



განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

## **Higher Education Institution Authorization Experts'**

### **Final Report**

### **LEPL – Ilia State University**

Tbilisi, 2024

#### **Expert Panel Members**

Chair: Milan Pol, Masaryk University, Czech Republic

Co-Chair: Azim Mirzazadeh, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Iran

#### **Members:**

Eka Lekashvili, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia

Sopio Khundadze, European University, Georgia

Khatuna Saganelidze, New Vision University, employer expert, Georgia

Magda Memanishvili, International Black Sea University, Georgia

Natia Maghalashvili, International Black Sea University, Georgia (student expert)

**Authorization Report Resume**

## **General information on the educational institution**

Ilia State University (ISU) was established in 2006 through the merger of six higher education institutions. At the moment, ISU consists of four primary education units, comprising three faculties (Arts and Sciences; Natural Sciences and Medicine; Business, Technology and Education) and one school (Law). Besides it, there are one international doctoral school, 26 institutes, and 50 research centers, and six laboratories related to the ISU. According to the self-evaluation report (SER), the ISU employs 353 faculty members. There are also 17 professors with the status professor emeritus, 218 researchers, and 869 invited lectures. As for the administrative and support staff, there are 1.289 people. There are about 17 thousand students, out of them about 700 are foreign students at ISU.

ISU seems to be well established in the Georgian tertiary sector and society in broad, as well as it is well anchored internationally in relevant networks and other academic communities.

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

The evaluation process started well before the very site visit by organizing online meetings of the panel and providing the panel with the information about the evaluation procedure and also with the documents submitted by the ISU. The site visit was held on June 20-25, 2024, and it was very well organized both by NCEQE coordinators, and by the ISU leaders. This way, the panel had a very good opportunity to study all the materials provided (some other materials were still additionally requested and later submitted by the ISU), to meet and interview different actors within the ISU and beyond, and also to visit the facilities in which ISU is functioning, incl. medical clinics. This all helped the panel to get a relatively complete picture about ISU's functioning.

## **Overview of the HEI's compliance with standards**

In general, the expert team evaluated the performance of Ilia State University very positively in vast majority of areas related to the authorization standards (sub-standards). In concrete, all seven standards were evaluated as complying with requirements. The expert team formulated one recommendation and twelve suggestions. Also, an example of good practice was identified.

## **Opinion of the experts' team on the position of the university towards the draft report**

The experts' team discussed the argumentative position of the university and accepted some of it. As a result, the recommendation related to the 7<sup>th</sup> standard was moved into suggestions. The recommendation related to the 3<sup>rd</sup> standard remained, but it was reformulated. Now it stresses the need that the university monitors and follows the legislative changes instantly. The experts' team has formulated it namely with regard to the need of implementing educational programs (for example, in accordance with "Law on Higher Education", PhD programs include not more than 60 ECTS teaching component).

These changes do not have any impact on the overall evaluation of the university which is very positive.

## **Summary of Recommendations**

- It is recommended that the university should monitor and follow the legislative changes instantly.

## **Summary of Suggestions**

- It is suggested to continue in well-started efforts to be an inclusive, open institution that proactively offers its studies to a large variety of SEN students.
- It is suggested to consider a possibility to include among the strategic goals the issue of work-life balance for the university staff, with consequent inter-organizational measures.
- It is suggested to continue in the efforts to make the ISU a place where a real integration of different cohorts of students (for instance Georgian and foreign students) effectively takes place.
- It is suggested to have more intensive and regular meetings with stakeholders for the purpose of giving feedback on actions taken by institution in response to their recommendations and suggestions, it should also be extended to all stakeholders and may take other forms of communications as well, in order to regularly motivate their valuable participation in QA research and evaluation.
- It is suggested the university should place greater emphasis on ensuring the accurate updating of documents.
- It is suggested to consider possibilities to offer more varied elective courses to students and expand the scope of their practical training.
- It is suggested to consider possibilities of establishing advisor boards for all study programs provided by the ISU.
- It is suggested to specify the maximum/minimum number of students the partner institution can receive (internships, clinical practice) in all memoranda.
- It is suggested that the School of Law, besides full and associated professors, also has a body of lower-level academic staff (assistants), to ensure continuity and sustainability of the programs and the growth of professionals in the field.
- It is suggested to strengthen the efforts to expedite the provision of relevant information on the English-language website, which will eliminate potential information problems for foreign students.
- It is suggested to reflect tasks and activities related to the creation of the new web portal in the university's strategic and action plan.
- It is suggested to ensure the dissemination of a reasonable amount and volume of information in process of emailing.

## Summary of the Best Practices

- Establishing advisory boards at some educational programs, for instance at School of Business, Technologies, and Education, and also at School of Law.

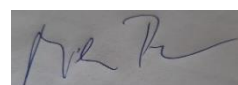
## Summary Table of Compliance of HEI with Standards and Standard Components

	Standard	Compl ies wit h Req uire me nts	Subs tanti ally com plies with requi reme nts	Parti ally Com plies with Requ irem ents	Does not Compl y with Requir ement s
1.	<b>Mission and strategic development of HEI</b>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.1	Mission of HEI	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	Strategic development	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	<b>Organizational structure and management of HEI</b>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.1	Organizational structure and management	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

## Signature of expert panel members

1. Milan Pol (Chair)



2. Azim Mirzazadeh (Co-chair)



3. Eka Lekashvili (Member)



4. Sopio Khundadze (Member)



5. Khatuna Saganelidze (Member)



6. Magda Memanishvili (Member)

მ. მემანიშვილი

7. Natia Maghalashvili (Member)

## Compliance of the Applicant HEI with the Authorization Standard Components

### 1. Mission and strategic development of HEI

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

#### 1.1 Mission of HEI

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

#### **Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements**

When defining its role in Georgia, the region and broader (European space), Ilia State University emphasizes conducting up-to-date research, academic activities of an excellent level (Western standards), effective response to requirements of the labor market, to local, regional and global challenges and establishing and promoting democratic values within the university and beyond. Academic freedom, freedom of conscience, and freedom of choice are declared as the basis on which ISU is building its work.

The mission statement of the ISU is formulated as follows: „The mission of Ilia State University is to create, disseminate, and apply knowledge to advance scientific progress and societal development, both locally and internationally.“ (SER, p. 16). This mission statement clearly relates university activities to three main pillars, learning/teaching, research/development, and public reach. From this perspective, the mission statement can be seen as well balanced.

Ilia State University declares that is centers its mission statement on three core principles of unity: (1) Integration of Research and Teaching (Research Teaching Nexus); (2) Unity of General Education Common (Liberal Arts) Curriculum and Specialized Education and Specialization; and (3) Unity of the Universal and the Local. The efforts to stick to all three principles can be seen in a number of ISU's activities, as it was evidenced in the documentation provided as well as during the interviews.

This can be confirmed that the mission statement of the Ilia State University corresponds to Georgia's and European higher education goals. It defines the ISU's role and place within the higher education area and society, both locally and internationally.

Vision statement of the ISU is positively corresponding with the mission statement, aiming at the time horizon of 2030. Until that time, "the ISU aims to establish itself as the premier

research institution in Georgia and the wider region, adhering to Western standards. This positioning will serve as the foundation for driving scientific and technological advancements, fostering high-quality educational practices, and promoting societal well-being through innovative approaches. The university is steadfast in its commitment to tackling global, regional, and national challenges. By fostering and implementing a knowledge-based economy, it aims to play a pivotal role in promoting sustainable development and facilitating Georgia's integration into Europe." (SER, p. 17)

Ilia State University declares its values as follows: autonomy, equal opportunity and inclusive environment, diversity, academic freedom, social responsibility, integrity, transparency and openness, focus on development. While there are a number of examples that can be brought as the evidence that ISU is successfully working based on these values, there is also in some cases a room for further improvement, for instance in the case of inclusivity (SEN students; Georgian and foreign students within the institution).

Mission statement of the ISU clearly defines the characteristics of the ISU based on its type and main directions of its work.

And it was proven to a sufficient extent that the mission statement is shared by the community of the ISU.

**Evidence/indicators**

- Self-evaluation report
- ISU mission
- Interviews

**Recommendations:**

None

**Suggestions:**

- It is suggested to continue in well-started efforts to be an inclusive, open institution that proactively offers its studies to a large variety of SEN students.

**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**

Ilia State University has a Strategic Development Plan (2024-2030) as well as an Action Plan (for the period 2024-2026).

The Strategic Plan is based on an analysis of activities of the ISU in previous years. SWOT analysis findings clearly point at strong as well as weak sides of the ISU operation and indicate opportunities and threats that might emerge from them, as perceived by the ISU. Based on this, six strategic goals were identified in the strategic plan of the ISU for the years 2024-2030. They include Institutional strengthening; Organizational development; Enhancing teaching/learning standard; Raising the standard of research activities at the university; Development of student services; and Enhancing awareness and reputation of the university. Each strategic goal is further elaborated into a series of tasks which are clearly defined and concretized. Altogether they create a relative complex and logically built whole. This can be said the ISU's Strategic Development Plan 2024-2030 is built in such a way that it can ensure the achievement of the ISU's goals. And these goals are clearly linked to the ISU's values, vision and mission, they seem to be achievable, time-bound and measurable.

The methodology of the development of a strategic plan is clearly described and well acceptable. The strategic plan was developed in a participatory manner. Main directives that guided this process were "Formation of the Working Group and Deadlines for the Development of the 2024-2030 Strategic Development Plan of Ilia State University" as well as "Strategic Planning Methodology". Upon the approval of the Academic and Representative Boards, the ISU established a working group which was mainly involved in all key steps (review of ISU's performance in recent years, identification of actual needs, assessment of realization of previous plans). The data were collected from key actors of the ISU as well as bound, using various forms/methods. It was reported by the ISU and confirmed to sufficient extent during the interviews that this process included involvement of internal as well as external stakeholders.

The action plan concretely describes activities planned for the next three years, determines the responsibilities of those involved, formulates performance indicators and indicates financial allocations related to implementation of concrete activities.

Overall, it can be confirmed that the strategic and action plans of the ISU cover main aspects that are vital to the operation of the ISU, including the ISU's further development, quality assurance, planning and implementation of educational programs, student body planning, research and other creative activities, human and material resources, student services, infrastructure, and more.

A special emphasis is put on the third mission, social responsibility and the advancement of public welfare. Towards this end, a large number of activities are planned and many of them can be seen as a continuity and possibly further development of already existing activities.

This can be confirmed that by realizing strategic and action plans the Ilia State University contributes positively to the social development of the country, shares with the society the knowledge generated in the institution, and facilitates lifelong learning.

The ISU has developed a plan for monitoring of implementation of strategic and action plans, incl. possible response to the findings of the monitoring process.

**Evidence/indicators**

- Self-evaluation report
- Strategic Development Plan (2024-2030)
- Action Plan (2024-2026)
- Interviews



<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is suggested to consider a possibility to include among the strategic goals the issue of work-life balance for the university staff, with consequent inter-organizational measures.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>

## 2. Organizational Structure and Management of HEI

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

### 2.1 Organizational Structure and Management

- Organizational 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 internationalization.

#### **Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements**

Organizational structure of Ilia State University is clear, it describes all the key and major management bodies and structural units of an institution and clearly demonstrates subordination of each.

Effective management of Ilia State University can be demonstrated through successful fulfillment of the strategic and action plan of an institution. University has provided 2018-2023 strategy implementation progress evaluation, strategic goals and tasks and completion status. It has to be noted that all the strategic goals or tasks of Ilia State University are

either completed or mostly completed, which may be one of the proofs of effective management of an institution.

To support effective management of the organization Ilia State University uses relevant modern technologies and programs, such as:

Student Information Systems (SIS) Argus: Managing student records, enrollment, and academic progress efficiently;

"Billing" electronic system of tuition fee collection, accounting and student financial information system;

Electronic system for procedures eDocument;

Organization resource management and planning system ERP: to manage and integrate the important parts of university operations;

Institutional repository of publications and research materials E-prints;

Learning management system E-learning - E-learning Platforms: Supporting online education and facilitating blended learning approaches.

Ilia State University maintains registry of educational institutions as described in current legislation.

Organizational structure of Ilia State University, description of each structural unit of the institution, their goals, functions and responsibilities, management bodies of the institution, major principles of university management, representatives of each management body, rights and responsibilities of management bodies are described in detail through the Statute of Ilia State University.

The rule of conduct of elections at Ilia State University, authority and the code of conduct of the election commission is regulated through Election Bylaws of Ilia State University, approved by the decision of meeting #9 of the Representative Board, adopted on November 7, 2014. The document describes in detail the composition of management bodies and structural units, election procedures, the rule of registering candidates for management bodies, the announcement and holding of the elections. The procedure for election and appointment of the managerial bodies of Ilia State University is in line with legislation.

It is important to note that during site-visit interviews university representatives demonstrated to be well aware of their functions and responsibilities at the institution, they also proved to be active participants of strategic and action plan development processes of the university, as well as to be aware of target benchmarks and indicators of successful performance of their structural units.

Ilia State University has developed a Business Continuity Plan (recently updated in 2023), which aims to guarantee the uninterrupted functioning of the university processes during critical occasions and mitigate the impact of such situations through monitoring, effective coordination and cooperation. The plan addresses and minimizes risks across information technologies, material resources, proceedings, protection and security and human resources. Ilia State University management believes that in 2020, during Covid 19 pandemic the university proved to be effective in managing unforeseen and critical situations faced by the university society.

The assessment of effective management of Ilia State University related to administrative, academic or scientific activities of the organization is insured through internal quality

assurance mechanisms of the institution (details provided through component 2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms), as well as strategic plan implementation monitoring mechanisms of the university, various reports, working documents developed at the university etc.

Supportive arrangements of Ilia State University's internationalization efforts are carried out according to its strategic plan, with specific tasks outlined in the internationalization strategy for 2018-2024 and 2024-2030. Various structural units of the university are involved in implementing the specific activities of the strategy, including the International Relations Office, International Students Department, Office of Development, Research Coordination Office, International Doctoral School and faculties. The evaluation and monitoring team of Ilia State University's Strategic Development Plan monitors and evaluates the implementation of the internationalization strategy.

Internationalization tasks of Ilia State University include:

Internationalization of learning/teaching process – to fulfill this task, the university promotes: Internationalization of educational programs, raising the quality of education in an international environment, international student mobility, internationalization of the student contingent.

Internationalization of research – to fulfill this task, the university implements a number of activities provided by the plan: encourages international collaborative research, promotes international exposure for young researchers by organizing various activities, supports to showcase the university's research achievements and the international recognition of researchers.

Gaining international recognition and institutional development – to achieve this goal: the university ensures internationalization of the third mission activities, constantly strives to integrate itself into the international scientific and educational sphere and enhance its reputation at the global level, determines and implements best practices for development.

It has to be noted that the university has provided numerous examples demonstrating implementation of various activities and arrangements supporting fulfillment of above listed tasks and relevant activities to achieve internationalization strategies, tasks and goals. However, to improve the achievements of one of the tasks related with internationalization of learning/teaching process and to improve positive effects of internationalization of the students contingent, it is better if the university continues efforts to make Ilia State University a place where a real integration of different cohorts of students (for instance Georgian and foreign students) effectively takes place.

**Evidence/indicators**

- Current structure and organizational chart of the university
- Functions of structural units - services and regulations
- The Statute of LEPL Ilia State University
- Election bylaws of LEPL Ilia State University
- Internal Quality Assurance concept
- Regulations of "Argus" and proceedings
- Business continuity plan 2023
- Management effectiveness monitoring mechanisms and evaluation system

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internationalization Policy/Strategy 2018-2024</li> <li>• Internationalization Strategic Plan implementation report 2018-2023</li> <li>• Internationalization Strategy 2024-2030</li> <li>• Site-visit interview results with different stakeholders</li> <li>• University Self-evaluation Report</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b> None</p>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is suggested to continue in the efforts to make the ISU a place where a real integration of different cohorts of students (for instance Georgian and foreign students) effectively takes place.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b> None</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>
<p><b>2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ HEI has a mechanism for planning student body, which will give each student an opportunity to get a high quality education.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>Aims and functions as well as the structure of Quality Assurance Office at Ilia State University is regulated through "Quality Assurance Office Statute" of the institution. Quality assurance mechanisms and procedures are clearly defined through Internal Quality Assurance Concept. The document describes in detail the evaluations and surveys that are regularly done by the QA Office, as well as the users of the survey and evaluation results. The document provides a time frame of each internal evaluation process, information about departments and stakeholders involved in the process as well as information about resources used. The internal quality assurance mechanisms serve to evaluate and continuously improve Ilia State University's academic, research activities and support services. More specifically, internal quality assurance mechanisms cover following regular assessments: internal self-assessment of programs, analysis of students' academic performance, student surveys at the end of each term (surveying students routinely each semester regarding all types of courses – standard, industrial work practice, fieldwork, PBL, labs, the clinic, bachelor's/master's theses, etc.), last year students surveys, graduates surveys, interviews with doctoral students (to assess the program's study components, research-related processes, administrative support as well as academic and visiting staff), doctoral students' survey on supervision quality, doctoral</p>

program graduates' career development survey, benchmark analysis, external review: peer assessment of academic programs, employer focus groups, survey of student satisfaction with services, survey of academic and invited teaching staff satisfaction with services, administrative and support staff satisfaction survey, administrative and support staff assessment, assessment of academic and invited teaching staff performance, assessment of research staff performance, assessment of the University's scientific research units and projects.

Besides regular evaluations (as mentioned above), QA Office may initiate other types of assessments based on different needs of an institution to evaluate particular academic activities, processes, services, etc.

It has to be noted that the Quality Assurance Office proved to have conducted all the assessments listed above through survey results and the analysis that has been provided by the institution either before or during the site-visit.

Documents provided by the institution prove QA survey results to be used for the improvements in different ways: improvement of different academic activities or services at the institution, or improvement of QA mechanisms themselves. For example:

1. The internal self-assessment system of the educational programs underwent significant changes based on challenges that were observed and identified after the use of this instrument:
2. The self-assessment instruments were refined to fit the higher education level. In particular, a different self-assessment report template was created for the doctoral level, shifting the focus to the research processes.
3. The assessment of program components has been diversified to enable identification and evaluation by course/component type (e.g.: standard course, entrepreneurial practice, laboratory practice etc.).
4. The Argus system was updated to run both Georgian and English language surveys simultaneously.
5. Through updates in the Argus system, it was possible to generate data on students' performance and termly surveys by program, and accessing these data has become easier for faculties. It is worth noting that the database of students' academic performance now includes various indicators that are relevant for performance analysis (e.g.: median, mean, standard deviation, normal distribution etc.).

Based on the evaluation results of student services, following improvements and responsive actions were made by the institution:

1. The practice of orientation meetings was revised, its structure and frequency were updated, in addition to the general meeting with newly enrolled students, orientation meetings were held with the other semester students, meetings were held for smaller groups for more interaction.
2. The faculties took steps to improve the timeliness of students' evaluations in the Argus system. Clear instructions were sent to the lecturers at the beginning of the semester, outlining the deadlines for posting grades in Argus. Monitoring was conducted during

the semester to ensure that intermediate and final evaluations were reflected promptly.

3. In order to increase students' awareness, information regarding various rules and regulations was uploaded to the Argus system (e.g. the student profile section includes information about the status recovery and suspension procedures, along with their respective deadlines, a rule for assessment appeals procedures can be accessed, etc.).
4. Information regarding individual consultations with lecturers was included in all syllabi posted to the Argus system. During the meetings with academic and invited staff that were involved in the program, the faculties emphasized the importance of utilizing the Argus system as an alternative communication channel with students, etc.

Based on the evaluation results of academic and invited staff services, following improvements and responsive actions were made by the ISU:

1. The Human Resources Management Office created a special information card at the beginning of the Fall semester of 2023, which was sent out to all invited teaching staff in order to increase awareness about the services available at the university. The card contained details about the different units and services offered by the university, as well as information regarding training programs for individuals involved in the educational process.
2. The Personal and Professional Development Center conducted information sessions and training programs for academic and invited teaching staff on the use of library databases, educational platforms, and modern teaching technologies.
3. A program has been developed to provide training for academic and invited teaching staff on project writing, grant application, and project management, etc.

In addition, it has to be noted that site-visit interviews with different stakeholders also proved consideration and the use of QA research and assessment results for the improvement of different procedures or services, as well as educational programs:

Numerous cases were named by different groups of students, employers, academic or invited staff members when their recommendations and suggestions for improvements were taken into consideration by relevant parties and responsive actions were taken for the development of educational programs or services. Here are some specific examples of it:

During site-visit interviews students named the case of increasing working hours of the library by the decision of relevant parties in response to their recommendations and requirements. Students prove to be involved in the development of educational programs, they recall specific courses (e.g. Data Analysis and Excel) that were added to particular educational programs in response to their recommendations.

Personnel implementing different educational programs as well as students proved to have different trainings and meetings organized for them to support the relevant use of library resources. Academic and invited staff also prove to be involved in the development of educational programs; they were also able to name specific courses (Tax Law) that were added to particular educational programs, they recall some courses (Academic Writing) that were moved to another study semester in response to their recommendations.

Employers proved to have focus group meetings with university representatives to evaluate different educational programs. They named specific recommendations and suggestions that were considered by relevant parties for the development of educational programs: e.g. courses oriented on the development of practical skills and soft skills, communication, group work, time management skills, critical reasoning, recommended by them were added to the study plans of particular educational programs.

Heads of educational programs also proved to have the cases of considering various recommendations of different stakeholders, they have recalled the cases of adding some elective courses (e.g. Securities Exchange Regulations) to a particular educational program based on students' recommendations. They proved to be aware of assessment of program learning outcomes and demonstrated the cases of responsive actions (e.g. modification of assessment methods) to the evaluation results.

In order to introduce QA research and evaluation results to relevant structural units, the Quality Assurance Office shares them to the Representative Council, organizes meetings with those units. Meeting representatives discuss evaluation results and needs for responsive actions. After the analysis, structural units present action plans in response to the issues that were identified during QA research, assessments and analysis. During site-visit the institution provided additional documents, protocols that proved implementation of meetings mentioned above. Protocols were supplemented with action plans of different structural units, describing responsive actions to recommendations of the Quality Assurance Office developed based on their research analysis.

According to Quality Assurance Office representatives they have recently started to organize meetings with students for the purpose of giving feedback on actions taken by institution in response to their recommendations and suggestions, however, the meetings are desired to have more intensive and regular character, should also be extended to other stakeholders and may take other forms of communications as well in order to regularly motivate stakeholders valuable participation in QA researches and evaluations.

It has to be noted that the educational programs at the School of Business do not fully comply with some of the current requirements, therefore, it is suggested that the university and the QA Office should monitor and follow the legislative changes instantly (see the details in 3.1 Design and Development of Educational Programmes).

University has developed a student body planning mechanism, in addition, there is a separate mechanism and methodology of planning the number of students for the One Cycle Educational Program in Medicine. Mechanisms describe in detail all the capacities and resources that have to be evaluated to arrive at a reasonable number of students university can properly serve. In case of those educational programs, which require laboratory resources, methodology considers evaluation of laboratory capacities, as for the One Cycle Educational Program of Medical Doctor, the mechanism additionally takes into consideration the capacity of simulation rooms.

Iliia State University determines 17 770 places for students in total, among them 1200 places are allocated for Medical Doctor Educational Program. Student body planning mechanism considers additional parameters to calculate the relevant number of students at MD educational program, such as, simulation spaces, laboratory spaces.

Formula used for the calculation above contains variable like, Maximum hourly workload of the laboratory/simulation room, Number of lab/simulation rooms, Maximum number of

students per laboratory/simulation, etc. Formulas used for the calculation above are rational and logical. University can serve requested number of students at MD educational program. The number of students for clinical practice is calculated individually for each partner clinic, considering the ratios of students and patients determined by the field descriptors.

**Evidences/indicators**

- Quality Assurance Office Statute
- Internal Quality Assurance Concept
- Procedures for the assessment of the implementation of higher education programs
- Tools for systematic research/assessments
- Report of the Quality Assurance Office on the results of internal self-assessment of higher education programs
- Internal self-assessment reports of programs
- Quality Assurance Research Analysis
- Student contingent planning mechanism and methodology
- The mechanism and methodology of planning the contingent of students for the One Step Educational Program for Medicine
- The procedure for evaluating the academic staff's activity
- The procedure for evaluating the research staff's activity
- The procedure for evaluating the work performed for administrative and support staff
- Site-visit interview results with different stakeholders
- Self-evaluation report

**Recommendations:**

None

**Suggestions:**

- It is suggested to have more intensive and regular meetings with stakeholders for the purpose of giving feedback on actions taken by institution in response to their recommendations and suggestions, it should also be extended to all stakeholders and may take other forms of communications as well, in order to regularly motivate their valuable participation in QA research and evaluation.

**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**

Ilia State University has developed several documents to regulate academic integrity and the ethical issues at the institution: "Code of Ethics for Academic Staff and Other Individuals Involved in the Educational Process", "Student Code of Ethics", "Academic Integrity Rule for Students".

"Code of Ethics for Academic Staff and Other Individuals Involved in the Educational Process" sets the rule of professional conduct for academic and invited staff and researchers at Ilia State University, the goal of which is to set standards for professional conduct, ethical values and obligations. These standards apply to interactions with students, their legal representatives, colleagues and society.

"Student Code of Ethics" sets standards and procedures to ensure a relevant academic and research environment at Ilia State University. The document is a guide for behavior to ensure protection of common resources and rights of students and other members of university society as well as to ensure the best academic atmosphere.

"Academic Integrity Rule for Students" serves to determine and regulate issues about the academic integrity of students at Ilia State University as well as to apply penalties for breaching academic integrity. The academic integrity rule applies to students of the university.

Ilia State University has developed a checklist for students to help them prevent plagiarism in their work. The checklist lists the issues that students have to check to make sure that there are no signs of plagiarism in their work. It is a very clear and easy guide for students to support them in keeping academic integrity.

Information about regulations above are provided to relevant parties, students and academic or invited staff of Ilia State University through several ways:

The documents above are posted on the university's web-site: <https://iliauni.edu.ge/ge>, and the student's Code of Ethics is also uploaded to the Argus electronic system of the educational process management.

The Student Code of Ethics is attached to the Student Agreement. Students at the same time are informed about the rules above during orientation meetings before the academic year.

As for the academic and invited staff, Internal Regulations and Code of Ethics for Academic Staff and Other Individuals Involved in the Educational Process are part of the employment contract. They are made known to the employees at the time of signing the contract, and the employees verify their agreement by signing the contract.

The University joins Plagiarism Awareness Week every year in February. For the last three years, public lectures and webinars, mainly for academic staff, have been held, where current issues were discussed. Additionally, Ilia State University hosts a forum annually, which is led

by representatives of the company Turnitin. Forums are dedicated to the issues like: the effective use of Turnitin, online learning and academic integrity, contract cheating.

Ilia State University established an annual conference on academic integrity in 2020. The first conference was organized by Ilia State University in Tbilisi, in 2022 it was organized by Ilia State University in Batumi and hosted by Batumi State University, in 2023 it was organized by Ilia State University and hosted by Iakob Gogebashvili Telavi State University. The conference mainly unites Georgian partners, however, foreign colleagues from leading European universities also participate. This event allows attendees to share successful/failed practices and discuss current challenges.

Ilia State University was coordinating the project "Academic Integrity for Quality Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Institutions in Georgia" (2017–2021), which united 14 Georgian and four European universities. The project was related to the adherence to the principles of academic integrity in the teaching-learning process, awareness raising and maintenance of the accompanying mechanisms/procedures, etc.

In 2022 Ilia State University became the coordinator of the project "Responsible Conduct of Research — Research Integrity and Ethics in Georgian Universities (ETHICS)", which is a serial continuation of the implementation of principles of integrity in research. The project unites 10 Georgian universities and 4 European partners; The implementation of the project is planned for 2023–2027 and it aims to strengthen the existing practices/mechanisms/procedures in the area of research integrity.

The periodic satisfaction survey of students includes such indicators as students' awareness of academic integrity and research ethics. According to the results of the above-mentioned survey in 2022, 63% of students were informed about academic integrity and ethical norms, and 74% about the regulations related to the prevention of plagiarism. According to the survey of 2023, 75% of students were informed about the rule related to academic integrity (plagiarism), and 59% of them about the ethical norms of research.

It has to be noted in addition that during site-visit interviews students as well as academic and invited staff of Ilia State University proved to be aware of all the rules and regulations on code of ethics and academic integrity of the university.

To support the protection of academic integrity at the university, Ilia State University utilizes relevant software: Turnitin, which is integrated into the university's e-learning portal, allowing instructors to activate the plagiarism detection feature while grading student assignments. The program is a mandatory requirement for the general module courses at the Bachelor's level, academic writing courses at the Master's and Doctoral levels, as well as for Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral theses. It has to be noted that there is a growing statistic of using Turnitin by academic and invited staff of the university, many academics have started using this evaluation system to ensure academic integrity.

#### **Evidence/indicators**

- Code of Ethics for Academic Staff and Other Individuals Involved in the Educational Process
- Student Code of Ethics
- Academic Integrity Rule for Students
- A checklist for students "How to avoid plagiarism"

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turnitin license/agreement (2018–2023)</li> <li>• Survey of satisfaction of students, academic and invited staff with university services (reports of 2022–2023)</li> <li>• Site-visit interview results with different stakeholders</li> <li>• Self-evaluation report</li> <li>• Website of Ilia State University: <a href="https://iliauni.edu.ge/">https://iliauni.edu.ge/</a>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>

### 3. Educational Programmes

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

#### 3.1 Design and Development of Educational Programmes

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

##### **Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements**

Ilia State University has a methodology for planning, designing, and developing educational programs. The document "Rules and Procedures for Development, approval, amendment, and Cancellation of Higher Educational Programs at Ilia State University (<https://iliauni.edu.ge/uploads/other/83/83084.pdf>) describes rules and regulations while planning, elaborating, and launching an Academic Program. Among the various regulatory documents required for the development of educational programs, there are two crucial regulatory documents: standards for planning the contingent of students in academic programs and the development of Bachelor and Master academic programs.

All stakeholders are involved in the process of developing educational programs - students, program staff, graduates, employers, and representatives of sectoral professional associations, both in the basic rules for the development of educational programs and by the procedures described in other regulatory documents. Paragraph 1.4 of the main regulatory document specifies that in the development of the educational program of the

university faculty/school academic, along with staff, invited staff should be involved (if any), including employers, students, and graduates (if the program is new, students of the adjacent discipline program should be involved in its development graduates), and administrative staff (including faculty/school Dean, Head of Quality Assurance Service, Quality Assurance Service specialist, and others).

The package of documents presented for authorization presents several pieces of evidence that prove the ISU continuously ensures the involvement of all interested parties in the development and implementation of academic programs. The quality assurance service of schools periodically prepares surveys of students' and professors' satisfaction, and surveys of employers' satisfaction are conducted (through focus groups and interviews). The abundance of studies ISU presented in the authorization package confirms employers' involvement in designing and developing educational programs. In particular, according to the submitted documents, in 2019-2023, the School of Arts and Science conducted more than 30 surveys of employers, the School of Natural Sciences and Medicine conducted 14 surveys, and the School of Business, Technologies, and Engineering conducted ten surveys. Against this background, the Law School seems relatively less productive; under the supervision of the advisory board, the school administration prepared only one market research document (Labor Market and Cooperation with the University Analysis of Perspectives) created in 2018. The need for activating cooperation with employers is vital here since many practicing professors teach in the mentioned school.

The administration, together with the heads of the educational programs, ensures the collection of data on monitoring the student's academic performance and analyzes the compliance of the learning outcomes with the target benchmarks. If surveys identify a need, the academic council of schools approves changes to academic programs.

The ISU' Quality Service has developed mechanisms for evaluating educational programs. The content of the program's internal monthly evaluation report form makes it clear that the ISU evaluates the programs from different perspectives — through periodic surveys of students, graduates, academic and visiting staff, and employers. The ISU evaluates academic programs quantitatively (student enrollment rate, indicators of program learning outcomes, statistical indicators of student performance) as well as by the use of qualitative methods. For quantitative data analysis, the ISU uses the data collected using its software Argus. For qualitative analysis, data are collected by direct survey methods other than Argus – focus groups and questionnaires. As the representatives of the quality service mentioned during the interviews, telephone interviews are also used to question the graduates. In addition to stakeholder surveys, educational program evaluation includes peer and external reviews.

To closely connect with employers and the changing labor market, several educational programs in the School of Business, Technologies, and Education have an advisory board consisting of professionals in the field (including employers). This way, they keep up with the changing labor market demands. The School of Law has an advisory board as well. From the point of view of the expert team, establishing advisory councils is the best practice, and its implementation can be helpful for other Schools and educational programs operating at Ilia State University.

It has to be noted that the educational programs at the School of Business do not fully comply with some of the current requirements of the qualification framework and the classifier of the fields of study (e.g. the volume of concentration at the bachelor level

exceeds 30 ECTS, the number, classification and the formulation of learning outcomes of educational programs are developed so that it complicates the process of their assessment). However, it has to be noted as well that Business School educational programs are already renewed and updated to comply with the qualification framework and the classifiers of the fields of study and the new versions of the programs have already been submitted for the accreditation purposes and for detailed content evaluation. In addition, the mentioned educational programs, according to the order #69/n of April 10, 2019, of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia were allowed to comply with the qualification framework and the classifiers of the fields of study till September 30, 2024.

In addition, the PhD educational program in Business Administration is structured as a 180 ECTS program. According to the Law of Georgia on Higher Education (chapter VII, article 46, paragraph 2) doctoral educational programs should be designed as a maximum 60 ECTS study component plus research component with no credits. PhD educational program in Business Administration is also updated for a given moment and submitted for accreditation purposes, however, it is suggested that the university should monitor and follow the legislative changes instantly.

However, the number of credits in the documentation was identified by the experts as a technical error, given that changes were made in other documents. Therefore, the university should place greater emphasis on ensuring the accurate updating of documents."

According to the self-evaluation report submitted for authorization, Ilia State University canceled ten educational programs after authorization in 2018. During the interviews, the school's administrative board members noted that the board may cancel an academic program based on market demands. During the interview with the deans of the schools, the respondents mentioned that in such a case, a school administration would either put an academic program into a temporary mode or merge it with another related program. For example, The School of Arts and Sciences administration decided to merge the bachelor's program of Oriental Studies with the bachelor's program International Relations: Europe and Middle East (Major).

Legal Entity of Public Law Ilia State University Policy and Procedures for the Development, Approval, Modification, and Cancellation of Higher Education Programs (<https://iliauni.edu.ge/uploads/other/83/83084.pdf> ) regulates the study of those students Continuation of the process, those who are studying temporarily, or in canceled educational programs. Article 3 of the governing document regulates the cancellation/merger of academic programs in HEI. According to Article 3, Clause 5, when students study in a canceled educational program, their learning will be provided by the rule regarding the student's mobility and recognition of education received during the period. Thus, students can continue their studies in an educational program transferred to the transfer mode or transfer to an adjacent program through mobility.

#### **Evidence/indicators**

- Methodology for planning, designing and development of educational programs
- Analysis of labor market and employer demands
- Student, alumni, employer satisfaction surveys and analysis
- Student academic performance monitoring results

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedures for program approval, amendment and annulment</li> <li>• Mechanisms providing further educational opportunities to students, in case of the amendment/annulment of educational programs</li> <li>• Interview results</li> <li>• Educational programs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is suggested the university should place greater emphasis on ensuring the accurate updating of documents.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>
<p><b>3.2 Structure and Content of Educational Programmes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Programme learning outcomes are clearly stated and are in line with higher education level and qualification to be granted</li> <li>○ 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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>The credit accumulation system at Ilia State University is in line with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) guidelines. In particular, "Rules for the Assessment of Students/Vocational Students at Ilia State University, Assigning of Credits, Rating, and Fees for Additional/Retaken Courses/Components" (The academic council adopted the rule mentioned in 2015, and since then, several changes have been made to it). According to Article 3 of the mentioned rule, "The number of credits in each course/component is determined by the time (independent and contact hours) required to achieve the goals and outcomes of the course/component. One credit consists of 25 hours." The credit system of the programs of the higher educational institution is based on the ECTS methodology.</p> <p>The learning outcomes of educational programs are clearly formulated, facilitating the measurement and evaluation of learning outcomes. The learning outcomes of the MD program are aligned with specifications of the field of medicine and relevant sector benchmark. The learning outcomes of the educational programs are consistent with the level of the educational program and the qualification awarded.</p>

The specifics of the field of study and the national qualifications framework are considered when forming the learning outcomes of training programs.

It is important to note that the educational programs at the School of Business should be reviewed to align with certain current requirements of the qualification framework and the field of study classifier.

The structure and content of the higher education programs are logically related to learning outcomes. The curriculum's design ensures that an average student can overcome the semester curriculum in terms of time and the amount of material to be digested.

The structure of the MD program which includes different phases of normal structure and functions, abnormal structure and function, clerkship and also internship are well designed and are appropriate for attainment of the program learning outcomes. The internship phase is a very good opportunity for MD students to practice medicine under close supervision of the faculty members. Considering its innovative nature, it seems necessary to define the details of the internship phase before a real implementation for the first cohort of students which enter this phase.

In the structure of higher education programs, there is usually enough space for the student to have the opportunity to choose subjects of interest, both within the main field of study, and outside the main field of study, since the majority of bachelor's programs have 60 ECTS places allocated for free credits. Even though the structure of the educational programs guarantees the completion of elective subjects and free credits, some students and graduates during the interview expressed the desire that the program administrators would offer them more elective subjects, as well as - to have the opportunity to undergo field and practical studies more intensively. In the MD and in some other regulated programs the number of elective courses are aligned with the sectoral benchmarks of the field.

The analysis of educational programs confirmed that the specifics of the field and learning outcomes determine the scope of academic programs. In addition, undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral-level standards are maintained. For the development and implementation of programs at all three levels of higher education, the ISU has developed a separate standard that defines the specifics of the level of higher education and the characteristics of the program to be developed.

Educational programs consist of various teaching and learning methods. These methods take into account the specificity of the field of study and the tasks of a particular subject and ensure the achievement of the training course goals.

The ISU provides access to higher educational programs. The university's website describes the accredited academic programs, course catalogs, and curriculum (including the semester curriculum). The information on the website about the educational programs is updated and corresponds to the latest versions of the academic programs.

The ISU's administration considers the learning characteristics of students with different needs. Article 4 of the document "Legal Entity of Public Law Ilia State University Policy and Procedures for the Development, Approval, Modification, and Cancellation of Higher Education Programs" explains the procedures that students with special needs follow. In particular, point 4.4 states, "A student/trustee with special educational needs should apply

to the faculty/school implementing the relevant program with the request of drawing up an individual program." The student's/trustee's application must be confirmed with documentation revealing special educational needs.

In addition to the general rule, the ISU has a unique regulatory measure, "Rules for organizing the educational process for disabled and special needs students at Ilia State University," which describes in more detail the measures that the university implements to ensure the proper educational process of students with special needs or limited abilities. This rule underscores the university's unwavering support for students with special needs, providing them with the necessary resources and assistance to ensure their academic success. According to Article 4 of the mentioned rule, "University: a) provides for disabled/special educational needs equal access to the process of getting education for people without any discrimination; this means appropriate material, human, and training resources, including ramps, a learning environment equipped with an elevator, a sanitary unit, and more effort; b) ensures, if necessary, the invitation of an additional specialist and/or receiving a recommendation to appeal to organizations with relevant knowledge and specific work experience. Cares about the accessible format of educational materials (reading materials Audio/Electronic/Braille/Enlarged; Educational videos wanted with translation/audio description and others) on ensuring the existence of all educational program's direction. During interviews with the authorization expert group, representatives of higher education institutions mentioned that they have special assistants who help students with special needs.

It is important to note that Ilia State University has been running the Georgian language preparation program for many years. This program offers students from regions of Georgia where the level of teaching the Georgian language is not satisfactory the opportunity to study for free. Upon reaching the required level of proficiency, these students can enroll in the educational programs of their choice.

The authorization experts team had the chance to interview students of the Georgian language educational program. These students confirmed that their knowledge of the Georgian language significantly improved during their studies in the program. They also expressed their readiness to continue their studies in the bachelor's programs of their choice, which is a testament to the program's effectiveness.

Ilia State University periodically conducts graduate surveys. One purpose of the survey is to study graduates' employment rates. The document "Survey of Undergraduate Students of Ilia State University" is in the authorization documentation package. The quality service surveyed bachelor program graduates in the spring semester of 2023.

According to the document, the study aimed to determine the bachelor of Ilia State University degree of graduates one year after graduation and evaluate the training program. It also aimed to determine what percentage of graduates are employed and how satisfied they are with the program.

The survey results of 997 graduates of undergraduate programs showed that the share of employees among the respondents is 78%. Compared to the previous academic year index, it has increased by 7%. Notably, 34% of graduates are employed in their majors or in a related field, demonstrating the relevance of their degree. 36% are employed, but not in a specialty. Compared to the previous year, the percentage of respondents not working in their professional field has increased by only 1. It should be noted that there are self-



employed people in the specialty or related field, and 3% of the respondents are self-employed, but 4% do not have a specialty. (p. 11).

The quality service interviewed 456 graduates who finished master's programs in 2022. According to the results of the research, the employment rate among the respondents is 91%, a modest 1% increase from last year. 70% of graduates are employed in a specialty or related field, and 16% are employed in a non-specialty field. Compared to the previous year, the share of respondents who are employed in a specialty or related field has decreased by 3%. However, it's encouraging to note that 2% are self-employed in a specialty or related field, and 3% are self-employed but not in a specialty, indicating a positive trend in entrepreneurial endeavors. The share of the unemployed is 9%, which is only 1% less than the figure of the previous year. (pp. 6,22)

In conclusion, we note that the number of employees is high. In particular, 78% of bachelor's graduates and 91% of master's graduates are employed. Although the number of employees by specialty is relatively small (37% for bachelor's degrees, 72% for master's degrees), this is a general trend for higher educational institutions.

**Evidence/indicators**

- Educational programs, syllabi
- Regulations for planning, implementing and assessing scientific-research component
- Catalog of educational programs
- Interview results
- Ilia State University Undergraduate Alumni Survey, Spring 2023
- Ilia State University MA Alumni Survey, Spring 2023

**Recommendations:**

- It is recommended that the university should monitor and follow the legislative changes instantly.

**Suggestions:**

- It is suggested to consider possibilities to offer more varied elective courses to students and expand the scope of their practical training.
- It is suggested to consider possibilities of establishing advisor boards for all study programs provided by the ISU.

**Best Practices (if applicable):**

- Establishing advisory boards at some educational programs, for instance at School of Business, Technologies, and Education, and also at School of Law.

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

#### **Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements**

The ISU has a general rule for assessing the learning outcomes of educational programs, which is spelled out in the internal regulatory document "Rules for the Assessment of Students/Vocational Students at Ilia State University, Assigning of Credits, Rating and Fees for Additional/Retaken Courses/Components". In particular, in Article 10 of this document. Examining the syllabi of the educational programs submitted for authorization, it became clear that the evaluation system within the subjects (as well as learning methodology and activities) is different, as it corresponds to different fields and takes into account their specificities. However, the general rule of assessment is in line with the university regulation.

The mentioned rule applies to all educational programs operating in a higher educational institution; however, in some cases, depending on the specifics of the field, the evaluation system may change slightly. According to articles 10.1 and 10.2 of the mentioned document, "taking into account the objectives, learning outcomes, specifics, and minimum competency requirements of higher education programs, it becomes feasible to set a minimum passing grade that differs from the one indicated in clause 10. This minimum passing grade should not be below 51 points or exceed 60 points. (Update - 6.07.2022). In the case when subject benchmarks for academic programs in art and performance allow it, academic programs in these fields may include the following assessment scale for arts/performance projects/assignments:

- a) Pass with excellence – 91-100 points;
- b) Pass – 51-90 points;
- c) No pass – 50 points and less.

The system of evaluation of learning outcomes of educational programs takes into account the specificity of the field, though.

The evaluation system described in the syllabi is transparent. The scoring of individual components is adequate and described in a comprehensible way. Thus, the evaluation system, both for university and individual educational programs or at the level of specific subjects, is transparent. Students can learn how learning outcomes are evaluated at all levels.

The university's grading systems, designed to eliminate inequality, are easily accessible. The regulations on credit awarding, which define the grading system at the university level, are openly available. The evaluation system for each subject is clearly outlined in the syllabuses, which are easily accessible on Moodle's electronic resource. These regulations are standard for all students, ensuring an equal approach for everyone. The assessment system for each subject is integrated into the university software Argus, where the various midterm assessment components are permanently displayed throughout the semester.

During interviews with students and graduates, it was confirmed that they are familiar with evaluating learning outcomes. If necessary, the score of a separate component of the

midterm assessment was specified, and additional feedback was requested from the subject professor about the assessment received in the final/midterm exams.

"Rules for the Assessment of Students/Vocational Students at Ilia State University, Assigning of Credits, Rating and Fees for Additional/Retaken Courses/Components" describes the assessment appeal procedure. In particular, according to Article 9, "Students and vocational students have the right to appeal their midterm and/or final evaluations for any components of their educational program within two working days of receiving the notification of the results. As directed by the Dean, their appeal will be reviewed by a specialist in the field or the complaints commission, which must consist of no fewer than three members." (Addition - 4.07.2017)

When reviewing a complaint, the field specialist or complaints commission has the authority to evaluate the accuracy of midterm, or final assessments mentioned in the application. They can decide within three days to either increase the student's grade, deduct points, or leave the grade unchanged. Additionally, a specific school or faculty may set alternative deadlines for master's projects, theses, creative works, or other scientific papers, considering the project's scope, the academic calendar, and administrative requirements.

Sharing the outcomes of the midterm and final examinations in accordance with paragraph 94 of this policy implies that the responsible individual inputs the results into the educational process electronic management system Argus. (Addition - 4.07.2017).

The system mentioned works, as confirmed during the interviews by students who had appealed the evaluation score.

Ilia State University ensures that students are informed about their grades. Most of the test exams are held in the exam center, and students receive information about the evaluation of the midterm and final exams through the university software program "Argus."

During interviews with students and graduates, the respondents confirmed they can always get additional information about the evaluation if they are interested. Subject teachers always explain the arguments for assessment. Most interviewers confirmed that they are familiar with the mechanisms of appeal.

The medicine program at the university includes 12 OSCE (Objective Structured Clinical Examination) stations, fully equipped with simulators, case scenarios, and checklists, all in accordance with sectoral benchmarks. These stations meet the required standards, ensuring that both the number and the equipment align with industry expectations.

To provide post-assessment feedback, the institution not only informs students about the goals they have achieved, gaps in their knowledge or skills, and ways to improve, but also organizes individual meetings with supervisors or OSCE examiners. These meetings offer students personalized feedback and guidance, helping them better understand their performance and how to enhance their learning outcomes.

**Evidence/indicators**

- System for learning outcomes assessment and its accessibility to all interested parties
- Educational programs, syllabi

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Student survey results</li> <li>● Interview results</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="radio"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>

#### 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**

According to the SER, a total number of the ISU's staff (including academic, scientific, invited, administrative, and support staff) is 2.729, out of them there are 353 academic staff members (123 professors, 172 associate professors, 58 assistant professors), and 218 scientific staff. The number of international academic, scientific, invited staff involved in teaching is 31, and of those involved in research 23. Also, there are 869 invited staff involved in teaching. The total number of administrative and support staff is 1.289.

As the expert team calculated, the ratio between academic and invited staff at Ilia State University is 2.4. (864 invited lecturers / 353 academic staff). The fact that the number of invited lecturers is 2.4 times higher than the academic staff does not threaten the stability of the university. The total number of students in the university is 15,597. According to the SER quantitative data, the ratio of the academic and scientific staff number to the number of invited staff is 1/2 (571/869); the ratio of the affiliated staff number to the number of students is 1/43.8 (356/1557); The ratio of the academic, scientific, invited staff number to the number of the higher educational programs is 14/1 (1440/105). The ratio of students to affiliated staff at the master's and doctoral levels is much smaller. The ratio of the number of supervisors and master students is 1/4 (646/181), and the ratio of the number of supervisors and doctoral students is 1/2 (187/112).

The retention rate for academic staff, invited staff, and administration and support staff is higher than 90% (according to the list, 97%, 93%, and 95%). ISU's benchmark is maintaining the ratios mentioned for at least three years.

University-wide staffing ratios with various quantitative data ensure the sustainability of the work of the higher educational institution

The ISU has developed a clear policy for hiring new employees, which ensures that professional employees are hired through competitive and transparent competition. LEPL Ilia State University

Internal Regulations describe the rights and obligations of the employer and employee. The documents on the recruitment policy for academic, research, administrative, and support staff describe more detailed rules for employee selection. The ISU has a procedure for ensuring the integration of new employees – the New Employee Guide – which explains all essential issues – the university structure, remuneration rules, and insurance guidelines.

Staff management policy of the ISU is aligned with the institutional mission, vision, and strategic plan. The ISU's documents that relate to staff management policy are underlying values of fairness and impartiality, equal opportunities, integrity, innovativeness and initiative, transparency and openness, teamwork, high ethical standards, democratic management style, and quality assurance. Such a set of values can be seen as highly relevant; together these values are creating a relative complexity, with a potential to ensure implementation of educational processes and other activities defined in the strategic plan of the ISU.

Procedures for hiring academic, scientific, invited, administrative and support staff seem to be transparent and objective. The unit that is in charge of these processes is the Human Resources Management Office.

As for participation/involvement of the staff in decision-making processes that relate to main aspects of the ISU's operation it is guaranteed by the statute of the ISU, faculty bylaws and some other regulations of specific units of the ISU, including election regulations of the ISU.

Selection and integration of the staff includes, among other processes, induction activities, incl. the development of a professional development plan. The selection aligns with qualification requirements, the existing legislation and institutional regulations, as the documentation provided by the ISU showed.

A part of the human resource management is evaluation and management of the performed work done by the staff members. The evaluation system has the potential to generate data about work performance of the staff members, provide feedback to employees, and relate it to the identification of needs and remuneration system. The cycle consists of several phases: planning, evaluation, summarization, feedback, planning/implementation of activities. Target benchmarks, mandatory criteria, and performance indicators are in place, and they are linked with qualification requirements and competencies.

Evaluation of the academic staff's work has been implemented since 2018 at the ISU, with some amendments done during the years. At the moment, it is done in a way that emphasizes behavioral, professional and technical competencies in particular.

Principles of remuneration and encouragement seem to be predefined and they are related to performance evaluation results of the staff at ISU.

This can be said, the ISU has developed and used adequate approaches to professional development of its staff. Various forms of professional development activities are in place at the ISU, and two units formally related to the Human Resources Management Office seem to be the main actors here: the Center for the Development of Academic Staff and Teachers, and the Personal and Professional Development Center. A number of examples of the courses and other staff development opportunities were enlisted in the self-evaluation report, and the ISU's staff (both academic, and administrative) confirmed their relevance during the interviews. Some of these activities are also related/supported with Erasmus+ and other projects in which the ISU has been involved, and some reach an even broader professional public (such as school teachers, for instance).

The ISU is using human resources management software with the help of which it also collects data about the employees, generates statistics, allows quick and efficient data retrieval, and more - in other words, the ISU works with the data on its employees in an up-to-date way. The data are collected via various surveys conducted mainly but not only within the ISU.

In response to the recommendation from the previous authorization process, the ISU developed job descriptions and the criteria related to the qualification requirements, and clarified behavioral and technical competencies for all positions within the ISU. This can be said, the ISU has clearly defined qualification requirements of all staff categories.

Overall, the ISU's staff qualifications are in line with the higher education institutions' qualification requirement.

The affiliation of academic staff to the ISU is regulated, namely by the Rule of Competition for an Academic Position at Ilias State University and Conditions of Employment in an Academic Position.

**Evidence/indicators**

- Self-evaluation report
- Regulations of the Human Resources Management Office
- Policy documents regarding to recruitment of Academic, Research, Administrative and Support Staff
- New Employee Guide
- Survey results
- Interviews

**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

**4.2. Academic/Scientific and Invited Staff Workload**

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

**Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements**

As for the workload of academic, scientific and invited staff, the ISU has developed workload charts that adhere to university regulations, namely those related to the employment of academic staff and guidelines for determining the student population at the ISU.

The workload scheme includes teaching, scientific research, and other workload according to the academic staff's functions and duties. The regulatory document "Rules for holding a contest for an academic position at Ilia State University and Terms of Employment in an Academic position" describes conditions for announcing and holding a competition for academic staff vacancies and signing an employment contract. The Academic Council and the Entrepreneurial Council made the last changes to the document in November and December 2023.

The workload schemes are regularly updated, the methodology of establishing student enrollment quotas, considering program specifics, existing student numbers, and anticipated intake is in place. This way, for instance, in 2023 the update of the methodology was aligned with the ratios (target benchmarks) of student to academic and invited staff involved in the teaching within the educational programs.

Higher education institutions have a methodology that considers the specifics of educational programs and determines the ratio of students and teachers using unique formulas. Two documents describe student contingent Planning Mechanisms: 1. "Ilia State University Student Contingent Planning Mechanism and Methodology," and 2. "Ilia State University Student Contingent Planning Mechanism and Methodology for MD Program." According to the methodology, "When planning the student contingent for undergraduate-level programs (excluding programs in Law, Business, and Administration, as well as Travel, Tourism, and Leisure), one professor is assigned to a maximum of 70 students. However, up to two professors are required for each program, and the qualification and/or research profiles of both professors must correspond to the specific program's requirements." ("Ilia State University Student Contingent Planning Mechanism and Methodology", p. 1).

In undergraduate Law programs, ten professors are allocated for every 1000 students. For 2000 students, there are 17 professors with at least ten professors' qualifications and/or research profiles matching the program's specified criteria. Depending on the field of study, the student-to-academic/invited staff ratio is at least: 1/17.

For undergraduate programs in Business and Administration, as well as Travel, Tourism, and Leisure, ten professors are allocated for the first 1000 students and eight professors - for each subsequent 1000 students, and depending on the field of study, the student-to-academic/invited staff ratio is at least:

Management and business administration 1/25

Finance, banking, and insurance 1/25

Travel, tourism, and recreation 1/35 ("Ilia State University Student Contingent Planning Mechanism and Methodology," pgs:2-3).

School of Medicine approved a different academic staff workload ratio. According to the methodology regulation document, "based on the type of instruction, the ratio of teaching staff and students should not be less than: Type of teaching	students/ personnel involved in teaching ratio
Basic (science) education	1/20
CBL/PBL	1/80
Simulation in medical instruction	1/60
Clinical training	1/10

The document ("Ilia State University Student Contingent Planning Mechanism And Methodology for MD Program") mentions that the student contingent is calculated based on the lowest indicators.

Ilia State University's "Mechanism and methodology of student quota planning" ensures that the number of professors determines the number of academic staff according to the individual needs of the programs. Although the ratio of academic staff to students varies from 1/12 to 1/35 in different educational programs, it does not exceed 70 in any program (the exceptions are academic undergraduate programs in law, business and administration, and travel, tourism, and recreation). At the master's and doctoral level, the program should include at least two professors, and the ratio between academic staff and students should not exceed 1/40. In addition, one academic staff can supervise a maximum of eight theses at the same time.

As concerns the scientific staff, research benchmarks are being established, in alignment with the prerequisites of scientific research projects, and with consideration of individual agreements.

This can be confirmed that the academic staff defines its primary affiliation to the ISU based on the agreement between the staff and the ISU.

The authorization experts group finds it noteworthy that the law school's academic staff comprises only associate and full professors. The school should also have lower-level academic staff (assistants), which is necessary for the sustainability of the programs and the growth of professionals in the field.

The academic and research staff is affiliated only with Ilia State University. According to the "Academic Staff Recruitment Policy" document, a selected candidate who holds the academic position of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor at Ilia State University cannot work in another higher educational or scientific research institution in Georgia in an academic/administrative and scientific position or in the scientific/academic position of another name, which involves research and teaching as the main activity (Article 7). The last three paragraphs of Article 7 of the same rule describe the exceptional cases when ISU-affiliated academic staff can give lectures in another higher educational institution without holding an academic/scientific/researcher position in another educational institution. In all such exceptional cases, the person holding an academic position must discuss a case with the university administration and obtain written permission of the rector.

At the beginning of each academic year, the ISU evaluates the activities of the academic staff; academic staff members describe their activities annually through self-evaluation



reports. Every two years, the ISU evaluates the academic staff's performance according to pre-established benchmarks that relate to teaching, research, and social impact in university life. Based on the evaluation results, the administration of schools, research institutions, and other units makes encouraging decisions— job promotion, financial incentives, funding of scientific trips, and promotion of participation in exchange programs.

- Evidence/indicators**
- Academic/scientific staff-students ratio indicated in SER
  - Regulatory document(s) for affiliation terms and conditions
  - "Iliia State University Student Contingent Planning Mechanism and Methodology"
  - "Iliia State University Student Contingent Planning Mechanism and Methodology for MD Program."
  - Benchmarks set by the ISU
  - Evaluation Outcomes of the Academic and Research Staff and implemented activities
  - Rules of remuneration and bonuses, social monetary assistance to university employees
  - Interviews

**Recommendations:**  
None

- Suggestions:**
- It is suggested that the School of Law, besides full and associated professors, also has a body of lower-level academic staff (assistants), to ensure continuity and sustainability of the programs and the growth of professionals in the field.

**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**

Ilia State University has regulatory documents for obtaining student status, suspension, and termination, as well as mobility, qualification granting, issuance of educational documents, and recognition of education received during the learning period.

The institution has put internal policies into place and enforces them, along with a code of ethics for students, academic staff, and other stakeholders in the educational process, all aimed at protecting the rights and legal interests of students.

Students who participated in interviews confirmed that the contract, the Argus platform and the website are the primary sources from which they can obtain information about their rights and responsibilities.

The ISU has established appeals process for students who feel their rights have been violated or are unsatisfied with the academic outcomes. During the interview, students confirmed that they have used the method of appeals multiple times (especially when they are not happy with the assessment points). The appeal procedure is initiated on the Argus platform and is later carried out at the faculty level, at the dean's office. Before starting the appeal process students usually approach lecturers during consultation hours to express their dissatisfaction.

The student profiles have been updated with a guide and checklist for preventing plagiarism, as well as information on the steps and due dates for status restoration and suspension.

Students have various channels of communication with the administration, which was also confirmed by students during the site visit.

Ilia State University has a transparent process for student exchange mobility. Students can apply simultaneously for various exchange programs. The main criteria are to match the program requirements and have competitive academic results. If the student is not selected for mobility, he/she is recorded on the waiting list. If students have the same points, the socially, economically or otherwise disadvantaged student will be prioritized for mobility.

International students are admitted to the programs without unified national exams. However, preconditions for program admission are described in program curriculums (Education recognition). Minimum English language proficiency is B1 level, in some cases such as Business Administration undergraduate program it is B2 level. Ilia State University is accepting international language proficiency certificates such as TOEFL, CBT, IELTS, FCE, BEC Vantage, PTE, PTE Academic, Michigan.

During interviews with international students, their English language skill was proven. Students could freely communicate in English and understood the expert's questions. It has to be mentioned that international students underlined the support of the international relations office in helping their smooth transition and adaptation to local culture.

**Evidence/indicators:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Self-evaluation Report</li> <li>● Interviews</li> <li>● Rule regulating the status of a student/vocational student at Ilia State University</li> <li>● Rule of recognizing of education received during student mobility and training period at Ilia State University</li> <li>● Rule of recognizing the education received within the framework of the amended or canceled educational program in the case the educational program is amended or canceled on the initiative of the university</li> <li>● Rule of granting qualifications at Ilia State University</li> <li>● Student code of ethics</li> <li>● Sexual harassment prevention policy document of Ilia State University</li> <li>● Samples of the agreement to be signed between the university and the student</li> <li>● Student Exchange mobility participation regulation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>
<p><b>5.2 Student Support Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEI has student consulting services in order to plan educational process and improve academic performance</li> <li>○ HEI has career support service, which provides students with appropriate counselling and support regarding employment and career development</li> <li>○ HEI ensures students awareness and involvement in various university-level, local and international projects and events, and supports student initiatives</li> <li>○ HEI has mechanisms, including financial mechanisms to support low SES students</li> </ul>

### **Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements**

A variety of services and support systems are available at Ilia State University to accommodate the various demands of its students. These consist of career development and planning advice, academic and university life counseling, help with student projects and activities, extracurricular skill-building activities, psychological support services, and resources for students with special needs.

During interviews, students confirmed that different trainings are conducted to address their needs such as soft skills training by San Diego University. Students emphasized that training enhanced their interpersonal communicational skills.

The library has developed a set of trainings where students can register online and wait until the number of participants reaches 7-10 students, which allows trainers to conduct the training. Library's halls are completely wheelchair-accessible, the administration of the library works closely with faculty members to determine what needs the students have that cannot be met by audio or reading programs.

Students' services are provided with various channels of communication developed by the university: UNIJOBS, Argus, Moodle, Emails, Phone.

Annual activities are planned by Ilia State University's Department of Student Affairs to help graduates and students advance their careers.

These include regular projects, external partners, and various University offices in which the below activities are carried out: employment forums, meetings with company representatives; career development accelerator; web-page tutorials; collaborations with Gepura consultation firm; student paid internships.

Throughout the year, the university regularly holds job fairs where representatives from various companies meet students with a range of specializations and introduce them to positions that are tailored to their needs.

During the site visit students highlighted the fact that some of the trainings are also carried out by students, such as coaching in CV writing.

International students have various supportive services starting with the preparations for the visa process, ending with orientation meetings and obtaining a residence permit. During interviews, international students emphasize a constant support from the International Office, which monthly sends reminders not to forget to extend the residence permit document.

The university is in the process of establishing a Buddy program, which should allow especially international students to match with local students for guidance and advice for navigating the University's new culture.

During interviews, international students confirmed their participation in cultural festivals, although expressed willingness to be involved more in student life.

Ilia State University realizes a number of projects where students are actively involved at all levels of study programs. Some of examples include:

FabLab - provides students (and other interested parties) the opportunity to transform innovative ideas into reality with the assistance of qualified staff and modern equipment.

UniLab - Cyber Laboratory provides educational activities and a professional acceleration program for students and others, helping them accumulate theoretical knowledge and practical experience in the field of digital technologies.

QartNLP - a tool for digital processing of the Georgian language in cooperation with the ISU Institute of Linguistic Studies, which makes the Georgian language analyzer created at the Ilia State University accessible to a wider audience.

<p><b>Evidences/indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Self-evaluation report</li> <li>● Interviews</li> <li>● Electronic Selection System Argus</li> <li>● Student and University Agreement Samples</li> <li>● Library website</li> <li>● E-Learning Portal eLearning Iliani</li> <li>● Turnitin Feedback Studio</li> <li>● Psychological Counseling Center for Students</li> <li>● Financial support of the University and related orders</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>

## 6. Research, development and/or other creative work

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

### 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

The University's research strategy was prepared by the Rector, the Rector's Consultant for Research and the Research Coordination Office in cooperation with scientific research units, faculties/schools and the strategic planning working group. In the process of developing the research strategy document, the studies conducted to evaluate the University's activities were also used. Goals and objectives were identified, and the action plan defined the relevant activities.

The goal of the University's 2024-2030 research strategy is to create a leading, robust and open research environment in the region and broader; to support interdisciplinary research activities at the University; to maintain institutional and various sectoral indicators in

international research rankings; and maximize the support and performance of prospective destinations.

The Research Strategy's mission is to strengthen the strategies of the faculties to jointly create space and conditions focused on development and success, both for the University's academic and scientific staff and scientific units, as well as for students and young researchers.

The vision presented in ISU's research strategy is an essential tool for implementing the University's research activities, with which the University should achieve research excellence, social impact, growth of knowledge and the University's reputation, both in the academic community and beyond.

By implementing a Research Strategy, the University creates an enabling environment where research is linked to teaching and practice, and all three are enhanced by working together.

Strategic objectives:

1. Ensuring and promoting the sustainability of research activities
2. Raising the standard of research activity

The University's mission is to create a flexible environment for research activities within its capabilities, encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, and support ethical and responsible research practices. This is bolstered by projects funded through various international partnerships, including:

Erasmus+ Projects:

1. [Responsible Conduct of Research - Research Integrity and Ethics in Georgian Universities \(ETHICS\)](#).
2. [Advancing Open Science In Eastern Partnership Region \(BE-OPEN\)](#)
3. [RAISING RESEARCH CAPACITY OF GEORGIAN HEIS THROUGH DEVELOPING R&D UNITS \(HERD\)](#)
4. [„Strengthening the Quality and Relevance of the 3rd mission in Georgian Universities“ \(SQUARE\)](#)

Also the University participates in 4 International Consortia of the European Cooperation Program - COST and in the EMBRACE Project funded within the Horizon Europe Program and 4 projects funded within the Horizon 2020 Program. In line with the Horizon Europe guidelines, Ilia State University developed a Gender Equality Plan. This plan represents the University's declared and agreed-upon approach, with specific tasks and actions outlined for a three-year period.

The University aims to support academic, scientific, and visiting staff, along with students, by offering appropriate structures and resources to participate in relevant programs.

During the interviews it was mentioned that one of the University's research priorities is fostering a culture of openness and transparency through the implementation of open science and data management policies. This involves creating platforms for open data access and sharing, making research data available to other researchers according to international standards. The University has established a computing center focused on data analysis and big data processing tools. In collaboration with research units and the Research Coordination Office, the center supports open repositories and backup services. As part of this collaboration, a digital collection/database of the National Herbarium of the Botanical Institute is being created, with plans to digitize and include 32,000 herbarium sheets by the project's end.

Additionally, a biodiversity database of Georgia is being developed with the Institutes of Ecology and Zoology. Future plans include developing electronic infrastructure and integrating it into the European Open Science Cloud.

At present, research units are carrying out projects with various external partners and economic agents, operating jointly and on their behalf. These collaborations are governed by relevant memorandums, service agreements, and consulting contracts. The collaboration involves scientific and consulting activities, including preparing questionnaires, providing laboratory services, developing training courses, conducting soil and forest research, and more.

The university provided a comprehensive document that included a detailed list of studies conducted by various research institutes. This document showcased the extensive research work undertaken by these institutes, highlighting their contributions and areas of focus.

At the ISU, artistic and creative activities are incorporated into educational programs like Film Studies, Music, and the Art of Live Theatre. These programs ensure the development of students' creative and performing skills and their involvement in creative projects ((For example the annual Kutaisi Short Film Festival). They include components designed to nurture and develop creative talents, utilizing both the Music Center and the ISU Theatre at Ilia State University, as well as partner organizations with which memorandums have been signed.

At the University, several key aspects highlight the integration of teaching and research. PhD students participate in the teaching process as assistants, providing valuable support and gaining teaching experience. Academic staff and researchers involved in relevant research institutes also contribute to teaching, ensuring that students benefit from their active engagement in research. To support this integration, international electronic databases of periodicals are accessible to both students and staff involved in the teaching process.

In the interviews with the PhD graduates, it was noted that they had the option to select their supervisor and could switch supervisors if they desired. All supervisors were well-qualified and knowledgeable in their fields.

A thorough examination of the supervisors' curricula vitae and scholarly publications confirms their qualifications and expertise in their respective fields. This detailed assessment underscores their academic rigor, extensive research experience, and substantial contributions to their disciplines, all of which validate their suitability for mentoring advanced-level students. The depth of their academic achievements and the relevance of their research portfolios demonstrate that they are well-equipped to provide high-quality supervision, ensuring that the academic integrity and excellence of the programs are upheld.

According to university regulations, master's and doctoral programs must include at least two professors as part of the academic staff, ensuring that the ratio between students and faculty members does not exceed 1:40. Furthermore, these regulations stipulate that any single academic staff member is limited to supervising a maximum of eight theses at a time. These guidelines are in place to maintain high standards of academic quality and provide students with the necessary support and mentorship throughout their research endeavors. At this stage, the university has 213 active PhD students

Moreover, academic staff use their published papers, such as books and monographs, as learning resources in educational programs. Master's and doctoral students conduct qualifying research as part of the University's scientific projects, often utilizing partner research institutions and bases, particularly within the Faculty of Natural Sciences and the Institute of Chemical Biology. Additionally, the experimental, laboratory, field, and expeditionary work outlined in educational programs are conducted at Ilia State University's facilities and partner research institutions and laboratories.

To ensure effective management of doctoral research, the "Regulations on Dissertation Council and Doctoral Studies" are in place at the faculties. These regulations clearly outline the responsibilities of PhD supervisors, while allowing some flexibility to accommodate the specific needs of different fields. However, since the "communication" terms between students and supervisors are not strictly regulated, instances of "insufficient" communication sometimes occur. The doctoral thesis process involves gradual and consistent steps, including systematizing the research process, providing intermediate progress reports, and receiving periodic feedback. To ensure high-quality doctoral research, the regulations on the dissertation council and doctoral studies require the presentation of relevant international publications indexed in periodicals specified by the university. Interviews with involved parties revealed that the workload of academic and scientific staff allows for effective supervision of scientific and creative projects, ensuring high-quality work. These regulations also establish transparent, objective, fair, and publicly accessible procedures and criteria for evaluating and defending dissertations.

International Doctoral School of Ilia State University represents a cross-faculty administrative support unit at ISU assigned to support (structured) international doctoral education of high academic standards based on Cotutelle agreements between partner institutions, streamlining processes by supporting faculties and doctoral students in achieving academic excellence. In this process, ISU can be envisioned as a home or host institution. All doctoral students are admitted by ISU Faculties/schools, but only those (doctoral) students, and respective supervisors, become IDS members who have the consent letter of both supervisors (local and international), followed by Cotutelle agreement signed between home/host institutions. His/her membership is terminated upon the completion and/or suspension of the study in accordance with partner universities regulations.

The ISU upholds public, transparent, and fair procedures for the assessment and defense of dissertations, tailored to the specifics of each field. This ensures that the evaluation process is rigorous and equitable, reflecting the unique requirements and standards of diverse academic disciplines. Dissertations are subject to a structured review process, involving internal and external examiners who are experts in the relevant field. This multi-layered evaluation guarantees that the research meets high academic standards and contributes meaningfully to the field.

The defense process is conducted openly, allowing members of the academic community and other stakeholders to attend. This transparency fosters a culture of accountability and scholarly integrity. The procedures are clearly documented and accessible to all doctoral candidates, providing them with a comprehensive understanding of the requirements and expectations. Regular updates and training sessions are conducted to ensure that faculty and examiners are well-versed in the latest assessment criteria and methodologies.

In summary, Ilia State University conducts research and creative activities tailored to its type and field specifics. It ensures effective supervision of doctoral research to maintain high academic standards. Additionally, the University has established public, transparent, and fair procedures for the assessment and defense of dissertations, ensuring these processes are relevant and appropriate to the specifics of each academic field. This approach supports the University's commitment to academic integrity and excellence in research.

Over the period from 2018 to 2023, the Development Office managed a diverse portfolio of funded projects and grants that significantly contributed to the advancement of research, education, and community development initiatives. The funding was sourced from various prestigious organizations, including the Volkswagen Foundation and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), among others.

In 2018, the Volkswagen Foundation funded the "Lehmann-Haupt International Doctoral Program," a substantial project with a total budget of 406,000 EUR, equivalent to 1,218,000 Georgian Lari. This program was launched on January 11, 2018, and was successfully



completed by June 30, 2023. The primary objective of this project was to foster international collaboration and provide doctoral candidates with comprehensive research opportunities in their respective fields.

Another noteworthy project in 2018 was funded by UNDP, titled "Modernization of Vocational Education and Training." With a budget of 30,020 USD (84,056 Georgian Lari), this project aimed to enhance the quality and relevance of vocational education, aligning it with modern industry needs. The project commenced on March 7, 2018, and concluded by September 7, 2018, providing valuable outcomes in terms of educational infrastructure and curriculum development.

These projects are a testament to the continuous efforts to support academic and developmental goals through strategic funding and partnerships. The diversity in project types, from research-oriented initiatives to vocational training modernization, highlights the broad impact of these funded endeavors on both the academic community and society at large.

From 2018 to 2023, the Development Office actively pursued external funding by submitting numerous grant proposals to various prestigious organizations. These efforts were part of a broader strategy to secure financial support for projects that aimed to enhance research, education, and community development across different institutions.

In 2018, several significant proposals were submitted. For instance, the project titled "Strengthening the Research and Teaching Capacity in the Field of Communication Technologies," in collaboration with Klagenfurt University, aimed to bolster the institution's research capabilities in communication technologies. This proposal was submitted to the APPEAR program, reflecting a commitment to fostering academic excellence through international collaboration.

Another notable proposal in the same year was "PAVING THE WAY TO A KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY: ENHANCING ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS," submitted by Iliani to the US Embassy. This project sought to support the development of a knowledge-based economy by enhancing entrepreneurial skills among students and faculty, thereby contributing to the country's economic growth.

Throughout the five-year period, the Development Office engaged with a diverse range of donors, including the U.S. Mission to Georgia, the University of California, and Cleveland State University, among others. The proposals submitted covered a wide array of topics, from advancing entrepreneurial skills to promoting networking in brokerage events, demonstrating the Office's strategic focus on leveraging external partnerships to drive institutional development.

The database of submitted proposals showcases the proactive approach taken by the Development Office in identifying funding opportunities and crafting proposals that align with both institutional goals and donor priorities. This narrative highlights the key initiatives undertaken and the breadth of the Office's efforts to secure funding for impactful projects.

The university put forward agreements for international research grants, seeking to secure funding for collaborative projects on a global scale. These agreements were designed to establish partnerships with various international organizations and institutions, aiming to enhance the university's research capabilities and foster innovation through global collaboration.

#### **Evidence/indicators**

- The University's mission and vision as research university

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ilia State University Strategy of 2024-2030 and Action Plan of 2024-2026</li> <li>• 2024-2030 University Research Strategy of 2024-2023</li> <li>• Memorandum</li> <li>• Faculties' Bylaws of the Dissertation Board and Doctoral Studies</li> <li>• Dissertation Thesis Guidelines</li> <li>• Dissertation Defense Indicators</li> <li>• Policy of International Doctoral School of Ilia State University</li> <li>• Website</li> <li>• Interview results</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>
<p><b>6.2. Research Support and Internationalization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEI has an effective system in place for supporting research, development and creative activities</li> <li>○ Attracting new staff and their involvement in research/arts-creative activities.</li> <li>○ University works on internationalization of research, development and creative activities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>Ilia State University's research activities are supported by various structural units, with the Research Coordination Office and the Office of Development being the most significant. The statute of Ilia State University governs administrative aspects of ongoing research, while bylaws regulate each scientific research unit and support office.</p> <p>The decision on internal university funding is made by the Academic Council and the Rector:</p> <p>A. In the case of research units, the Academic Council accepts the financing of research activities within the income received from the University's economic activities, based on the recommendation of the Research Council.</p> <p>b. In the case of the University's Institutional Development Grant competition, upon the recommendation of the Research Council, the Rector approves by order.</p> <p>c. Decisions about various prizes, awards and initiatives supported by the University are governed by the relevant regulations and rules</p>

Ilia State University's existing scientific-research and creative-artistic units provide a strong foundation for involving master's and doctoral students, as well as young employees, in both fundamental and applied research and artistic activities. This is supported by the bylaws of the University's research units, which establish a unified research and education space through the collaboration of professors, researchers, and students. The academic and scientific staff assist students in publishing their research in scientific journals, such as *Caucasiana* and *Kadmos*, and in presenting their papers at international or local conferences.

Ilia State University's research strategy (2018-2024 and 2024-2030) aims to create an international-level research environment, support scientific activities, and actively involve students for their academic and professional growth. This approach enriches the research community with fresh perspectives and talent. To achieve this, the University encourages student participation in research activities. For example: The Institute of Theoretical Physics has seen an annual increase in student-implemented projects funded internally since 2018. Also, the ISU's students (21) are involved in the international mega research project CaBOL - Caucasus Barcode of Life, led by the Institutes of Ecology and Zoology and funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. This project allows students to participate in international biodiversity research and exchange programs, enhancing their knowledge in ecology, applied genetics, taxonomy, evolutionary biology, forestry, and species conservation through collaboration with international scientists.

The Research Coordination Office aids scientific units and staff in securing and managing national scientific projects, organizing activities for intramural research, implementing the open science policy, and arranging science engagement events like the University Science Picnic. This picnic, the first outdoor science promotion event, involves the Young Explorers Clubs, created in collaboration with the Copernicus Science Centre. These clubs, coordinated by the Science Education Research Centre SALiS, foster a new student-teacher relationship through scientific experiments, promoting critical and creative thinking among young people. In November 2023, 11 Young Explorers Clubs from University attended the International Copernicus Forum in Poland.

Additionally, the Research Coordination Office supports the Research Board, which develops the University's research agenda and regulates research evaluation processes. The Research Board follows specific guidelines for evaluating research activities and projects at Ilia State University.

Ilia State University offers several types of intra-university research support. The Institutional Development Projects, launched in 2019, aim to develop new areas at the University, integrating research and teaching. Since its inception, 35 projects have been funded, requiring student involvement. Priorities include developing research activities, preparing for broad grant calls, creating joint programs with international partners, and promoting science. Notable achievements include the development of an English-medium master's program in Public Health, the creation of the Innovative Education Research Center, and the establishment of the "Nanostructures for Renewable Energy" laboratory, which received further grants and a patent.

The Pascal Prize is a monetary award that encourages young scientists at Ilia State University by recognizing essential international publications. Since 2018, 21 Pascal Prizes have been awarded. The Ilia Medal, established in 2017, honors academic staff for their unique contributions to the University's academic activities and has been awarded to nine professors for their significant scientific publications. The University Scientific Prize, introduced in 2022, is awarded to high-impact scientists who make significant contributions to their fields through international publications. The first recipient was a Professor Emeritus for contributions to botanical and phytoecological sciences.

The University also supports academic staff and students in publishing in high-impact journals and participating in conferences. Since 2018, 105 individuals have been funded to attend scientific meetings, and more than 35 publications have been financed.

One of the key tools for supporting scientific activities are the University's scientific journals, which are created and managed by the institution. These journals are published on the OJS platform website and follow the Open Access (Open Source) principle. University Press provides printing of scientific books, journals, and materials, which are then placed in the university library, digital repository, and on the University Press website.

To internationalize the University's research activities, the International Relations Office facilitates the international mobility of academic staff and doctoral students through exchange programs. According to SER, between 2018 and 2023, 233 professors and teachers, as well as 70 doctoral students, participated in these programs, with increasing numbers each year. The Office also promotes mobility for foreign researchers and professors at Ilia State University and organizes orientation meetings with potential partners, such as the Brokerage Events with Aachen University. Information on international opportunities like research grants and scholarships is regularly shared, and support mechanisms for visiting researchers are in place, with 83 visiting researchers hosted between 2018 and 2023.

The Office of Development supports the University's research activities by helping academic and scientific staff find international funding sources. It aids in developing project proposals, managing funded programs, and ensuring the University meets Western research standards. Between 2018 and 2023, 65 international research projects received over 20,300,000 GEL in funding from significant international donors. The Office's objectives include identifying external funding opportunities, informing relevant groups about grant competitions and partnerships, and providing consultation during the application process.

The funds earmarked for research and scientific initiatives amount to 24,862,713 GEL, comprising close to one-fourth of the university's entire financial plan. This significant allocation underscores the university's commitment to advancing its research capabilities and supporting scientific innovation as a central aspect of its mission.

The university has established public, transparent, and equitable procedures for research funding. These procedures ensure that all funding opportunities are accessible to eligible researchers, with clear criteria and processes that promote fairness and integrity. By adhering to these principles, the university fosters a competitive and open environment that supports high-quality research across all disciplines.

Research units enhance the University's internationalization through strategic partnerships, funding acquisition, and training programs. Joint master's and doctoral programs, including double degree and exchange programs, are developed and implemented with international partners. Academic staff actively participate in these programs, particularly those run by the International Doctoral School under joint co-leadership initiatives.

As part of a multi-year strategic partnership with San Diego State University, programs are continuously developed to enhance the research capabilities of Georgian scientists. Collaboration efforts are also planned to strengthen STEM education at the general and preschool levels.

In 2023, Ilia State University received a post-doctoral research grant under the MSCA4Ukraine program, which involves hosting a Ukrainian social sciences researcher for 24 months to jointly implement the project "Identifying effective ways to find children and adults with disabilities among Ukrainian refugees."

The EU Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions project "Chromatin accessibility landscape and transcription changes in recognition memory after visual imprinting in chicks — CHARM-Vis" aims to study changes in the chromatin landscape and transcriptional activity in domestic chickens' brains after visual imprinting.

To enhance the internationalization and visibility of its scientific activities, Ilia State University regularly analyzes international scientific databases and updates its information on significant international systems and platforms.

Since 2021, Ilia State University has led Georgia in the Times Higher Education World University Ranking and is the only Georgian institution in the 2023 Young University Ranking.

Since 2021, Ilia State University has also been ranked in the U.S. News & World Report Best Global Universities, placing 801st globally and 447th in physics among 1,750 institutions from 90 countries in 2023.

In Stanford's annual ranking of the world's top 2% scientists, published since 2020, eight Georgian scientists are listed in 2023, including three from Ilia State University. Stanford's rankings use Scopus data and criteria such as Hirsch's h-index and Schreiber's hm-index.

Updating researcher profiles enhances the University's reputation and fosters new collaborations and partnerships. To raise awareness of research and opportunities, Ilia State University uses various communication channels. In 2020, it launched an online platform providing bilingual information about research units, grant calls, and projects. Tools like ORCID are also promoted and supported by the Research Coordination Office.

Since 2020, Ilia State University has been developing updated websites for its research units, providing dedicated online spaces for sharing information on publications, conferences, digital databases, and projects.

Starting in 2023, the University launched a platform for university blogs, where professors and researchers post scientific content to share new knowledge with students and the professional community. This initiative enhances the University's visibility and communicates its research achievements globally.

Ilia State University has signed a memorandum with state theaters, theatrical studios, schools, and organizations promoting theater development, along with the Georgian State University of Theatre and Cinema. These agreements aim to foster artistic and creative activities and develop practical, scientific, performing, research, and transferable skills among involved students.

Additionally, agreements with institutions like the Georgian Composers Creative Union, State Folklore State Center of Georgia, State Museum of Georgian Folk Songs and Instruments, and Georgian Sinfonietta provide university staff and students access to necessary resources. These collaborations enable joint educational and research activities, leveraging intellectual and technical resources across various domains.

The university actively engages with the community through research-driven programs and initiatives. Public lectures, workshops, and cultural events based on university research are regularly organized and open to the community, facilitating knowledge dissemination and cultural enrichment. Faculty and students participate in community service projects and volunteer work, applying research findings to address local issues. Collaborations with local non-profits, schools, and government agencies leverage research to develop solutions for community challenges. Continuing education programs offer non-degree courses, training, and certifications based on current research, promoting lifelong learning and professional development within the community.

During the interview with the directors of the institutes, it was mentioned that the university ensures its research has a real-world impact through effective knowledge transfer and innovation. Technology transfer offices facilitate the commercialization of research by helping patent innovations and bring them to market, ensuring that academic research contributes to technological advancements and economic growth. Collaborative research projects with external partners address societal challenges, combining strengths and resources to generate impactful solutions. Open access initiatives promote the availability of research outputs to the public, supporting further innovation and development. University experts provide research findings and insights to inform and shape public policy at local, national, and international levels, enhancing governance and societal outcomes.

In summary, University effectively supports research, development, and creative activities. It focuses on attracting new staff and involving them in these activities while also working on the internationalization of its research and creative endeavors.

**Evidence/indicators**

- The Statute of the ISU
- The Vision of the ISU
- The rule of evaluation of scientific-research activity and university financing
- Research Coordination Office Bylaws
- The Bylaws of the Office of Development
- International Relations Office Bylaws
- Agreements
- Statistics of bilateral mobility of doctoral students and teaching staff
- Annual Reports of the Research Coordination Office (2018-2023)
- Annual Reports of the Office of Development (2018-2023)
- The decision of the Academic Board to establish the Pascal Prize
- The decision to approve the ISU Scientific Award
- Doctoral Dissertation Evaluation and Defense Regulation
- The Regulations of the Dissertation Council and Doctoral Degree of Ilia State University
- Research/Scientific Evaluation and Support Mechanisms
- Interview results

**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

### 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 Policy "Job Performance Evaluation Policy for Research Staff" applies to the research staff employed at Ilia State University, including researchers, associate researchers, and research assistants, governing their job performance evaluation system. Evaluation of scientific staff is made once in two years, and unified self-evaluation questionnaires are used as an evaluation instrument. The self-evaluation reporting period for 2023 of the researchers at the faculties and research institutes of Ilia State University covered the years 2021-2022. The university has presented an analysis of the evaluation of research activities by faculties, where the information is given in detail.

#### Research Evaluation Criteria

- Publication (The author's affiliation must explicitly state Ilia State University; otherwise, the publication cannot be utilized to assess the author's research result):
  - Article in a peer-reviewed journal from international academic databases (Scientific publication featured in international peer-reviewed thematic journal(s) listed in reputable international databases such as Thomson Reuters Master Journal List, Scopus, Ulrich's Index, ERIH PLUS, EBSCOHost, Latindex Catalog). For natural sciences, exact sciences, engineering, and medicine, the articles should be published in a journal with an impact factor above 0.5 accessible in the Thomson Reuters Web of Science database or a journal with an impact factor above 0.5 cites core accessible in the list of Scopus)
  - Article in an international peer-reviewed journal
  - Article in a local scholarly journal
  - Monograph/book
  - Chapter in a book/compilation (international edition)
  - Chapter in a book/compilation (local edition)
  - Conference materials included in international databases (Thomson Reuters Master Journal List, Scopus, Ulrich's Index, ERIH PLUS, EBSCO Host, Latindex Catalog)
  - Conference materials
  - Manual
  - Vocational publication (Publication, which is not subject to peer review, is intended for a vocational audience and is a report of research conducted by the author or a database created by them. Such publications can be a result of collaboration with various organizations).
- Grant
- Membership in international collaboration
- Award

- Patent
- Participation in an international scientific conference
- Project with creative/performative elements, expedition, exhibition, design, public rendition (e.g., in the field of music); software;
- Knowledge transfer:
  - Supervision of a master's thesis
  - Supervision of a PhD dissertation
  - Membership on the editorial board of an international peer-reviewed journal
  - Membership on the editorial board of a local peer-reviewed journal
  - Peer-reviewing for international publications

Outlined criteria are not mandatory and exhaustive. Each scientific research unit/faculty reserves the right to independently determine each case's evaluation criteria and quantity for research assessment.

Each scientific and research unit establishes the minimum threshold for evaluating researchers in collaboration with the faculty or independently by the faculty. The evaluation is conducted following the criteria outlined in the Policy. The distribution of points among the criteria for evaluation of the research is determined and regulated independently by each faculty/scientific research unit in collaboration with the faculty. An individual researcher's performance may be assessed with more points than the prescribed minimum threshold if they accumulate additional points based on the selected criteria.

The administration of each scientific research unit or faculty reviews survey findings and self-evaluation reports from researchers. They then present these to the research staff, recommending actions for improvement or sustainability. Based on these outcomes and suggestions, recommendations are forwarded to the Faculty or School Board.

Once approved, these results and recommendations are communicated to the Rector, the University Research Board, the University Quality Assurance Office, the Human Resources Management Office, and the Research Coordination Office. Other relevant individuals or bodies are informed as necessary. The Research Board's decision and the reports from the research units are presented to the Academic

Board for review and approval of the recommendations and any further actions.

According to policy "Rule of Evaluation. University Support and Research Activities of Research units and Scientific projects of Ilia State University" the research activities of the University must comply with international standards. The main goal of the support and evaluation of research activities is the financial support of individual research units and scientific projects using a formal and systematic approach to the assessment of their contribution to the research activities of the University, which, in turn, serves to improve the quality of research. Improvement, as well as institutional development of the University in three main directions:

- a) promotion of successful, high impact research;
- b) promotion of important research for the region and the country;
- c) Promotion of research inspired by the University's responsibility towards the development of society, including social responsibility.

Assessment of scientific research activities serves the following tasks:

- management of intra-university funding for efficient distribution of resources;



- outline the priority directions of development and to plan future studies;
- identify and recognize high-impact research. Recognition of outstanding researchers, achievements and special projects with awards;
- strengthen research ethics;
- promotion of studies;
- creation and maintenance of the necessary environment for the implementation of international-level research, active support of the Academic and Scientific community of the University and active involvement of students in it;
- evaluation of the University's third mission and community impact.

The evaluation of the research activity performed by the research unit and the scientific project financed within the framework of intra-university funding is carried out in a formal way, with a specified periodicity, at least once a year and in a predetermined form.

The evaluation of the University's research efficiency and ranking is carried out using local and international institutional ranking systems.

The system for evaluation of the research activities in Ilia State University is a part of the internal quality assurance mechanism of the university and includes the evaluation of scientific research units and projects, on the one hand, and the evaluation of activities of the academic and scientific staff, on the other.

It should be noted that in 2021-2023, the scientific profile of Ilia State University has significantly developed. The outcome is confirmed by the data of important scientific databases, such as Clarivate WoS, Scimago, and Elsevier Scopus - with the growth rate of publications and citations.

Since 2021, Ilia State University has been at the forefront in the 2024 Times Higher Education World University Ranking (THE World University Ranking) in Georgia. Additionally, Ilia State University stands as the sole institution included in the 2023 Times Higher Education Young University Ranking (under 50 years). Notably, Ilia State University excels with a particularly high score of 47.7 points in research quality. In the field of Physical Sciences, Ilia State University achieves the highest position, ranking 351st with an indicator of 71.5.

**Evidence/indicators**

- Rules of evaluation of the activities of the academic and scientific staff of Ilia State University
- Rules of evaluation of scientific research activity and financing of the ISU
- Rule of Evaluation University Support and Research Activities of Research units and Scientific projects of Ilia State University
- Interview results
- SER

**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**

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

**Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements**

Based on the self-evaluation report for the authorization of Ilia State University, the attached documents, interviews conducted within the framework of the authorization visit, examination of additional requested documents, and inspection of material and technical resources, it was determined that the real and movable property owned/legitimately held by the university is used to achieve the goals defined by the university's mission, aligns with the university's mission, educational and research objectives, and the existing and planned number of students.

Ilia State University is a multi-profile educational and research university that integrates diverse educational and research directions and successfully positions itself at both national and international levels with significant research, educational, and societal impact.

The university serves a maximum of 17,770 students, including up to 700 international/foreign students. According to the self-assessment report, the actual number of active students at the university is 15,597, of which 32 are students with special educational needs. The total number of employees at the university (including academic, scientific, invited, administrative, support staff) is 2,829. The total area of the institution is 63,213.62 square meters, the total educational area of the institution is 24,037.21 square meters, and the total support area of the institution is 39,176.41 square meters.

To ensure high-quality research, educational, and administrative services, the institution has set target benchmarks at both the university and faculty levels. These benchmarks reflect the actual situation and are to be maintained by the institution over the next three years. During the interview process with representatives of the quality assurance service, it was clarified that the institution has actual conditions as indicators for the target benchmarks but also observes the experiences of other universities in forming them for benchmarking purposes. The actual

conditions, achieved learning outcomes, and interviews confirm that there are no significant deviations in relative data, and the existing indicators do not present problems. However, the institution noted that they plan to improve both primary and additional adaptive spaces/environments, which is reflected in the strategic plan for 2024-2030 and the action plan for 2024-2026. Additionally, the institution presented architectural sketches of planned construction projects and noted that the agreement process with the relevant regulatory bodies is ongoing. One of the main projects is related to student housing, which is designed for 300 places. These processes are in the initial stage of implementation according to the PDCA model. Consequently, to achieve the goals defined by the university's mission, Ilia State University constantly cares for the development of its infrastructure. Alongside planned works, infrastructure projects are being implemented that align with educational and research objectives and the existing and planned number of students.

In accordance with its mission to achieve its defined goals, Ilia State University continuously strives to develop its infrastructure. Alongside planned works, infrastructural projects are being implemented that align with educational and research objectives and the existing and planned number of students. More specifically, to achieve Strategic Goal #2, the following tasks are planned:

As for the development of educational and working spaces and research infrastructure, the ISU will ensure the further development of students' educational, working, and recreational spaces, thereby creating all the necessary conditions for learning and relaxation. It will also develop working spaces for academic and administrative staff. For infrastructure development, the university will collaborate with state agencies to obtain the necessary financial support. The following works will be carried out:

- Completion of G building works (grounding/elevator/uninterrupted power supply for laboratories).
- Rehabilitation of C building.
- Extension of T building.
- Work on the plan for the construction of a student dormitory.
- Preparation of a space optimization plan to reorganize and efficiently use spaces after the partial introduction of online learning."

These tasks are part of other tasks under Strategic Goal #2, for which the budget for 2024 is 4,240,000 GEL, for 2025 is 4,844,750 GEL, and for 2026 is 5,485,588 GEL. To assess the adequacy of material and technical resources to achieve the goals defined by the institution's mission, educational programs, and research activities' requirements, as well as the existing and/or planned number of students, the expert group additionally requested the following documentation:

- Measured drawing of the building (presented in printed version);
- Corresponding internal space of the measured drawing of the building (presented in printed version);
- Documentation confirming the ownership of movable property (presented in printed version);
- Documentation confirming safety in educational/scientific research laboratories (presented electronically);
- Receipts confirming payment for electricity, water, and natural gas (or payment confirmation document/bank statement, if available, for at least the last 3 months) (presented electronically);

- Document confirming the proper operation of the heating and ventilation system and its operational period (presented electronically);
- Document confirming compliance with sanitary norms (presented electronically);
- Documentation confirming the procurement of resources (presented electronically with selected resources);
- Fire-fighting inventory with detailed instructions for its use and approved evacuation plans by a competent body, LEPL - 112, or another state-accredited body/certified independent person (presented electronically);
- Document confirming the approval of evacuation plans (presented in printed version);
- Documentation confirming the ownership of fire-fighting and medical inventory, security cameras (relevant contract/acceptance-delivery acts/inventory materials, along with the need for their visual inspection). Conclusions from relevant structures (accredited bodies/certified person) (presented electronically);
- Adapted environment and/or development plan (presented electronically).

According to the authorization standards' requirements, information on the institution's area is presented based on actual addresses, cadastral codes of real estate, and extracts. Additionally, the institution presented measurement drawings of all spaces under its management, indicating educational and auxiliary areas as well as internal spaces.

The buildings are renovated and equipped with furniture, lighting, and necessary teaching inventory. Appropriate spaces are allocated for conducting educational, research, and administrative processes at a high level: classrooms, a conference hall, professors' offices for student consultations, educational/research laboratories, a library, a book storage room, a foyer, recreational spaces, theoretical teaching auditoriums, administrative rooms, group workspaces, sanitary facilities, a library, specialized laboratories, educational rooms, and archives. Their layout ensures the effective conduct of educational and administrative processes.

A significant role in the university's development was played by the construction of a new four-story, 5000 sq. m. educational building equipped with the latest technology, in collaboration with the San Diego State University Research Foundation and funded by the Millennium Challenge Corporation. The project, completed with the university's participation, was finished in 2019. The university co-financed the construction of the building's structure, roofing, and finishing, while the foundation carried out interior repair work and equipped laboratories. The building houses six educational laboratories of international standards for electrical and civil engineering, a cyber-laboratory, 16 classrooms, a reading room, a student space, and a conference hall equipped to modern standards.

Moreover, the Material Resources Service implemented infrastructural projects from 2020-2022. These included student spaces in buildings A, G, and S, and a conference hall in building G, equipped with modern conference equipment necessary for international conferences. Research bases in Kazbegi and Dedoplistskaro were rehabilitated to support research activities and university events, including student activities.

The university has well-equipped laboratories for the School of Medicine (4th floor of building G), a microbiology teaching laboratory (building E), a biochemistry teaching laboratory (building E), a microscopy laboratory (G 306), a genetics laboratory (3rd floor of building G), an anatomical laboratory (S 903), a clinical skills center (S901, 902, 904, 905, 906), and a research laboratory of the Institute of Chemical Biology (G 213). The laboratories are equipped with the

necessary teaching and research inventory and materials. Established rules ensure safety, including ventilation, fire safety equipment, and special clothing. This was confirmed by inspecting the laboratories. The university has educational/research laboratories, practical components inventory, and information technology equipment. Due to the specific nature of some educational programs, the university uses resources from partner institutions, as reflected in the memorandums or agreements between the university and the respective institutions. During the interview process, students, academic staff, and administration representatives confirmed that the laboratories have sufficient resources (reagents, materials, etc.) to achieve the educational program's goals and learning outcomes. If needed, stock replenishment is carried out through procurement.

The School of Medicine collaborates with various clinics and organizations (34 in total) to ensure the implementation of clinical and scientific practice. The university has signed memorandums with partner organizations, valid from 2024 to 2028. These memorandums outline cooperation goals and activities. While in some agreements the number of students is determined, in some others a specification of maximum/minimum number of students for partner institution can accommodate is missing.

Ilia State University owns 26 light/high-clearance vehicles, 6 water-crafts (1 ship, 1 boat, and 4 rubber boats), and 11 special-purpose equipment (1 tractor, 1 bus, 2 minibuses, 3 trailers, 1 passenger vehicle, and 3 trucks). A small ship safety certificate (inspection date 15.12.2023) issued by Georgian Veritas under the "Rules for Technical Inspection of Small Watercraft" was presented, valid until 15.12.2024. Copies of the passports for all technical equipment were also provided. The interview process revealed that these means are used for both curricular and extracurricular activities. An annual inventory process is conducted, as confirmed by inventory documents and interviews with auxiliary administrative services representatives.

The ISU has the necessary environment for educational activities: an uninterrupted electricity supply system, sanitary facilities, natural lighting, and central heating.

The ISU has created an alternative continuous electricity supply system (Tbilisi: I. Chavchavadze Ave. N32, K. Cholokashvili Ave. N3/5, G. Tsereteli Alley N1, Sh. Nutsubidze St. N77, Botanical N1). Constant power supply sources are installed at seismic station bases across the country. Solar systems were installed and functioned at K. Cholokashvili Ave. N3/5, generating up to 35 kilowatts of electricity, fully supplying the university's F building. The university is equipped with a central heating system, and every classroom and workspace have an individual conditioning system purchased with a warranty and additional technical services.

Sanitary and hygienic norms are maintained at the university. Internal rules and instructions for sanitary maintenance and a responsible person for these duties (cleaner's internal regulations) and disinfection and pest control contracts are developed. The expert group studied the 2023 lecturer survey on university services. Survey results allowed respondents to rate their satisfaction with various university services and resources on a 5-point scale. According to the average scale indicator, respondents most positively rated the reading rooms and research bases of the library (4.5) and the temperature (heating/air conditioning), classrooms, laboratories, cleanliness, and research centers/laboratories equally (4.3). The lowest rating (3.9) was given to WiFi internet. Among the 438 surveyed lecturers, more than half (53%) are very satisfied with cleanliness, 3% are dissatisfied, and 4% are very dissatisfied. The majority of respondents (57%) could not evaluate the research centers or laboratories due to a lack of relevant experience, but 24% are very satisfied with these resources. Academic staff positively rated the library's reading rooms, with 44% very satisfied and 20% satisfied. However, during

the interview process, no dissatisfaction was recorded among respondents (students, graduates, lecturers). The survey was also conducted by schools. The university administration uses survey results to improve university services.

The university ensures the safety and health of its staff and students. Specifically, fire safety, first aid, and order maintenance mechanisms are developed, with appropriate inventory confirmed during the inspection of university spaces. It was noted that training is conducted for employee preparation on safety issues. Each department has its regulations posted on the university website, defining the roles and responsibilities of the employees.

Fire safety equipment with detailed usage instructions and evacuation plans approved by the LEPL - 112 are installed on each floor. The institution has a medical cabinet equipped with necessary first aid supplies, continuously stocked with hot and cold water. A qualified responsible person is employed for first aid, confirmed by a contract. The university has first aid kits with necessary medications. Additionally, designated cabinets are in buildings A and E.

Order is maintained throughout the institution's building perimeter. A "hotline" is established for this purpose. Ilia State University's Order Maintenance and Support Measures Rule outlines security measures. Security personnel undergo annual safety and occupational safety training. For enhanced security and order, security cameras with video recording functions are installed throughout the buildings' interior and exterior perimeters. Video recordings are stored for one week.

Interviews confirmed that the university effectively overcame the COVID-19 pandemic, turning this challenge into an opportunity by creating a video lecture platform that continues to develop successfully. Initially, there were uncertainties, and results reflected on practical course outcomes.

The institution has an adapted environment for persons with special needs. The university continuously ensures an adapted environment for students with special educational needs. Electric elevators are installed at central entrances and between buildings. Sanitary facilities are adapted. Buildings A, E, and S. have appropriate elevators. Parking spaces are designated for persons with disabilities, and during the rehabilitation of building E's yard, an adapted parking space was arranged. An electric vehicle charging station was set up in building T's underground parking. Ramps were installed at research bases during renovation works. The university continues to improve adapted spaces and strives to enhance infrastructure based on individual needs.

#### **Evidence/indicators**

- Extracts from the Public Registry regarding immovable property (information on immovable and movable property is stored in the Legal Office, Accounting and Reporting Office and Material Resources Office)
- Building Plans
- Building shells and safety (available at the university)
- Memoranda and agreements signed with various clinics and organizations to facilitate the implementation of clinical and scientific practice at the School of Medicine
- Movable property purchase agreements/stocktaking documents
- Documentation for the purchase of watercraft
- Receipts confirming the payment of electricity, water and natural gas

- Solar-powered system and its documentation
- Order N344-02, dated 19 February 2024, on approval of internal regulations of Ilia State University for employees responsible for cleaning, issued by the Head of Administration
- Documents confirming rehabilitation of the buildings of Ilia State University (I. Chavchavadze Ave N32, K. Cholokashvili Ave N3/5, G. Tsereteli exit N3) and Buildings A, B and S (I. Chavchavadze Ave N32, G. Tsereteli exit N3) (SPA150029540; Agreement N12/056 dated 14 December 2015)
- University strategic development plan 2024-2030 and action plan 2024-2026
- Infrastructure Development Projects (available at the university)
- Student Housing Projects
- Agreement signed with the San Diego State University Research Foundation regarding laboratories and inventory located in the building (SDSU Assets Handover Act)
- Order N56-02, dated 11 January 2017, on the procedure for conducting measures to promote order at Ilia State University, issued by the Rector
- Order N02-2710, dated 19 December 2012, on the establishment of a "hotline" to ensure safety and security within the territory of Ilia State University, issued by the Head of Administration
- Mechanisms for fire safety, medical assistance and order protection
- Documentation verifying the possession of fire-fighting and medical equipment, as well as security cameras
- Sample employment contract signed with the individual responsible for maintaining order and providing medical assistance
- Memoranda signed with partner institutions
- Student and staff survey reports
- Heating and cooling systems, along with additional sources of electricity supply
- Measured drawing of the building (presented in printed version)
- Corresponding internal space of the measured drawing of the building (presented in printed version)
- Documentation confirming the ownership of movable property (presented in printed version)
- Documentation confirming safety in educational/scientific research laboratories (presented electronically)
- Receipts confirming payment for electricity, water, and natural gas (or payment confirmation document/bank statement, if available, for at least the last 3 months) (presented electronically) (presented electronically)
- Document confirming compliance with sanitary norms) (presented electronically)
- Documentation confirming the procurement of resources (presented electronically with selected resources)
- Fire-fighting inventory with detailed instructions for its use and approved evacuation plans by a competent body, LEPL - 112, or another state-accredited body/certified independent person (presented electronically)
- Document confirming the approval of evacuation plans (presented in printed version)
- Documentation confirming the ownership of fire-fighting and medical inventory, security cameras (relevant contract/acceptance-delivery acts/inventory materials, along with the need for their visual inspection). Conclusions from relevant structures (accredited bodies/certified person) (presented electronically)
- Adapted environment and/or development plan (presented electronically)
- Safety certificate for a small vessel (inspection date 15.12.2023) issued by Georgian Veritas, according to the "Rules for Technical Inspection of Small Floating Technical Means," and valid until 15.12.2024

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview with stakeholders</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
<b>Suggestions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is suggested to specify the maximum/minimum number of students the partner institution can receive (internships, clinical practice) in all memoranda.</li> </ul>
<b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b> None
<b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</li> </ul>
<b>7.2. Library Resources</b>
Library environment, resources and service support effective implementation of educational and research activities, and HEI constantly works for its improvement.
<b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b> <p>This can be said that the library environment, resources and service support effective implementation of educational and research activities at the ISU, and the institution constantly works for its improvement.</p> <p>Iliia State University’s mission is to create, disseminate, and utilize knowledge for scientific advancement and societal development at both local and international levels. In line with this mission, the university places significant effort into stimulating scientific research and securing essential resources for this process. Since 2018, the university has funded 322 research projects through international and local donors, and in the same period, 230 projects have been funded by the university and state under the scientific research support program.</p> <p>The budget allocated for research and scientific activities amounts to 24,862,723 GEL, which is almost a quarter of the university's total budget. To enhance the quality of research and teaching, Iliia State University is focused on developing library resources such as reading rooms, book collections, an electronic catalog, an electronic library, and library services. The university library serves not only the university community but also anyone interested. There is open access to the electronic and digital learning resources produced by the university.</p> <p>In 2019, the budget allocated for the operation and development of the library was 1,000,000 GEL, and by 2024 it increased to 1,250,000 GEL, which is nearly 1.3% of the total university budget. The combined indicator of searches conducted in international scientific library databases by the university (2019-2024) is 977,861.</p>



Strategic Goal #3: Raising the Standard of Teaching and Learning is one of the university's significant strategic goals, which supports the fulfillment of the university's mission. The university space accumulates knowledge, experience, and human resources, giving the university the potential to become one of the educational institutions with the highest standards of teaching and learning in Georgia. Among the tasks defined to achieve this are the promotion of the quality of teaching and learning, which, among other activities, includes:

- Developing library resources (both print and electronic book collections) to ensure the use and accessibility of modern professional literature in the teaching and learning process.
- Increasing the use of scientific electronic databases.
- Translating foreign language literature with the help of various donor organizations and co-funding from the university.

To achieve the third strategic goal, the institution has allocated 22,371,567 GEL for 2024, 23,471,445 GEL for 2025, and 23,993,485 GEL for 2026.

To determine compliance with authorization standards in this component, the expert group requested additional documents: documentation confirming the possession of the book collection (presented electronically), documentation confirming the possession of the equipment in the library, and informational instructions (presented electronically). As additional information, the institution provided library usage rules, equipment reception-transfer acts, a search guide for the electronic catalog, rules for replacing library units lost by the reader and determining relevant literature, procurement rules for library resources, information about trainings conducted by the library, and statistics on the use of electronic library databases from 2019-2023, with which they have contracts. E-libraries can be accessed from anywhere, not limited to just the university premises These include:

- Discovery Service - Ebsco
- ScienceDirect
- Scopus
- Funding Institutional
- Clarivate Analytics (Web of Science)
- Journal Citation Report
- ProQuest Research Library
- Taylor and Francis Online
- ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global
- Sage Publishing
- LexisNexis
- Humanity Source - Ebsco
- Political Science Complete - Ebsco
- JStore
- BioOne
- Hinari
- IMF eLibrary
- Royal Society Publishing
- Britannica
- Edward Elgar Publishing
- Cambridge Journals
- The New England Journal of Medicine
- Caucasus Survey

- Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders
- International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders
- Financial Times
- Economist

The annex of the self-evaluation report includes agreements signed with digital library databases by year, including Britannica, Clarivate Analytics, EBSCO, JSTOR, LexisNexis, ProQuest, Taylor and Francis, and the library association. The university website features the library's electronic catalog, services, collections, electronic library, and literature search system. Additionally, the library page includes search areas for readers, e-books, video lectures, photo archives, audiobooks, repositories, records, and information about the university's films. In the news section, the library provides readers with information about training, new books, and the rules for using scientific databases.

These Bases are accessible from all locations outside the University using corporate email. The rate of use of the bases was 199 278 in 2023.

To determine the compliance of the book collection with the primary literature specified in the educational programs, the expert group requested several primary teaching materials through random selection. Most were found in material form in the library, while some were presented electronically with full access links from international databases.

It is noteworthy that the institution has informational instructions and a well-equipped reading room, including internet-connected computers, printers, copiers, and scanners. The library is provided with wireless internet.

The ISU's library serves its users with 8 reading rooms and 2 computer rooms. The library includes the following spaces: book storage, reading rooms, group workspaces, 2 copying centers, workspace for library staff, meeting space, and a corner equipped with multimedia resources. The books in the library are processed according to library rules.

The university library collaborates with faculties and schools in the direction of acquiring updated literature for educational program syllabi. Research institutes are also involved in the process of identifying the need for and sourcing modern literature.

Readers are prepared based on the book collection, which is available both electronically and in printed form. The preparation of readers is carried out at the request of a professor or course leader, with full copyright protection.

Ilia State University has a longstanding practice of utilizing the electronic learning platform (E-learning/Moodle) (in use since 2007). Prior to the pandemic, this platform was employed in training courses that followed a blended learning method.

From 2020 to 2023, Ilia State University implemented the Erasmus Plus institutional development project titled "Learning Optimization and Academic Inclusion via Equitativa Distance Teaching and Learning" (LOVEDISTANCE). The project aimed to exchange European experiences in distance learning practices. Since 2015, Ilia State University has been using the plagiarism detection program (Turnitin), which is built within the same platform.

The library staff has the appropriate competence in library work, including the use of international electronic library databases. The library staff provides information to students and

staff about library resources and services. Orientation meetings and consultations are regularly held at the beginning of the academic year. Librarians help students find literature and other resources. Periodic training is planned for academic and invited staff as well as students on the use of library capabilities.

According to a survey of students and academic staff, library resources and services are highly rated.

**Evidence/indicators**

- Library Website
- Library halls, their location and working hours are posted on the library website
- The rules for utilizing the library and other normative documents are published on the website
- The electronic catalog of the library to explore and search the print fund as well as other library resources
- Information about new books is posted on the website
- "Readers" are cataloged and stored on a dedicated portal
- Electronic library website
- International academic databases, libraries, journals, etc.
- Documentation verifying participation in the international library networks and databases (accessible within the library)
- Academic repository of the university
- E-learning portal
- Training sessions offered by the library
- Library's social media page
- Library Staff Capacity Building Trainings Database
- Electronic/digital library database usage statistics 2019-2023
- Budget allocation for the provision and development of library resources over the past five years: 2019 - 1,000,000.00; 2020 - 1,000,000.00; 2021 - 1,155,000.00; 2022 - 1,180,000.00; 2023 - 1,250,000.00 (GEL)
- Digital; Library Access Agreements
- Documentation certifying possession of books/inventory records (documentation is available at the university)
- Library Resources and Service Development and Maintenance Mechanisms
- Surveys of students and academic staff
- Interview with stakeholders

**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

### 7.3 Information Resources

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

### **Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements**

According to the strategic vision of Ilia State University, "By 2030, Ilia State University will be a leading research university in Georgia and the region, aligned with Western standards. It will lay the foundations for scientific-technological development, high-quality educational processes, and public welfare through innovative approaches. The university will contribute to solving global, regional, and national challenges and will promote sustainable development and European integration of Georgia through the development and implementation of a knowledge economy."

Strategic Goal #2 of the 2024-2030 Strategic Plan - Organizational Development - includes the sub-goal of implementing modern management systems, which outlines the following tasks:

- Continuing the implementation of the organizational resource management system (ERP), which includes fully implementing the human resources management module, integrating ARGUS with the ERP system, and developing a future vision for ERP development.
- Continuing the development of the ARGUS program.
- Developing a vision for the implementation of a Knowledge and Information Management system, which involves classifying important knowledge and information, developing processes for their collection and archiving, defining and institutionalizing the scheme for their delivery to beneficiaries.
- Developing and implementing the concept of Institutional Research (IR), which will enable university management to make data-driven and analytical decisions.
- Standardizing and implementing the system for recording students' academic performance (GPA).

The achievement of this goal #2 is detailed in the 2024-2026 action plan, with a total allocation of 4 240 000 GEL in 2024, 4 844 750 GEL in 2025 and 5 485 588 GEL in 2026.

In accordance with its regulations, the Information Technology Service ensures the support of educational, scientific-research activities, and university administration with appropriate software, computer equipment, and internet. The service studies the needs of the information systems used for educational and scientific-research activities and administrative purposes of the university, plans and implements activities for their further development.

Based on the self-assessment report for authorization and the accompanying documents, the expert group requested the following types of documents to complete the information provided by the institution:

- Documents for the purchase of licenses for technological programs, permits (presented electronically);
- IT strategy document, which will be in line with the university's strategic goals and will define the organization's goals regarding IT (presented in printed version);
- Information technology infrastructure (presented in printed version);
- Administration, responsibility, and accountability rules; (the rules should reflect how processes are planned and organized in the university → acquisition and implementation → delivery and support → monitoring and evaluation (presented in printed version);
- Documents confirming the existence of the internet. (contract with the internet provider, as well as a document reflecting the quality of the internet and payment receipts) (presented electronically);
- Management electronic systems (presented in printed version);
- Mechanisms for the development of electronic services and management electronic systems (presented in printed version);
- Business continuity action plan (presented in printed version);
- Domain, hosting, certificate (document confirming the ownership of these: contract and others) (presented electronically);
- Certificate of Cisco Systems Inc. for the score Design, Development, Manufacturing Operations, Customer Experience Services and Support for Networking, Data Venter, Communications, Video, Collaboration and Security Products, Solutions and Services. The Quality Management System operate based on ISO 9001:2015. This Certificate is valid from February 28, 2024, and February 15, 2027, with the re-issue date on N/A (presented in printed version);
- Division of Information Technology Systems: Policies and procedures that regulate the successful and proper use of the university's information technology resources (presented in printed version);
- Ilia State University Information Technology Strategy Plan 2024-2030 (presented in printed version).

To ensure component evaluation, interviews were conducted with target groups, and the participation of the Information Technology Service in educational, research, and administrative processes was observed and studied. Ilia State University operates under the "Information Technology Services Management Policy and Procedure Rule." This rule applies to all users who utilize the university's information resources. The document states that all information stored on devices owned by the university belongs to the university, ensuring its protection from unauthorized use. The IT service must ensure the proper functioning of technology. Additionally, it must create a productive work environment for students and teachers with special needs.

The internal audit policy of the IT service includes a "stress test" conducted by the audit team. This rule defines the policy for safe data storage, telecommunication policy, technical equipment configuration policy, guest/visitor access and equipment use policy, information sensitivity policy, password policy, personal identification policy, and more.

Daily, at 3:00 PM, information is saved/backed up automatically. Daily configurations from network devices are transferred to backup storage. Besides system backups within the

university buildings' disk arrays, the IT service periodically stores backup copies of key systems and services in Google's cloud storage.

Upon appointment, administrative and academic staff at Ilia State University are provided with the necessary equipment and software required for their roles, including items such as computers and relevant programs tailored to their specific needs. The service ensures that lecture halls, faculties/schools are equipped with modern computer technology and internet based on their educational program needs. All lecture halls are equipped with personal computers, projectors or LCD screens (two or three screens depending on the size of the hall), internet provision through physical cables as well as a modern wireless system that covers both indoor and outdoor areas without dead spots. Ilia State University offers computer labs for free use in buildings A and E, serviced by the library. It can be noted that the institution ensures the creation of appropriate conditions for employees.

To ensure the updating and administration of information technology, as well as the security of business processes, the IT service of Ilia State University operates the following working groups: software group, network and systems monitoring group, statistics group, and network infrastructure group.

The principles of business process continuity in the direction of information technology include automated server support with continuous power supply for a reasonable period; involving technical personnel if necessary; providing additional power supplies for servers and network-connected personal computers; ensuring disk storage, etc. The server room is equipped with uninterruptible power supplies, which are also insured by a diesel generator. All servers and network devices that play a critical role in the university's activities have alternative connection points with another provider in case of damage to the channel between the university and the internet provider, and the switch to it is fully automated. To ensure the continuous and proper functioning of the key and peripheral components of the university's server and network infrastructure, the IT service constantly monitors the system. Various software solutions are used for monitoring, which detect faults and notify the administrator team in real-time via email and special bots about any issues found in the system. The personnel working in the university's IT service undergo regular training within their field of activity.

Ilia State University has a rule that protects personal data from being disclosed by individuals employed at the university. This ensures the protection of personal data. The IT service's operational documents outline the mechanism for protecting access to personal information. There is a rule for defining the procedures and deadlines necessary for requesting and receiving personal data, which establishes the conditions under which personal data can be transferred to third parties.

The information technology infrastructure (computer equipment, software, internet) intended for the services of USD is consistently and stably available to students and staff. Although a survey conducted to evaluate university services in 2023 indicated that some respondents were dissatisfied with the quality of the internet, this issue was not raised during interviews with target group representatives during the authorization visit. During the interview with the administration, it was noted that the university purchased additional internet transmission devices, ensuring internet provision in the university's open spaces as well.

Electronic services and electronic management systems are implemented and mechanisms for their constant improvement are in place. They include:

- Argus – At Ilia State University, the electronic system Argus is used for managing the educational process. It ensures the management and administration of the educational process at the university. The system involves students, teachers, administrators, chief administrators, faculty administrators, system viewers, registrars, and schedule administrators. Through Argus, students enrolled at Ilia State University can register for courses, access course information, schedules, evaluations, syllabi, study materials, academic cards, notifications, financial debts, borrowed books from the library, frequently asked questions, privacy policies, cookie rules, etc. Teachers can communicate with students registered in their courses through Argus. They can create attendance sheets based on the syllabus, assess students, share study materials, send notifications, use the discussion module, etc. The main administrator of the Argus system reflects and edits various types of information, processes different types of statistics upon request, which is built into the system and also configured through the Data Warehouse platform. The registrar registers and reflects the personal information of students admitted through the Unified National Examinations into the system using Argus. The schedule administrator manages the schedule board in Argus, reflecting the lecture schedules by days and hours. There is a mobile application for both students and teachers on Android and iOS platforms for the Argus system. With the advent of modern technological changes and innovations, the old version of Argus has been updated, a completely new design of Argus has been prepared, and navigation within the system has been simplified. An electronic registration system for master's candidates has been introduced, allowing them to register electronically and upload all necessary documentation into the system. The Argus system facilitates conducting surveys among students, academic, and invited staff. It can generate questionnaires in Georgian and English, allowing simultaneous surveys of local and international students. Notably, since the spring semester of 2022, it has been possible to diversify questionnaires based on different types of courses in the system. With the integration of the Data Warehouse platform, it has become possible to generate unified databases related to students' academic performance and course satisfaction surveys conducted every semester, contributing to the internal quality assurance system of the programs.

- "Billing" – Ilia State University uses an electronic system for accounting student tuition fees, which allows the university to account for the amounts paid and due by students, analyze the income from tuition fee payments, and other financial activities. The billing system actively interacts with the "Argus" API, ensuring the smooth operation of business processes overall. A Data Warehouse is also set up for billing, simplifying the extraction and processing of financial statistics.

- Organization Resource Management and Planning System – Ilia State University has started working on an internal process management system ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning). The system aims to facilitate the management of internal university processes, make the work process much more efficient, and enable real-time viewing of current information and the collection and analysis of various statistics through the program. The procurement module is integrated and fully operational in the program. The process of online signing of labor contracts for invited teachers in the HR module is being tested, which will simplify the formalization of the hiring process. Simultaneously, "conditional appointment submission" is being prepared for the test mode, which involves making invitations to all types of positions with the help of the ERP program. The employee's personal page and appointment part are completed, which includes the electronic existence of information about all employed persons. Gradually, the integration of budgeting and financial analysis, financial accounting and reporting, and warehouse management is planned. Integration of the Data Warehouse platform is also planned, which will

simplify data access and monitoring. The procurement module is completed, and a corresponding document outlining the usage instructions is created.

Ilia State University provides corporate email accounts for all employees and students, which are used for system authorization and access to various electronic resources and databases. The Student Affairs Department sends daily emails with updates, including important information, events, and vacancies, to students at all academic levels. Emails are segmented based on academic level and semester, and specific notifications are sent as needed

- Electronic Document Management System – Ilia State University has implemented an electronic document management system called eDocument, which allows for the electronic circulation of official documents. The system facilitates the monitoring process of tasks, their responses, and other organizational issues effortlessly.

### **Electronic Services:**

- Institutional Repository Eprints - An electronic service has been implemented at Ilia State University. Eprints is an institutional repository where the academic portfolio/profile of academic staff is created, which involves various types of publications and research materials that have already been published or are being prepared for publication, all placed in one space.
- E-learning Platform - The E-learning platform functions with 37,380 registered users and 2,528 created courses.

### **Mechanisms to Facilitate the Development of Electronic Services**

The basis for the development of electronic management systems is the needs identified as a result of research on university services, the need for technological updates, needs related to the ongoing teaching/learning processes at the university, and requirements dictated by internal and external regulations.

The IT Department reviews and agrees on the technical assignment for electronic services with faculties, schools, and administrative units, after which, with the agreement of the head of the administration, the software development group of the IT Department completes the assignment. In addition to planned assignments, electronic services management is carried out according to needs, an example of which is the measures implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic: detailed instructions were created, a hotline was launched, and media center support was offered for recording lectures. The IT Department created a detailed guide for lecturers on how to use Zoom. Technical support was provided almost 24/7 to ensure that the educational process was not disrupted.

At the ISU, business continuity mechanisms are ensured. During the authorization visit, to evaluate the mechanisms based on the business continuity plan at Ilia State University, the expert group requested the institution's business continuity plan. The institution presented the business continuity plan for 2023 and changes to the business continuity plan (December 28, 2023, Order N3543-02). The business continuity plan includes principles for the continuity of business processes in information technology, material resources, records management, security and safety, and human resources. The principles for business process continuity in information technology were discussed during the analysis of this component. The principles for business process continuity in material resources include the uninterrupted power supply system, the procedure for uninterrupted water supply, which involves informing the relevant



company to receive water by alternative means, and making individual decisions based on the specifics of the crisis to ensure an uninterrupted educational process. The principles for business process continuity in records management are related to transitioning to an alternative records management mode in case of a crisis, which involves the circulation of correspondence in material form (on paper). Security and safety business processes are ensured with 24-hour security and safety throughout the year in the university space. When risk levels increase, patrol police are called in for management. In extreme cases, the educational process is moved to another space. Business process continuity in human resources is related to constant communication with employees, support measures, remote work, data backup, employee retraining, and other issues.

The ISU has a functional webpage in Georgian and English languages. Ilia State University ensures the functionality of the website (<https://iliauni.edu.ge/en>). The university's website is bilingual. The Georgian-language website contains more informational material and is the main source of information, while the English-language site is supplementary. Overall, the Georgian-language website meets modern requirements in terms of both technical and content aspects, providing access to updated, accurate, and objective information. Ilia State University operates a web portal, which is the main website of the university. The domain is registered in the name of Ilia State University. The hosting of the site is provided by the company "Cloud Nine" on its servers. The website operates with a secure protocol https, and the security certificate is issued by COMODO RSA Domain Validation Secure Server CA. At the end of 2022, the university decided to change the existing web portal engine and move it to WordPress. The project work started in 2023. The work defined the structure of the updated web portal, mechanisms for information exchange between sites, and changed the existing design and fonts. Data from the existing site were distributed to various separate sites. The updated university web portal includes all the news and important information needed by professors, students, researchers, and any interested person. The portal consists of over a hundred sites where information is distributed according to the university's structural units and content division. During interviews conducted during the authorization visit, it was confirmed that these works are still ongoing. Due to this change, complete information is not presented in various blocks/modules on the university website. For example, minutes/decisions of academic and representative council meetings, a significant part of the information on the English-language website, and others are not posted. It is advisable for the institution to strengthen its efforts to expedite the provision of relevant information on the English-language website, which will eliminate potential information problems for foreign students. Also, it is advisable to reflect tasks and activities related to the perfection of the new web portal in the university's strategic and action plan.

In addition to the portal, the university operates several dozen additional websites. All of them are subdomains of the main domain, and they host the university's projects and services. The technical maintenance of the portal is carried out by the IT Department of Ilia State University.

- **Evidences/indicators**

- The Information Technologies Office Bylaws
- Official university website
- Responsible person for website administration, administration procedure, and job description
- University strategic development plan 2024-2030 and action plan 2024-2026
- Guide for using Argus

- "Instruction - Creating Conditional Submissions in the Purchasing Module of the ERP System and the Subject of Purchase."
- Internet provider agreement
- Order N02-323, dated 28 March 2013, "On Protection of Personal Data of Other Individuals Employed at Ilia State University" by the Head of Administration
- Order N1056-02, dated 25 May 2016, on approval of "Rules for Determining Procedures and Deadlines for Requesting and Receiving Personal Data at Ilia State University" by the Rector
- Electronic systems: ELearning, ePrints, eDoc.
- Agreements for the purchase of website domain, and hosting certificate
- On approval of "Rules of Operation for the Electronic Management System, Argus" by the Head of Administration
- Order N335-02, dated 19 February 2018, on approval of " Management Policy and Procedures for the Information Technologies Office" by the Head of Administration
- Ilia University Learning and Teaching Management System (LMS)
- Erasmus+ project LOVE.DISTANCE agreement
- IT Management and Policy, Procedures, IT Infrastructure, E-Systems and services and their development mechanisms
- Documents for the purchase of licenses for technological programs, permits (presented electronically)
- IT strategy document, which will be in line with the university's strategic goals and will define the organization's goals regarding IT (presented in printed version)
- Information technology infrastructure (presented in printed version)
- Administration, responsibility, and accountability rules; (the rules should reflect how processes are planned and organized in the university → acquisition and implementation → delivery and support → monitoring and evaluation (presented in printed version);
- Documents confirming the existence of the internet. (contract with the internet provider, as well as a document reflecting the quality of the internet and payment receipts) (presented electronically)
- Management electronic systems (presented in printed version)
- Mechanisms for the development of electronic services and management electronic systems (presented in printed version)
- Business continuity action plan (presented in printed version)
- Domain, hosting, certificate (document confirming the ownership of these: contract and others) (presented electronically)
- Certificate of Cisco Systems Inc. for the score Design, Development, Manufacturing Operations, Customer Experience Services and Support for Networking, Data Venter, Communications, Video, Collaboration and Security Products, Solutions and Services. The Quality Management System operates based on ISO 9001:2015. This Certificate is valid from February 28, 2024, and February 15, 2027, with the re-issue date on N/A (presented in printed version)

- 

**Recommendations:**

None

<p><b>Suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is suggested to strengthen the efforts to expedite the provision of relevant information on the English-language website, which will eliminate potential information problems for foreign students.</li> <li>• It is suggested to reflect tasks and activities related to the creation of the new web portal in the university's strategic and action plan.</li> <li>• It is suggested to ensure the dissemination of a reasonable amount and volume of information in process of emailing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Best Practices (if applicable):</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fully complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>
<p><b>7.4 Financial Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Allocation of financial resources described in the budget of HEI is economically achievable</li> <li>○ Financial standing of HEI ensures performance of activities described in strategic and mid-term action plans</li> <li>○ HEI financial resources are focused on effective implementation of core activities of the institution</li> <li>○ HEI budget provides funding for scientific research and library functioning and development</li> <li>○ HEI has an effective system of accountability, financial management and control</li> </ul>
<p><b>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</b></p> <p>The strategic goal #2 for the years 2020-2030 (organizational development) includes the strategic task of ensuring financial sustainability. Implementing this strategic task will enable the university's management team to set priorities in the long term and ensure the sustainability of the action plan's implementation. Financial sustainability will also allow the university to gradually establish higher minimum competency thresholds for those wishing to study at Ilia State University and to improve the quality of education from the starting point. To ensure financial sustainability, the following activities will be carried out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing the share of international students in the overall student body (1,500 international students within 7 years).</li> <li>• Strengthening cooperation with international donor organizations to attract funding for educational program internationalization, research, infrastructural, and institutional development projects.</li> </ul> <p>The revenue portion of Ilia State University's budget is formed from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income from economic activities, allocations from the state budget, and targeted grants.</li> <li>• Income from economic activities includes tuition fees from higher education programs, income from centers and certification programs within the university, and other additional economic activities permitted by legislation.</li> </ul>

- Allocations from the state budget are provided to fund the main activities of research institutes. Additionally, targeted expenses, such as university infrastructure development, scholarships for undergraduate students, and other programmatic funding, are financed within state programs.
- Targeted grants include projects funded by local and international funds.

The distribution of income/revenues received from the listed sources is carried out according to the country's existing legislation and the internal normative act approved by the university within this legislation (the rule of compiling, amending, and monitoring the budget of Ilia State University). In 2023, 79% of the consolidated budget was formed from economic activities, 16% from state budget allocations, and 5% from targeted grants. The consolidated budget for 2023 amounted to 99,116,000 GEL, of which 33,758,621 was the balance at the beginning of the year and 63,357,379 GEL was the current year's income. The expenses of the 2023 budget are 62,617,000 GEL, of which 19,070,000 are for labor remuneration, 36,687,400 GEL for goods and services, 750,000 for grants, and 5,859,600 for other expenses. The operational balance is 36,489,000 GEL. The change in non-financial assets (fixed assets and material assets) amounted to 6,299,000 GEL. The institution has no financial liabilities. The balance amounted to 30,200,000 GEL. The budget is in surplus, indicating the institution's financial stability.

To determine the institution's financial stability and compliance with the relevant authorization standard, the expert group requested additional documentation.

- Funding sources - documented information confirming the existence of funding sources (presented in printed version);
- Financial reports confirming the accuracy, fairness, and completeness of financial information (presented in printed version);
- Document evaluating the functionality of the financial management and control system (presented in printed version - original).

Based on the analysis of the self-assessment report, attached and additional documents, and information obtained during interviews conducted during the authorization visit, it has emerged that due to the activities implemented by the university's relevant departments in the direction of revenue diversification, the volume of funding attracted from additional sources is increasing annually. Funds attracted from various donors provide the university with the opportunity to finance educational and research as well as institutional activities. This makes it possible to ensure financial stability with the freed-up resources in their own revenue portion and to implement significant projects for the university's development. The fulfillment of the tasks set for strategic development is also driven by the university's financial sustainability. The implementation of activities outlined in the strategic development and action plan is based on financial analysis of previous years and revenue forecasts projected over the years.

Financial standing of the ISU ensures performance of activities described in strategic and mid-term action plans. It is noteworthy that over the years, the institution has been implementing significant activities in the direction of revenue diversification, including within the portion of revenue generated from the university's core economic activities. To ensure the growth of revenue from tuition fees, various English-language educational programs have been introduced at the university. International student recruitment campaigns have been conducted. As a result, the number of international programs and international students has

increased. For the fall semester of the 2023-2024 academic year, the number of foreign students is approximately 700, which, under the condition of maintaining the same number of students, ensures an increase in the university's revenues. In 2023, the revenue from foreign students in the form of tuition fees exceeded 20.7% of the university's total tuition revenue.

To diversify revenue streams and bolster educational and research initiatives, it's essential for the university to increase the proportion of targeted grants from international and local donor organizations within its overall budget. This approach would reduce reliance on traditional funding sources and provide greater financial support for academic and research endeavors.

Additional grant projects for scientific-research and institutional development, attracted from local and international sources, make it possible to finance many significant projects, purchase and update technical equipment necessary for educational and scientific purposes. The university's academic and administrative staff have the opportunity to participate in international conferences and share experiences with international partners. Students have the opportunity to engage in research activities, which contributes to the improvement of education quality and the fulfillment of the tasks set for strategic development

The ISU's financial resources are focused on effective implementation of core activities of the institution. Over the years, the activities implemented by the university aimed at maintaining financial stability and sustaining the growth dynamics of the consolidated budget ensure the financial sustainability of the university. According to the university administration, since 2014, through revenue growth and expense optimization, it has been possible to achieve a stable increase in the year-start balance. This has allowed the university to overcome the challenges caused by the pandemic and, despite the difficult economic situation in the country, to carry out its core activities without interruption. During the post-pandemic period, in the face of a deteriorated economic situation, increased prices, and inflation, the university had to resume projects that were halted during the pandemic. As a result, it was not possible to maintain the growth trend of the balance in 2022, and the university had to use part of the accumulated balance. Despite this, the situation stabilized again in 2023 through revenue growth and expense optimization, and as a result, in 2023, the expenses in the economic activities section did not exceed the revenues. According to the presented information, the university's consolidated budget has been characterized by a growth trend since 2018 up to the reporting period.

The activities outlined in the university's budget are planned in such a way that, in addition to the main educational expenses, the implementation of activities provided by the strategies and action plans is ensured.

The ISU's budget provides funding for scientific research and library functioning and development. According to the approved budget of the university, in addition to the development of educational and research programs, appropriate funds are allocated for the library, university development, promotion, student activities, creative and other types of activities, as well as for the development and renewal of the university's material-technical base. To deepen scientific-research activities, a significant portion of the consolidated budget (including funding received from local and international funds) is directed towards the activities of research institutes, participation of students, academic and scientific staff in conferences, publication of articles in international journals, and other activities necessary for scientific work.

The expenses in the university's approved budget are grouped according to the budget classification items operating in Georgia.

During the interviews conducted as part of the authorization visit, it was noted that the work on the budget project begins at the end of September. The deans of the faculties submit their needs for the upcoming year to the university's financial and economic services. Based on the submitted information, the university budget project is developed and submitted for review to the faculty councils. If the councils agree with the project, it is submitted for approval to the Academic Council and the Senate. During the interview process, it was noted that communication with the university administration regarding the financial and economic needs of the faculties and schools is ensured by the deans.

The ISU has an effective system of accountability, financial management and control. To ensure financial management, the university has implemented an effective system of accountability, financial management, and control. For the efficiency of financial management and control, the university operates under a rule for compiling, amending, and monitoring the budget. This rule outlines the procedures for budget compilation and management and establishes mechanisms for accountability and control. The budget project is approved by the university's academic and representative councils, while amendments are made as necessary through individual administrative-legal acts of the representative council or the head of administration. The university has presented minutes of the academic and representative council meetings regarding the review and approval of the 2023 budget execution and the 2024 budget approval reports.

To control the approved budget, the university has implemented a financial management system that enables effective management of the university's financial resources. The control of expenses by the university is carried out as follows: initially, the planned expenses' compliance with the budget is determined, and then any incurred expense, based on the relevant documents, is reflected in the corresponding item of the budget's economic classification according to the funding source and expenditure category. As a result, information about the available resources is accessible at any specific point in the current period, and future expenses can be controlled.

To enhance the efficiency of financial management and control, the university is in the process of implementing an electronic resource management system. This system aims to systematize expenses in various directions (procurement, human resources, etc.), ensure orderly accounting, and develop additional monitoring and control mechanisms.

To regularly monitor planned and incurred expenses, the following mechanism is in place: at the end of each quarter, the head of the budgeting and financial analysis department conducts an analysis and prepares a report on the compliance of planned and incurred expenses with the budget for that quarter. This information is submitted to the head of administration for review. Additionally, at the end of each calendar year, the university's budgeting and financial analysis department, in agreement with the head of administration, presents the university's budget execution report for the previous year to the representative council.

The university operates an internal audit service, which periodically controls the effectiveness of the university's financial management system within its competence. Additionally, in accordance with legislation, the university submits financial reports to the Ministry of Education,

Science and Youth of Georgia and the State Audit Office upon request. These reports are public. It is noteworthy that the State Audit Office is currently conducting an evaluation.

For the purposes of transparency and public accessibility, the university's approved budget is posted on the university's website and is available to all interested parties.

**Evidence/indicators**

1. The ISU 's budget
2. Self-evaluation report
3. Financial reports of the current and/or previous reporting periods
4. Financial management and control system introduction document
5. Signed agreements and memoranda with economic agents/partners (2018-2023)
6. Funding sources - documented information confirming the existence of funding sources (presented in printed version)
7. Financial reports confirming the accuracy, fairness, and completeness of financial information (presented in printed version)
8. Document evaluating the functionality of the financial management and control system (presented in printed version – original)
9. Ilia State University's individual financial statements (for the year ending December 30, 2023), including accounting policies and other explanatory notes
10. Ilia State University's adjusted budget project for 2024, textual descriptions of changes, and a detailed analysis of the execution of the 2023 budget with attachments, for discussion at the Representative Council meeting
11. Accounting manual developed at Ilia State University
12. Decisions made at the Ilia State University N3 meeting on May 1, 2024, regarding the performance report of the 2021-2023 action plan and the evaluation report on the implementation of the 2024-2028 strategy
13. Interview with administration
14. University web: <https://iliauni.edu.ge/ge/iliauni/budget>

**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