Higher Education Institution Authorisation Experts' Final Report

[NNLE - Agricultural University of Georgia]

Expert Panel Members

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Tbilisi

2025

Authorisation Report Resume

General information on the educational institution

The Agricultural University of Georgia comprises five schools, with 25 programmes, some of which are run in collaboration with the Free University, with which the institution shares financial foundation, administrative oversight and campus. The university further comprises 14 scientific institutes, which include 26 research laboratories and 30 teaching laboratories. In addition, there are also three field centers in different parts of the country. There is a veterinary clinic, mostly for the treatment of small animals, and this clinic is integrated into student learning process. The panel also visited an on-campus wine production facility (with a laboratory for wine tasting evaluation and analysis) and a small animal holding. There is also a culinary academy, also on-campus, which also has a teaching and learning role.

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

In response to the previous evaluation visit the university has introduced a quality feedback administration unit. Communication internally has been streamlined and is now predominantly carried out electronically. Regulatory documents have been updated and have now been made publicly available. The evaluation process was allowed to progress very smoothly, without hindrance. The room provided for the evaluation panel and the interviews was comfortable, light and airy. Interviewees attended as planned and were always on time. Interviewees answered questions readily, did not hide from questioning and were happy to freely elaborate on the discussions. There was no evidence during the interviews that the interviewees had been schooled or provided with prepared answers. The impression given to the panel was of openness and transparency. This report has been written in collaboration with and contributions from all members of the expert panel, and has been approved by all members of the panel.

Overview of the HEI's compliance with standards

All of the seven standards are at least "substantially compliant with regulations", with the vast majority being "compliant with requirements". To ensure absolute compliance across the whole portfolio of standards in the future we have included four recommendations for action and to improve the provision of this university we have included a number of suggestions. Best practices have been identified and listed.

Summary of Recommendations

Component 2.2 Internal quality assurance mechanisms

- It is recommended to develop clear and effective evaluation procedures for the administrative staff performance

Component 4.1 Staff management

- It is recommended that target benchmarks for academic staff activities, including research-related activities, be developed by 2031.

Component 6.2 Research Support and Internationalisation

- It is recommended to formalize the existing support mechanism for scientific research activities by developing a comprehensive document that provides academic staff with a clear outline of available resources, as well as the necessary steps and procedures for accessing them;

Component 6.3 Evaluation of research activities

- It is recommended to improve the evaluation procedure for the scientific activities of academic staff and research units and to establish a results analysis system to guarantee the creation and implementation of a development plan.

Summary of Suggestions

Component 1.2 Strategic Development:

- Include completion dates for actions in the action plan.

- Formalise, record and document staff and student contributions to strategic planning.

Component 2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms

- It is suggested that quality culture establishment be the overall goal in quality assurance (implying mainstreaming quality responsibilities toward more formalization as well as multi-faceted assessments).

- It is suggested staff evaluation be brought up to standards with clear benchmarks and KPIs.

Component 2.3. Observing Principles of Ethics and Integrity

- It is suggested to employ similarity/plagiarism detection platform for enhancing the means against academic fraud

Component 3.1 Design and development of educational programmes

- It is suggested to provide more detailed information in the „Methodology of Elaboration, Planning, Assessment and Development of Educational Programmes", regarding the procedure for amending or annulling programs."

Component 3.2 Structure and content of educational programmes

- It is suggested to strengthen the curriculum in the bioinformatics field by adding credits, introducing new courses, etc.

Component 3.3 Assessment of learning outcomes

- For better accessibility, it would be suggested to attach a learning outcomes map to educational programmes

Component 4.1 Staff Management

- It is suggested to ensure the involvement of academic and scientific staff in collegial bodies of the university and to promote their more active participation in decision-making processes at the university level.
- It is suggested that academic, scientific, administrative, and support staff receive feedback on their evaluation results and identify areas for improvement;

- It is suggested that the identified area for improvement regarding the academic staff retention rate be reassessed and that the target benchmark aligns with expectations.

Component 4.2 Academic/Scientific and invited Staff workload

- It is suggested to provide more detailed documentation on the fulfillment of hours allocated for research activities.

Component 5.2 Student Support Services

- It is suggested that the university enhance efforts to raise awareness about the existence and role of the student self-governance body. This could help foster more direct and effective communication between students and the administration, ensuring that student voices are more actively heard and represented.

Component 6.2 Research support and internationalisation

- Ensure equality of access to exchange programmes across students of all departments.

Component 7.2 Library resources

- It is suggested that the digitization of contemporary, new literature should be completed in the shortest possible time to enhance its accessibility

Component 7.3 Information resources

- The backup internet speed of 2 Mbps for global resources is low, it is important to address this deficiency.

Summary of the Best Practices

Component 3.1 Design and development of educational programmes

- The Agricultural University of Georgia jointly with the Free University of Tbilisi implements joint master's and doctoral programs in STEM fields. This synergy between institutions, departments institutes and students constitutes best practice.

Component 4.1 Staff Management

- Highly qualified, motivated and interested staff and good mechanisms to support them.

Component 5.2 Student Support Services

- Careers support for students is very high quality.

Component 7.1 Material resources

- Veterinary clinical activities and the commercialization of veterinary services undoubtedly constitute a component of best practices

Experts respond to argumentized position of HEI:

Component 2.2.

The institution has provided substantial text explaining the evaluation of administrative staff. And much of this is laudable. However, the following points in the report demonstrate that clarity for administrative staff evaluation is unclear. The institution contends that ensuring this would be onerous and potentially harmful to their management practice. There is no reason why this should be

so. However, evaluation of administrative and support staff is not as clear and mostly carried out by the heads of departments, faculties and by the rectorate. The expert panel could not find the internal target marks defined by the institution for the staff and the activities performed by them, in order to effectively manage the institution's activities interviews with different groups revealed the need of a clear evaluation mechanism of administrative and support staff based on indicators, target marks and appropriate KPIs for ensuring effectively management of the University activities.

Component 4.1:

"It is recommended that target benchmarks for academic staff activities, including research-related activities, be developed by 2031".

The university has already developed target benchmarks, including quantitative indicators for staff, which still require some adjustments. However, it does not have target benchmarks related to specific activities. The institution states that implementing this recommendation is unnecessary and misaligned with AUG's existing evaluation framework. They argue that:

"The Directive (aka Recommendation) to develop target benchmarks for academic staff activities by 2031 is unnecessary and misaligned with AUG's existing evaluation framework. The university already has a robust, dynamic, and confidential system for assessing staff performance, which focuses on individual growth trajectories and disciplinary diversity.

Introducing rigid benchmarks would disrupt this effective system, increase bureaucracy, and potentially harm the collaborative and innovative culture at AUG. Therefore, the Directive (aka Recommendation) should be withdrawn, and AUG should be deemed in full compliance with the 4.1 Staff Management Standard Component."

As a reminder, one of the requirements of Standard 4.1 states:

"HEI sets benchmarks for their staff and the work completed by them in order to effectively manage the institution's activities; it also constantly tries to improve the benchmarks".

The implementation of the standard should not negatively impact the institution. Therefore, the panel believes that the recommendation should remain unchanged.

Component 5.2

Yes, we have taken on board the response of the Institution and agree. The self-governing body is an important and necessary provision, which does exist, but there was concern among the panel that students were not as aware of this as they should be. This is now a suggestion.

Component 6.2

According to the authorization standards for Higher Education Institutions, "HEI must have public, transparent, and fair procedures for research funding". Experts do not assert that the university lacks a research support system; rather, their finding concerns the absence of formalization and misalignment with the standard. Therefore, if the university intends to contest this assessment, it must

refer directly to the requirements set by the authorization standards rather than the experts' conclusion. Therefore, the panel is of this opinion that the recommendation should not be changed.

Component 6.3

According to the authorization standards for Higher Education Institutions, "HEI has a system for evaluating and analyzing the quality of research/creative-arts activities, and the productivity of scientific-research units and academic/scientific staff". Experts do not question the quality of research outcomes; on the contrary, they acknowledge the high level of research, as stated in the report. The evaluation system is addressed in the report, which states: "The report describes how each component can be assessed. Interviews with personnel and heads of institutions confirm that the evaluation process is indeed carried out. Additionally, the expert group requested samples of assessment documents for evaluating scientific activities of individual academic staff and institutes/departments and sample analysis document of scientific activity assessments, along with a corresponding action plan (if available). Unfortunately, these documents were not provided. "This finding is further confirmed by the HEI's response, which acknowledges that the recommendation "is based on the expert panel's inability to access confidential assessment documents during their review." Therefore, the panel is of the opinion that the recommendation should remain unchanged.

Summary Table of Compliance of HEI with Standards and Standard Components

	Standard	Complies with Requirements	Substantially complies with requirements	Partially Complies with Requirements	Does not Comply with Requirements
1.	Mission and strategic development of HEI	☒	☐	☐	☐
1.1	Mission of HEI	☒	☐	☐	☐
1.2	Strategic development	☒	☐	☐	☐
2.	Organisational structure and management of HEI	☒	☐	☐	☐
2.1	Organisational structure and management	☒	☐	☐	☐
2.2	Internal quality assurance mechanisms	☐	☒	☐	☐
2.3	Observing principles of ethics and integrity	☒	☐	☐	☐
3.	Educational Programmes	☒	☐	☐	☐
3.1	Design and development of educational programmes	☒	☐	☐	☐
3.2	Structure and content of educational programmes	☒	☐	☐	☐
3.3	Assessment of learning outcomes	☒	☐	☐	☐
4	Staff of the HEI	☒	☐	☐	☐
4.1	Staff management	☐	☒	☐	☐
4.2	Academic/Scientific and invited Staff workload	☒	☐	☐	☐
5	Students and their support services	☒	☐	☐	☐

5.1	The Rule for obtaining and changing student status, the recognition of education, and student rights	☒	☐	☐	☐
5.2	Student support services	☒	☐	☐	☐
6	**Research, development and/or other creative work**	☒	☐	☐	☐
6.1	Research activities	☒	☐	☐	☐
6.2	Research support and internationalisation	☐	☒	☐	☐
6.3	Evaluation of research activities	☐	☒	☐	☐
7	**Material, information and financial resources**	☒	☐	☐	☐
7.1	Material resources	☒	☐	☐	☐
7.2	Library resources	☒	☐	☐	☐
7.3	Information resources	☒	☐	☐	☐
7.4	Financial resources	☒	☐	☐	☐

Signature of expert panel members

1. David Arney (Chair)

2. Inga Bochoidze

3. Levan Tsitskishvili

4. Anzor Beridze

5. Gaioz Partskhaladze

6. Ilia Botsvadze

7. Ana Mikhelidze

Compliance of the Applicant HEI with the Authorisation Standard Components

1.   **Mission and strategic development of HEI**

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

1.1 Mission of HEI
Mission Statement of the HEI corresponds to Georgia's and European higher education goals, defines its role and place within higher education area and society, both locally and internationally.
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements The mission of the university is clear and very thorough. It is rather long for a university mission statement compared to other similar institutions internationally. But it clearly demonstrates the philosophy of the university. The university management reported that the university mission is "not just a formal statement but motivates the life of the university". This includes the importance and focus on learning through the medium of the Georgian language, which is laudable, if restricting internationalisation and staff and student mobility (especially of incoming students and staff). The contents of the mission were checked with staff, students, past and present and employers. The students and staff were not able to quote the mission in detail, which is not to be expected, but they were aware of it. Their responses confirmed that their experience of teaching and learning in the university fits with the stated university mission. To detail some of the other points in the mission; Critical thinking is to be empowered. This was confirmed by teaching staff in the delivery of their teaching (problem-based learning is one of the approaches to learning that is in practice), students were aware of this too, but perhaps most convincingly this was also confirmed by (several) employers who, unprompted, reported that this was thought to be a significant feature of students from this university in their experience, and awareness of this was reported to be something in the students' favour when applying for jobs with them. The student-centred approach was likewise confirmed, and this was heard over and over, by Vice Rectors, Deans and staff and students past and present. The mission to provide understanding of nature, society, humans and art, was also something that was taken seriously and was not just something that might be thought a good idea to add to the mission. Students were supervised by in-university art staff and an art studio is available for students use. The mission identifies the aim of "creating an "environment suitable for…young persons". There was an initial concern among the panel that this might exclude the interests of mature students, but management reported that this was not exclusionary, and interviews with students past and present (including mature students), confirmed this. Indeed the mission also emphasizes the career-long development opportunities for students. Describe, analyze and evaluate institution's compliance with the standard component requirements (considering the relevant evaluation criteria) based on the information collected through self-evaluation report, relevant enclosed documents and site visit; the analysis has to reflect problematic issues related to HEI's compliance with the requirements of this standard component (if applicable). There is a documented university vision which, as with the mission, is in accord with Georgian and international higher education goals.
Evidences/indicators

University Mission document, interviews with management, Vice Rectors, Deans, heads of programmes, academic staff, students past and present and employers.

Component evidences/indicators including the relevant documents, interview results, etc.

Recommendations:

Suggestions:

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

1.2 Strategic Development

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

A strategic plan is in place and this is accompanied by an action plan. This is thorough, reflects the mission of the university and is in accord with evaluation criteria expectations. Likewise it demonstrates engagement with the social development of the country, sharing knowledge gained by the institution in the wider community and encouraging lifelong learning, It includes institutional development, quality assurance, planning and implementation of educational programmes, student body planning, research, arts and creative activities, and both human and material resources. The strategic plan also identifies and includes measurable evaluation criteria. The strategic plan is an accurate reflection of the reality. The action plan does not include specified dates for the completion of actions, the university might consider including these to assist in the management and check of these actions. Actions are identified with links to financial resources. Strategic development planning is not a purely top-down activity by management, but students (including recently graduated students) and staff, including research institute staff, and employers (from survey feedback but not directly involved in the process) confirmed that their opinions were asked for, and the staff reported that they were happy that their views were taken into account, although this process of consultation is not formalised. Research Institute staff and senior management meet twice yearly which included discussion of the strategic plan. So there is some formal approach to strategic development but it is suggested by the panel that some record and formal documentation of staff and student involvement in this process be documented. Students have no formalised involvement in the strategic planning group, this is problematic in ensuring that students inputs are truly represented in strategic

development. However, they did report that their opinions had been asked, what they liked and what they didn't like. There is no doubt of student engagement in this process, but it remains informal.

The strategic plan is prepared to cover seven years of development and the action plans for three years, and these are updated annually.

Evidences/indicators
Strategic plan and action plan documentation, Interviews with Vice-Rectors, with self-evaluation team, staff, PhD students and other students, recent graduates of the university, employers.

Recommendations:

Suggestions:
Include completion dates for actions,   Formalize, record and document staff and student contributions to strategic planning.

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation
Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard   ☒ Complies with requirements   ☐ Substantially complies with requirements   ☐ Partially complies with requirements   ☐ Does not comply with requirements

2. Organisational Structure and Management of HEI

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The Structure of the Agricultural University of Georgia is highlighted in the organizational structure document- „Agricultural University of Georgia Structure". University examines short hierarchical chain and lean organizational structure, to maintain high efficiency in management of various processes and in the decision-making. In addition to paper documentation, the institution clearly makes use of modern technologies in the management of documentation. The component institutions are registered and the registry is maintained.

The Rector is the person responsible for the university's management and representation. Several structural units report directly to the Rector, including the Quality Assurance Office, Human Resources Management Department, Financial Analytics Department, Public Relations and Marketing Department, International Relations Office, Examination Center, Coordinatior of Scientific Activities, and 21 specialized institutes/centers and laboratories. The university has two Vice-Rectors: a Vice-Rector in Academic Affairs and a Vice-Rector in Program Development, who generally deal with the study process and support the schools in study programs' developments. The Chancellor oversees the administrative - supportive departments and social-extracurricular activities at the university.

During the interviews representatives of University mentioned that the management system of the Agricultural University of Georgia based on so called „lean approach" is highly efficient, enabling for timely and quick decision making; besides, according to 2023-2024 budget data, administrative salary expenses accounts only 22% of the total salary expenses, which seems quite low considering the high education institutions in Georgia.

Five schools are presented on the University base, each school has a Dean and Head of Program/Coordinator, who administer the school's educational programs. The university does not have an office system, and its employees are seated in an open working space, which allows for greater openness, transparency, and a quick exchange of ideas. Organizational structure of the institution ensures effective implementation of activities defined in its strategic plan, and achievement of its goals.

Functions and responsibilities of structural units of the institution are clearly defined and divided. „Structural Units Provisions" document includes the duties and responsibilities of each unit. Decisions at the Agricultural University of Georgia are made on a project-based management principle, where for each objective, targets are set and working groups are created. The working groups are responsible for a timely meeting of the objectives. Once the objectives are reached, the working group will be dismissed. For each new issue, a corresponding working group is created. Based on the interviews with stakeholders and University representatives, expert panel can conclude, that structural units implement their functions effectively and in a coordinated manner.

Election/appointment to the management bodies of the institution take place accordance to predefined requirements. „Personnel Selection Rules" document describes the procedures of selection and appointment for both administrative and academic positions. Procedures are transparent, equitable, and in line with legislation based on the competition principle. Decisions of the management body related to academic, scientific and administrative issues, are made in timely and effective manner, regulations

for document processing within the institution correspond to the established legislation; University uses modern technologies, including electronic case management system.

To ensure the business continuity of all major processes taking place at the institution, the University is making every effort to maintain operations. A thorough strategy has been devised to do this, which includes risk identification, the creation of harm reduction plans, and the establishment of a rapid notification system. Risks associated with infrastructure, health and safety, operational procedures, technology provision, human resources, and financial sustainability are given special consideration by the university. Mechanisms for quick response and ongoing monitoring are put in place to fill in any possible deficiencies in these areas.

The University has elaborated internationalization policy and supports international mobility of students and staff, development of joint projects, participation into international research activities, implementing scientific research on innovative knowledge, attracting various international organizations and state scientific grants in order to maximize active participation in international and local scientific projects for university staff, establishing business contacts with foreign universities and non-university scientific centers, state and private structures in order to stimulate scientific research and implement innovative projects, creating independent scientific-research units (Centers, Institutes, Laboratories, etc.), integrating independent and supportive research units (centers, institutions) in university research and training, creating of university funding system of internal grants and researches in order to encourage research work of academic and scientific staff, young scientists research work, promoting and implementation of professional development and professional research programs of young specialists (internship, training, joint scientific research, inviting authoritative scholars of different disciplines for conducting lectures and seminars etc.) in partnership with foreign universities and scientific centers, enhancing research quality, integrating teaching and research, and fostering an environment that upholds research ethics and internationalization.

The university gives several chances to students to participate in international mobility, mostly cooperating bilaterally with some universities abroad. Institution creates some opportunities for students' participation in various projects, ensures students' awareness on various domestic and international projects and events carried out outside of the institution. During interviews students expressed their low interest and readiness to participate in exchange academic programs. Also, they underlined a few opportunities in this direction (please see standard 5.2). University leadership ensures coherent implementation of the abovementioned activities and effective utilization of internationalization results in the work of the institution.

Evidences/indicators
- SER;
- Agricultural University of Georgia Structure;
- Structural Units Provisions;
- Personnel Selection Rules;
- Management effectiveness monitoring mechanisms and evaluation system;
- Mission of the university;
- Strategic and action plan;
- Business process continuity plan;
- Internationalization policy;

● Interviews with a range of staff and students.

Recommendations:

Suggestions:

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

⊠ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

o ☐ Does not comply with requirements

2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

A Total Quality Management (TQM) system has been adopted by the The Agricultural University of Georgia with the goal of improving and enhancing research, teaching, and learning. This all-encompassing strategy guarantees that every university structure unit participates directly and indirectly in quality development and control. The university's strategic goal of preserving a lean organisational structure is in line with its quality assurance system. Close communication between students, instructional strategies, and decision-makers is made easier by this perspective. The university guarantees efficient and adaptable quality management by maintaining strong connections between these components.

The university „Quality Assurance Mechanisms" document describes internal quality assurance system. At the University, quality assurance is a shared duty that goes beyond the Quality Assurance Office. Every pertinent organisation within the university participates in quality management and is dedicated to its ongoing enhancement. The duties of Heads of Programs, School Deans, School Coordinators, and other important positions are intimately related to those of the Quality Assurance Office. These units collaborate to develop implementation, preventative, and response strategies, coordinate quality assurance procedures, and detect issues. Quality assurance mechanism ensures continuous assessment and development of institution's activities and its resources.

All stakeholders are actively involved in the continual improvement of study programmes. This collaborative approach guarantees that the programs are relevant, up to date, and in line with industry norms and expectations. The Faculty Development Manager's involvement in the QA system guarantees that faculty members are always developing their teaching skills, keeping up with the current educational trends, and contributing to the institution's strategic objectives.

The university has developed monitoring mechanisms for students' academic performance, and uses its results for the improvement of the teaching process; The Agricultural University of Georgia places a high value on monitoring students' academic achievement, recognising that it is critical to improving the overall quality of education. The institution uses a range of tools and methods to track and assess student performance, analysing the data to discover areas for improvement in the teaching process. This continual feedback loop ensures that students have a productive and enriching educational experience.

The university has created and uses a variety of surveys to assess the efficacy of the services it provides. These surveys collect feedback from students, faculty, and other stakeholders, giving useful information about the university's operations and services. This feedback is then analysed to help make educated decisions regarding prospective modifications and enhancements.

Leadership of the institution makes decisions based on the results of quality assurance. Evaluation results are used for further development of the activities. However, expert panel believes that the activities caried out by the Quality Assurance Department should be more formalized (detailed reporting) incorporating whole stages from identification drawbacks, as well as analyze the identified weaknesses, and describing actions and ways to correct them, in order to draw the whole picture and show the level of improvements across timelines for the top management for efficient decision making. Quality assurance is clearly effective in practice, and this is through informal communication between and within departments. However, Quality Assurance reports that are made are not reported formally. It is suggested by the panel that this would clearly demonstrate how, and by whom, a problem is identified, how and by whom change is made, and how and by how effectively outcomes of this change are at solving the problem. If a formal record were kept this would ensure transparency, clarify how and by whom decisions are made. This would also help if similar problems or issues were to occur in the future. In addition, communication between the senior management and students, and staff at all levels (including both academic and administrative) were repeatedly throughout the visit reported to be easy, comfortable, and that issues raised were dealt with. This is to be applauded, but this communication was not reported with documentation. It is suggested that it would be a good idea to introduce this, just a quick note would suffice detailing the problem, the solution and storing it centrally with management.

The university has developed and implemented a performance evaluation system for its academic and scientific personnel. Lecturers are evaluated each semester by management, an evaluation which includes a review of the assessment grades given to students by the lecturer. The lecturers are given feedback on this. Staff confirmed this process of their evaluation. Students also confirmed that evaluate each course and each lecturer through the means of a survey. They also volunteered the example of change through their inputs, which was to add more practical sessions in the veterinary clinic, and this is now in place. This approach is designed to examine staff members' performance on a regular basis, ensuring that they fulfil the university's high standards. However, evaluation of administrative and support staff is not as clear and mostly carried out by the heads of departments, faculties and by the

rectorate. The expert panel could not find the internal target marks defined by the institution for the staff and the activities performed by them, in order to effectively manage the institution's activities. Moreover, overarching institutional goals and aspirations are framed in a way that makes it difficult for individual units and roles to cascade indicators defined by the strategic and operational plan to measure their own success and excellence. Interviews with different groups revealed the need of a clear evaluation mechanism of administrative and support staff based on indicators, target marks and appropriate KPIs for ensuring effectively management of the University activities.

The university examines the quality of its services and resources on a regular basis, and the results are used to drive continual development. This regular audit guarantees that the Agricultural University's operations and services remain effective and efficient.

The university has a mechanism for planning student body, which is carried out according to the methodology defined by the document – „Mechanism, Methodology and Target Benchmarks for Student Body Planning". Student body planning methodology takes into consideration University's resources such as space, academic personnel, educational programs and etc., and relevant indicators and benchmarks approved by the institution. These are in accord with predicted numbers of students in the next six years.

The evaluations were evidenced as feeding into decision-making regarding internal quality assurance and improvements in the light of these evaluations.

Evidences/indicators
- SER;
- Quality Assurance Mechanisms;
- Survey Forms;
- Semester Evaluation Report;
- Management effectiveness monitoring mechanisms and evaluation system;
- Mechanism, Methodology and Target Benchmarks for Student Body Planning;

Interviews with a range of staff and students, including heads of programmes (from both groups of these), academic staff

Recommendations:

It is recommended to develop clear and effective evaluation procedures for the administrative staff performance

Suggestions:

It is suggested that quality culture establishment be the overall goal in quality assurance (implying mainstreaming quality responsibilities toward more formalization as well as multi-faceted assessments);

It is suggested staff evaluation be brought up to standards with clear benchmarks and KPIs

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation
Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard ☐ Complies with requirements ☒ Substantially complies with requirements ☐ Partially complies with requirements ☐ Does not comply with requirements

2.3. Observing Principles of Ethics and Integrity

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The institution has developed codes of ethics and conduct for students and staff, and has defined procedures for responding to the violation of these regulations. The Agricultural University of Georgia has thorough regulations in place, including a Statute, Employee Code of Conduct, Academic Personnel Code of Ethics, Disciplinary Council and Disciplinary Council Charter, Student Code of Ethics, Ethics Council Charter, Exam Administration and Evaluation Rules.

These regulations are publicly available on the university's website (www.agruni.edu.ge) ensuring transparency and accountability. By setting explicit norms and procedures, the institution establishes a baseline for ethical behaviour and guarantees that disciplinary actions are handled as needed to maintain integrity across all operations.

The university has taken strong measures to combat plagiarism and academic misconduct. These include stringent exam supervision, Exam Centre refurbishment and enhancement, and mandatory academic writing training for students. By focussing on prevention through thorough monitoring and instructional programs, the university ensures academic integrity and fair evaluations. University's regulations lay down mechanisms for appropriate response in case of plagiarism. However, the university does not employ a similarity detection platform, which puts extra burden on supervisors and reviewers' responsibilities, which may seem sometimes impossible by the human to detect any issues of fraud.

The Agricultural University of Georgia believes in academic freedom, which includes freedom of conscience and choice. Academic professionals enjoy autonomy in teaching and research, are involved in curriculum development, and get funding for professional development and research activities. This commitment produces an environment that encourages intellectual curiosity and innovation, which is critical for the advancement of knowledge and education. University's community (staff and students) is familiar with and shares the principles of academic freedom.

The PhD students reported no issue with ordering of co-authors on research papers. This is good news. They all reported that so far they have all been first authors as a matter of course.

Evidences/indicators

- SER;
- Statute;

● Employee Code of Conduct;
● Academic Personnel Code of Ethics;
● Disciplinary Council Charter;
● Student Code of Ethics;
● Ethics Council Charter;
● Exam Administration and Evaluation Rules;
● Interviews with a range of staff and students.

Recommendations:

Suggestions:
It is suggested to employ a similarity/plagiarism detection platform for enhancing the means to identify academic fraud.

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation
Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard
☒ Complies with requirements
☐ Substantially complies with requirements
☐ Partially complies with requirements
☐ Does not comply with requirements

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
Agricultural University of Georgia implements educational programmes at all three levels of higher education, which correspond to the university's mission, goals, and vision. Currently, the University has 23 educational programmes, of which all of 23 - programmes are accredited, including 11 bachelor's, 4 master's, 6 doctoral programmes, also 1 One-cycle education programme (except MD), and 1 Veterinary preparation educational programme (60 ECTS). Agricultural University of Georgia has 5 Schools that implement 23 educational programmes at all levels.

The higher education institution has a "Methodology of Elaboration, Planning, Assessment and Development of Educational Programmes". These describe the structure of the curriculum; semester plan; program; methodology for the development of the individual curriculum; and the procedure for the operation of mechanisms for the renewal of educational programmes. The university has developed mechanisms to protect the legal interests of students in case of changing/cancelling the programme, which gives the student the opportunity to complete the program efficiently.

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

The university has implemented an electronic Cloud platform for managing the educational process: for students, and for faculty and administrative staff. The electronic platform contains databases of students and university staff, as well as information about educational programmes, research components, and other educational resources. Through this platform, students have the opportunity to complete academic registration from the platform and receive various information related to the educational process. Professors and administration have the opportunity to participate in managing the learning process. Students are surveyed and analyzed using this platform. Some students reported that their schedules had been changed as a result of their inputs (to include evening classes allowing them to more easily work to support their studies), while others have not. It might be an idea to formalize this to ensure that such outcomes are equal across departments.

The Agricultural University of Georgia jointly with the Free University of Tbilisi implements joint master's and doctoral programmes in STEM fields. e.g., master students of Biology have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge with courses taken from the master program of Chemistry arising from their research, and vice versa, master students of Chemistry have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge with courses taken from the master program of Biology arising from their research.

The university implements educational programmes that have won funding from the competitive innovation fund, the Shota Rustaveli National Science Fund, Horizon 2020, STCU, ISTCU, and other grant projects. These projects are used to develop programmes, establish scientific research laboratories, rehabilitate the technical infrastructure, and more. Additionally, the university actively participates in Erasmus+ grant projects, which help introduce new courses into the curriculum and develop various skills for both professors and students.

In accordance with current legislation, the university has developed regulations and procedures for making changes to or cancelling educational programmes. To enhance the development of educational programmes, the university has implemented a mechanism to ensure the integration of practical components, utilizing opportunities from both international projects and local businesses. Students and stakeholders are involved in these processes.

In spite of the fact that the Agrarian University has developed the "Methodology of Elaboration, Planning, Assessment and Development of Educational Programmes," it is suggested to include more detailed information in this methodology regarding the procedure for amending or annulling programs. Specifically, when deciding to cancel programs, the university should consider factors such as the labor market requirements, feedback from graduates and employers, survey results from students and graduates, monitoring of student performance, consultations with professional associations (if any), and best practices both locally and internationally. This activity is essential to protect the interests of the students."

Evidences/indicators
- Self-evaluation report
- Educational Programmes, Syllabi
- Methodology of Elaboration, Planning, Assessment and Development of Educational Programs
- Interviews with a range of staff and students (Meeting with Vice Rectors, head of programmes and administrators, heads of departments, current students, PhD students, employers, recent graduates)
- Labour Market Research Reports
- Stakeholder engagement in program design.

Recommendations:

Suggestions:

It is suggested to provide more detailed information in the „Methodology of Elaboration, Planning, Assessment and Development of Educational Programmes", regarding the procedure for amending or annulling programs."

Best Practices (if applicable):
- The Agricultural University of Georgia jointly with the Free University of Tbilisi implements joint master's and doctoral programs in STEM fields. This synergy between institutions, departments institutes and students constitutes best practice.

Evaluation

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

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

3.2 Structure and Content of Educational Programmes
- Programme learning outcomes are clearly stated and are in line with higher education level and qualification to be granted
- With the help of individualized education programmes, HEI takes into consideration various requirements, needs and academic readiness of students, and ensures their unhindered involvement into the educational process.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

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

The veterinary and veterinary preparation programmes are compiled taking into account the requirements of the European Directive 2005/36/EU (amended 2013/55/EU), as well as the Guidelines of the European Association of Veterinary Education Institutions (EAEVE), which are harmonized with the sector benchmark of higher veterinary education developed by the National Center for Education Quality Development (Order of the Director of the National Center for Education Quality Development No. 09 dated 03.01.2018) and Order of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia No. 69/n dated April 10, 2019. "On Approval of the National Framework of Qualifications and Areas of Study".

The University also successfully implements an educational programme for training veterinarians, which can be attended by anyone who has a bachelor's degree in veterinary sciences. The educational programme includes 60 credits and is designed for a period of at least one academic year. Upon completion of the educational programme of veterinary training, a veterinary certificate is issued, which gives the right to continue studies in veterinary doctoral studies. This programme also fully complies with the "Sectoral characteristics of higher education" for educational programmes of veterinary training, adopted by the National Center for the Development of Quality Education in 2018.

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

Teaching and learning methods take into account the specific characteristics of the field to ensure the achievement of the programme's learning outcomes within a specified time frame. Educational programmes in fields such as natural sciences, agriculture, forestry, veterinary science, engineering, etc., are designed according to the relevant characteristics and requirements of each field.

The university offers 23 higher education programmes, all of which are accredited. In addition to major and minor programmes, the university provides students with elective courses (emis.campus.edu.ge). Bachelor's programmes are structured through a combination of the following components: University General Education, General Education, Foundational Education, Practical Education, Core Education, and Elective Courses. For guidance on their chosen courses, students can consult the school's dean's office and the coordinators of the master's and doctoral

programmes. As the surveys indicate, it would be suggested to strengthen the curriculum in the bioinformatics field by adding credits, introducing new courses, etc.

The teaching-learning methods described in various programmes consider the field characteristics and ensure the achievement of the programme's learning outcomes. Depending on the educational system, each student has an individual study plan.

University provides access to information about programmes. The catalogue of educational programmes serves the purpose of informing interested people about the educational activities of the institution. The catalogue is updated, in accordance with changes in the programme. It is available to all interested parties and is published on the institution's web page (www. agruni.edu.ge).

As was seen from the conducted interviews and the presented materials, personalized education programmes offer appropriate formats and conditions of teaching-learning and assessment to students with different requirements. These include special educational needs, different academic readiness as well as opportunities for an adapted environment and appropriate human resources, where required. The university recognizes student diversity and is committed to providing a flexible and adaptive educational environment.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-evaluation report
- Educational Programs, Syllabi
- Methodology of Elaboration, Planning, Assessment and Development of Educational Programs
- Interviews with a range of staff and students. (Meeting with Vice Rectors, heads of programmes, research institute representatives, Dean of students, academic staff, students, including current and recently graduated PhD students).

Recommendations:

Suggestions:

It is suggested to strengthen the curriculum in the bioinformatics field by adding credits, introducing new courses, etc.

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

o ☐ Does not comply with requirements

3.3 Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The learning outcomes of educational programmes at the university correspond to the programme objectives, are measurable, realistically achievable, and comply with the order of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia № 69/N of April 10, 2019.

The programmes' learning outcomes are designed with the involvement of Professors, guest lecturers, industry experts, employers, and students, that correspond with industry-specific and current labour market requirements. The appropriate forms, components, and methods determine how students achieve the learning outcomes of the educational programmes. To help achieve the learning outcomes of the educational programme, specific learning courses have been created. Course outcomes are detailed in the syllabus of the courses, and an appropriate assessment method is selected for each outcome.

The assessment system is multi-component, consisting of intermediate and final forms of assessment. Minimum competency thresholds are established for midterm and final assessments. When assessing learning outcomes, such learning methods are used as: written exam; oral exam; control questioning test; essay; abstract; practical work; laboratory work; Project, etc. In the evaluation system, rubrics are written for each component and the gradation of points according to the rubrics is given.

Knowledge testing at the university is carried out in different ways: written exam, verbal exam, presentation of a project with practical or laboratory work, etc. Most exams are taken at the examination centre. Students reported that they considered the assessment of their learning to be fair and were neither too difficult nor too easy. They further reported that the assessments were not over arduous in term so time needed to complete them.

Students are informed about the evaluation system used at the institution and its related regulations. Information regarding the assessment of the components defined by the programme is available on the university's websites (www.agruni.edu.ge, emis.campus.edu.ge) and in the documents outlined by the university's internal regulations: (a) Specifically, educational components (Student Outcomes, Course Learning Outcomes) are evaluated in educational programmes, syllabi, and the "Learning Outcome Evaluation Mechanisms" of the university; (b) Scientific research components are evaluated according to the rules for assessing the scientific research component of master's and doctoral educational programmes. However, for better accessibility, it would be advisable (suggested) to attach a learning outcomes map to educational programmes.

The university has adopted the following rules: the "bachelor's Programs and Veterinary Integrated Master's Program Charter" and the "master's Programs Charter," which assess the scientific-research component of Bachelor's, Veterinary, and master's educational programmes. These rules also help students effectively plan their time, evaluate resources, and more.

The university has received the document "PhD Programs and Dissertation Councils Charter," which outlines the assessment of educational and research components of doctoral programs and the rules for their evaluation. This document includes the evaluation of teaching and research components, as well as the assessment of skill development in effective time planning, rational use of academic resources, and optimization of academic and research activities. The University has implemented an electronic system for assessing students' outcomes.

The institution has the assessment appellation system that is outlined in the Article 7 (Evaluation and Calculation of Academic Performance) of "Bachelor's Programs and Veterinary Integrated Master's Program Charter". To inform students, the institution provides information about achieved goals, gaps, and ways of improvement through the "EMIS" computer portal.

Evidence/indicators

Component evidence/indicators including the relevant documents, interview results, etc.

- Educational Programs, Syllabi,
- Methodology of Elaboration, Planning, Assessment and Development of Educational Programs,
- Bachelor's Programs and Veterinary Integrated Master's Program Charter,
- Master's Programs Charter,
- PhD Programs and Dissertation Councils Charter,
- Labor Market Research Reports,
- Stakeholder Engagement in Program Design and Development Reports.
- Learning Outcome Evaluation Mechanisms
- Interviews with students, academic staff.

Recommendations:

Suggestions:

For better accessibility, it would be suggested to attach a learning outcomes map to educational programmes.

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

    ☒ Complies with requirements

    ☐ Substantially complies with requirements

    ☐ Partially complies with requirements

o   ☐ Does not comply with requirements

4. Staff of the HEI

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

At the Agricultural University of Georgia, the basic principles of personnel management are outlined in the university's charter and internal labour regulations. According to the university's charter: The human resources of the university consist of academic, scientific, administrative, and support personnel whose work is regulated by the internal regulations of the university. Professional working relationships at the university are regulated by signed contracts (as well as contract annexes). Labour relations of employees at the Agricultural University of Georgia are regulated based on an employment contract (including its appendices) signed with the university. According to Article 2 of the Labour Regulations (Management of the University's Human Resources): academic, administrative, scientific, auxiliary staff, and student employees are appointed by the university's rector through an order or based on an employment contract. Salaries for academic staff are not fixed at each level but are negotiated with the Rector individually. The staff reported that they appreciate the lean bureaucracy in the university which allows them to communicate easily with top management and administrative staff. They are happy that their views are included in university management decisions.

The institution has also developed personnel selection rules, which define the fundamental principles of staff recruitment, conditions for occupying academic positions, the work of the competition commission, the conditions and stages for announcing a competition, conditions for selecting invited lecturers (including delivering a sample lecture), and the rules for appointing administrative and other staff. Accordingly, the regulations in place at the Agricultural University of Georgia ensure the employment of qualified personnel in academic, auxiliary, invited, and administrative positions.

The institution has also established rules and conditions for the affiliation of academic staff. Out of 90 academic staff members at the Agricultural University of Georgia, 82 are affiliated. Under the contracts signed with the university, academic/scientific and administrative staff, upon the university's request, participate in collegial bodies, working groups, commissions, and councils established by the university.

Furthermore, the contracts with academic staff stipulate their active involvement in decision-making processes related to educational, research, and other significant matters. However, interviews with staff revealed that academic and scientific personnel are not actively involved in the university's collegial bodies. According to the standard, the university must define the principles of staff participation in decision-making processes. In this regard, it is important to highlight agreements that establish these principles, as well as the confirmation of academic and invited staff with the rector and the head of administration, along with the opportunity to share opinions on university decisions. Nevertheless, staff

members noted frequent communication with the university's rector and administration head and reported having opportunities to share their views regarding university activities.

The university has developed mechanisms for evaluating staff performance and professional development. The evaluation scheme for scientific staff activities consists of eight components:
· Funding provided by the Knowledge Fund and the University
· The volume and amount of grants received by the scientists per year
· Utilization of University infrastructure and space
· The number and rating of articles published in Impact Factor journals
· Scholar citation index (if any)
· Published books, textbooks and monographs
· Involvement in the teaching process (annual academic workload, number of hours)
· Supervision of Doctoral students per year and number of defended dissertations
Each component is evaluated using a 100-point scoring system, with all criteria summed to produce the final score. Monitoring of research activity assessment results is carried out by the Scientific Activities Coordinator in collaboration with the Rector. If needed, professional development activities are planned.

The academic staff activity evaluation scheme includes the following criteria:
- Pedagogical Skills
- Course Management
- Professional/Research Activity

Each criterion is assessed on a 5-point scale, with the final score calculated as an arithmetic average. Based on the results, professional development activities are planned. To facilitate the integration of new employees, meetings are organized to provide methodological support for syllabus and evaluation systems, refine and improve teaching and learning strategies, introduce modern teaching methods and techniques, effectively use the electronic management system, and create well-structured schedules.

Interviews with academic and scientific staff revealed that they are not informed about their assessment results. However, they acknowledged the support mechanisms provided by the university. These include adjustments to their teaching workload during semesters when they are conducting high-quality research (primarily abroad) or rescheduling as needed. If the evaluation of an academic staff member's performance is sub-threshold there are opportunities given to the staff to make up the deficit identified, and are given time in which to do this.

In addition, a fixed portion of their salary is retained, which they can use at their discretion for professional development. Academic staff can also apply to the founding organization or the Agricultural University of Georgia's Knowledge Fund for funding their scientific activities (e.g., article publication). The Academic Staff Professional Development Manager plans development activities and mechanisms for academic staff.

It is suggested that academic, scientific, administrative, and support staff be provided with feedback on their evaluation results and areas for improvement. Moreover, the high qualifications of academic and scientific personnel, mechanisms supporting their work, appropriate teaching and research infrastructure, and straightforward improvement processes have been identified as best practices by the expert group.

The university regularly conducts satisfaction surveys among academic and administrative staff. The 2023–2024 staff opinion survey results confirm staff satisfaction with their work at the Agricultural University of Georgia.

The university has developed a methodology to determine the number of academic, scientific, and invited staff for each programme. The ratio of the academic and scientific staff to the total number of administrative and support staff is 1.56:1.. The ratio of the academic, scientific, and invited staff to the number of students is 1:6.5. The ratio of administrative staff to the number of students is 1:19. The ratio of affiliated staff to the number of students is 1:23.2. And the ratio of academic, scientific, and invited staff to the number of higher education programs is 12.74:1. Additionally, the self-assessment report aligns with this methodology, presenting various indicators related to personnel, including target benchmarks. Regarding the fourth standard, the institution has identified maintaining a satisfactory retention rate for academic staff as an area for improvement. The current retention rate for academic staff is 89%, with a target rate of 85% set for 2031. However, it is recommended to correct this inconsistency. It is also essential to define target benchmarks for personnel activities, including research activities, by 2031.

PhD students are also involved in teaching.

The Agricultural University of Georgia has established qualification requirements and job descriptions for its personnel, including administrative and support staff. In accordance with the regulations, the list of qualifications and experience requirements is developed based on the specific demands of each position, which is essential for the comprehensive evaluation of candidates. Reviews of CVs and interviews with staff confirmed that the personnel meet the qualification requirements.

Evidences/indicators

- Statute
- internal labor regulations
- Mechanisms for the Evaluation of Activities and Professional Development of Personnel
- Personnel Selection Rules
- Academic Personnel Affiliation Rules
- Staff CVs
- Contract Forms
- Self-evaluation report
- Interviews, including those with the Deans, heads of programmes, PhD students.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended that target benchmarks for academic staff activities, including research-related activities, be developed by 2031.

Suggestions:

- It is suggested to ensure the involvement of academic and scientific staff in collegial bodies of the university and to promote their more active participation in decision-making processes at the university level.
- It is suggested that academic, scientific, administrative, and support staff receive feedback on their evaluation results and identify areas for improvement;
- It is suggested that the identified area for improvement regarding the academic staff retention rate be reassessed and that the target benchmark aligns with expectations.

Best Practices (if applicable):
• Highly qualified, motivated and interested staff and good mechanisms to support them.

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

The academic and invited staff (who are primarily invited for their business, public and professional experience, and may be internal graduates) of the Agricultural University of Georgia have a semesterly updated workload scheme that includes teaching components. Individual workload indicators for academic staff are provided, outlining the total workload volume per semester and weekly hours. The scheme also accounts for staff workloads at other higher education institutions. Employment contracts with academic/scientific and administrative staff stipulate a 40-hour work week. In addition to teaching responsibilities, an average of 956 hours is allocated annually for scientific/research activities and professional development. The evaluation of scientific research activities at the university is based on submitted reports and data from scientific databases. However, it is suggested to provide more detailed documentation on the fulfillment of hours allocated for research activities. For invited staff there is no fixed payment rate, this varies according to need and experience of the invited staff member.

The institution has developed a methodology to determine the number of academic, scientific, and invited staff for each program. The methodology considers the content of the program, specifically whether it is more theory-oriented or practice-oriented. Additionally, the availability of highly qualified personnel in the local market is considered. Consequently, the Agricultural University of Georgia's employs five strategies for determining the number of academic, scientific, and invited staff, including:
1. Theory-intensive bachelor's programs
2. Practice-intensive bachelor's programs
3. Theory-intensive master's programs
4. Practice-intensive master's programs
5. Doctoral programs

Each approach specifies the proportional limits for the number of professors, scientific staff, and invited personnel. The university also adopts international practices, especially by increasing the proportion of invited staff, especially professionals employed in various sectors. Their integration into the teaching process enhances alignment with labor market demands and contributes to program development and teaching strategies. The numbers of academic, scientific, and invited staff are fully aligned with the number of students across programs.

Currently, the Agricultural University of Georgia employs 445 staff members, including 248 academic/scientific staff and invited lecturers involved in the teaching process. Of these, 90 are academic

staff. The university employs 154 researchers, some of whom also hold academic positions. Notably, 38 members of the academic and invited staff are alumni of the university.

The institution has set target benchmarks for personnel across various dimensions.

The teaching load of the staff is fine, staff confirmed a weekly academic teaching load of around seven hours a week.

Evidences/indicators

- Methodology of Determining the Number of Academic, and Invited Personnel per Program
- Mechanisms for the Evaluation of Activities and Professional Development of Personnel
- Personnel Selection Rules
- Academic Personnel Affiliation Rules
- Personnel Individual Workloads
- Staff CVs
- Contract Forms
- Self-evaluation report and interview
- Interviews, including with heads of department, academic staff.

Recommendations:

-

Suggestions:

- It is suggested to provide more detailed documentation on the fulfillment of hours allocated for research activities.

Best Practices (if applicable):

-

Evaluation

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

5. Students and Their Support Services

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

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The Agricultural University of Georgia has implemented a structured set of regulatory documents that govern essential academic and administrative matters. These documents encompass regulations on student admissions, suspension, and termination of student status, as well as policies regarding plagiarism and academic dishonesty. They also outline the procedures for grade appeals, and protections against discrimination and harassment. Additionally, these regulations detail the protocols for both internal and external mobility, criteria for the conferral of academic qualifications, guidelines for the issuance of academic records, and standards for the recognition of prior education. The University ensures effective and timely implementation of the abovementioned procedures to protect student rights and lawful interests.

The university's regulatory documents are available to the public on its website. Additionally, students are informed about these documents before commencing their studies, during the orientation period at the start of the first semester. There are student data protection and storage rules in place, including what information can be retained and how long it may be kept.

The contract between the Agricultural University of Georgia and each student protects student rights and lawful interests. During the site visit, it was observed that students have the opportunity to seek clarification or obtain additional information about any provisions of the contract before signing. This process, facilitated by the Legal Office and the Office of Student and Applicant Relations, ensures that students fully understand the terms and conditions of the agreement.

The university upholds a principle of equality, ensuring the protection of student rights through the institutional role of the Dean of Students. There is in place process for the protection of students' rights and their lawful interests, and for the consideration of students' appeals where things are thought to have gone wrong. The Dean of Students, who oversees the Office of Student and Applicant Relations, serves as the primary point of contact for any student initiatives, concerns, or disputes. During the initial orientation, students are informed of the standard channels for receiving information from academic personnel; However, if these channels are inaccessible, students may directly approach the Dean of Students. The Dean of Students facilitates communication between students and both academic and administrative leadership, representing student interests and addressing any challenges or issues they encounter.

Withdrawal rates of students are low, and of these only 10% are known to have withdrawn for financial reasons.

Students are actively recruited by university staff, with around 10% of Georgian secondary schools visited each year, open door days offered at the university, and an academic competition is organized by the university for potential students. Current students are involved in the organizing of events for potential student applicants.

The panel determined that the Agricultural University of Georgia fully meets the requirements outlined in Standard 5.1. The institution has effectively developed and implemented processes for acquiring and modifying student status, recognizing educational achievements, and protecting student rights

Evidences/indicators

· Student Code of Ethics

· Rules of External and Internal Mobility

· Exam Administration and Evaluation Rules
· Interview results, including those with the Deans, office of registration, heads of departments,
· Copy of student contract

Recommendations:

Suggestions:

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

5.2 Student Support Services

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The Agricultural University of Georgia is dedicated to cultivating a student-centered environment by offering a range of services that are carefully tailored to meet the diverse needs of its students. In addition to providing these services, the university ensures that students are thoroughly informed about their availability and relevant details. Students are provided with consultation and support pertaining to the planning of their academic process and the enhancement of their academic performance through various institutional units.

Student life at the university includes active cultural and social opportunities. This was highly valued by recent graduates as well as by current students.

Students receive timely and comprehensive information through various channels, including direct communication with individuals involved in the implementation of the educational program, administrative and support staff, the university's website, and the electronic academic management system. This multifaceted approach guarantees that students have access to the information necessary

to navigate their academic and administrative responsibilities effectively. Additionally, students have the opportunity to seek further guidance from a lecturer concerning a specific course, as outlined in the course syllabus. This provision allows for personalized academic support tailored to the individual needs of students in relation to the course content.

The Agricultural University of Georgia regularly conducts surveys to assess students' personal, professional, and academic development, ensuring continuous feedback and improvement. The university also fosters opportunities for international mobility and participation in various projects, facilitating students' engagement in global initiatives. Students are kept informed about international projects and events outside the institution, ensuring they are aware of opportunities for broader involvement. There was some concern that students might not have equality of potential for international mobility across subject disciplines.

Career development initiatives appear to be highly robust, as evidenced by the comprehensive list of activities presented to the panel. Among these initiatives is a biannual job fair, which attracts participation from approximately 100 organizations. These were confirmed from employers' interviews. The effectiveness of these efforts is systematically evaluated by the Rector, ensuring alignment with institutional goals and continuous improvement. Careers services were highly evaluated also by recent BA and MA graduates.

Opportunities for international scholarly visits are well-established, with students selected based on clearly defined criteria outlined in the calls for applications. The selection process includes an evaluation of candidates' language proficiency, alignment of their expectations with program objectives, and the submission of a motivation letter. Upon returning, students are required to deliver presentations reflecting on their experiences, fostering knowledge-sharing and inspiring peers. This initiative represents a valuable contribution to the students' academic and personal development.

Students indicate a high level of comfort in discussing issues and sharing concerns with staff members. Furthermore, they demonstrate a clear understanding of the established procedures for addressing problems and are well-informed about the appropriate individuals to approach for support.

In the self-evaluation report, it is stated that the university has a student self-governance body. However, during the interviews, it was revealed that students are not sufficiently aware of this structural unit. Students indicated that communication between the student body and the administration is currently mediated solely by an administrative representative, rather than through an independent student organization. It would be beneficial for the university to increase awareness of the existence and role of the student self-governance body to facilitate more direct and effective communication between students and the administration.

Evidences/indicators
- Career support service;
- Publicity of Information (Webpage)
- Students' Support Mechanisms;
- Interview results; including with the Self-evaluation team, heads of programmes and student Dean, Students, PhD students, recently graduated PhD students, employers, office of student and applicant relations.
- Students, Alumni and Employer Survey Result Analysis.

Recommendations:
Suggestions: It is suggested that the university enhance efforts to raise awareness about the existence and role of the student self-governance body. This could help foster more direct and effective communication between students and the administration, ensuring that student voices are more actively heard and represented.
Best Practices (if applicable): Careers support for students.

Evaluation
Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard
 	
     ☒ Complies with requirements
     ☐ Substantially complies with requirements
     ☐ Partially complies with requirements
     ☐ Does not comply with requirements

6. Research, development and/or other creative work

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

6.1 Research Activities
o   HEI, based on its type and specifics of its fields, carries out research/creative activities. o   Ensuring the effectiveness of doctoral research supervision o   HEI has public, transparent and fair procedures for the assessment and defense of dissertations which are relevant to the specifics of the field
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements The self-assessment report outlines the research mission of the Agrarian University, which aims to support both theoretical and practical advancements in scientific knowledge. It is noted that one of its main goals is to establish a strong connection between research activities and educational programs. The university supports the implementation of scientific research projects by academic staff and promotes the internationalization of these activities, including attracting international grants and fostering deeper international research collaborations. It is emphasized that the academic staff's connections with the international scientific community directly influence the quality and scope of doctoral, master's, and bachelor's research. The research mission of the Agricultural University of Georgia is dedicated to supporting: ・   The creation of new scientific knowledge through individual research; ・   The promotion of interdisciplinary research;

- The development of high-level, scientifically valuable knowledge.

A research development strategy is described, the main principles of which are the internationalization of research and the integration of research results into the educational process. For this purpose, the institution conducts both fundamental and applied research, aimed at creating knowledge and implementing it in practice. It is noted that the results of fundamental research should, in the long term, form the basis for socio-political, societal, cultural, and technological progress. The goals of applied research are defined, with an important focus on ensuring technology transfer and innovation to address the social and economic challenges of the state.

Research support mechanisms are described, which include the following: exemption of researchers from administrative duties; rapid and simplified communication channels; enhanced access to grant funding for scientists; provision of human, financial, and material resources; and a centralized procurement management system. It is noted that a key goal of these mechanisms is to ensure that all individuals holding academic positions are also practicing scientists, as this is considered the most effective approach to integrating education and research. The research staff noted that there were not institutional financial constraints impeding them from carrying out research

To achieve the defined goals of the research mission, the Georgian Agrarian University has a defined scientific-research structure, which includes: 14 research institutes that incorporate 26 research laboratories; 7 independent scientific laboratories; 2 diagnostic laboratories; up to 30 teaching laboratories; three experimental research bases, and five collections containing thousands of different samples. The self-assessment appendix, "Research and Publishing Activities of the Georgian Agrarian University," describes the brief history of each research unit, the direction of scientific research, the significant research results obtained, and ongoing research.

The self-assessment provides data on the scientific productivity of scientists during the period 2018–2024: articles published in refereed journals – 893; participation in conferences – 413; submitted project applications – 452; funded projects – 195 (with a total budget of 24,388,169.50 GEL). Additionally, the expert group requested statistical information on the university's scientific activities, including publications, conferences, and research grants, in various contexts to provide greater clarity in assessing the dynamics of quantitative and qualitative growth. The institution presented university data on this.

The self-assessment highlights the involvement of students in research activities. Specifically, it notes that students are provided with opportunities to conduct research at various stages of their studies. Additionally, it is emphasized that students actively participate in research grant competitions designed for master's and doctoral students.

The self-assessment provides information about the university's publishing activities. From the perspective of scientific activities, details about the university's scientific journals are particularly significant. An online platform for electronic journals has been established at http://journals.org.ge/. The achievements of the journal *Annals of Agrarian Science* are also highlighted.

Component 6.1 of the self-assessment does not provide information on the functions of a supervisors of PhD students, the supervisor's academic workload, or the procedures for defending a doctoral dissertation. However, Component 3.2 briefly outlines the research component of the doctoral

thesis and the prerequisites for the defense of the dissertation, which are stated to be regulated by the doctoral program and dissertation council regulations. These regulations define the necessary procedures and establish the minimum standards for dissertation defense. Specifically, prior to submitting a dissertation, a doctoral student must publish at least one scientific article related to their research topic in an international journal with an impact factor and recommended by scientific committees. Notably, the list of defended dissertations, along with interviews with the doctoral program coordinator and doctoral students, indicates that the teaching and research processes at the doctoral level are conducted at a high academic standard. Therefore, although the SAR does not clearly report information on the functions of PhD supervisors and their academic workload, the aforementioned facts, along with the appendices of the SAR, a review of international scientific databases, and interview results, allow us to conclude that, in practice, the Agricultural University of Georgia has well-established procedures for PhD supervision and high-quality dissertation preparation.

PhD programmes have an overall university co-ordinator who monitors progress through student contact and feedback. A total of 893 research papers have been published reporting on research activities within the university in the last five years, and books have also been published, many in the Georgian language. Academic staff and students have participated in 413 conferences over the same period. Conference attendance is not only allowed but encouraged and financed by the university. There are no specific thresholds for funding for conference attendance (such as oral or poster presentation or costs) but staff could not give an occasion when such a request had been denied. A good rate of project application success was reported. This is facilitated by funding for the preparation of project grant applications, including funding for such preparation overseas in collaboration with overseas partners. Nineteen PhD students have successfully defended their theses in the last five years. Co-funding for project grant proposals expecting this contribution are approved in the great majority of cases and the Deans reported that all grant applicants are aware of this.

Heads of departments are open to publication ideas and proposals from staff. These are then discussed with the Rector and Vice-Rectors for approval. Staff reported that they consider that they have the freedom to carry out the research that is of interest to them, and this is appreciated. They are able to engage in research and further their research interest through the supervision of postgraduate research projects.

The description of each research unit, information on scientific activities presented in the self-assessment appendix, review of international scientific databases, and interview results allow us to conclude that the Agricultural University of Georgia:
- has a clear vision of research activities and corresponding research structures;
- has strong research staff and good research record;
- cooperates with different stockholders to implement research which contributes scientific, social, economic development;
- the research is integrated into the learning process and consequently, students involved in research;
- has defined functions for the supervisors of PhD students;
- has high standard for the evaluation and defense of dissertations.

Evidences/indicators

Component evidences/indicators including the relevant documents, interview results, etc.

Vice-Rectors interview, Deans, academic staff.

self-evaluation report

Research Activities of the Agricultural University of Georgia

List of publications

List of conference participation

Abstracts of PhD Dissertation

Interviews' results, including that of the deans, the self-evaluation team, heads of departments, research institute representatives.

Recommendations:

Suggestions:

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

6.2. Research Support and Internationalisation

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

In the self-evaluation report, the Research Activity Development Support Mechanisms are described. These mechanisms are also mentioned in Component 6.1:

- Researchers are relieved of administrative duties;
- The university ensures fast and simplified communication channels for disseminating information and providing various types of consultations;
- The university facilitates access to a wide range of grant funding opportunities for researchers;
- The university is equipped with the necessary human, financial, and material resources, which are accessible to all research institutes and laboratories.

The outcomes achieved through the implementation of the mentioned mechanisms are described. Among these, the following mechanisms are highlighted: the university's ranking; the dynamically increasing number of grants obtained by researchers; the diversification of funding sources for research projects; the acquisition of expensive infrastructure; the increased visibility of researchers at both local and global levels; and the active engagement of students in scientific research projects.

The salary formatting method is described, covering the administrative, pedagogical, and scientific/research duties of academic staff. The corresponding proportions are provided, emphasizing that all three functions are remunerated proportionally, fairly, and with the aim of encouraging each component.

The self-evaluation report includes information on:
- The implementation and organization of an annual evaluation system;
- The management of documentation related to scientific activities;
- The monitoring of ongoing projects;
- The system of centralized procurement management.

However, the provided information is not directly relevant for assessing Component 6.2.

An important part of the self-evaluation report is the description of Planning the Research Component of the University's Budget. In particular, it is shown that the university's primary source of financing is tuition fees, which constitute 64.9% of total revenue. However, the report highlights that the university also benefits from:
- Local and international grants for financing scientific projects (15% of total income);
- Direct funding from the Knowledge Fund for educational and scientific purposes (6.3% of total income);
- Income from other educational-practical, and laboratory activities (13.8% of total income).

It is noted that 45.2% of the research budget comes from research grants received from outside the university. The university's target benchmark for research funding is set at 10% of its total operating expenses, with 5% expected to come from external sources and 5% from internal funding. In the 2023–2024 academic year, external grants secured by the university accounted for 7% of the total operating budget, while internal funding constituted approximately 8.5%. Altogether, funding for research represented 15.5% of the university's total operating budget.

Based on this information, it is concluded that the Agricultural University of Georgia is a financially stable and sustainable organization capable of fully, properly, and diligently fulfilling its obligations over the long term. The university's financial stability is also reflected in its research component, a conclusion endorsed by the expert panel.

In this context, it is noteworthy that the Agricultural University of Georgia operates as a Non-Entrepreneurial (Non-Commercial) Legal Entity. As a non-profit organization, it reinvests any surplus funds entirely into educational and research initiatives, demonstrating good practice in financial and organizational management.

In component 6.2 is not mentioned, but it is given in component 7.4 the information that the academic personnel also address the Knowledge fund or the Agricultural University of Georgia to fund or co-fund their scholarly activities (such as publication of articles, conference organization or participation in international conferences, national or international grants, etc.).

Interviews with academic personnel confirm that this resource is available to them, but they have a lack information about the procedure and the maximum amount available per year. For this reason, the expert panel believes the university could formalize the existing support mechanism for scientific research activities by developing a comprehensive document that provides academic staff with a clear outline of available resources, as well as the necessary steps and procedures for accessing them.

The self-evaluation report also includes the University Strategy for Attracting and Involving Young Talent in Scientific Research and Creative Activities. The described mechanisms are standard and include: opening competitions for vacant positions, a structured selection process, and the continuation of scientific activities after the expiration of the defined competition period. However, interviews and observed activities demonstrate that the university actively supports the initiatives of young staff members. As a result, their involvement in the university's scientific activities is considered satisfactory.

In the self-evaluation report it is mentioned that the university One of the primary functions of the Research Activities Coordinators at the Agricultural University of Georgia is to simplify access to as many grant funding opportunities as possible for researchers. In this regard, the university collaborates actively with various scientific organizations, including the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation, the National Science Foundation of Ukraine, CRDF Global, DTRA, Horizon 2020, and others. The Research Activities Coordinators pay great attention to preparing and organizing the necessary documentation for the competitions announced by scientific funds, as this is one of the main criteria for obtaining grants. The applications submitted for competitions include the following documents:
- Application form
- Project proposal documents developed by the funds
- Relevant budget form
- Co-funding documents (if applicable)
- Application regarding infrastructure availability
- Various individual-type documents

Interviews with different representatives and information about research grants give the expert panel the basis to conclude that this process is well organized.

The self-evaluation report contains information about Internationalization Policy of university. It is explained that based on the mission of the Agricultural University of Georgia, instruction is conducted exclusively in Georgian, limiting the recruitment of non-Georgian-speaking students. However, this is not an indicator of internationalization. It merely prevents mechanical internationalization. In fact, the internationalization strategy includes the following directions:
- International-Level Programs;
- Education Compatible with International Systems;
- Faculty with International Experience;
- Memoranda with various international universities;
- Easy Integration for Students with Foreign Education;
- Exchange Programs and Erasmus+;
- International Collaborations with leading universities and research institutions worldwide;

- Participation in International Conferences;

Note that approximately 30% of the university's lecturers have education or work experience abroad.

The self-evaluation report with its appendix, the description of each research unit, interviews with different representatives of the university allow the expert panel to conclude that:

- The university is a financially stable and sustainable organization capable of fully, properly, and diligently fulfilling its research obligations over the long term;
- The university has assistance system to academic and scientific staff as well as scientific-research units to find funding from various sources for research is well organized;
- The university actively supports the initiatives of young staff members;
- Has difference sources for funding research activities, but it is suggested to formalize the existing support mechanism for scientific research activities by developing a comprehensive document that provides academic staff with a clear outline of available resources, as well as the necessary steps and procedures for accessing them;
- Internationalization of the research activities of the Agricultural University of Georgia is considered satisfactory. PhD students reported that they have had experience of research visits to Germany, France, Italy and Estonia, and indeed some of them attended the interviews remotely from such placements. The research institutes reported current collaboration with institutions in the Czech Republic, Germany and Greece. International exchange visits were reported by students to be offered and to have been taken advantage of, but those on agronomy courses did not appear to have access to these. It is suggested that this be addressed so that there is demonstrable equality of opportunity for such exchange visits by all students across all courses.

Research support for staff includes the encouragement and facilitation of research visits abroad. There are also remote working options available for research staff and there is a system for the provision of sabbatical years for such staff. Field studies are supported financially as are public presentations. Co-financing is available for the co-funding of research projects. Research Institute staff reported ease of accessbility to senior management for discussion, review and evaluation. The heads of research institutes reported that they had been consulted regarding the strategic development plan.

There is a research office that is involved in support for the writing of grant applications. In addition, the university provides funding for the preparation of grant applications, an incentive which is not common but is a very good motivator for the staff to write such applications which can be very time consuming.

Regarding research management, there are parallel accreditation and authorisation processes, and there is some overlap between these. Research activity is monitored, but it was unclear how this is formalised.

Evidences/indicators

Component evidences/indicators including the relevant documents, interview results, etc.

self-evaluation report

Research Activities of the Agricultural University of Georgia

Research Support Mechanisms;

Internationalization Policy;

Memorandums of Cooperation with Economic Agents.

Interview results, inc. Heads of programmes, Heads of Research Institutes,

Recommendations:

it is recommended to formalize the existing support mechanism for scientific research activities by developing a comprehensive document that provides academic staff with a clear outline of available resources, as well as the necessary steps and procedures for accessing them;

Suggestions:

Ensure equality of access to exchange programmes across students of all departments.

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

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

In the self-evaluation report, it is emphasized that the mechanisms for evaluating activities and professional development of personnel align with the university's personnel management policy. The goals of evaluating the activities of the personnel are:

- Understanding the mission of the University and ensuring the effective performance of functions by the personnel;
- Supporting the professional development of personnel;
- Finding potential for improvement in personnel's performance and identifying solutions.

One of the aspects of evaluation of academic and scientific personnel is research activities. A scientist is evaluated every year both individually and according to institutes/directions, and the results are analyzed in terms of 3-year dynamics. The assessment is carried out taking into account the following eight criteria:

- Funding provided by the Knowledge Fund and the University;
- The volume and amount of grants received by the scientists per year;
- Utilization of University infrastructure and space;

- The number and rating of articles published in Impact Factor journals;
- Scholar citation index (if any);
- Published books, textbooks and monographs;
- Involvement in the teaching process (annual academic workload, number of hours);
- Supervision of Doctoral students per year and number of defended dissertations

The report describes how each component can be assessed. Interviews with personnel and heads of institutions confirm that the evaluation process is indeed carried out. Additionally, the expert group requested samples of assessment documents for evaluating scientific activities of individual academic staff and institutes/departments and sample analysis document of scientific activity assessments, along with a corresponding action plan (if available). Unfortunately, these documents were not provided. Consequently, the expert panel concludes that, although the university has defined evaluation criteria and the interview results indicate that an evaluation process exists, it is recommended to improve the evaluation procedure for the scientific activities of academic staff and research units. Furthermore, it is advised to establish a results analysis system to ensure the creation and implementation of a development plan.

Evidences/indicators

Component evidences/indicators including the relevant documents, interview results, etc.

- Self-evaluation report
- Research Activities of the Agricultural University of Georgia
- Research Support Mechanisms;
- Internationalization Policy;
- Memorandums of Cooperation with Economic Agents.
- Interview result

Recommendations:

It is recommended to improve the evaluation procedure for the scientific activities of academic staff and research units and to establish a results analysis system to guarantee the creation and implementation of a development plan.

Suggestions:

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

☐ Complies with requirements

☒ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

7. Material, Information and Financial Resources

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Agricultural University of Georgia, is located on the "Kakha Bendukidze" campus and specializes in education and scientific research in the agricultural sector. Certain real estate and movable property on the campus belong to LLC "Agromet," leased to the university until 2033. It is noteworthy that LLC "Agromet" has committed to maintaining the premises in proper condition and providing services such as security, maintenance, communications, medical support, and more.

The campus spans 24,801.8 square meters and includes spaces designed for academic, research, and administrative needs. The number and configuration of classrooms are a significant component ensuring the optimization of the learning process. Special attention is given to large conference halls, such as the 224-seat large hall and the "Auditorium Magnum," with a capacity of up to 640 seats. These spaces enable the university to host both internal and international events.

The library is another vital component, encompassing both print and electronic resources. Its modern interior and technologies cater to student needs, while a 50-seat conference hall is available for intellectual and academic gatherings.

The examination center, renovated in 2022, covers 900 square meters and accommodates up to 305 students simultaneously. The examinations centre co-ordinates timings of examinations and these are negotiated with departments. This improves the efficiency of the learning process and enables the university to conduct both internal and national-scale exams. Students are split into non-same exam neighbours. Mobile phones and cameras are not allowed, and it is this office which is responsible for the storage of old examinations. This is an important resource that seems to work smoothly.

Significant financial investments have been made in infrastructure reconstruction, including:
2021: Renovation of Auditorium Magnum – GEL 900,000.
2022: Reconstruction of the examination center – GEL 1,268,433.
2023: Modernization of the Culinary Academy – exceeding GEL 1,000,000.
Modernization of the veterinary clinic "Veterinarium" – exceeding GEL 1,000,000.
Creation of an indoor sports hall – GEL 650,000.

The campus is fully adapted for persons with disabilities. Parking spaces accommodate 527 vehicles, including specially adapted spots, and charging stations for electric cars align with the university's environmental responsibility policies.

Safety and health care for students and academic staff are priorities. The campus is under 24/7 security police surveillance, with key external and internal perimeters equipped with CCTV cameras. Fire safety standards are upheld, with fire extinguishers, visible instructions, and evacuation plans in place.

The university provides free emergency medical services to students, academic, and administrative staff. The medical facility is equipped with standard tools, instruments, and medications.

The campus's educational and research infrastructure includes laboratories compliant with international biosafety standards (BSL-1 and BSL-2). These facilities are equipped with microscopes, incubators, PCR devices, biosafety cabinets, and other modern equipment necessary for microbiological, virological, and related research. Where required equipment, particularly for research purpose, is too costly, there were examples given of the university organising the rent of such equipment from other institutions.

The vivarium, another essential resource, allows for the housing and breeding of small laboratory animals and is fully compliant with international standards, supporting research in disease prevention and treatment.

The veterinary clinic serves as an educational and practical resource for animal care. Equipped with diagnostic devices, X-rays, ultrasound scanners, and other equipment, it provides students with real-world training opportunities. A mini-farm on campus further supports veterinary education through hands-on interaction with various agricultural animals.

The oenology and winemaking academy offers theoretical and practical training in viticulture, winemaking, and tasting techniques, using laboratory and production equipment to ensure high-quality education.

The Culinary Academy teaches traditional Georgian and global culinary techniques, fostering creativity and career readiness in culinary arts.

Sports and recreational zones provide relaxation opportunities, including facilities for soccer, basketball, tennis, and other activities, promoting physical well-being and teamwork. The campus also houses a dendrological park with unique plant collections, creating an ecological and recreational space for students and staff.

Additionally, the university has an educational center near Bazaleti Lake, featuring conference halls, training classrooms, dormitories, a cafeteria, a sports field, and outdoor recreational areas, accommodating up to 100 visitors. The Agricultural University of Georgia exemplifies a forward-thinking educational institution. Its state-of-the-art facilities, strategic investments, and focus on sustainability not only advance education but also contribute to regional and international academic growth.

There is a dedicated media studio for the delivery of professional and effective university events and promotions. The Agricultural University of Georgia exemplifies a forward-thinking educational institution. Its state-of-the-art facilities, strategic investments, and focus on sustainability not only advance education but also contribute to regional and international academic growth.

The university museum is used as a space for lectures and for private study (and students were observed by the panel taking advantage of this facility). Students are also involved in the preparation and presentation of exhibits in the museum. It is also used for school visits as part of the student recruitment efforts.

Evidences/indicators

Component evidences/indicators including the relevant documents, interview results, etc.

- ✓ Documentation confirming ownership of real estate (extract from the Public Registry);
- ✓ Inventory materials for movable property;
- ✓ Agreements with practice/research-scientific facilities;
- ✓ Mechanisms for fire safety, medical assistance, and maintaining order;
- ✓ Self-evaluation Report of a Higher Educational Institution;
- ✓ Results of infrastructure inspections;
- ✓ Outcomes of interviews conducted during the visit, including with the Deans, heads of departments, exam centre, library staff, office of registration,

Recommendations:

Suggestions:

Best Practices (if applicable):

Veterinary clinical activities and the commercialization of veterinary services undoubtedly constitute a component of best practices

Evaluation

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

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

7.2. Library Resources

Library environment, resources and service support effective implementation of educational and research activities, and HEI constantly works for its improvement.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The Library of the Agricultural University of Georgia plays a significant role in the university's educational and research-scientific activities. Its main function is to ensure the availability of modern, high-quality resources and services to support learning and research at the highest level. The library is open daily from 10:00 AM to 9:00 PM, including weekends.

The library sets the following priorities:
Development of internal and electronic collections.
Maintenance and improvement of the electronic catalog.
Management of electronic scientific databases.
Improvement of infrastructure to support both individual and group work.
Professional development of staff.

The physical and digital infrastructure of the library is fully tailored to meet the needs of users.

Among the physical spaces, the reading rooms stand out; these areas are designed for both individual and group study, providing a comfortable and quiet environment. They include: a "quiet zone," a designated area for individual work; a conference room equipped with modern presentation technology for theoretical and practical meetings; open shelves, organized thematically to facilitate user comfort;

and computers, printers, and scanners available for free use. These are clearly used by the students. The panel observed a very good number of students using these resources on each day of the visit. The students also reported that they were very happy with the library and IT resources available to them.

The university has developed an electronic catalog system for library resources, which can be accessed remotely as well as by local users. The university also has an online media portal that supports uploading and downloading electronic documents, enhancing access to materials.

The university has established management mechanisms, which include the following components: regular feedback from users and staff; examination of spaces and equipment; and the allocation of a budget for infrastructure renewal.

Staff are able to order books and other library resources. The library manager checks costs and the chancellor makes the final decision on payment. The staff confirmed that this was a smooth and usually successful process.

The primary literature listed in the syllabi for all courses is easily accessible in the institution's library, available in both physical and digital formats to ensure students and faculty have full access to essential materials. As mentioned earlier, the library also has a user-friendly cataloging system, making it easy to search for and find these resources to support learning and academic success.

Library resources, both paper-based and electronic is diverse, constantly updated based on developments in the field, and support achievement of educational program learning outcomes and implementation of research/scientific work;

In 2019, the Agrarian University of Georgia significantly enhanced its library's scientific resources by becoming a member of the university consortium established by Georgia's Ministry of Education and Science. This membership provided students and faculty with access to leading academic databases, including Elsevier's Science Direct and Scopus, enabling broader access to high-quality research materials and scientific publications. Additionally, the library's operational and developmental budget experienced a notable increase of more than 23% compared to its previous authorization, reflecting the institution's ongoing commitment to expanding its resources and supporting academic and research excellence.

The Agricultural University of Georgia's library is an essential part of the educational system, offering both traditional and modern services. The development of infrastructure, resource availability, and the continuous professional development of staff ensure the library's ongoing support of the university's academic activities.

Evidences/indicators

Component evidences/indicators including the relevant documents, interview results, etc.
- ✓ Documentation confirming ownership of the book collection and inventory materials;
- ✓ Statistics on the usage of electronic library databases;
- ✓ Mechanisms for the development and renewal of library resources and services;
- ✓ Self-evaluation Report of a Higher Educational Institution;
- ✓ Results of infrastructure inspections;
- ✓ Outcomes of interviews conducted during the visit; including Library staff, heads of departments, office of information technologies, academic staff, students.

Recommendations:

Suggestions:
Preferably, the digitization of contemporary, new literature should be completed in the shortest possible time to enhance its accessibility

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation
Please mark the checkbox, which best describes the HEI's compliance with this specific component of the standard ☒ Complies with requirements ☐ Substantially complies with requirements ☐ Partially complies with requirements ☐ Does not comply with requirements

7.3 Information Resources

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The university's IT department ensures the reliability of infrastructure and services, which facilitates the smooth running of educational, scientific, and administrative processes. The IT department efficiently manages critical services, including internet access, email services, an updated (systematically updatable) website, the examination center, the education management information system (EMIS), and support for distance learning through Zoom and Google Workspace platforms.

Internet access is provided through two independent optical fiber channels, equipped with backup power supply systems, ensuring continuity in case of service disruptions from the main provider. The university's email platform, Google Workspace for Education, ensures modern and efficient communication for staff and students, while the EMIS system fully manages academic and administrative processes.

The university actively updates its equipment and services. Database security and protective measures comply with Georgian legislation, including laws on personal data protection.

Despite the progress in information technology, some challenges remain. For example, the backup internet speed (2 Mbps for global resources) is low, which could cause issues during high traffic periods. The university significantly meets the requirements of standard components. Its IT infrastructure and services are organized according to international best practices; however, additional attention should be paid to increasing the backup internet speed and strengthening data protection. These measures will ensure service continuity and better responsiveness to the growing needs of users.

Evidences/indicators

Component evidences/indicators including the relevant documents and interview results

- ✓ Agreements with internet providers;
- ✓ University website;
- ✓ University's Education Management Information System (EMIS);

- ✓ Materials for inventory of movable property;
- ✓ Information technology management policies and procedures;
- ✓ Self-evaluation Report of a Higher Educational Institution;
- ✓ Results of infrastructure inspections;
- ✓ Outcomes of interviews conducted during the visit.

Evaluation

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

☒ Fully complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements

Recommendations:

Suggestions:

The backup internet speed of 2 Mbps for global resources is low, it is important to address this deficiency.

Best Practices (if applicable):

7.4 Financial Resources

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The total budget of the Agricultural University of Georgia is approximately 35 million GEL per year, which includes both academic and administrative expenses. The expenditure part ensures resources for strategic and operational goals, with a focus on the continuous development of key institutional activities such as educational processes, scientific research, library resources, and infrastructure areas. Regarding payroll expenses, it should be noted that from 2018 to 2024, salaries have increased by approximately 45%.

It is important to highlight the effective financial reporting, management, and control systems implemented at the university, which ensure compliance with financial standards and regulate non-targeted expenditure of resources.

The university has created a financial fund called the "Knowledge Fund," which is actively involved in the budget expenditure component. Additionally, it has a bank deposit equivalent to 4 months of salaries, providing a financial buffer.

The university uses a unified budgeting model, where each program does not have an independent budget. This allows for more flexible allocation of the fund between programmes.

The university's main sources of income are:
Student payments (65% of tuition fee revenue, 42.2% of total income);
State educational grants (29% of tuition fee revenue, 19% of total income);
Knowledge Fund scholarships ("Travel Grant") (5% of tuition fee revenue, 3.1% of total income);
Social grants and other funding (1% of tuition fee revenue, 0.6% of total income);

Additional sources of income include revenues from the commercialization of laboratory and practical activities, and veterinary services.
A noteworthy approach is: 100% reinvestment in education! All profits are entirely reinvested into education, financial reserves, and student-oriented programmes. The self-evaluation team reported that "we are financially stable".
The Agricultural University of Georgia is a financially stable institution in the long term, responsibly fulfilling its obligations.

Evidences/indicators

Component evidences/indicators including the relevant documents, interview results, etc.

- ✓ Self-evaluation Report of a Higher Educational Institution;
- ✓ University Budget;
- ✓ University's financing dynamics over the past 5 years / financial statements for the current and/or previous reporting period;
- ✓ Document on the implementation of the university's financial management and control system;
- ✓ Outcomes of interviews conducted during the visit, including the self-evaluation team;

Recommendations:

Suggestions:

Best Practices (if applicable):

Evaluation

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

☒ Complies with requirements

☐ Substantially complies with requirements

☐ Partially complies with requirements

☐ Does not comply with requirements