodology, limitations exist with the current model and these have been discussed extensively in Standard 1.2. To ensure fit-for-purpose planning for student numbers the panel considers that the institution needs to refine its student body planning methodology to consider a broader range of data and growth implications. This is especially the case as the current PDCA cycle has not identified the significant challenges posed by a growth in student numbers to current infrastructure and operating models.

Evidences/indicators

2.2.1 - Quality Assurance Service Regulations;

- 2.2.2 - Internal Quality Assurance Service Regulations;
- 2.2.3 - Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms;
- 2.2.4 - Staff Involvement in Quality Mechanisms;
- 2.2.5 - School Regulations;
- 2.2.6 - Quality Service Research;
- 2.2.7 - Stakeholder Engagement Reports;
- 2.2.8 - Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Mechanisms;
- 2.2.9 - Student Contingent Planning Mechanism and Methodology;
- 2.2.10 - Sustainability and Quality Assurance Target Indicators.

Recommendations:

Ensure the institution's student body planning methodology is fit-for-purpose

Ensure internal quality assurance processes places equal emphasis on scrutinsing the credibility and sufficiency of future planned actions as part of the PDCA cycle.

Suggestions:

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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

2.3. Observing Principles of Ethics and Integrity

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The institution informed the panel that the Academic Writing Center ensures the prevention and management of plagiarism and violations of the principles of academic integrity among academic staff and students. In order to achieve this the university promotes the prevention of plagiarism and its detection through regulations, provisions, mechanisms, information campaigns and workshops.

All Bachelors, Master's and Doctoral theses are checked for academic integrity (with the involvement of scientific supervisors and experts). Academic staff also have the opportunity to check exam papers, in order to prevent academic dishonesty, however exams are not routinely checked upon submission.

IBSU have been using a Polish plagiarism detection programme. However, from the 2023-2024 academic year, access has been gained to the Turnitin programme. The university also intend to use Turnitin to identify the use of artificial intelligence in assessment, which is a positive development. However, the panel determined that the institution is currently somewhat behind the international curve (though maybe not nationally) in developing a position in relation to artificial intelligence and academic integrity. While securing detection capability is a positive move, the institution also needs to consider its relationship to AI and adopt a formal position. There are circumstances where the use of AI can enhance assessment and support the student learning process but IBSU needs to adopt a clear position that regulates this, preferably drawing on international good practice.

The University's Code of Ethics clearly defines norms of ethics for personnel and students, outlining possible forms and procedures for responding to violations. In relation to the staff, the internal labor regulations also apply, which regulate the obligations and rights and duties related to the working environment and conditions for both the employee and the university. Forms of disciplinary responsibility of students are described in detail in the relevant regulatory rule, and students can at any time, in order to protect their interests, apply to the university ombudsman, whose duty is to mediate between students, staff and the university in relevant processes.

Evidences/indicators

- 2.3.1 - Academic Integrity Policy;
- 2.3.2 - Code of Ethics;
- 2.3.3 - Student Disciplinary Responsibility Regulations;
- 2.3.4 - Staff Disciplinary Regulations within Administrative and Support Personnel Work Regulations;
- 2.3.5 - Discipline Regulations for Academic, Scientific, and Administrative Staff;
- 2.3.6 - Responsibilities of the Doctoral Studies and Dissertation Council;
- 2.3.7 - Turnitin Agreement;
- 2.3.8 - Regulations for Master's Thesis Completion;
- 2.3.9 - Ombudsman's Duties.

Recommendations:

None

Suggestions:

Establish a formal policy regulating the use, including acceptable use, of artificial intelligence in assessment

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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

3.Educational Programmes

3.1 Design and Development of Educational Programmes

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

IBSU demonstrates a structured approach to planning, developing, and updating its educational programs in alignment with the guidelines set forth by the university's regulatory framework. This framework encompasses all levels of higher education (Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral) as well as teacher training and single-cycle medical education programmes.

IBSU's educational offerings adhere to Georgian higher education laws, the national qualifications framework, and specific ministerial orders that define study areas. The university ensures that its programmes not only comply with these external regulations but also integrate the regulatory documents that govern its educational processes.

The planning and implementation of educational programmes at IBSU involves a broad range of stakeholders, including academic staff, practitioners, students, alumni, and other interested parties. This collaborative approach is crucial for aligning programmes with the needs of the labor market and ensuring that educational outcomes are relevant and effective. The inclusion of feedback from stakeholders, such as graduates and employers, supports continuous improvement and responsiveness to changing educational demands.

The university's programmes are designed to foster logical coherence among their components and are tailored to the average academic capabilities of students. This strategic alignment ensures that students can complete their studies within a reasonable timeframe. Decisions regarding programme initiation, modification, or termination are made with careful consideration of relevant data, including enrollment trends, graduate employment statistics, and external best practice.

The regulations governing programme development mandate that programme leaders analyse international best practice and involve both local and foreign experts in programme design. Surveys and focus group discussions are employed to gather insights from students, employers, and faculty, facilitating an inclusive approach to curriculum updates. Faculty members are actively engaged in revising their syllabi, ensuring that learning outcomes and teaching methodologies remain aligned with current educational standards.

Periodic evaluations conducted by qualified specialists provide further opportunities for programme enhancement. These evaluations generate actionable recommendations, which are reviewed by programme leaders and academic administrators to improve educational effectiveness. However, IBSU does not adopt a systematic regular review process for course syllabi to ensure that the content remains current, relevant, and aligned with evolving industry standards and educational best practices.

The university has clear policies regarding the cancellation or alteration of educational programmes, ensuring that such decisions are supported by thorough research and analysis. In situations where programmes are modified, students are afforded the chance to transition into new curricula while retaining the credits they have already earned. This approach protects students' academic interests and facilitates a smooth transition during programme changes or cancellations.

Currently, IBSU offers a diverse array of 41 educational programmes, encompassing 23 undergraduate, 12 master's and 4 doctoral programs, as well as a teacher training programme, and a one-cycle medical education programme. Notably, 26 of these programmes are delivered in English. The university is also in the process of securing accreditation for five additional undergraduate programmes, further expanding its educational offerings. A significant highlight is the development of a Joint-degree master's programme in "Management and Information Technology," in collaboration with various international institutions (the University of Applied Sciences Zwickau in Germany, the Kazakh-American Free University, the Armenian State University of Economics, and the Kyrgyz-German Institute of Applied Informatics). This programme, which has received international accreditation, reflects IBSU's commitment to global standards and partnerships.

All relevant regulatory documents, including those pertaining to educational programmes, are made accessible on the university's website: www.ibsu.edu.ge. This transparency allows both students and staff to access vital information regarding their academic pursuits.

In summary, IBSU exhibits compliance with the standards for educational programme planning and development. Through active stakeholder engagement, adherence to regulatory frameworks, and a commitment to continuous improvement, the university effectively meets the educational needs of its students while maintaining high academic standards.

Evidences/indicators

- Supporting documents of the SAR
- Interviews during the site visit
- Website of the IBSU

Recommendations:

- Establish a systematic review process for course syllabi that requires faculty to update them at least once per academic year. In order to ensure that the content remains current, relevant, and aligned with evolving industry standards and educational best practice.

Suggestions:

- Expand the options for individualised learning plans by integrating more diverse learning pathways and resources. This could include online modules, internships, or project-based learning opportunities; tailored to students' interests and career goals.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage collaboration between different departments to create interdisciplinary programmes or courses. This could help students gain a broader perspective and develop skills that are increasingly valued in a complex, interconnected job market.
Best Practices (if applicable): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive development and delivery of English language programmes A commitment to innovative partnerships (double and dual degrees, mobility partnerships etc)
Evaluation <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>
3.2 Structure and Content of Educational Programmes <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 <p>At the university, educational programmes are crafted in alignment with existing legislation and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) guidelines. At IBSU, one ECTS credit corresponds to 25 hours of study, while the medical education programme assigns 30 hours per credit, encompassing both classroom and independent study time. Currently, the university's programmes, aside from those requiring future compliance reports, fulfill the criteria established by the national qualifications' framework and the relevant classification of fields of study. These programmes are designed with sector-specific characteristics in mind, ensuring that the defined learning outcomes are transparent and aligned with the level of higher education and the qualifications conferred.</p> <p>The educational content, volume, and organisation of the programmes are appropriately tailored to the programme level and the qualifications awarded. The logical structure of the programmes facilitates the achievement of learning outcomes within a reasonable timeframe for the average academically capable student. This structure includes a coherent sequence of study components, the extent and content of specialised courses, specified learning outcomes for each component, teaching methodologies, and contemporary literature relevant to the curriculum.</p> <p>To adhere to qualification frameworks, programmes incorporate both mandatory and elective courses. Undergraduate programmes include a flexible component, allowing students to cultivate additional skills. The learning outcomes for compulsory courses across all educational programmes are aligned with overall programme outcomes, thus supporting the achievement of established objectives. A detailed learning</p>

outcome map has been created to delineate the programme's goals associated with each course.

IBSU's programmes across all three educational levels comply with current legislation:

- First Cycle (Bachelor's): Academic programmes require a minimum of 240 credits/ECTS, with relevant conditions stating 180 credits.
- One-cycle medical programme: Comprising at least 360 credits.
- Teacher Training Programme: Requires a minimum of 60 credits.
- Second Cycle (Master's): Mandates at least 120 credits/ECTS, with relevant conditions stating 60 credits.
- Third Cycle (Doctorate): Requires a minimum duration of three years, with educational components totaling no less than 60 credits.

The design of these programmes ensures a logical connection among their various components, allowing students with average academic capabilities to achieve intended outcomes. The teaching and learning strategies employed in each course align with higher education standards and are designed to foster student engagement through a student-centered approach.

The one cycle medical program is a 6 year-program and as mentioned above it is comprising at least 360 credits. The learning outcomes of the Program are systematized on the basis of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) evaluation criteria and the integration of competencies in the field of medicine, dividing 3 NQF domains (Knowledge and Understanding, Skills, and Responsibility and Autonomy) into 14 outcomes aligned with 14 competencies in the Sectoral Benchmarks of High Medical Education of the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement.

To cater to individual student needs, each course specifies a time and location for additional consultations with instructors, ensuring at least one hour per week for each course. A schedule for these counseling sessions is created each semester and made accessible through multiple channels.

Moreover, the university's regulations facilitate the development of personalised curricula. The university provides suitable teaching and learning conditions that accommodate diverse student requirements, special educational needs, and varying academic preparedness, including adaptations in the educational environment and necessary human resources. Requests for individual curricula are considered by the school board, with the programme head, and potentially the internal quality assurance service, involved in the development process.

Information regarding the university's educational offerings is publicly available. The catalog of programmes is accessible on the university's website: www.ibsu.edu.ge and is updated regularly to reflect any changes.

The quality assurance service routinely evaluates programme structures, the effectiveness of programme components, and opportunities for enhancement. Additionally, student academic performance is monitored each semester, with timely responses to any identified concerns. All educational programmes at the university

are accredited and meet both the accreditation standards for higher education programmes and relevant qualification requirements.

To summarise, IBSU effectively adheres to the standards for educational programme outcomes and individual student needs. Through a framework that ensures alignment with legal and academic standards, as well as a strong focus on student engagement and personalised education, the university demonstrates a commitment to high-quality educational practices.

Evidences/indicators

- Supporting documents of the SAR
- Interviews during the site visit
- Website of the IBSU

Recommendations:

None

Suggestions:

- Establish a programme of ongoing professional development for academic staff focused on effective assessment strategies and best practices. This could include training on formative assessment techniques, feedback mechanisms, and innovative evaluation tools to enhance teaching and learning outcomes.
- Develop an online resource hub where students can access detailed information about assessment criteria, grading rubrics, and best practice for preparation. This hub could include example assessments, tips for success, and FAQs to help students better understand the evaluation process and expectation

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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

3.3 Assessment of Learning Outcomes

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

At IBSU, educational programmes are formulated in accordance with relevant legal standards and field-specific requirements, ensuring that students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills. The assessment framework for achieving learning outcomes is tailored to the unique aspects of each field, incorporating suitable evaluation methods, components and formats.

The assessment of programme elements is governed by regulations concerning the educational process, including specific guidelines for master's programmes and the

medical school. Each School has established procedures for planning, implementing, and assessing research components, along with standards for conducting examinations in doctoral education.

IBSU grants academic freedom to faculty members, allowing them to create assessment systems for their courses that align with university guidelines and the unique characteristics of the subject matter. This flexibility ensures that the evaluation processes meet the specific needs and requirements of each field.

Student knowledge is assessed through oral and/or written evaluations, employing a 100-point grading scale. Final assessments comprise both midterm and final evaluations. The grading system features five levels of achievement:

- (A) Excellent – 91 points
- (B) Very Good – 81-90 points
- (C) Good – 71-80 points
- (D) Satisfactory – 61-70 points
- (E) Acceptable – 51-60 points

Two categories of failing grades are also present:

- (FX) Fail – 41-50 points, indicating that further work is needed to pass, with an opportunity for an additional exam after independent study.
- (F) Fail – 40 points or below, necessitating a complete retake of the course.

A minimum competency threshold is established for both midterm and final assessments, where no more than 60% of the final grade can be attributed to the minimum requirements. The distribution of points, the minimum competency thresholds and assessment criteria are detailed in each course syllabus.

To earn credit, students must meet the learning outcomes specified in the syllabus, which includes:

- Exceeding the minimum competency thresholds for midterm and final assessments.
- Achieving at least 51 points in the final evaluation.

Students scoring between 41 and 50 points in the final assessment may take an additional exam, provided they also meet the overall minimum competency threshold. The format and evaluation criteria for assessments are outlined in the syllabi, taking into consideration the specifics of each course.

Comprehensive details about assessment methods and criteria are provided in the course syllabi, which are shared with students at the start of the term. Syllabi are accessible through the university's electronic platform (<https://smart.ibsu.edu.ge/>), while assessment results can be viewed in the university's information system (<https://sis.ibsu.edu.ge>).

The assessment protocols for master's theses and doctoral dissertations are defined in specific regulations for each programme, ensuring clarity in evaluation criteria. To promote transparency, a dedicated assessment overview is available in the Student Information System (SIS), allowing students to view both their scores and any components that received failing grades.

Furthermore, the regulations for graduate education require that reviewer feedback reports, even if unscored, are provided to students for constructive purposes. Faculty members are responsible for reviewing and uploading the course syllabus to the electronic portal at the beginning of the semester, a task that is monitored regularly by the internal quality assurance service.

At the start of each semester, orientation sessions are conducted to inform students about various aspects of the educational process, including evaluation criteria. These meetings aim to identify any potential issues with the programmes, which are subsequently discussed at the School Board for further action.

Regular surveys are conducted to gauge student perceptions of teaching, learning, and evaluation processes. The Quality Assurance Office continuously monitors student understanding of the assessment system through semesterly surveys and direct engagement.

Students at IBSU have the right to appeal their assessments, as outlined in the university's educational regulations and specific guidelines for each programme. This process further reinforces the institution's commitment to transparency, fairness, and the protection of student rights.

The panel did hear evidence in interviews that employer feedback on credit bearing internships or practice placements directly contributes to student grades and their GPA. The panel also heard of instances where students take placements with their friends who provide favourable reports and marks. This stands to undermine security and fairness of assessment and the institution should take steps to mitigate this in the approval of internships.

In summary, IBSU has established a well-structured and transparent assessment system that aligns with legal standards and the specific requirements of various academic fields. By fostering student engagement, maintaining clear communication about evaluation criteria, and providing avenues for appeals, the university effectively promotes academic improvement and safeguards student rights.

Evidences/indicators

- Supporting documents of the SAR
- Interviews during the site visit
- Website of the IBSU
- SMART platform
- Student Information System

Recommendations:

- Develop a structured feedback mechanism that allows students to receive detailed insights on their performance. This could include personalised feedback on assignments, midterm results, and final assessments, helping students identify areas for improvement and promoting a growth mindset.
- Ensure fairness and transparency where employers are involved in determining part of a student's assessment outcome.

<p>Suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase transparency in the assessment process by creating a more user-friendly online resource that clearly outlines all assessment criteria, processes, and available resources. This could include video tutorials, FAQs, and case studies showcasing successful assessments to further demystify the process for students. • Introduce peer assessment opportunities within courses to foster collaborative learning. In order to not only encourage students to engage critically with their peers' work but also enhance their understanding of assessment criteria and improve their own skills through the process of evaluating others.
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>None</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements ○ <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements

4. Staff of the HEI

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

4.1. Staff Management

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

IBSU has a personnel management policy in place, approved by the Governing Board (Resolution #5, 24/01/2024). The rules for the appointment of persons involved in the educational and scientific process regulate the procedures for the appointment of personnel involved in teaching, including academic and visiting personnel. Related documents define all procedural issues and appeal of academic competition results, including the composition of the commission, deadlines, requirements for candidates, and the documentation to be submitted. All academic competitions at the University are announced publicly, are available for a period specified by law and the stages of selection are organized in accordance with the current legislation of Georgia. The appointment to academic positions is possible only through an open competition. In addition, related regulatory documents are developed for hiring, management and evaluation of academic and invited personnel as well as administrative and support staff.

The University has developed the Administrative and Support Staff Recruitment Rules, which describe the selection procedures of applicants for a vacant position. For each vacancy, the position is published on employment portals and the university website. The selection criteria are clearly stated in the job description. These documents are publicly available to academic, invited, administrative and support staff. Additionally, any changes made to these regulations are communicated to employees within a reasonable timeframe. During the interview with the administration, it was mentioned that IBSU intends to review the appointment and selection procedure in terms of its detailed elaboration. Many fundamental changes have been made to the incentive mechanisms and the institution wants to revisit and ensure these are fully documented.

The Personnel Management Policy defines the general principles and rules for personnel management. To implement the policy, a Human Resources Management and Development Office has been created within the organizational structure of the university. The office is responsible for the administration of human resources, including through the development of relevant policies and human resources administration procedures, working to recruit and attract employees and helping new starters to adapt to the work environment. The office also manages the processes related to staff administration, staff training and development programmes and ensures personal data privacy. This is in addition to conducting activities aimed at strengthening the corporate culture, administering staff performance evaluations,

conducting staff satisfaction surveys, and more. Further to this, the Human Resources Management and Development Office is responsible for ensuring that the qualifications of the personnel are in line with the requirements of the University and relevant legislation. The office maintains electronic databases of employees and utilizes the electronic system Signify, which facilitates the digital management of employees' contracts.

As part of staff induction, the office presents the employee with information about the work process. This includes details about salary allocation, university health insurance, university services, corporate email and rules for using electronic resources, as well as a recommendation for personnel to familiarize themselves with the university's regulations through appropriate electronic resources.

The university has appropriate rules and conditions of staff affiliation, which the academic affiliated staff commit to as part of the agreement signed with the university. At the same time, the conditions related to affiliation are reflected in the labor contract to be signed with the academic staff. It should be noted, that at the moment of site visit the affiliation rule was in effect, which will be replaced by the new rule of affiliation in the 2024-2025 academic year. During the reporting period (since 2018), the conditions of affiliation were generally regulated by the Rules of Appointment of Persons Involved in the Educational and Scientific Process (approved in September 2019). According to this version of the aforementioned rule, the person elected to the academic position must at the same time be an affiliated academic person of the university, who participates in the process of community development and knowledge sharing on behalf of the university and carries out the main educational, research/scientific activities in the university, and the results of his research are considered to be the attached to the university. The staff member is also expected to be involved in the educational activities of the university, in decision-making processes related to research and other educational issues, to provide counseling and academic and scientific guidance to students. In exceptional cases, based on the submission of the School Board, by the decision of the governing board, it was possible to announce an academic position under the condition of optional affiliation.

A decision was made to implement new regulations for the affiliation of personnel, effective from the 2024-2025 academic year. The new rule of appointment of persons involved in the educational and scientific process was approved in February 2024 and a new affiliation rule was also developed in June 2024. The new rule of affiliation came into force immediately after being approved by the governing board on June 19, 2024. The rule describes the types of research, academic, administrative activities of affiliated academic staff, and the minimum university workload of full-time/part-time academic staff. It establishes in detail the rights and duties of the affiliated academic staff, their hourly workload and other conditions of the labor-legal relationship.

A model of workload and financial remuneration of the academic staff of the university has also been developed, which implies a monthly fixed remuneration for the affiliated staff who are involved in research, scientific and creative activities, and in the relevant academic year agree to develop a research publication. At the time of the experts' visit, although the 2024-2025 academic year had already begun, the

new type of affiliation contracts had not yet been signed with the academic staff. During the interview with the university management, it was noted that the academic staff can stay on the old contract or choose a new affiliation contract, the transition to the new affiliation conditions is a voluntary process, and it takes some time to negotiate and sign the contract with each staff member. The panel therefore recommends that the University renew labor and affiliation contracts with academic staff according to the recently adopted affiliation rule.

The university promotes the personal and professional development of employees. The Human Resources Management and Development Office periodically conducts various types of employee surveys in order to determine their respective needs and plan the measures necessary for their staff development. The institution presented material on activities conducted for staff professional development. The facts about such activities were supported by the academic and invited personnel met by the panel during the site-visit interviews.

According to the staff management policy, in order to encourage the staff, the organization can use both financial and non-financial forms. The forms of encouragement can be declaration of thanks, material reward and compensation, including bonuses, specific prizes and other incentives. The Rector makes a decisions regarding an employee's incentive, on the recommendation of the employee's immediate supervisor, several types of incentives can be used. During the interview, it was mentioned that at this stage in the incentive system, the University does not have a bonus system, but the University pursues a promotion practice, for example, one of the former deans was promoted as a vice-rector. Documentation proving that financial rewards were received by academic personnel and administrative and support personnel were presented by the university. For example, one associate professor was given financial support to take the Harvard University Higher Education Teaching Certificate online course. Other examples were mentined during the site-visit interview.

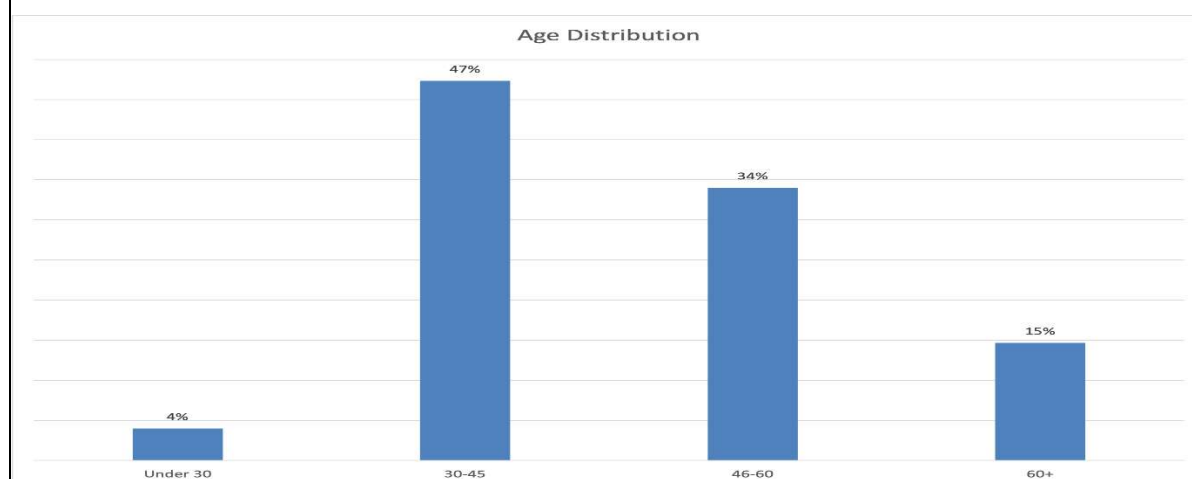
Despite the fact that the University has instruments for encouragement of academic activity of staff, the expert group considers that there is a possibility to develop a more ambitious promotions policy in terms of the requirements and expectations that IBSU places on staff seeking advancement. This has the potential to raise standards, quality and the reputation of the institution. It is therefore suggested to develop a more ambitious promotions policy in terms of the requirements and expectations that IBSU places on staff seeking advancement.

The assessment of academic and invited staff is carried out taking into account their scientific and educational activities. An evaluation of the scientific activity of invited personnel is carried out every two years. In addition, the IBSU has developed an academic performance report, which is used to evaluate the annual academic performance of academic staff. In particular, an assistant professor must accumulate 10 points, an associate professor 20 points, and a professor 40 points during the year.

To assess the quality of performance of academic and administrative staff and ensure professional development, the form of the academic activity report was refined with the involvement of academic staff, and mechanisms for evaluating administrative

staff were developed. The need for professional development of academic and administrative staff has been identified through surveys conducted by the Quality Assurance Service and Human Resources Management and Development Office. The university systematically conducts training, workshops, webinars, and working meetings with personnel, based on the feedback received from the staff satisfaction survey results. During the visit, the administration mentioned that they already have a 360-degree evaluation system in place for administrative staff. The relevant questionnaires have already been sent and for the first time the evaluation was conducted within this system.

The statistical position regarding the number of personnel is as follows: number of staff employed at HEI (including academic, scientific, invited, administrative, and support staff)-670. Total number of academic staff-150. Total number of affiliated academic staff-99, and among them professors-28, associate professors-62, assistant professor-9. Number of foreign academic/visiting staff involved in teaching-24, Number of foreign academic/scientific/visiting personnel involved in research-8. Invited personnel involved in the educational process-377, Administrative and support personnel-143. With respect to the gender split, 51% of personnel are female and 47% of the staff are aged 30-45 years old.



In April 2024, the university approved sustainability and quality assurance target benchmarks. The purpose of these standards is to determine the minimum number of human and material resources, and the corresponding ratios required for the implementation of educational programmes:

"...The ratio of the number of students to the number of academic staff is no more than 40/1 at the programme level;

The ratio of the number of students to the number of academic staff is no more than 60/1 at the university level.

The ratio of the number of students to the total number of academic and visiting staff is no more than 20/1".

According to the panel, the ratio of academic staff to visiting staff (150/377), and especially the ratio of affiliated academic staff to visiting staff (99/377), is a challenge for the future further development of the institution. The ratio of administrative and

support staff to academic staff (143/150) is also a challenge. It is recommended to increase the number of affiliated staff at the university level and for program in medicine to ensure the sustainability of the educational programs. Benchmarks for the staff are in some cases only set for a period of one or two years and are maintained almost unchanged, for example: The ratio of academic and scientific staff to the number of invited staff (1/3), the ratio of academic and scientific staff to the total number of staff of the institution (1/5), the ratio of the number of affiliated academic staff to the number of students (1/35 in 2024 and 1/40 in 2025). However, in some cases, the improvement of the target marks is not fixed for the period of the next authorization. The institution has defined target marks in the strategic plan, where in several cases it is envisaged to maintain the current year's target mark for 7 years. For example, the current ratio of affiliated academic staff to staff involved in teaching is 1/4. According to the strategic plan, the 7-year target is to maintain this indicator by 1/4. It is necessary for the institution to take care of improving the target marks. The panel therefore recommends that the institution should seek to constantly refine the benchmarks for the university staff and the work completed by them.

The university has in place certain basic elements to involve academic staff in decision-making processes. The governing board at the university level includes the vice-rector in the field of research, the vice-rector in the field of study and the deans of the main academic units and schools. In addition, programme leaders are invited to join the extended governing board. However, the extended board only meets on an ad-hoc basis and does not meet on a permanent, cyclical basis. At the school level, the school board consists of affiliated academic staff and programme leaders. The Dissertation Board represents a further decision-making body at the school level, which includes professors with doctorate degrees and associate professors and is authorized to grant a doctorate degree to a doctoral student based on the decision of the Defense Commission.

Although the university has some tools for staff to participate in management decisions, the panel considered that the involvement of staff in the decision-making process should be increased. Academic staff are not represented through elected peers at the faculty or university governing boards (except for ad-hoc meetings assembled at the discretion of university managers). Furthermore, school board members are appointed by the rector based on the dean's recommendation. "...The school council consists of the school dean, the administrative director/directors of the undergraduate/master's educational programmes, the head/co-head of the academic programme, the affiliated academic staff as decided by the dean, the student". The head of the programme is an appointed person. The dean is an appointed person, the rector is an appointed person. The members of the faculty council are selected by the dean of the faculty, the student is selected to the faculty council through a competition, not as a result of election. The panel therefore recommends that the university ensure the involvement of academic staff in the decision-making process at all levels through representation by elected academic staff in governing bodies.

Finally, with respect to the medical programme, national requirements state that those teaching clinical medical subjects should hold at least 3 years clinical experience, following registration. However, the panel heard that in some instances staff intended to teach these subjects are newly or soon to be qualified doctors,

whereas the university intends to count their clinical experience during their time as a student towards these 3 years. The panel did not consider this met the national requirements or that this was safe or fit-for-purpose and recommends that the institution should therefore reverse that position.

Evidences/indicators

- Webpage of the University <https://ibsu.edu.ge/en/documentation/>
- Personnel management policy
- Rule for hiring administrative and support staff
- Rule for appointing persons involved in the educational and scientific process to the position (approved in 2019 and being in force during the reporting period)
- Rule for appointing persons involved in the educational and scientific process (current edition approved in 2024)
- Affiliation rules for the academic staff of the Black Sea International University (approved in June, 2024)
- Labor regulations on labor discipline of administrative and support staff
- Labor regulations on labor discipline of academic, scientific and guest personnel
- Provision of Human Resources Management and Development Service
- Samples of employment contracts to be signed with academic staff
- Statute of the University
- Provisions of schools
- Provisions of structural units/departments/Offices
- Academic activity report form
- Academic activity report sample
- Personnel satisfaction surveys
- Analysis of personnel evaluation results
- Professional development activities of academic and administrative staff
- Regulation of determination of academic load and salary
- Regulation of encouragement of academic activity
- Target Benchmarks for Sustainability and Quality Assurance
- Strategic development plan
- Documents (examples) of administrative/support staff hiring from the last competitions
- Documents (examples) of academic staff hiring from the last competitions
- Number of applications on advertised job openings
- Distribution of academic and scientific staff according to age and gender
- Documentation proving that financial rewards were received by academic personnel/administrative and support personnel
- 360-degree evaluation forms for the evaluation of the administrative staff
- Analysis of the results of evaluation of academic and invited staff activities
- Personnel CV's and qualification documents
- Site-visit interviews
- Self-evaluation report submitted by the University

Recommendations:

- renew labor and affiliation contracts with academic staff according to the recently adopted affiliation rule.
- ensure the involvement of academic staff in the decision-making process at all levels through the election of academic staff in governing bodies.
- ensure that only staff who hold at least 3 years clinical experience, post registration are appointed to teach clinical classes
- Increase the number of affiliated staff at the university level and for program in medicine to ensure the sustainability of the educational programs

Suggestions:

- develop a more ambitious promotions policy in terms of the requirements and expectations that IBSU places on staff seeking advancement.

Best Practices (if applicable):

None
Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements
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>
<p>The University, in particular the Human Resources Management and Development Service, in cooperation with schools and the internal quality assurance service, prepares the workload chart of academic and visiting staff every semester to ensure the fulfillment of the responsibilities stipulated in the labor contract agreement. The university has developed a regulation for determining academic workload and remuneration (approved in June 2024), which determines the components of the academic workload of the university lecturer (academic staff, invited lecturer): educational activity, scientific-research activity, consultations, participation in the programme development process and various events planned within the programme. For the purposes of calculating the academic workload of the staff, the time required for the preparation and evaluation of lecture materials is also taken into account. In order to determine the academic load of the lecturer, the university takes account of workload in all other higher educational institutions. To calculate the academic load at the university, the lecturer's application is taken into account, which indicates their load at other universities in the current semester. In order to ensure the smooth implementation of the educational process, as defined by the educational programme and the performance of scientific-research activities and other functions assigned to personnel, the maximum weekly lecture load of the academic in all universities can be no more than 27 hours, the consulting hours of the lecturer include at least 1 hour per week.</p> <p>The affiliation rules at the university and the labor contract/agreement to be signed with the academic staff ensure that any individual is affiliated only with IBSU. Staff workload and/or affiliation with other universities is checked based on the QMS database and the application provided by the staff (for more details about existing affiliation rules at the university see standard 4.1). The Quality Assurance Service maintains records relating to staff affiliation.</p> <p>As mentioned under Standard 4.1, some target benchmarks for university staff are defined for 2025 and some of them are defined for 2027. During the interviews with the university, the panel asked questions to clarify the logic applied by IBSU, the methodology the university used in setting target benchmarks and the best practice the IBSU relies on when establishing benchmarks (for example to identify the number of personnel per programme). The university administration described the process as follows: the University analysed the factual data and situation and conducted surveys of interested parties. Based on survey results and based on the students' satisfaction survey results (where students expressed satisfaction with the current ratios and situation), the university decided that existing ratios are acceptable. They decided to set different benchmarks for different time periods because the institution has already achieved good indicators and ratios for some benchmarks.</p>

The institution relies on the document of sustainability and quality assurance target benchmarks (referred to under Standard 4.1) to determine the number of personnel according to each academic programme. During the interviews the university administration did not highlight the best international practice they rely on when determining the number of personnel per programme. Rather, representatives of the university administration gave the explanation that encountered difficulty in relying on international best practice because such information is not open access. In the quality and sustainability assurance target benchmarks document it is written that benchmarks can be changed according to the specifics of the programmes. However, the panel recommends that IBSU consider how it can utilise international best practice in personnel planning methodologies to ensure adequate numbers of professors, associate professors and assistant professors per programme. The panel considered that the university needs to put more effort towards improving benchmarks for its staff to effectively carry out its educational and research activities. In particular, the university should consider international best practice when planning academic staff/student ratios.

Evidences/indicators

- Web-page of the University <https://ibsu.edu.ge/en/documentation/>
- Personnel management policy
- Regulation of determining the academic workload and remuneration
- Affiliation rules for the academic staff of the Black Sea International University (approved in June, 2024)
- Samples of employment contracts to be signed with academic staff
- Regulation of determination of academic load and salary
- Regulation of encouragement of academic activity
- Target Benchmarks for Sustainability and Quality Assurance
- Strategic development plan
- Methodology of planning the contingent of students
- Analysis of personnel workload by Quality assurance service
- Personnel CV's and qualification documents
- Site-visit interviews
- Self-evaluation report submitted by the University

Recommendations:

-

Suggestions:

- Integrate international best practice in personnel planning methodologies to improve staff benchmarks.

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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

5. Students and Their Support Services

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

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

- 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

At IBSU, there is a regulatory rule for the educational process, which details the procedures for acquiring, suspending, and terminating student status, mobility, awarding qualifications and recognizing prior accredited learning. All processes provided by this rule are transparent and fair, ensuring compliance with the legislation in force in Georgia. The rule is public and accessible to students and other interested parties. Additionally, any changes made to this rule are communicated to students via the university's email system

In relation to each educational programme, the curriculum includes detailed prerequisites for admission, aligning with the relevant legislative requirements for the educational level. Moreover, the prerequisites for admission to the master's and doctoral levels are described in the regulations for master's education and in the regulations of the doctoral education and dissertation council.

The enrolment of non-resident students is regulated by the international student enrolment policy. In order to determine the knowledge of the language of the program of students (citizens of foreign countries, stateless persons, citizens of Georgia who meet the conditions established by the by the order 224/N of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia of December 29, 2011), the university conducts an online interview and the video recording of the said interview is made available to the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia. The implementation of related activities and consultation of interested parties are the responsibility of the university's International Relations Office. This includes the recognition of education obtained abroad.

IBSU is focused on the effective protection of students' interests and rights. Accordingly, detailed information on issues related to student status and their legal position is provided to students during orientation meetings. Additionally, consultations with school representatives and the Quality Assurance Office are available throughout the semester as needed. Simultaneously, by decision of the university's new management team and as discussed elsewhere in this report, the administration of IBSU holds monthly public meetings with students. During these meetings, the university presents planned and implemented changes and projects, while students have the opportunity to ask questions or provide feedback on academic and other services.

The university's special efforts in the aforementioned direction are confirmed by the newly established Ombudsman Institute, responsible for safeguarding the interests of students and mediation. This means, in the case of students' requests, each

application is considered, studied, and addressed to the relevant structural units and, finally, the Institute makes recommendations and decisions tailored to the student's interests. Consequently, during the study of applications, it is possible for the university to begin the implementation of ethical codes and student rights protection by administrative, academic, or other staff members. Reaction forms are described for each case in the university's Code of Ethics, Personnel Management Policy, and internal regulations. Furthermore, any university process ensures the security of students' personal data. These guarantees are provided within the university's policy for the protection of personal data.

Article 45 of the statute on "Higher Education" delineates the mechanism for safeguarding students' rights and legitimate interests, which is mandated to be established in the form of self-governance within higher education institutions. IBSU endeavours to supplant this rights protection mechanism with an ombudsman, to whom the aforementioned authorities have been delegated. Additionally, the university has student clubs, independent associations, and similar entities. However, notwithstanding these provisions, the panel consider that the institution fails to demonstrate compliance with Article 45, Paragraph 3 of the statute on "Higher Education", particularly in relation to subparagraph "a", regarding student participation in the governance of the higher education institution. Furthermore, to ensure the legitimacy of the ombudsman and to engender trust and transparency in the eyes of third parties, including international students, the panel recommends that IBSU, reassess the appointment process of the ombudsman. Owing to the fact that the absence self-governance, student representatives in university level committees and councils and the use of an ombudsman, appointed by university managers, weakens student engagement and, in the case of the latter, introduces the potential for a conflict of interest.

Student rights and duties related to the teaching/learning process are fully described in the Regulation of the Educational Process. In addition, in order to protect the interests of students as much as possible, a service for monitoring educational processes was created at the university. The office is responsible for conducting and controlling the educational process and exams, uploading students' evaluations in the electronic system within reasonable time limits, receiving students' complaints and coordinating evaluations conducted as part of training courses. Students' rights to appeal assessment decisions is described in detail in the rules for conducting examinations.

Contracts to be signed with the student (in Georgian and English languages) define the rights and obligations of the parties including the fee payment policy, the procedure for resolving disputes and the grounds for terminating the contract. The agreement also lists the university's main regulatory acts that the student must be familiar with for the purposes of the study process. In addition, despite the existence of various mechanisms aimed at the improvement of students' rights by the university, IBSU periodically conducts a student satisfaction survey in order to ensure the effectiveness of these processes, and if necessary, refine the rules and procedures based on the received feedback.

Evidences/indicators

- 5.1.1 - The regulation of the educational process
- 5.1.2 - Provisions of MA studies
- 5.1.3 - Provision of Doctoral Education and Dissertation Council
- 5.1.4 - Rules for enrollment of international students
- 5.1.5 - Ombudsman provision

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 5.1.6 - Code of Ethics ○ 5.1.7 - The regulation of students' disciplinary responsibility ○ 5.1.8 – Labor regulations on labor discipline of administrative and support staff ○ 5.1.9 – Labor regulations on labor discipline of academic, scientific and invited personnel ○ 5.1.10 - Personal data protection policy ○ 5.1.11 - The procedure for conducting exams ○ 5.1.12 - Sample contract to be signed with the student ○ 5.1.13 - Statute of the University ○ University website ○ Interview results;
<p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the current appointment process of the Student Ombudsman from a Rector's appointment to a democratic election by the student body • Strengthen the involvement of student representation in university decision-making processes
<p>Suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine and clearly articulate mechanisms for protecting students' rights
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>None</p>
<p>Evaluation</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
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>In order to facilitate the planning of the learning process for students and the improvement of academic achievement, the university has designated responsible persons who are also involved in managing the needs of students. In all schools, these persons are represented by the dean, heads of educational programmes and administrative directors of educational programmes. In addition, the university operates a service for monitoring learning processes, one of the important functions of which is to inform students about news related to weekly lecture and exam schedules.</p> <p>Information about structural units, management contacts and working and reception hours is also available on the university website. In order to maintain the continuity of service delivery to students, the academic head of the educational programme,</p>

together with the administrative directors, provide counselling for students during working hours. Students are informed about the possibility of counselling related to the study courses in the counselling schedules, this possibility is also described in the syllabi of the study courses. In particular, in order to meet the individual needs of students within the programmes, each study course defines the time and venue for additional consultations with the lecturer. This must be at least 1 hour per week in each study course.

Schools conduct orientation meetings with students at the beginning of the semester, where the students are also provided with information about all the detailed issues related to the educational process, about available consultations and assistance. The university also offers counselling services for students and graduates in the direction of career planning and development. In particular, the career planning and development service is responsible for the professional development of students and graduates and their support in the direction of employment. For this purpose, the career planning and development service carries out various activities, particularly: organising meetings of companies and students, employment forums, training and projects. They also invite representatives of international employers to interact with students, survey of employers and consider their recommendations. They also assist employers to conduct recruitment exercises among students, in accordance with the requirements of companies. Based on close cooperation with schools, the Career Planning and Development Service selects the best students, taking into account the company's requirements, and submits their candidacy to the employing companies for further employment.

The Career Planning and Development Office, together with the academic leaders of the educational programme, constantly researches the labor market and trends related to the profession to ensure a high-quality link with the labor market requirements. At the same time, the career planning and development service, in cooperation with schools, is working on improving the practice component, which means diversifying practice institutions and strengthening relevant partnerships. Currently 342 memorandums have been signed with private and public sector organisations. In the current semester alone, about 90 job vacancies and internship opportunities were shared with students and graduates.

The university continuously conducts research on students and alumni regarding their career and academic development and needs. Telephone and electronic surveys, as well as face-to-face meetings and focus groups are conducted. The university also conducts an annual survey of graduate employment, including employment rates by profession.

Internationalisation of students' experience is one of the strategic directions of the university. For this purpose, the Department of International Relations operates in the university. The department is responsible for developing partnerships with international universities, administering the university's membership in international associations and unions and supporting international mobility for students. The department also organise the development and promotion of joint educational programmes, seek to recruit foreign students and support of international seminars and conferences.

Along with exchange programmes, the university constantly shares information about international seasonal schools, conferences and projects with students and advises them in this field. The selection of students in exchange programmes is carried out transparently, using objective and fair criteria. In the process, the interests and rights of students are protected as much as possible. In addition, the university provides on-site sharing of international experience. In particular, it offers public meetings, masterclasses and workshops led by foreign professors or representatives of partner institutions. IBSU also hosts annual international conferences in which foreign experts and academic staff of international universities are actively involved. Currently, The university has 40 bilateral agreements, which provide the possibility of exchange of both students and academic staff.

Along with academic education, the university encourages students to engage in extra-curricular activities. The university's Extracurricular Activities Planning Office, Marketing and Public Relations Office and IBSU Academy regularly offer public lectures, training, webinars and certificate courses to students. Information related to these events is effectively provided to the students via the university's website, e-mail, and social media channels.

Student clubs and student initiatives provide an opportunities for students to engage with their interests and hobbies. Currently, there are a range of student clubs and associations operating in the university and students can seek funding to support their activity. An initiative group consisting of several students, which is not registered as a club, can also use this funding opportunity.

In the academic year 2023-2024, about 100 public lectures and more than 20 workshops and training events were held. As well as about sports competitions, cultural events and circa 20 funded student initiatives

The university also has sports clubs that promote a healthy lifestyle. The university has outdoor basketball and indoor football fields. Clubs organise intra-university championships and teams and students compete in various external championships and festivals on behalf of the university. At the same time, students have the opportunity to use the university sports facilities in parallel with the study process. In addition to sporting activity, the university has a student lounge where various board games, billiards, chess and other activities are available.

In order to develop students' innovative ideas and entrepreneurship skills, the university has also created an Innovation and Entrepreneurship Centre, which is focused on developing the skills necessary for start-up and business activities, helping students generate and implement their ideas. The centre periodically conducts ideations, disseminates information on various competitions and advises students to submit applications to relevant competitions.

The university takes into account the socio-economic status of the students and implements various support measures (e.g., scholarship, flexible tuition payment schemes and other benefits). Students have the option to divide the annual tuition fee into 2, 4 or 8 instalments and pay in stages. In order to increase the access to education and increase student motivation, the university has developed an Internal Grant and Support Policy. The university website contains current benefits, internal grants and a tuition fee calculator. In order to publicise the diverse system of grants

and funding operating at IBSU, the university provides maximum accessibility using various platforms. Also, the university shares short videos and posts about discounts and grants through its official social media pages. The entrants also learn about this at open days, campus tours, various exhibitions in which the university participates, and during visits to schools by university representatives. These possibilities are described in detail in the Financial Regulation of Student Incentives and the Promotion of Socially Vulnerable Students and the Funding Rules for Ranked Students

Evidences/indicators

- 5.2.1 - Provisions of schools
- 5.2.2 - Regulation of the educational process monitoring service
- 5.2.3 - Provision of career planning and development service
- 5.2.4 - Regulations of the Department of Development of Students and Graduates
- 5.2.5 - Student extracurricular activities management office
- 5.2.6 - Statute of IBSU Academy
- 5.2.7 - Regulation of alumni relations service
- 5.2.8 - Regulation of the Department of International Relations
- 5.2.9 - Internationalization policy
- 5.2.10 - agreements with international partners
- 5.2.11 - Memoranda with employers
- 5.2.12 - sample contract to be signed with the practice facility
- 5.2.13 - indicators of employment of graduates;
- 5.2.14 - research of students' career needs;
- 5.2.15 - Samples of labor market research;
- 5.2.16 - the rules for financing student initiatives;
- 5.2.17 - Regulation of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center;
- 5.2.18 - Annual reports of services included in the Department of Student and Alumni Development
- 5.2.19 - Financial provisions for encouraging students and promoting socially vulnerable students
- 5.2.20 - the rule of funding of ranked students
- University website
- Website of sports activities - <https://sport.ibsu.edu.ge>
- Student clubs and activities - <https://clubs.ibsu.edu.ge/ka/news>
- Interview results;

Recommendations:

None

Suggestions:

- strengthen communication and information provided to students about the range of support mechanisms and activities implemented by the university.

Best Practices (if applicable):

- The range of financial support available for students

Evaluation

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

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

- 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

Research activities at IBSU are led by the Vice-Rector for research together with the Research Promotion and Project Management Service, Academic Writing Center, library and publishing house.

The institution carries out research, development and creative activities contributing to scientific, social, economic, and cultural development on national level covering regions of Georgia, as well as on an international level using its well-developed network of collaborations. One such example is the annual silk road scientific conference that is open for participation to all universities across country and for international collaborators.

The research development policy document existing at the institution reflects a clear vision for research/development/creative activities and plan for their implementation.

Research results are integrated in teaching activities of the institution, students have access to the research outputs of local and international academic staff members.

Research internationalisation is at a core for the strategic development of IBSU and is included in the strategic development plan. IBSU has also elaborated a Research Development Policy that serves as a framework for identifying research activity directions and for promoting the development of the research process, including a focus on the integration of undergraduate, master's, and doctoral students into scientific research activities under the supervision of academic staff, through collaborative projects and participation in research.

IBSU annually hosts international scientific events for instance the Science and Society Symposium and international conferences that facilitate the process of the internationalisation of the research outputs. Some examples of conferences are as follows:

1. Silk Road International Conference: <https://silkroad.ibsu.edu.ge/>

2. International Research Conference on Education, Language and Literature (IRCEELT).

<https://ircelt.ibsu.edu.ge/>

3. International Research Conference of American Studies. 13 international conferences have already been held <https://ibsu.edu.ge/ge/scientific/american-studies/>

4. International Conference of Young Researchers
<https://ibsu.edu.ge/ge/interc/about/>

5. Multidisciplinary student conference <https://ibsu.edu.ge/ge/scientific/student-conference/>

IBSU also publishes a number of scientific journals, namely:

- Journal of Education in the Black Sea Region;
- Journal of Humanities;
- Journal of Social Sciences;
- Journal of Technical Sciences and Technologies;
- Business Magazine;
- Journal of Law.

IBSU has transparent, public and fair procedures for the assessment and defence of dissertations which are relevant to the specifics of the field. The main document regulating doctoral education at IBSU is the Regulation of Doctoral Education and Dissertation Council that sets detailed explanations regarding rules of procedure, discretion of the Dissertation Council and relevant bodies responsible for the administration of the process including the defence of dissertation.

The Dissertation Assessment criteria embodied in the Regulation of Doctoral Education are as follows:

- Significance (urgency) of the dissertation,
- Practical importance of research,
- Theoretical importance of research,
- Novelty (originality) of the thesis,
- Depth of analysis and originality of conclusions,
- Credibility of research results (statistical treatment of experiment results/ data, argumentation),
- Material presentation during defence (logical reasoning, presentation structure, clear speech, presenting the essential issues of research, etc.),
- Adequate answers to the questions during the defence, justification of one's views, adequate application of terminology and
- Efficiency of visual aids applied during the defence.

The workload of academic and visiting staff at the university and the policy for supervision of doctoral theses are described in the Regulation on the Determination of Academic Workload and Remuneration. This regulatory document describes in detail the target marks, according to which it is determined how many doctoral students and master's students can be supervised by the staff involved in teaching.

Interviews conducted during site visit also revealed that PhD candidates can benefit from the opportunity of a co-supervisor if/when the subject matter of the dissertation topic requires. The details as to how to request co-supervisor are codified in the relevant university regulations governing doctoral education at IBSU.

Evidences/indicators Self-Evaluation Report Research development policy document Regulation of determination of academic load and salary Regulation of Doctoral Education and Dissertation Council Interviews Conducted during Authorization Visit
Recommendations: None
Suggestions: None
Best Practices (if applicable): None
Evaluation <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 IBSU has an effective system for supporting research, development and creative activities in line with a strong focus on internationalisation of research. Interviews conducted during the site visit revealed that the university actively supports academic staff and students to conduct high-quality research activities. The Vice-Rector for Science gave detailed clarifications regarding inner university funding schemes to facilitate the development of scientific research projects that included leadership by experienced academic staff and participation by students (of all levels of studies to attract new talented staff in the research), with a maximum budget set of 15,000.00 GEL per project. Activities related to the development of scientific research are described in the university statute, strategic and action plans and the university budget. Detailed records on the effectiveness and procedures for research activity itself are given in

the Research Development Policy and the intra-university research funding rule. Some examples of the research activities supported by the university are:

- Support for participation of academic staff, young researchers and students in local and international scientific research activities;
- Promotion of publication of research results in university and other highly rated scientific journals and/or international publications for academic staff and young scientists;
- Ensuring publication of textbooks published by academic staff/scientific works published by employees of research centres.

With respect to funding for scientific activities IBSU has incentive mechanisms in place for its active staff members. This includes an annual funding scheme for post-doctorate research.

For the purposes of internationalisation, IBSU participates in a number of international projects and hosts academic events such as: conferences, training and workshops. Participation of students in academic events and international projects is a priority for the university.

IBSU is part of joint research, projects and activities with international partners. It is involved in EU scientific-research programmes. IBSU has been engaged in institutional cooperation with European and international research institutions because of what currently it has several international projects.

Some examples of EU funded and international projects implemented at IBSU are:

- Double degree programme developed within the framework of the international project IDEA, in collaboration with Tsvikau University, together with the universities of Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Kazakhstan, which has been granted international accreditation by the ASIIN agency;
- ERASMUS + Project HERD developing research infrastructure in partnership with 4 European and 12 Georgian Universities;
- World Bank funded project CIF in partnership with Tbilisi State University (initiator), Akaki Tsereteli State University (Kutaisi) and Sweden's Linköping University and so on.

Interviews have confirmed that co-supervision on MA and PhD levels are ensured by an international expert from the network of collaborators when such a need arises.

IBSU works to ensure that in addition to support for scientific research there is a constant emphasis on ongoing evaluation of the scientific productivity of staff members. For this reason, the Vice-rector for Research leads the evaluation process in conjunction with relevant departments of the university. The results of the evaluation are processed through a SWOT analysis and relevant recommendations are developed based on strategic priorities and objectives.

Evidences/indicators

Self-Evaluation Report

Statute of the University

Strategic plan
University budget
Research development policy document
The rule of intra-university funding of research
Provision for encouraging academic activity
Activities aimed at increasing the efficiency of own services related to the development of scientific and research activities 2020-2024
Interviews conducted during authorization visit
Recommendations: None
Suggestions: None
Best Practices (if applicable): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial and other support for staff engaged in research activities and continuing professional development
Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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 The evaluation of scientific research activities are conducted at the end of each year by the Vice-Rector for Science in coordination with the Quality Assurance Service. Evaluation is carried out according to predetermined criteria that take into account the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> articles published in the journal with an international citation index or indexable with international referencing; book published by a local or international publishing house; leadership of the international scientific-research/educational project; citation index (h-index); international scientific award or patent; chief editorship of a refereed or professional journal; scientific/professional journal review; participation in local or international conferences;

- membership of the editorial board of the refereed scientific or professional journal;
- leadership of the project supported by the international organization;
- the status of the main speaker at the international scientific event;
- participation in a project supported by an international organization or state budget funds.

In particular, at the end of each academic year, academic staff submit a report on the current year's scientific and research activities, which details the work performed by the staff member during the year. The research activity evaluation system is a development-oriented, continuous evaluation process and is based on Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA) principle; The research quality assessment procedure includes development and continuous refinement of research quality assessment tools and indicators. It also focusses on development of research quality improvement recommendations based on their use.

At the end of each academic year, the Vice-Rector for Science conducts an observation of the productivity of the academic/scientific staff, as well as highlighting strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, in order to eliminate problematic issues and respond accordingly. The analysis is conducted annually by comparing the results of previous years to each other. The results are used to enable further sophistication of the overall process of evaluation and revision of funding opportunities in the case of the need.

In order to share and encourage the good practice relating to research activities, identified as a result of the evaluation of the scientific-research and the scientific productivity of staff at IBSU, the 5 best affiliated academic staff are issued with awards that have been introduced as an enabler for the creation of special conditions for outstanding personnel. These awards contribute to the support mechanisms in place for the development of the quality of research activities.

Evidences/indicators

Self-Evaluation Report

Analysis of the university's scientific and research activities 2020-2023 academic years

Interviews conducted during Authorization Visit

IBSU Website

Recommendations:

None

Suggestions:

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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

7. Material, Information and Financial Resources

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

7.1 Material Resources

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The university's operations are centered at its campus in Tbilisi, Georgia, located at the 13th kilometer of Aghmashenebeli, N2. The campus spans 10,323.00 square meters, with 4,080 square meters dedicated to educational spaces and 5,089.4 square meters for administrative functions.

The material resources of the University include both real estate and movable assets owned and utilised by the institution. These resources support the university's educational mission, accommodate its current student population, and broadly ensure the effective execution of educational programmes.

To support its educational goals, the main campus offers a range of essential facilities, including 48 classrooms, 7 computer labs, a library, group workspaces, a conference hall, recreational areas, administrative offices, archives, common social spaces, and sanitary facilities. In the second building, on the basement level the university has two auditoriums, which the panel found had minimal natural lighting, with only a narrow rectangular window. As natural lighting is required according to standards for educational spaces, the panel found these rooms are not suitable for teaching purposes and would be best re-purposed for other activity.

During interviews, it was noted that the administrators and managers are familiar with compiling schedules and distributing groups.. During the interview, it was emphasised by the administration and academic staff that the medical programme has received accreditation for a quota of 2,000 students, as the university meets the necessary requirements for the program. During inspection of the infrastructure, interviews with university representatives, and analysis of existing schedules, experts found ambiguity in managing the educational process for 2,000 medical students. It is suggested that the institution establish a clear, structured strategy for managing the educational process of 2,000 medical students. This strategy should include transparent guidelines, efficient scheduling, and streamlined communication channels to ensure effective oversight and reduce ambiguity in educational management.

Depending on the specific teaching methods of the programmes and the potential number of students in each group, the redistribution of auditoriums, classrooms, laboratories, simulation centre, and examination rooms should be considered to accommodate the educational needs of the increased student population on campus.

During the interview, the majority of academic staff indicated that they currently do not have a designated workspace or meeting area where they can prepare for lectures or hold individual meetings and consultations with students. The panel considered that this was insufficient and that in order to enable proper preparation and consultation with students, IBSU needs to provide a fit-for-purpose solution. Currently staff provide student consultations in the library, which is itself small and does not offer privacy. This problem will only be exacerbated with an increase in student numbers. The institution should consider hot-desking arrangements and other flexible solutions.

The campus offers sports facilities, a well-maintained garden, and outdoor spaces for relaxation and student gatherings. Recent updates include the renovation of the Game Room Lounge and the acquisition of new sports equipment. The university also operates a cafeteria, managed by the company "Agrohab." A recent 400,000 GEL investment from the university's budget will ensure healthier and more varied dining options for students and staff.

Fire safety mechanisms and first-aid provisions, including a qualified doctor and equipped medical office, are in place. The panel noted that the side evacuation exit doors from the educational building are made of iron and although they should be replaced to meet the standard the State Fire Safety Service has issued a positive conclusion regarding the current provision. Also, to ensure safety, the parking area has been restructured, with plans for an open café in the vacated space. A full inventory of the university's movable property was conducted during the 2023-2024 academic year, confirming ownership through relevant documentation.

In the 2023-2024 academic year, the university invested 1 million GEL to enhance its infrastructure. This included upgrades to internet infrastructure, network systems, and the installation of servers for data security. The university also implemented video surveillance systems across its buildings. The university acquired 2 copiers, renovated 3 computer labs, established an architecture lab and an Apple Learning Centre, as well as upgrading the audio system in the conference hall. Smart boards replaced projectors in some classrooms, and administrative areas received updated computer equipment.

The university is equipped with a backup power supply (diesel generator) and maintains well-functioning sanitary facilities on each floor, adhering to sanitary and hygiene standards. Laboratories meet safety standards, and the campus is secured by surveillance systems.

The university also prioritizes accessibility for individuals with special needs. The campus is fitted with ramps, elevators, and wide entrances, making all buildings and services accessible. It should be noted that only the first floor of one of the educational buildings is accessible and adapted for people with disabilities, while the remaining floors do not have an adapted environment. During the interview, the administration mentioned that lectures, seminars, and other activities for individuals with disabilities will be held on the first floor of this building. The second building, however, is fully adapted and is primarily used by the university for classroom activities. Building A includes the Student Services Monitoring Centre, designated parking spaces and special entrances provide safe access for all.

To implement the medical programme, the panel found the university has a minimally equipped simulation centre and histology and pathology teaching laboratories, as defined by Medicine Sectoral Benchmark. It is important to note that enhancing these two units with additional equipment is desirable to continuously ensure the quality of the educational process and the achievement of learning outcomes. Specifically, the institution should increase number of microscopes and sets of samples. The Simulation Center also needs improving with respect to the number of simulators in the Center.

The university has also signed agreements with external laboratories, which provide practical training and support scientific activities in basic courses. Regarding the OSCE Examination Centre, the university has developed a new concept and introduced "mobile stations" equipped with the necessary equipment. Several stations were observed on-site, and the university has the capacity to set up a further 10 stations, which meets Medicine Sectoral Benchmark requirements. During the interview, it was noted that the OSCE Examination Center is staffed by external examiners hired by the university.

During the visit, two clinics, "Todua Clinic" and the "National Center of Surgery," were inspected. The infrastructure and profile of both clinics align with the requirements of the medical programme. Additionally, one floor of the "National Center of Surgery" was undergoing renovation, which is expected to be completed within a month and will then be ready to receive students. During the interview with the clinic's administration, it was noted that the calculation of the maximum number of students has not been conducted at this stage and will be determined during the contract process. The administration also lacked information regarding how many students from other universities are currently receiving clinical training. As for the "Todua Clinic," the administration similarly did not have precise information, but during an interview with the clinical supervisor, it was clarified that only students from one university are currently undergoing clinical rotations. In accordance with the sector benchmark requirements, universities have until the end of 2024 to include specific information in their contracts regarding the number of students and patients in clinics', exact schedule of clinical rotations. In addition to these two clinics, the university has signed agreements with other clinics that provide students with practical training.

Finally, the university has its own library, electronic learning resources and IT-infrastructure for conducting synchronous and/or asynchronous remote workshops and forums.

Evidences/indicators

- Site-Visit observation (Campus, Clinics)
- Memorandums
- Interview results

Recommendations:

- enhance the Simulation Centre and labs with additional equipment to continuously ensure the quality of the educational process and the achievement of learning outcomes.
- Establish a clear, structured strategy for managing the educational process of 2,000 medical students.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide a dedicated workspace and meeting area for academic staff to prepare for teaching process and conduct individual meetings and consultations with students. • Repurpose rooms lacking adequate natural lighting for non-teaching activities, as they do not meet educational space standards.
Suggestions:
Best Practices (if applicable): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The architecture and media rooms and new Mac Lab
Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements
7.2. Library Resources
Library environment, resources and service support effective implementation of educational and research activities, and HEI constantly works for its improvement.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements <p>The University Library offers resources, electronic databases, and services to support effective teaching and research activities. The library consists of three main reading rooms: the main collection of over 18,000 printed resources is located on the fourth floor of Building B, along with the main reading room. The Main Reading Room houses 783 printed books, and a smaller reading room holds 492 printed items. Library staff have dedicated workspace, and a small conference room is available for meetings and training sessions. Additionally, the library includes group workspaces, an information technology department, internet-connected computers, printers, scanning equipment, and multimedia devices. Students can make copies directly in the library or at a designated photocopying point, which they are informed about via email and social networks. The library also provides wireless internet access and an open-access library.</p> <p>The university library maintains a diverse and up-to-date collection of print and electronic resources that reflect the latest developments in various fields, supporting the achievement of learning outcomes in educational programmes and scientific research activities. Core literature listed in syllabi is available in the library. All books in the collection are processed according to library rules, including physical processing and digital entry. The library uses the Dewey Decimal Classification system, and the catalogue is accessible via the Evergreen platform in the OPAC electronic catalogue.</p> <p>Printed books can be found in the library's catalogue, and a digital repository with up to 4,000 digital resources is accessible through corporate email. Students and staff are informed about how to access information through the Library Regulation and Library Usage Policy, both of which are available on the university's website. Library users must follow the rules, ensuring they do not disrupt others or interfere with the</p>

library's normal operations. Informational instructions are also posted throughout the library.

The library offers access to international scientific databases, which can be used both on campus and remotely. To facilitate access, a video tutorial has been created to help users navigate the service, and students are provided with video instructions to assist with any technical issues.

Library representatives periodically meet with schools, students, academic, and invited staff to share updates, which are also communicated through the university's website and social media.

The university regularly updates and purchases new literature for the library. Each year, the central university budget allocates financial resources to ensure the efficient operation of the library. The collection is continuously updated through book acquisitions based on requests from schools, donations, and the library's own needs. At the beginning of each academic year, the literature required for the next semester is reviewed. Continuous collaboration with schools allows the university to respond quickly and flexibly to requests. Schools, or the library, can initiate book purchase requests, taking into account the relevance of materials to learning outcomes. If necessary, multiple copies of a book may be purchased. Requests are submitted to the library, which checks the availability of the requested book in its database. If unavailable, the request is forwarded to the Vice-Rector for Research, who coordinates financial aspects with the Vice-Rector for Finance. Upon approval, the Procurement and Logistics Department handles the book purchase.

To promote the library's development, a skilled professional has been appointed as Head of the Library, and additional human resources have been allocated. The staff ensures the digitisation of educational materials using a state-of-the-art scanner, and these materials are included in the digital library, accessible via institutional email. The library continuously works to enhance staff competence by providing training that includes both theoretical and practical qualifications.

Library staff informs students and staff about available library resources and services. During orientation and informational meetings, they explain the main rules and opportunities. Students can access this information either through a QR code located in the reading room or by consulting directly with a librarian. Additionally, students can use the "Ask a Librarian" service to inquire about specific topics and receive assistance.

The library is open to students and staff at least six days a week, offering 60 hours of access: Monday to Friday from 9:00 AM to 8:00 PM, and Saturday from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM. These details are outlined in the Library Regulations and on the university website.

The university continuously updates its scientific databases. In addition to the existing databases, the university has secured access to the EBSCO scientific electronic database, which includes 10 sub-databases. Both academic and invited staff, as well as students, have access to these electronic databases, both on and off campus.

The library regularly conducts surveys, both online and through personal interactions, to better understand and meet the needs of its users.

Despite the quality and range of resources available through the library, staff informed the panel that, owing to the limited capacity, demand outstrips supply of learning spaces during peak periods and the institution is unable to accommodate all students wishing to study in the library. Staff were unable to confirm that a plan exists for expanding the library in line with the planned growth in student numbers. Consequently, the panel determined that a facility that at points already struggles to service student requirements will be under unmanageable strain if IBSU is successful in reaching its student number targets. The panel considered this to be an issue of strategic importance and that the institution therefore needs to develop a comprehensive and credible plan as to how it will grow library facility in line with student numbers.

Evidences/indicators

- Interview results
- Factual situation
- library Provision
- Rules for using the library
- Statistics of electronic scientific databases
- Library resources inventory documentation
- Agreements of electronic bases
- Electronic catalog of the library

Recommendations:

- develop a comprehensive and credible plan for library expansion in accordance with the anticipated increase in student numbers

Suggestions:

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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

7.3 Information Resources

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

At IBSU, the information technology infrastructure includes computer laboratories, a campus-wide network, a security camera system, and the hosting and management of internal university systems. Wireless internet access is available throughout the

campus. During the site visit, staff provided the panel with a detailed explanation and demonstration of the electronic educational process management system.

The university is also developing a Student Information System and an electronic management database. A contracted company is responsible for this project, with the necessary agreements in place. This infrastructure supports the educational process, particularly in computer laboratories and the library. The university's network includes security measures, and potential risks are addressed in the Business Continuity Plan and the Information and Communication Technology Management Policy. Data is stored on two separate servers to ensure protection.

The university owns its servers, with digital resources and software hosted on its internal network. It also holds hosting and security certificates. Periodic surveys are conducted to assess student and staff satisfaction with the IT infrastructure.

Financial risks are identified and described in the Business Continuity Plan, and prevention and management mechanisms are described both in the university's Business Continuity Plan and in the Financial Management and Control Rule.

The university operates a bilingual website, offering information in Georgian and English. The university's domain unites various websites, and a corporate email system used by students and staff. Information is updated on the website as needed.

Evidences/indicators

- Interview results
- Information and communication technology management regulation.
- Personal data protection policy.
- documentation confirming the purchase of the server.
- confirmation of equipment purchased for laboratories.
- Security cameras agreement.
- Regulation of Information Technology Service

Evaluation

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

Recommendations:

None

Suggestions:

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

7.4 Financial Resources

- Allocation of financial resources described in the budget of HEI is economically achievable

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

According to the Self-Evaluation Report (SER), the university is financially stable and growing, with an average annual revenue increase of 15% over the past five years. In 2023, total revenue reached 9,303,540 GEL. The financial department monitors two key indicators: an operating profit margin (EBITDA) of at least 30% and a net profit margin of at least 15%. The university's primary income source is student tuition, but it plans to diversify revenue over the next seven years by expanding Georgian and English programmes, offering dual/joint degrees, and engaging in international projects and grants. The budget shows that over the five-year period from 2018 to 2023, the financial dynamics of the institution show significant growth in both income and operating costs.

Income Overview:

The primary source of income, total tuition including state grants, has steadily increased. In 2018-2019, the total tuition income was 5,028,903, which rose to 8,290,921 by 2022-2023. This indicates a strong growth in enrollment or state funding over the years.

International and Local Grant Projects have fluctuated during this period. In 2018-2019, the institution earned 95,244 from grants, but this dropped significantly to 8,191 in 2019-2020, before recovering to 91,168 in 2022-2023.

The institution also reported income from other sources such as training and international projects, though these amounts are comparatively smaller. In 2018-2019, other income stood at 41,039, but it decreased to 14,272 in 2022-2023.

Operating Costs:

Operating costs have risen in parallel with income growth. Administrative salary expenses were 1,382,790 in 2018-2019 and increased to 1,893,722 by 2022-2023. Similarly, academic staff salary costs grew from 1,226,417 in 2018-2019 to 2,021,938 in 2022-2023, reflecting the need for more academic personnel or higher compensation over time.

Other significant costs include taxes, which increased from 832,232 in 2018-2019 to 1,446,355 in 2022-2023, and marketing expenses, which also rose from 88,894 in 2018-2019 to 185,342 by 2022-2023.

Net Cash Flow:

Despite the rise in operating costs, the institution managed to maintain positive net cash flow. In 2018-2019, the net cash flow from all activities was 308,683, which increased to 553,306 in 2022-2023.

This growth in both income and expenses reflects the expanding operations of the institution, driven by increased enrollment, higher staff costs, and more investment in areas such as marketing and research.

The university provided a separate budget for their medicinal programme, which shows that, the allocated budget for various operational areas is detailed as follows: 123,700.50 GEL is dedicated to the research direction, emphasising the institution's commitment to advancing academic inquiry. The library expenses, crucial for supporting both student and faculty research, amount to 122,140 GEL. A further 33,600 GEL has been allocated for the procurement and maintenance of inventory, ensuring that all necessary equipment and materials are available. The institution's efforts towards global engagement and fostering international partnerships are supported with a budget of 24,500 GEL for internationalisation activities. Additionally, 43,750 GEL is earmarked for clinic-related costs.

Earlier in this report the panel identified deficiencies in the institution's strategic planning process, in particular the 7-year and 3-year plans and the extent to which these provide specific and credible institutional level plans that will enable the institution to meet its projected growth in student numbers. For example, the team consider such growth will require demonstrable investment in university infrastructure and this section of the plan only contains 5 actions, including some as broad as 'improvement of university spaces', while action is shown as being connected with the budget there is no further detailed provided in terms of what this means. The plan does not identify how many or what spaces will be improved or how much funding will be assigned to this objective. Furthermore, there is no reference under infrastructure to the funding and investment that will be required for the University's medical provision. While the team were informed that the University has conducted some financial forecasting the team determined that as well as detailing specific actions to be taken in the 3-year plan the plan itself should contain an explicit reference to the funding allocation available to meet these objectives to ensure the plan and budget are realistic and achievable.

Evidences/indicators

- Budget of University
- Budget of program of Medicine
- Interview results
- SER

Recommendations:

- Ensure that specific objectives are detailed in University level strategic planning documents and clearly and explicitly linked to the University budget, including as they relate to the institution's medical provision.

Suggestions:

None

Best Practices (if applicable):

None

Evaluation

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