განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Higher Education Institution Authorisation Experts' Final Report
Alterbridge University

Expert Panel Members

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Tbilisi

2025

Authorisation Report Resume

General information on the educational institution

Alterbridge University is a private institution legally registered as an LTD, located at 67 Tskneti Highway in Tbilisi, Georgia. It is authorized by the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, with its authorization granted on December 11, 2019 and valid until December 11, 2025. Alterbridge was established in 2018 by the PR Academy. The institution's competitive advantages lie in the practical experience of its founders and management team, strong student employment prospects, and effective reputation management. Since its inception, Alterbridge has been actively engaged in social initiatives, the design of educational programmes, research, and creative projects. It serves as a platform for interaction between the labour and education markets, expands its network of local and international partners, and creates distinctive models of student life that contribute to the development of a mentally healthy future generation. Alongside its academic and research activities, the university operates two training centers that provide programmes for personal and career development, supports the professional development of civil servants, and organizes community-focused projects. The name Alterbridge itself embodies the institution's mission and long-term vision. It represents a bridge connecting education with employment and personal development, integrating academic learning, values, practical experience, and career advancement. The university's ambitious statement is to act as the connecting bridge between science, society, education, and employment, a role it seeks to fulfill through innovative programmes, transformational teaching methods, a dedicated team of professionals, and a student-centered learning environment. In terms of general information,

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

The site visit started on the morning of 23.10.2025 with the panel visiting Alterbridge University's site and continued with meetings for interviews of the panel with the University leadership, management, staff, students and representatives of employers on 24.10.2025, and 25.10.2025. The last interviews and the site tour were conducted in the morning of 25.10.2025 and were followed by deliberation of the expert panel, during which the experts agreed on their assessment of the extent of compliance of Alterbridge University with the authorization standards and their components. The chair of the panel delivered a brief overview of the panel findings to the University's leadership and a wider audience. The expert panel was accompanied in the site visit by Sopiko Kurasbediani and Kristine Abuladze from the NCEQE.

Overview of the HEI's compliance with standards

Alterbridge University has been found to be compliant with requirements as regards standards 1, 3, and 5; substantially compliant with requirements as regards standards 2 and 4; and partially compliant with requirements as regards standards 6, and 7.

Summary of Recommendations

1. R1.2.1. Strengthen stakeholder participation in strategic planning.
2. R1.2.2. Sharpen the measurability of the strategic objectives.
3. R1.2.3. Define intermediate target values for multi-annual KPIs.R2.1.1.
4. R2.1.1 Ensure the awareness on structure, accountability, functions of all the administrative units and management bodies (including school board).
5. R2.1.2. Even though the progress, as well as the factors affecting internationalization level is acknowledged, it is important for the institution to increase the level of internationalization in all the areas of its activity.
6. R2.1.3. For the effective management of the university, that implies representative participation of staff in the decision-making process, also taking into account growing size of the institution, the composition of the council and decision-making, in terms of numbers must be reconsidered.
7. R2.2.1. Foster the culture among academic staff making sure the quality is shared responsibility among administrative and academic function of the university.
8. R2.2.2. With the growing size and volume of operations and programs, it is important for the QA service to add full-time employees.
9. R2.2.3. Ensure that management effectiveness evaluation provides sufficient basis for analysis.
10. R2.3.1. Continue efforts to ensure awareness on academic integrity policy and mechanisms.
11. R3.3.1. It is recommended to accompany each program with a plan and target benchmark document for assessing the program learning outcomes based on target benchmarks according to the specific completed task that directly measures the mentioned learning outcome.
12. R4.1.1. It is recommended that the University strategically increase the proportion of affiliated

personnel with active research profiles to strengthen its scientific productivity and research capacity.

13. R4.1.2. It is recommended that the University revise its qualification requirements to establish differentiated research productivity expectations across academic ranks, with progressively higher standards for Associate Professors and Professors (e.g., requiring increased publication outputs, research quality indicators, or scholarly impact metrics), thereby ensuring that promotion criteria reflect both professional experience and scholarly achievement in accordance with international academic standards.

14. R5.2.1. It is recommended to offer long-term exchange programs to students.

15. R6.1.1. It is recommended that the University ensure the regular and consistent publication of its scientific journal, in order to strengthen research dissemination and support its planned integration into international citation databases.

16. R6.1.2. It is recommended that the University strengthen staff engagement in research activities by organizing periodic workshops and information sessions on institutional research priorities and available funding opportunities, thereby enhancing awareness and participation.

17. R6.1.3. It is recommended that the HEI further develop international research projects and partnerships, with a focus on increasing publications in highly indexed journals and promoting collaboration and commercialization opportunities with economic agents.

18. R6.2.1. It is recommended that the university further strengthen its international research partnerships by expanding participation in global grant programmes and formalizing staff and student mobility schemes, ensuring systematic engagement and measurable outcomes.

19. R6.2.2. It is recommended that the university enhance its research infrastructure and visibility by systematically disseminating information on international projects, outcomes, and collaborations through institutional platforms and communication channels.

20. R6.3.1. It is recommended that the university regularly publish aggregated research evaluation results to strengthen transparency and support data-driven decision-making.

21. R7.1.1. It is recommended that the university formally secures access to the third and fourth floors as stipulated in the lease agreement to ensure sufficient space for the intended number of students and staff, and to allow full implementation of university life.

22. R7.1.2. The institution should increase the number of classrooms, exam centers, computers, desks, and chairs in order to adequately meet the needs of the 1,050 students.

23. R7.1.3. To foster a truly international environment, it is recommended to include quotes in English within the campus.

24. R7.1.4. Ensure approval of evacuation plans by the authorized entity and provide them in English together with a Georgian version.

25. R7.1.5. It is recommended that the university enhance the English proficiency of a doctor to at least the B1 level

26. R7.2.1. It is recommended that the university enhance the English proficiency of library staff to at least the B1 level.

27. R7.2.2. It is recommended to set an internal benchmark for computers within the Methodology for defining student quota.

28. R7.2.3. Increase number of individual and groupwork areas and computers at the library to be sufficient for requested number of students and planned number of lecturers.

29. R7.2.4. Dedicated staff office area and separate processing room for cataloguing and maintenance has to be allocated.

30. R7.3.1. The university should ensure that its website accurately reflects all admission requirements for international students, students at all the areas where information on admission requirements is mentioned, including the English language test sample and information on the interview content.

31. R7.3.2. Ensure that details on academic profile of lecturers are accessible on university web page.

32. R7.4.1. The institution should strengthen its long-term financial sustainability by reducing dependence on student number growth and owner contributions, and by developing a diversified revenue strategy that includes external grants, research funding, partnerships, consultancy services, and donor engagement.

33. R7.4.2. Define the exact amount of financial resources in the 2025–2028 action plan to ensure realistic budgeting, enable effective prioritization of activities, strengthen financial accountability and support strategic decision-making.

34. R7.4.3. Ensure public availability of audit reports and financial statements on the HEI website for transparency and accountability to stakeholders.

Summary of Suggestions

1. S1.1.1. To fully realize its ambitions, the university could sharpen its mission with measurable targets and more explicit references to European funding and open science frameworks.

2. S2.2.1 It is suggested to enhance reporting to ensure it covers all the mechanisms provided in the document and multifaceted data for evaluating the effectiveness of the management processes.

3. S4.1.1. It is advised that the university reconcile discrepancies in the numbers of staff, establish a single authoritative personnel count with clear definitions, and ensure consistent reporting across all institutional documents.
4. S4.1.2. It is advised that the University conduct a comprehensive review of English language proficiency requirements across all administrative positions.
5. S5.1.1. It is suggested that minimum standards for exam administration be maintained during the English language test.
6. S6.1.1. It is suggested that the University consider encouraging and supporting publications in peer-reviewed international scientific journals.
7. S6.3.1. It is suggested that the University consider enhancing its international research profile by increasing participation in international projects and by further promoting publications in highly indexed journals.
8. S7.1.1. It is suggested to revise the Methodology for defining student quota 2025 to increase the minimum area per student, rather than reduce it from 2 sq. m to 1.3 sq. M at one moment of a time.
9. S7.1.2. It is suggested to create separate offices or quiet zones for administrative staff to minimize noise
    a. and interruptions, thereby improving productivity and work quality.
10. S7.1.3. It's suggested to expand the canteen facilities to accommodate the number of students, administrative staff and lecturers adequately.

Summary of the Best Practices
N/A

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. Sokratis Katsikas (Chair)
2. Tinatin Gabrichidze (Member)
3. Ia Natsvlishvili (Member)
4. Nino Alavidze (Member)
5. Nino Jolia (Member)
6. Ekaterine Pipia (Member)
7. Davit Tepnadze (Member)

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

Alterbridge's stated mission is "to give people new opportunities for personal and professional self-realization," by creating accessible conditions for research and learning, establishing an international platform between education and the labor market, and promoting public relations development in Georgia. The university publicly frames itself as a "bridge" between science, society, education, and employment and highlights authorization status, applied orientation, and internationalization ambitions. Its 2025 Statute confirms compliance with the Law of Georgia on Higher Education and governance requirements for bachelor's and master's provision.

Alterbridge University's mission statement is aligned with both Georgia's national higher education priorities and the broader objectives of the European Higher Education Area. At the national level, the mission emphasizes accessibility, responsiveness to labor market needs, and social contribution. This is operationalized through initiatives such as employment forums, partnerships with employers, and social projects that promote inclusivity and community engagement. Through the interviews, the panel learned that this mission is shared with the academic community and those stakeholders that the panel met with. Further, the alignment of the mission statement with community values, labor market needs, and societal development goals makes it a shared mission, one that both the university and the wider Georgian community can claim ownership of. The university also embeds quality assurance mechanisms, continuous monitoring, and compliance with accreditation standards, reflecting the requirements of the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement.

From a European perspective, Alterbridge's mission is aligned with Bologna Process principles, particularly in their focus on employability, mobility, and internationalization. The emphasis on quality assurance, transparency, and stakeholder involvement is aligned with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA. Furthermore, the university's commitment to digital transformation, including the integration of data literacy and AI basics into curricula, reflects the EU's digital education agenda.

Taken together, Alterbridge positions itself as a bridging institution that connects education, research, and employment, while also contributing to societal development through inclusivity, CSR initiatives, and community engagement. Locally, it defines its role as a socially responsible, applied higher education institution that supports Georgia's modernization goals. Internationally, it seeks visibility and credibility through partnerships, mobility, and alignment with European standards.

Evidences/indicators

- The Mission of Alterbridge University;
- Statutes of the University;
- Activity Report and Strategic Development Plan (2025-2031);
- SER;
- Interview results;
- www.altebridge.edu.ge

Recommendations:
N/A

Suggestions:

S1.1.1. To fully realize its ambitions, the university could sharpen its mission with measurable targets and more explicit references to European funding and open science frameworks.

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

Evaluation

        ☒ 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

Alterbridge follows its Methodology for Strategic Planning, developed and approved in accordance with the university's established rules; this is described in the document titled "Methodology for Strategic Planning". It is based on an analysis of the current environment, relevant international standards for educational processes, and market research results. The methodology explicitly states that strategic planning is discussed and approved by the Academic Board before being enacted by the Rector. Academic and administrative staff and students are recognized as contributors to the planning process. Through the interviews the panel was able to confirm that such provisions of the methodology have been followed, resulting in a participatory strategic planning process. Even though indirect involvement of external stakeholders is foreseen in the methodology, the SER identifies further involvement of all Alterbridge stakeholders in the development of the strategic plan as an area for improvement. This can be achieved by an appropriate modification of the methodology, to explicitly include external stakeholders in the strategic planning process.

Alterbridge University has both a long-term strategic development plan and a shorter-term action plan. The seven-year strategy (2025–2031) is grounded in an assessment of activities carried out between 2019 and 2024, as well as consultations with stakeholders. However, room for improvement exists. The strategy sets overarching objectives such as strengthening brand visibility, aligning educational programmes with labor market needs, supporting student development, and enhancing research capacity. This strategy is complemented by a three-year action plan (2025–2027), which translates the broader vision into specific tasks, responsible units, funding sources, and measurable indicators. Together, these documents show that Alterbridge has both a strategic horizon and an operational roadmap, consistent with national authorization requirements and international standards of institutional planning. However, the measurability of the strategic objectives needs to be improved, and target values for KPIs need to be defined.

The university contributes to the social development of Georgia and positions itself as a socially engaged institution. Its mission and strategy emphasize reputational management through societal engagement, and this is reflected in various initiatives. During the pandemic, Alterbridge created platforms such as AlterTheme and AlterMe, offering public lectures, masterclasses, and psychological support resources to students, parents, and the wider community. It has launched projects like Alterbridge for Applicants and Alterbridge for Teachers, providing exam preparation, professional development, and school outreach. The university also engages in charitable and environmental activities, supports vulnerable groups, and promotes inclusivity and diversity. Its "Green Campus" concept and health-promotion initiatives illustrate its commitment to societal well-being. Lifelong learning is facilitated through the Center for Continuing Education and Career Development, which offers training programmes, workshops, and career support, while internal grants and scholarships make education accessible to socially vulnerable students. These activities demonstrate that Alterbridge shares knowledge with society and creates opportunities for learning across different life stages.

Alterbridge has embedded mechanisms for evaluating the implementation of its strategic and action plans and for acting on the results. The strategic planning methodology includes situational analysis, monitoring systems, performance criteria, and corrective measures. The Scientific Research Development Strategy sets out annual self-evaluation requirements for academic staff,

commission-based reviews, and feedback loops to deans and programme directors, with consequences for non-engagement in research. The action plan specifies annual reporting events, publication of reports online, and systematic monitoring of programme compliance with national and international standards. Quality assurance processes include continuous monitoring, external evaluation, automated reporting, and stakeholder feedback. Evidence from the 2019–2024 reporting period shows that Alterbridge has already used evaluation results to refine programmes, strengthen employer engagement, and enhance student support mechanisms.

Evidences/indicators

- SER;
- Methodology for Strategic Planning
- 2022–2025 Action Plan Report;
- 2025-2027 Action Plan;
- Strategy 2025-2031;
- Assessment of activities 2019-2024;
- Interview results;
- www.altebridge.edu.ge

Recommendations:

R1.2.1.   Strengthen stakeholder participation in strategic planning.
R1.2.2.   Sharpen the measurability of the strategic objectives.
R1.2.3.   Define intermediate target values for multi-annual KPIs.

Suggestions:
N/A

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

Evaluation

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

2.   **Organisational Structure and Management of HEI**

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

2.1 Organisational Structure and Management

- 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

Alterbridge University has an organizational structure that reflects and responds to its size, overall vision and strategic plan, ensuring implementation of goals and activities described in its strategic plan, and achievement of its goals. Given into account the recent growth of the institution, as well as the plans of the institution in terms of increasing the number of programs, students, including international students, vision in terms of increasing the research productivity and internationalization level, at this stage is supported through the structure, with the further development of the institution, however, the structure, or the composition of the administrative staff would benefit from the increased

capacity. Based on the self-evaluation report, the institution plans to increase the number of administrative staff by 10.

As described in the self-evaluation report and discussed in more depth during the interviews, some structural changes were introduced during the reporting period. The changes included introduction of vice-rector, the establishment of the exam center, and the overall shift of the structure of management to the agile system and focus on project management.

The management approach of the institution is suitable for the individual characteristics of the university and organizational culture at the institution.

However, the system, based on evaluation, is at the starting stage. Namely, the KPIs for individual units are being developed, and not all of the units present at the interviews have their individual KPIs.

Moreover, the awareness of the structural units regarding the organizational structure, the organizational chart, the accountability system is somewhat low. Some of the structural units' representatives were not fully aware about their status within the organizational structure – e.g. manager of the unit, or the head of the sub-unit. The knowledge about the chart of the organization or the delegation flow, etc. However, the vision of the leadership of the university is very clear and aimed at the development of the overall management of the institution and development of the university as the organization.

Therefore, the structure, functions and responsibilities of structural units of the institution are clearly defined and divided, however, in practice, sometimes it is challenging for the units to clearly define the scope of their responsibility and/or accountability. However, the problems or challenges with the implementation of the functions were not evident.

The horizontal engagement of the different units in different activities, based on the interviews, is mostly carried out within the scope of different projects – project management approach to implementing different activities also incorporates defining project leader and participants, with their relevant functions. This approach is also just being developed and not fully implemented.

What should be further noted is that even though the self-assessment report states that the restructuring of the structural units was aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the university and it led to improvement of the management of the university, the expert panel was not able to gather information on the criteria used for evaluating the results of changes as effective. The issue of evaluating management effectiveness and the need for evaluating recent changes and their impact on the different areas of university activities is further discussed in the standard component 2.2.

The managerial bodies of the school and university are the school board and the academic board.

The academic board includes the Alterbridge University rector, who is heading the academic council, and students, whose candidacy is submitted by the student self-governance. Based on the statute of the academic board, the members of the board are elected from the respective schools of the university. Even though there is only one school at the moment, the university can have the regulation this way, but as the regulation is detailed and has the indication of the number of the members of the council, more details can be provided – e.g. basis of calculation of the proportion of the representatives of the schools, or affiliation requirement. Based on the regulation, the academic council is eligible for voting/the "quorum" is met when more than half, at least 51% of the members attend. Therefore, at least 5 members of the council are required for voting.

The decision is made based on the number of votes – therefore, if at least 5 members attend, 3 votes are needed for the decision, and in case of equal votes, the decision is based on the vote of the head of the academic council. For the effective management of the university, that implies representative participation of staff in the decision-making process, also taking into account growing size of the institution, the composition of the council and decision-making, in terms of numbers must be reconsidered.

In the statute of the academic council, in the basis for terminating the membership in the academic council, the termination of contract of the administrative staff is listed, which might be a technical error.

The school council consists of the school academic staff and no less that ¼ of the council should be composed of students. The members of the school council cannot be holding an administrative position at the university (except of the dean of the school).

Academic staff of the school is automatically included in the school council. However, during interviews the staff were not well aware of the composition of the school council, or the regulation for school council, the members of the school council did not have full knowledge of the mechanism of becoming a member – e.g. voluntary, vs. automatic, or how the decision is made (voting principles, decision-making principle). This leads to the conclusion that the regulations are not known to the staff, as the challenges in terms of implementing the regulations was not identified by the experts.

The rector is appointed by the partners' assembly, and this way of appointing the rector is in line with Georgian legislation, taking into account the legal form of the institution – LTD.

The rector is accountable to partner's assembly. Vice rector, in turn, is appointed by and accountable to the rector. The head of the administration is also appointed by the rector.

Even though the major management positions are subject to appointment, once again, the legislation of Georgia on the private liability companies, as well as on higher education should be taken into consideration, combined with the elections, or the freedom to join established for the collegial bodies is sufficient to state that the procedures for election/appointment of the governmental bodies of the HEI are transparent, equitable, and in line with legislation. However, as mentioned, additional improvements can be made to the composition and decision-making.

The decisions of the management body related to academic, scientific and administrative issues, based on the interviews, or other existing evidence, are made in timely and effective manner. Information gather from the different stakeholders did not point to any challenges with the effectiveness of the decision-making process. The management of the university has pointed out to agile methodology of management and they are highly valued and appreciated by students and staff members.

Regulations for document processing within the institution correspond to the established legislation and are provided in the document processing regulation. The university utilizes modern technologies, including electronic document processing system, namely, electronic system of document processing, E-Flow is used. Institution also maintains registry of educational institutions.

University has also developed an internationalization policy, which is more descriptive statement for the main activities of the university in terms of internationalization and does not include concrete KPIs or goals. Individual KPIs for internationalization process is being finalized by the new team and according to the new approaches established at the university, as described earlier. The number of international partners, exchange programs and exchange of staff and students, internationalization is one of the areas for improvement, which is also common for newly established university. However, the university team is well aware of the need for continuous development and is heading to the progress. Even though at this stage, the number of international partners, exchange opportunities and other indicators for internationalization are limited, the steps and progress made by institution and its leadership in terms of promoting internationalization activities, is acknowledged.

The university has developed a business continuity plan, which accounts possible risks for the institution's operation, the strategies for its mitigation, responsible bodies/persons and timeline for risk mitigation.

Evidences/indicators

- University Structure;
- Functions of the units of the university;
- Academic Council Regulation;
- Business processes continuity plan;
- Charter of the school;
- Internationalization policy;
- Self-evaluation report;
- Interview results;
- Additionally requested documents.

Recommendations:

R2.1.1. Ensure the awareness on structure, accountability, functions of all the administrative units and management bodies (including school board).

R2.1.2. Even though the progress, as well as the factors affecting internationalization level is acknowledged, it is important for the institution to increase the level of internationalization in all the areas of its activity.

R2.1.3. For the effective management of the university, that implies representative participation of staff in the decision-making process, also taking into account growing size of the institution, the composition of the council and decision-making, in terms of numbers must be reconsidered.

Suggestions:
N/A

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

Evaluation

☐ Complies with requirements
☒ Substantially complies with requirements
☐ Partially complies with requirements
☐ 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

The institution effectively implements internal quality assurance mechanisms. Leadership consistently works to strengthen the quality assurance function and promote the establishment of a quality culture. The internal quality assurance system ensures continuous assessment and development of institutional activities, academic programs, and resources, with decisions grounded in evidence-based analysis.

University Alterbridge has a well-defined internal quality assurance structure that operates as an integral part of the institutional management system. The QAS is accountable to the rector and academic council, and its functions, responsibilities and reporting mechanisms are clearly regulated. The QA functions cover every aspect of the university activities, including the implementation of the strategic development and action plans.

The execution of the QAS and implementation of its mechanisms is carried out through the delegation of the functions of implementation to different administrative units of the university and it should be noted that the quality culture is shared among the administrative staff representatives.

However, the quality culture of and involvement, as well as overall awareness on the Quality assurance mechanisms and system among the academic staff and heads of the programs might be further improved, based on interviews, the quality assurance is perceived more as the administrative function.

The Quality Assurance service is provided with the essential resources, highly experienced head and consultant, sharing the areas of university activity for QA (institutional and program-level). Even though the QA service does not have any other full-time staff, the internships in the office and the involvement of administrative units in the implementation ensures smooth and effective functioning of the quality assurance function. However, with the growing size and volume of operations and programs, it is important for the QA service to add full-time employees.

The university also developed "Management Effectiveness Monitoring Mechanisms and Assessment System", which is the part of the overall QA processes at the university as well and implemented by QA service. It should be further noted that the alignment of the QA functions with the mission and strategic development plan of the university is evident and supported through evidence.

The mechanisms described in the Management Effectiveness Monitoring document and confirmed during interviews include:

- Monitoring of strategic development and action plan implementation;
- Annual assessment of academic and invited staff;
- Annual evaluation of administrative and support staff by the HR Department;
- Continuous monitoring of the educational process and learning outcomes;
- Evaluation of research productivity and engagement;
- Monitoring of services and student support activities.

Each mechanism is guided by PDCA cycle. The QA Service consolidates results and provides recommendations to the Academic Council, which then takes decisions on necessary adjustments or staff development measures.

However, one of the reports provided, for example, for the year 2024, is not detailed, or deep enough to serve as the basis of assessing the management effectiveness. The report, namely, is addressing the results of the surveys of interested parties and discussing the management processes based on result, which might not be fully sufficient. It is suggested to enhance reporting to ensure it covers all the mechanisms provided in the document and multifaceted data for evaluating the effectiveness of the management processes.

The decision-making process at the university takes into account the results of QA evaluations. For example, based on the documents and interviews, the QA office had role in changing the structure of the university, proposing recommendations for more effective management, etc.

The university is also working on implementing KPI system for individual units, which will be a useful tool for evaluating the effectiveness of management of the university and for the unit-level evaluation. The tools developed for the QA are various and cover every area and aspect of the university activity, university resources and educational programs. The tools are implemented based on predetermined timeline and with the involvement of pre-defined units.

The assessment of academic and invited staff is systematic and involves evaluation of teaching quality, research activity, and student feedback. Administrative and support staff assessments are conducted by the Human Resources Service based on predetermined schedule and tools developed for assessment, which ensure effective evaluation of staff performance.

Student academic performance monitoring is used for evaluation and improvement of the educational programs and/or study process. As other tools, it is carried out based on predetermined timeline and the analysis, example of which was also provided in the documentation, is used for the continuous improvement.

The university has developed and implemented a "Methodology for Planning the Student Contingent, which establishes formulas for determining institutional capacity based on spatial, human, and infrastructural resources. The methodology takes into account:

- The total area of teaching and auxiliary spaces;
- The number of academic staff and their teaching load;
- The number of available classroom seats and shifts;
- Programme specifics and labor market demands.

This system ensures that enrolment is aligned with institutional capacity. The student-to-staff ratio, group size (25–40 students), and classroom capacity are periodically reviewed and monitored by the QA Service.

The QA system includes mechanisms for monitoring programme implementation and learning outcomes. The QA Service, together with the Academic Office, coordinates the periodic evaluation of programmes. Evaluation results are based on course reports, student satisfaction surveys, and employer feedback.

Evidences/indicators

- Quality assurance policy;
- Results of the QA tools implementations – analysis and reports;
- QA mechanisms;
- Interview results;
- Self-evaluation report;
- Student body planning methodology.
-

Recommendations:

R2.2.1. Foster the culture among academic staff making sure the quality is shared responsibility among administrative and academic function of the university.

R2.2.2. With the growing size and volume of operations and programs, it is important for the QA service to add full-time employees.

R2.2.3. Ensure that management effectiveness evaluation provides sufficient basis for analysis.

Suggestions:

S2.2.1. It is suggested to enhance reporting to ensure it covers all the mechanisms provided in the document and multifaceted data for evaluating the effectiveness of the management processes.

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

Evaluation

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

2.3. Observing Principles of Ethics and Integrity

- 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

University Alterbridge developed the regulations setting norms and establishing expectations in terms of ethical behavior and integrity. The regulations are publicly available.

The code of ethics developed by the university establishes norms of ethical behavior for both students and staff. The students, as they are enrolled at the university, are expected to look through the document and agree on the norms by signing the contract.

The procedure is similar regarding staff of the institution, as the introduction to the ethical norms and behavior at the university is the part of the induction of staff. The internal labour regulation also sets the expectations towards staff and is also the part of the induction process.

As for the academic integrity and norms against plagiarism, it is regulated by the separate document – "Academic Integrity Policy". University has established clear norms regarding plagiarism and academic misconduct, even though the implementation of the process is not well known to the academic staff, including the software used for the detection of plagiarism (the institution uses StrikePlagiarism.com since the year 2022, while the interviews with staff provided inconsistent answers). Plagiarism check is mandatory for the BA and MA theses, articles prepared by students and staff, while checking other written work is not mandatory, but possible in case of suspicion on possibility of misconduct. The thresholds for original text, as well as similarity is defined for different types of work and varies from 15 to 30 (this numbers reflect the similarity share, policy has zero tolerance for plagiarism). Based on interview results with students, university has to increase efforts in increasing awareness on existing policy and practice. A total of 128 papers were submitted to the plagiarism check.

However, it should also be noted that the institution provides informational meetings and aims to increase awareness on plagiarism detection and prevention policy at the university, through different activities, which is supported by evidence, so it is suggested that the university continuous its efforts.

The university also fosters academic freedom, which is declared in relevant documents and well known to the staff, as supported by interview results.

Evidences/indicators

- • Self-evaluation report;
- • Interview results;
- • Academic integrity policy;
- • Code of ethics;
- • Additionally requested documents.

Recommendations:

R2.3.1. Continue efforts to ensure awareness on academic integrity policy and mechanisms.

Suggestions: N/A
Best Practices (if applicable): N/A

Evaluation
 	
    ☐ Complies with requirements
    ☒ Substantially complies w ith 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 The Alterbrigde University has a methodology in place for planning, designing and development of educational programmes, which is presented in the document "Procedures for Planning, Designing, Approving, Developing, Modifying and Cancelling Educational Programmes" (approved by the Alterbrigde University Academic Council Resolution, Minutes #2, 24, 2025), which details all procedures - methods, tools, development stages, target benchmarks for assessing programme learning outcomes, and is in full compliance with the authorization standards. The document is accompanied by a unified template for educational programme and course/component syllabi. The document encompasses all stages for planning and development of the educational programme. Program planning, designing, and development is a participatory process and all stakeholders (staff, students, alumni, employers, professional associations) are involved in it to ensure the development of high quality, market-oriented, and modern educational programmes. To ensure stakeholder engagement, the institution has conducted surveys of business and public sector representatives. For example, the results of such surveys are analyzed and interpreted in the institution's Strategic Research Report 2025. According to the same report, as a result of qualitative research, the institution has studied the opinions of private sector employers, assessments of the non-governmental sector, and assessments of representatives of private, educational, and governmental organizations operating in the international labor market. In addition, the institution has conducted surveys of students, graduates, academic and visiting staff, and administrative staff's satisfaction with the program and university services. For example, the institution has presented an analysis of the results of the

evaluation of the English-language Bachelor of Business Administration program by academic/visiting staff, students' and employers. Stakeholder participation in the design and development of programs was also confirmed through interviews during the visit. According the "Procedures for Planning, Designing, Approving, Developing, Modifying and Cancelling Educational Programmes", the head of the programme coordinates the educational programme elaboration. The stakeholders engaged in educational programme development include: a) University academic and invited staff; b) Administrative staff, within its competence; c) Potential employers, professional associations and other stakeholders; d) Students of the main educational structural unit It is also possible to invite students of similar programme from other university; e) Graduates of educational programmes in the relevant field.

The persons involved in the educational programme, within their competence, determine the programme goals and estimated learning outcomes, which should derive from the university mission. In the process of elaboration of education programmes, they take into consideration higher education sectoral benchmarks.

By the Rector's order, a working group is created, which includes the programme director, quality assurance service, academic/invited staff, employers, administration representatives, research center, international relations service, library manager, student, graduate and employer. The working group creates the programme curriculum, develops the programme's goals and outcomes, which are in compliance with current legislation. The institution has a practice of implementing the educational programme development process in training formats, which is provided by the "Innovation Education Center" based at AlterBridge. In addition, the external collegial evaluation of educational programmes by local and international experts are caried out.

The self-evaluation report submitted by the Alterbgridge University is accompanied by the documents about the results/reports of the surveys of the interested parties involved in the implementation of the programme as well as job market research report. During the reporting period within the framework of planning of educational programmes, several meetings with potential employers by field were held to listen their opinions about what competencies graduates need for the labour market. What courses/components the educational programme should contain and nearly 150 memoranda were signed with representatives of different areas of the labour market.

It was noted during the interviews that the University is continuously working on the process of program development, which is related to the constantly changing environment and changes in labour market requirements. The goal of the "Plan- Do- Check- Act" (PDCA cycle) principle of programs is to improve teaching and research, which is implemented through permanent monitoring of the stages of implementation of educational programs and their components.

The procedural issues of approving programs and making changes to them are reflected in the minutes of the Academic Council, where programs and changes made to them are approved. The same document "Procedures for Planning, Designing, Approving, Developing, Modifying and Cancelling Educational Programmes" also regulates cases of program cancellation. Decision regarding educational programme cancellation is made by the Academic Council of the university. The issue is initiated at the school council by the head of the programme /representative of quality assurance service. For the purpose of discussion at the school council, the head of the programme prepares justification report for programme cancellation and a plan to inform students. The report is reviewed by the school council and the decision of the school council is submitted to the academic council by the dean for final decision - making.

In case the academic council makes a decision regarding cancellation of the educational programme, to ensure continued education for students of the respective educational programme, the institution is authorized to: a) Provide students of the educational programme to be cancelled with the opportunity to complete the ongoing level. In this case, admission to the educational programme is not carried out; b) Offer students mobile and flexible educational programmes that will include study courses/modules/elective components that will be compatible and relevant when transferring to other programmes and maximum credits will be recognized; Inform students regarding relevant educational programmes implemented by other higher educational institutions; d) Introduce students with the information regarding mobility procedures, deadlines and conditions provided by current legislation.

In case of implementing changes in the educational programme, the university offers the student individual study programme. Development of the individual educational programme takes place in cases of student status restoration, enrollment through external and internal mobility procedures, recognition of education, academic lag, special needs, student request and other objective circumstances. The quality management service ensures monitoring of individual educational programme development, implementation and execution and when needed provides recommendations

regarding the modification of the individual educational programme. Individual study plan of the student considers the student's different needs and legislative requirements, according to which mandatory workload of the student during one academic year includes 60 credits, however, acquisition of no more than 75 credits during the academic year is permissible.

Based on the information collected through self-evaluation report, relevant enclosed documents and site visit interviews, the group of experts came to the conclusion that the whole process for initiating and designing educational programs is well-established and clearly articulated. It involves dedicated program working groups responsible for formulating program goals and learning outcomes, developing and updating syllabi, identifying necessary resources, and preparing self-evaluation reports. The parties responsible for educational programme development are: Head of the programme, programme working group, dean of the school and quality assurance service. Documents of developed educational programs are then forwarded to the school dean, school council, reviewed by the Quality Management Service, and subsequently submitted to the Academic Council for final approval and implementation.

Evidences/indicators

- Official web-site of the Alterbridge University https://alterbridge.edu.ge/en/;
- Regulatory documents on the official web-site of the Alterbridge University https://alterbridge.edu.ge/en/regulatory-documents-2/;
- Educational Programmes and syllabi;
- Educational programme catalog;
- Quality Assurance Mechanisms of the Alterbridge University;
- Procedures for planning, elaborating, approving, developing, modifying and cancelling the educational programmes;
- Rules for planning, implementing and evaluating the scientific-research component (Guidelines for Master's Thesis Preparation and Defense; Regulation on Master's Degree Programmes);
- Regulation of the Bachelor's Program;
- Regulation of the Master's Program;
- Rules for completing a bachelor's thesis;
- Rule Regulating the Educational Process;
- Rule for the Administration of the Examination Process;
- Rule for Determining Language Competence;
- Methodology for developing an individual curriculum;
- Methodology for planning the student contingent;
- Methodology for assessing educational progremme learning outcomes;
- Memoranda with representatives of different labor market sectors;
- Students' academic performance monitoring results;
- Researches conducted for the purpose of programmes development (labor market research, reports of students and graduates satisfaction surveys, programmes evaluation reports by interested parties, reports in implemented changes, reports on Program learning outcome assessment);
- Academic Calendar;
- Regulation for Internship (practicum);
- Minutes of Academic and School Councils;
- Timetable of study courses in current semester of 2025-2026 academic year;
- Strategic Research Report 2025
- Results of the evaluation of the English-language Bachelor of Business Administration program by academic/visiting staff, students and employers.
- Site-visit Interviews;
- Self-evaluation report submitted by the Alterbridge University.

Recommendations:
N/A

Suggestions:
N/A

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

Evaluation

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

o	Programme learning outcomes are clearly stated and are in line with higher education level and qualification to be granted
o	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

At University Alterbridge operates The School of Management and Communication. The following academic educational programmes are implemented in this School: Bachelor's Educational Programme in Business Administration (English-language) – ECTS credits; Bachelor's Educational Programme in Mass Communication - 240 ESTS credits; Bachelor's Educational Programme in Psychology - 240 ECTS credits; Master's Educational Programme in Strategic Communication - 120 ESTS credits. In 2023 and 2024 all programmes were accredited by the Educational Programmes Accreditation Council at National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement and they comply with accreditation standard of educational programmes of higher education (see table. 3.1.1). Bachelor program in Psychology went through the unplanned monitoring process from the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement. In the framework of this process the programme was evaluated positively. Besides this, in July 2025 the proceedings of mentioned programme were stopped by the decision of Accreditation Council and there were no more recommendations left to be implemented.

Table 3.1.1. List of higher education programmes:

The programme title	Higher education level	Language of instruction	Qualification to be awarded and detailed field name and code according to the field of study classifier	ECTS	Programme status (authorized/accredited/conditionally accredited/international accreditation)
Business Administration	Bachelor	English Language	Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Business Administration, 0413	180	Accredited (1674105, 17/12/2024)
Psychology	Bachelor	Georgian	Bachelor of Psychology. Psychology, 0313	240	Accredited (381131, 04/04/2023)
Mass Communication	Bachelor	Georgian	Bachelor of Mass Communication, Journalism and Reporting, 0321	240	Accredited (937197, 14/07/2023
Strategic Communication	Master's	Georgian	Master of Public Relations, Marketing and Advertising, 0414	120	Accredited (1674106, 1 7/12/2024)

The educational programme includes the number of credits required by legislation for the corresponding stage of higher education. Within the programme, the credits assigned to each course reflect both contact hours and independent study time of student necessary to achieve the intended learning outcomes of that component, accurately representing the student's workload (1 ECTS credit equals 25 hours of study).The bachelor's and master's educational programmes offered at AlterBridge comprise a cohesive set of study components—such as courses, practical training, and a bachelor's thesis—and, in the case of master's programmes, scientific research components, including the master's thesis. These components are organized in a logical sequence and distributed across semesters. The structure and content of the programmes ensure coherent integration of all constituent elements and enable students with average academic performance to achieve the intended learning outcomes within a reasonable timeframe.

The academic degree awarded upon completion of the programme corresponds to the appropriate level of higher education as defined by the National Qualifications Framework and aligns with the qualification to be conferred. The educational programme, along with mandatory courses, ensures students' ability to choose non- mandatory components; students can select these courses to satisfy their individual and intellectual preferences, and to strengthen professional and general transferable competencies.

The academic year is the aggregate of semesters and the interval of recess between them and shall not exceed 12 consecutive calendar months. One academic year comprises 40 weeks. According to the syllabus of the educational program, classroom teaching processes are held for 12 weeks (weeks 1-6 and 8-13). The seventh week is the midterm exam, the fourteenth week is devoted to preparation for the final exam, the 15th-16th weeks are the final exams; the seventeenth week is an additional exam.

The student's workload is determined by the syllabus of the educational program component and includes contact and independent work hours. Student workload is the time required to achieve the learning outcomes defined by the educational program. Student workload consists of independent hours and contact hours. An academic hour in the classroom is 50 minutes, a break is 10 minutes.

The University ensures the transparency of choices envisaged by educational programs. Programs include elective courses/modules, and students can choose courses/modules provided for by the University's educational program. School and the program head(s) are obliged to inform students, at the start of the semester, about the elective courses envisaged by the program. A student may review the elective/compulsory courses and, during the registration period, make selections/register with the School. To ensure transparency of choice, the University provides for the electives envisaged by the program via the electronic learning management system, through which students select elective courses/modules at the beginning of the academic year.

The bachelor's educational programmes include courses of core components (including practice and bachelor's thesis), and mandatory and elective courses of free components. The procedure for completing the bachelor's thesis and practice is regulated by the "Practice Regulation" and "Rules for Completing and Assessing Bachelor's Thesis." **The master's educational programmes** include educational and scientific- research components (master's thesis/project). Detailed information about research at the master's level is presented in the educational programme "Strategic Communication" and corresponding syllabus, which indicate the probable research topics, volume, content, assessment rules and system. The rules for conducting and presenting/formatting master's research are regulated by the university's "Regulation for Preparing and Defending Master's Thesis."

Based on specificity, the following teaching- learning methods are used: lectures using interactive methods, written, oral, practical work methods (presentation, online work), discussion/debates; collaborative group work, brainstorming, demonstration, induction, deduction, analysis, synthesis, case study, verbal or oral work, written work, explanation-clarification and etc. The teaching-learning methods used in the educational programmes consider field specificity and ensure achievement of the programme's learning outcomes.

The Authorization Expert Group studied the learning outcomes of the submitted programmes and found that the Learning outcomes of the programmes are clearly stated and based on field National benchmarks/Characteristics. The programmes learning outcomes are in line with the level of higher education, and qualification to be granted. In accordance with the procedures established at the university, the following document has been developed and approved - "Mechanism for Assessing Learning Outcomes of Educational Programs" - which details how learning outcomes are formulated and assessed.

The University ensures accessibility of information about educational programmes. The educational programmes catalog serves to inform interested parties about AlterBridge's educational activities. The programmes catalog is updated regularly, according to the changes implemented in the programme. Educational programme catalogs are accessible to all interested parties and are posted on AlterBridge's website https://alterbridge.edu.ge/en/programs-2/.

With the help of individualized education programmes, the University takes into consideration various requirements, needs and academic readiness of students, and ensures their unhindered involvement in the educational process. During the site-visit interviews with the program leaders, representatives of administration it was noted that they have experience in working with students with individual needs who had transferred from other institutions or had changed the program during the internal mobility and offering them individualized study plans of the educational programs.

According to the self-assessment report submitted by the institution, the institution has 54 graduates (45 from master's programs, 9 from bachelor's programs). According to the same report, the employment rate of bachelor's program graduates is 100%. **The Alumni employment rate by qualification for the Bachelor's degree in Business Administration is 60%, for the Bachelor's degree in Psychology - 50%, and for the Bachelor's degree in Mass Communication - 90%.** The graduate rate of the Master's Program in Strategic Communication is 94% and employment rate by qualification is 56%. The institution systematically conducts a graduate survey. The 2023 and 2024 Alumni Survey reports are presented. More than 70% of the total number of university graduates participated in the survey. They evaluated various aspects of the university. One of the questions aimed to determine whether the university had a positive impact on their career/life. For example, according to the 2023 report, 20% of respondents found it difficult to answer whether their education at Alterbridge had a positive impact on their career growth, And 80% believe that it has had a positive impact on their life and career (20 out of 24 graduates of the institution (83.3%) participated in the 2023 survey). When asked whether graduates have a high chance of employment, 60% of respondents answered positively, while 30% found it difficult to answer, 10% responded negatively.

Evidences/indicators

- Official web-site of the Alterbridge University https://alterbridge.edu.ge/en/;
- Regulatory documents on the official web-site of the Alterbrigde University https://alterbridge.edu.ge/en/regulatory-documents-2/;
- Educational Programmes and syllabi;
- Educational programme catalog;
- Quality Assurance Mechanisms of the Alterbrigde University;
- Procedures for planning, elaborating, approving, developing, modifying and cancelling the educational programmes;
- Rules for planning, implementing and evaluating the scientific-research component (Guidelines for Master's Thesis Preparation and Defense; Regulation on Master's Degree Programmes);
- Regulation of the Bachelor's Program;
- Regulation of the Master's Program;
- Rules for completing a bachelor's thesis;
- Rule Regulating the Educational Process;
- Rule for the Administration of the Examination Process;
- Rule for Determining Language Competence;
- Methodology for developing an individual curriculum;
- Methodology for planning the student contingent;
- Methodology for assessing educational programme learning outcomes;
- Memoranda with representatives of different labor market sectors;
- Students' academic performance monitoring results;
- Researches conducted for the purpose of programmes development (labor market research, reports of students and graduates' satisfaction surveys, programmes evaluation reports by interested parties, reports in implemented changes);
- Academic Calendar;
- Regulation for Internship (practicum);
- Minutes of Academic and School Councils;
- External collegial evaluations of educational programmes;
- Focus groups reports (QA service meeting with students);
- Report on Program learning outcome assessment (Learning Outcomes Assessment Report of Strategic Communication Master's Degree Educational Program (2021-2023 Academic Year);
- Timetable of study courses (2023-2024, 2024-2025 academic years and Automn semester of 2025-2026 academic year);
- Site-visit Interviews;

• Self-evaluation report submitted by the Alterbridge University.	

Recommendations:
N/A

Suggestions:
N/A

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

Evaluation

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

3.3 Assessment of Learning Outcomes

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The university has adopted the legislative document "Mechanisms for Assessing Learning Outcomes of Educational Programmes" which outlines the system for assessing learning outcomes, taking into account the specifics of each academic field and incorporating appropriate forms, components, and methods of evaluation. These regulation enables the University to determine the extent to which students have achieved the learning outcomes defined by the components of the educational programmes. The forms, components, and criteria of assessment are determined by the course author(s), taking into account the specific nature of each course. Each course syllabus outlines the assessment components and is designed to support the achievement of the learning outcomes specified within it.

Learning outcomes are categorized into three areas: knowledge and understanding, skills, and responsibility and autonomy. The university's assessment system and related regulations are clearly defined and align with the legal acts governing the educational process in Georgia. The student knowledge assessment system is based on the guiding principles of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the Law of Georgia on Higher Education, the approved rules for Calculating Credits of Higher Educational Programs (Order No. 3 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, dated May 1, 2007), and the university's internal regulations.

Academic and invited staff develop assessment forms of the specific components of each course. The components, criteria, and minimum competency thresholds for midterm and final assessments are defined in the syllabi of each course, practicum, bachelor's thesis, and research component (master's thesis), taking into account their specific characteristics. This information is known to students in advance with the help of academic staff and administration as well as through the Learning Process Management System of the University.

The assessment system consists of clearly defined criteria and rules by which student academic performance is evaluated. Each course or component is assessed on a 100-point scale, combining midterm and final assessments, conducted in oral and/or written form. It is not permitted to award credits based solely on one assessment component (either midterm or final). The minimum competency threshold for the final assessment must not exceed 60% of the final score. Course syllabi specify the minimum competency thresholds for each assessment component. A student is eligible to take the final exam only if they have met or exceeded the minimum competency threshold outlined in the respective syllabus.

The assessment system includes five types of positive and two types of negative assessments: Positive assessment: a) Five types of positive assessment: A) Excellent – 91-100 points; (B) Very good – 81-90 points; (C) Good – 71 - 80 points; (D) Satisfactory – 61-70 points; (E) Sufficient – 51 - 60 points; b) Two types of negative assessment: (FX) Didn't Pass – 41 - 50 points, which means that the student needs to work more and is allowed to retake the exam once by working independently; (F) Fail – 40 points and less of the maximum grade, which means that the work done by the student is not enough and he/she has to retake the course.

Credit can be obtained only after the student achieves the learning outcomes established by the syllabus, considering the following mandatory requirements: a) In case of exceeding the minimum competency threshold of midterm and final assessments; b) In case of accumulating at least 51 points out of the maximum 100 points of the final assessment. A student is admitted to an additional exam if they have accumulated 41- 50 points out of a maximum of 100 points for the final assessment, or at least 51 points, but failed to exceed the minimum competency threshold established for the final assessment.

The format of midterm and final assessment components, the assessment criteria, and the minimum competency thresholds are defined in the syllabus of each course, scientific research component, or practicum, taking into account their specific characteristics.

University Alterbridge has in place an student grade appeal system, which is regulated according to the "Rules for Examination Process Administration" and "Rules for Academic Process Regulation."Students are authorized to demand fair assessment of their knowledge and to appeal examination results according to established procedures. According to the university's rules for conducting, postponing, assessing and appealing examinations, reviewing and resolving complaints, students have the right to: within 3 days after grades are entered into the information system, review examination work together with the lecturer and receive feedback; if the student disagrees with the feedback result, they have the right to protest their midterm and/or final examination grade within 5 working days by submitting an application addressed to the school dean. Based on the dean's referral, the university rector approves an appeal committee by the order. The result of the committee's re-grading of the examination work is final and is reflected in the information system (database).

According the Program Learning Outcome Assessment Regulation the program must be accompanied by a mechanism for assessing the learning outcomes of the program, as well as documents confirming the use of the mechanism for assessing the learning outcomes of the program. Also, the methodology for assessing the learning outcomes of the program indicates that the curriculum map should indicate which learning outcomes specific training courses contribute to and at what level (1– Introduction level) 2—Deepening level, 3 – Reinforcement level/Mastering level. At the master's level, the achievement of learning outcomes is mostly assessed during the completion and defense of the master's thesis.

According the Program Learning Outcome Assessment Regulation all learning outcomes of the program should be assessed at the end of the program. A plan for assessing the learning outcomes of the program should be developed. The learning outcomes assessment plan should reflect how the learning outcomes of the program will be assessed at the end of the program. It is important that the learning outcomes of the program are assessed in those learning courses and/or activities in which the learning outcomes of the program are reinforced according to the curriculum map.

The learning outcomes of the program should be assessed using both direct and indirect methods. A direct assessment method is one that through which it is verified whether the student has achieved the learning outcome of the program through a completed task. This can be a test, exam, essay, portfolio, presentation, defense of the topic, simulation, etc. When assessing the learning outcomes of the program, the result of the specific task that directly measures the mentioned learning outcome should be used.

The indirect assessment method involves student self-assessment; assessment of the student by the employer, etc. For the purpose of indirect assessment of the program's learning outcomes, a questionnaire can be prepared, which will list the program's learning outcomes and students will indicate their opinion on the level at which they have achieved a particular learning outcome. The same questionnaire can also be sent to employers.

After determining the methods for assessing learning outcomes, a target benchmark should be set for each learning outcome, reflecting the expectation of the level at which students will achieve each learning outcome. The so-called normal distribution (also known as the Gaussian distribution) can be used as a target benchmark to determine and assess achievement in a task/component defined for assessing learning outcomes.

One of the tools for assessing course learning outcomes is the evaluation of students' academic performance, which considers course specificity, the number of students in the group, individual student abilities and outcome dynamics, received grades, and semester-by-semester grade point averages (GPA). As a result of analyzing student academic performance, the following is determined: The degree and level of difficulty of the educational programme and individual subjects; How correctly the study topics are selected; The adequacy of learning/teaching/assessment methods used during evaluation; Staff pedagogical and scientific- research skills; Students' preparation level and other

factors. For the analysis of the academic performance, the so-called Normal Distribution is used (same Gaus Distribution) which represents continuous type of distribution. The highest scores (Grade A) should not exceed 10% of the total, and then distribution of grades should be the following: B-25%; C–30%; D–25% and E–10%. According to the ranking scale, the main mass of students should have an average indicator of achievement of learning outcomes, and very high and low - 10–10% of students, respectively. In case of a 20% deviation from the specified range, the learning outcomes and the ways to achieve them will be reviewed.

It is noteworthy that in the documentation accompanying the self-evaluation report submitted by the institution and in the package of educational programs, maps for assessing the learning outcomes of the programs are presented, but plans for assessing the learning outcomes of the programs are not presented. Also, the target indicators for achieving the program's learning outcomes are not specified according to the specific completed task that directly measures the mentioned learning outcome. It is recommended to accompany each program with a plan and target benchmark document for assessing the program learning outcomes based on target benchmarks according to the specific completed task that directly measures the mentioned learning outcome.

Evidences/indicators

- Official web-site of the Alterbridge University https://alterbridge.edu.ge/en/;
- Regulatory documents on the official web-site of the Alterbrigde University https://alterbridge.edu.ge/en/regulatory-documents-2/;
- Educational Programmes and syllabi ;
- Educational programme catalog ;
- Quality Assurance Mechanisms of the Alterbrigde University;
- Procedures for planning, elaborating, approving, developing, modifying and cancelling the educational programmes;
- Rules for planning, implementing and evaluating the scientific-research component (Guidelines for Master's Thesis Preparation and Defense; Regulation on Master's Degree Programmes);
- Regulation of the Bachelor's Program;
- Regulation of the Master's Program;
- Rules for completing a bachelor's thesis;
- Rule Regulating the Educational Process;
- Rule for the Administration of the Examination Process;
- Rule for Determining Language Competence;
- Methodology for developing an individual curriculum;
- Methodology for planning the student contingent;
- Methodology for assessing educational progremme learning outcomes;
- Memoranda with representatives of different labor market sectors;
- Students' academic performance monitoring results;
- Researches conducted for the purpose of programmes development (labor market research, reports of students and graduates' satisfaction surveys, programmes evaluation reports by interested parties, reports in implemented changes);
- Academic Calendar;
- Regulation for Internship (practicum);
- Minutes of Academic and School Councils;
- External collegial evaluations of educational programmes;
- Focus groups reports (QA service meeting with students);
- Report on Program learning outcome assessment (Learning Outcomes Assessment Report of Strategic Communication Master's Degree Educational Program (2021-2023 Academic Year);
- Timetable of study courses (2023-2024, 2024-2025 academic years and Automn semester of 2025-2026 academic year);
- Site-visit Interviews;
- Self-evaluation report submitted by the Alterbridge University.

Recommendations:

R3.3.1. It is recommended to accompany each program with a plan and target benchmark document for assessing the program learning outcomes based on target benchmarks according to the specific completed task that directly measures the mentioned learning outcome.

Suggestions:
N/A
Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

Evaluation

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

4. **Staff of the HEI**

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

4.1. Staff Management
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

The University has a Personnel Management Policy document that outlines key principles and guidelines for overseeing academic, invited, administrative, and support staff. Additionally, the institution maintains the 'Rules for Selecting Academic and Invited Personnel' document, which outlines clear and fair processes for selecting academic staff in accordance with applicable regulations, thereby facilitating the recruitment and hiring of qualified individuals. The university has further established "Rules for Conducting Academic Personnel Attestation" and "Rules and Conditions for Academic Personnel Affiliation." These documents address matters related to academic staff affiliation and attestation processes.

According to the rules and affiliation of the academic personnel document, the affiliation rule implies full or partial financing of textbooks, articles, translations, lecture collections, and other materials prepared for publication in the name of the university by the affiliated person; full or partial financing of the affiliated person's participation in international conferences in the name of the university (participation implies presentation of relevant scientific topics in the name of the university). During the interview, it was mentioned that 3000 GEL is allocated for each affiliated academic personnel. According to the self-evaluation report, the University has 32 affiliated academic personnel. They have priorities in terms of their research activities. The interview results have revealed that scientific activities undergo annual evaluation at year-end. The University submitted a scientific productivity analysis document covering the period from 2019 to 2025, which assesses the research output and scholarly contributions of its personnel. A thorough examination of this document has yielded significant findings regarding the scientific engagement of affiliated personnel. The analysis encompasses 29 affiliated personnel, revealing a notable disparity in research participation. Of these 29 individuals, only 7 have demonstrated scientific engagement (5 with a PhD degree). The remaining 22 personnel have not recorded any scientific activity during the evaluated period. The document contains an explanatory framework for this imbalance, noting that the 22 individuals without scientific output were recruited primarily for their professional expertise and practical experience rather than for research-oriented roles. Out of these 22 individuals, only 9 have a PhD degree. It is recommended that the University strategically increase the proportion of affiliated personnel with active research profiles to strengthen its scientific productivity and research capacity, particularly given the planned expansion of student enrollment.

The interview results have revealed that academic staff are involved in school boards, though it does not have a systematic nature. The interview results revealed that the University supports the professional development of its staff through regularly offered training, seminars, and webinars. The university operates two training centers: the Innovative Education Center and the Alterbridge Training Center. Academic and administrative staff participate in programs organized by these centers. The recent training of the staff during the panel meetings was named The Usage of Artificial Intelligence in Education, Syllabus Creation Specificities and Personal Development Strategies. The University's human resources policy includes initiatives to enhance staff compensation and provide financial

support for educational, research, and professional activities. The university offers additional incentives to reward active participation in institutional development, exceptional achievements, and intellectual and creative contributions.

The University implements a structured mentorship program designed to facilitate knowledge transfer and professional integration within the institution. Through this initiative, experienced and senior staff members are paired with newly recruited or less experienced personnel to provide guidance, support, and professional development.

According to the self-evaluation report, the university's overall staffing composition includes 39 administrative staff, 7 support staff, 64 academic personnel, and 44 invited personnel (page 111). According to the QMS document, the University has 108 academic personnel (Assistant Professor-23, Associate Professor- 25, Professor-7, affiliated personnel 29 and invited personnel-39). However, discrepancies emerge when examining the affiliated personnel figures across different sections of the documentation. Page 109 of the self-evaluation report states that there are 32 affiliated personnel, representing more than 50% of the total academic staff. The scientific productivity analysis document references 29 affiliated personnel when assessing research output from 2019 to 2025. Personnel planning policy stipulates that affiliated personnel should constitute no fewer than 50% of academic staff. If the total academic personnel is 64 (as stated on page 111), then 32 affiliated personnel would represent exactly 50% of academic staff, meeting the minimum threshold. However, 29 affiliated personnel would represent only 45.3%, falling below the policy requirement of no fewer than 50%. During the site visit, an additional document regarding the list of academic perssonel has been requested. According to this document, there are 63 academic personnel out of whichj there are 31 affiliated academic personnel. It is advised that the university reconcile these discrepancies, establish a single authoritative personnel count with clear definitions, and ensure consistent reporting across all institutional documents.

The University conducts annual staff performance assessments according to a fixed timeline. The institution has established performance targets and responsibility standards to facilitate effective organizational management, with an ongoing commitment to refining and enhancing these benchmarks over time. The evaluation procedures for administrative staff have been confirmed through interview findings.

The University has established formal qualification requirements and detailed job descriptions for its academic positions. The document outlines the criteria and expectations for faculty appointments at various ranks. The university's academic hierarchy consists of three primary faculty ranks: Professor, Associate Professor, and Assistant Professor. However, the differentiation between these positions is notably limited in scope. The primary criterion separating these academic ranks is years of professional experience (6 years for professors, 3 years for associate professors, and 2 years for assistant professors). Notably, the research productivity expectations remain uniform across all three academic ranks. Each position—whether Professor, Associate Professor, or Assistant Professor—requires a minimum of one published article within the last five years. This standardized research threshold means that a Professor holds the same publication requirement as an Assistant Professor, differing only in accumulated years of experience. This structure suggests that the university's faculty advancement system prioritizes experience and longevity over research productivity or scholarly impact. The minimal publication requirement (one article over five years) and its consistency across ranks reflect the institution's emphasis on teaching and professional practice rather than research excellence. This approach aligns with the earlier observation that many affiliated personnel were recruited for professional expertise rather than research capabilities, though it may raise questions about whether research expectations adequately distinguish between junior and senior academic positions. It is recommended that the University revise its qualification requirements to establish differentiated research productivity expectations across academic ranks, with progressively higher standards for Associate Professors and Professors (e.g., requiring increased publication outputs, research quality indicators, or scholarly impact metrics), thereby ensuring that promotion criteria reflect both professional experience and scholarly achievement in accordance with international academic standards.

The University has established formal qualification requirements and detailed job descriptions for its administrative positions as well. Most positions appropriately require B2-level English proficiency. Some gaps have been identified in key positions. For instance, the University Doctor position requires only A1 level English—a basic proficiency level insufficient for medical communication and patient care. Similarly, the Applicants, Students, and Alumni Service Manager, who serves as a primary contact point for prospective students, current students, and graduates, requires only B1 level proficiency. Given the complexity of inquiries, program information needs, and diverse stakeholder interactions these roles involve, the current language requirements are inadequate. It is advised that the University

conduct a comprehensive review of English language proficiency requirements across all administrative positions.

Evidences/indicators
 - Self-evaluation Report; - Human Resources Management Policy; - Rules for Selecting Academic and Invited Personnel; - Rules for Conducting Academic Personnel Attestation; - Rules and Conditions for Academic Personnel Affiliation; - Contract Samples; - Qualification Requirements and Job Descriptions; - Academic Personnel Documents; - Staff Performance Assessment Documents; - University Website; - Interview Findings.

Recommendations:

R4.1.1. It is recommended that the University strategically increase the proportion of affiliated personnel with active research profiles to strengthen its scientific productivity and research capacity.

R4.1.2. It is recommended that the University revise its qualification requirements to establish differentiated research productivity expectations across academic ranks, with progressively higher standards for Associate Professors and Professors (e.g., requiring increased publication outputs, research quality indicators, or scholarly impact metrics), thereby ensuring that promotion criteria reflect both professional experience and scholarly achievement in accordance with international academic standards.

Suggestions:

S4.1.1. It is advised that the university reconcile discrepancies in the numbers of staff, establish a single authoritative personnel count with clear definitions, and ensure consistent reporting across all institutional documents.

S4.1.2. It is advised that the University conduct a comprehensive review of English language proficiency requirements across all administrative positions.

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

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 documents provided indicate that the University regularly updates the teaching workload for the personnel each semester to align with their specific roles and responsibilities. This systematic approach ensures that the workload is tailored to reflect the unique contributions and functions of each academic staff member. Based on the interviews, the university also regularly monitors the workload of its personnel outside the institution. According to the QMS document, 16 academic personnel has a workload at different universities. This practice ensures that faculty members can balance their responsibilities effectively, both within the university and in their external commitments. Documentation supports this approach, and interview results corroborate the effectiveness of monitoring outside workload.

According to the self-evaluation report, the university determines its total student capacity by establishing a maximum enrollment threshold that ensures quality education delivery for each student. The methodology incorporates five key factors: total area of teaching and auxiliary spaces, number of

academic staff, classroom seating capacity, practice facility capacity based on program requirements, and alignment between educational programs and labor market demands. This calculated maximum capacity serves as the basis for announcing admission numbers for specific educational programs. The academic staff-to-student ratio is calculated by multiplying the number of academic staff members (X) by 25. Considering the recommendation given in 4.1.1. regarding a necessity to increase the proportion of the affiliated staff with more PhD degrees will have an impact on the number of student body the university is planing to icrease.

The documents presented clearly illustrate the formal agreements established between the university and its affiliated personnel, accompanied by the draft contract. These agreements outline the terms and conditions of the affiliation, ensuring that both the university and the affiliated individuals understand their respective roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

The University has the benchmarks identified, including a ratio of academic and scientific staff to administrative and support staff. Ratio of academic and scientific staff to administrative and support staff: Actual: 63/46- Target: 90/56. Ratio of academic and scientific staff to total number of staff: Actual: 63/153- Target: 90/216. Ratio of academic and scientific staff to invited staff: Actual: 63/44- Target: 90/70. Ratio of academic, scientific, and invited staff to students: Actual: 107/224- Target: 160/1050. Ratio of academic, scientific, and invited staff to higher educational programs: Actual: 107/4- Target: 160/8. Ratio of administrative staff to students: Actual: 46/224- Target: 56/1050. Ratio of affiliated staff to total academic and invited staff: Actual: 32/75- Target: 52/108. Ratio of affiliated staff to students: Actual: 32/224- Target: 52/1030. Ratio of supervisors to Master's students: Actual: 11/40- Target: 50/150.

Evidences/indicators
- Self-evaluation Report;   - University Website;   - Student Body Planning Methodology;   - Academic Personnel Workload;   - Staff Planning Methodology;   - Interview Findings.
Recommendations: N/A
Suggestions: N/A
Best Practices (if applicable): N/A

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 Alterbridge University has clearly defined rules for obtaining, suspending, terminating student status, mobility, awarding qualifications, and recognizing prior education (Regulatory Rule of the educational Process). This regulation is publicly available on the university's webpage and accessible to any

interested person. During interviews students confirmed they are informed about these rules. As they noted, during the first week of the semester orientation meetings are held. Students are provided with a corporate email address (Microsoft 365) for communication with various structural units of administration and for receiving information. With the same email, students register on the electronic learning portal (ini.ge), which is outsourced by the university. During the first week, students are trained in how to use the electronic portal, get acquainted with the staff, the assessment system, and university regulations. Through the portal, students register for subjects, participate in surveys, check their grades, etc.

Foreign applicants' language proficiency is assessed through program-specific interviews or recognized certificates (IELTS, TOEFL, etc.). However, the university's internal test, administered via Google Forms, lacks effective anti-cheating controls. The Google Forms format compromises assessment validity by failing to verify applicant identity or prevent the use of unauthorized translation tools. It would be better to choose other, more trusted tools for examination.

The relationship between students and the University is formalized through a bilateral contract. This agreement defines the mutual rights and obligations of both parties, tuition payment procedures, and other legal stipulations. The contract, which includes a clause for tuition payment in installments, is designed to be equitable and protect student interests. Prior to enrollment, students are familiarized with this contract and all relevant normative documents.

Interviews with both the administration and students establish that there is a very open relationship between students and the administration at the University. Any student can discuss any issue with the relevant person or write the email. To offer a flexible schedule to the students, Alterbridge can organize a student's learning through an individual curriculum. The university maintains an open and accessible relationship between students and administration, encouraging direct communication on any issue. To accommodate student needs, Alterbridge offers flexible scheduling through individual curriculum plans.

A central "Process Management Service" handles student services. This service provides information on assessments and academic schedules, communicates with staff regarding student status (suspension, termination, or restoration), and offers organizational support for these processes. Additionally, it provides technical assistance to students for developing individual study plans in coordination with program heads.

Alterbridge has formally approved and published an "Examination Procedures" document, which outlines all processes for examinations, assessment, and appeals. This regulation is publicly accessible on the institution's official website. Students also receive comprehensive information and orientation on these procedures through dedicated meetings.

Evidences/indicators

- Alterbridge Internal Regulations;
- Student contract sample;
- University website;
- Student survey results;
- Implemented student activities;
- Interview results.

Recommendations:
N/A

Suggestions:

S5.1.1. It is suggested that minimum standards for exam administration be maintained during the English language test.

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

Evaluation

☒ 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

Alterbridge offers comprehensive student support, including flexible consulting (in-person, group, or online) and a career center that assists with internships and employment. The university provides an online grade appeal system via the LMS, specialized integration support for international students, and unique bridging courses to help graduates meet local and international job market requirements. As university states in the mission, Alterbridge build bride from students personal development to their career growth. In this regard, one of the best practices is organizing face-to-face meetings with employers and sharing experiences in an informal setting. To meet students support service policy of the university Alterbridge has:

- **Lifelong Learning:** The Alterbridge Training Center provides broad access to trainings and workshops.
- **Career Development Events:** The university regularly hosts employment forums, masterclasses, and discussions on professional and psychological topics.
- **Practical Involvement:** Students are actively involved in major field-related events throughout the year.
- **Formal Internship Program:** A specific internship rule supports the professional development of students and graduates, aiming for their subsequent employment by fostering independence and creative initiative.

Close contacts with employers and a wide range of partner organizations represent one of Alterbridge's competitive advantages.

Alterbridge's Service Office sends job vacancies from partner organizations to students and alumni. The university supports student projects, helps international students integrate, and actively encourages participation in international mobility programs and conferences. The university promotes its internationalization policy by distributing opportunities via email, the website, and social media. While students have participated in 2-week short-term exchanges, they have also expressed a clear desire for full, long-term exchange programs. During visit University provided list of 20 students who participated into exchange programs.

To support scientific development, the university hosts conferences and publishes an electronic journal featuring works by both students and experienced researchers, which promotes Georgian students' scientific potential and collaboration. Furthermore, the Quality Assurance Department conducts semesterly surveys using special questionnaires to measure student awareness, engagement, and satisfaction with university, local, and international projects.

At Alterbridge, mechanisms for providing financial support and scholarship award rules for students, including socially vulnerable students, are clearly defined. The procedures for granting one-time financial incentives are also established.

Alterbridge provides significant financial support, totaling 945,021 GEL in internal grants and funding to students between 2020 and September 2025. This support is distributed through three primary mechanisms:

- Needs-Based Benefits: The university provides aid to students from various categories, including socially vulnerable families, national minorities, large families, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, and orphans, among others.
- Academic Scholarships (Merit-Based): These are awarded based on ranking (GPA) starting from the third semester. To qualify, a student must earn at least 30 credits and an "A" grade (91–100) in all components. The Rector confirms the scholarship for the highest-ranking student by decree.
- One-Time Incentives: The Rector can grant one-time financial awards to students who achieve outstanding results in conferences, sports, or intellectual competitions while representing the university.

Alterbridge offers various extracurricular activities to students. The university focuses on improving student life and fostering social responsibility through various initiatives:

- General Motivation: Students are motivated through entertainment events, informal meetings, and participation in the university's promotional videos and marketing campaigns.
- Core Values: The university aims to instill values of acceptance, unity, forgiveness, and care.
- New (2024-2025) "Four Bridges Concept": A new system was launched to boost extracurricular motivation. It includes:
  - Team Competition: Students are divided into four teams (named after corporate colors) that compete to accumulate points throughout the year.
  - Student Self-Governance: Each team has a "Head of Bridge," and a "Leader of the Students" is selected based on academics and points. Together, they form a modern self-governance model, integrating students into university management.
  - Transparent Points: Points are accumulated through a pre-established, transparent system based on defined activities.

Evidences/indicators

- University Statute;
- Student satisfaction survey;
- Graduate Survey results;
- Memoranda/agreements in place with employers;
- Regularly updated graduate database;
- Information meetings for students about vacancies;
- Employers' information sessions on existing internships and vacancies at their companies;
- Analysis of employer satisfaction surveys;
- Events carried out (cultural/educational/sports);
- Student Self-Government Charter;
- Information about student participation in exchange and international programmes;
- Information on student involvement in scientific projects;
- Mechanisms for supporting students from vulnerable groups;
- Interview results.

Recommendations:

R5.2.1. It is recommended to offer long-term exchange programs to students.

Suggestions:
N/A

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

Evaluation

- ☐ 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
- HEI, based on its type and specifics of its fields, carries out research/creative activities.   - Ensuring the effectiveness of doctoral research supervision   - HEI has public, transparent and fair procedures for the assessment and defense of dissertations which are relevant to the specifics of the field
Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The HEI has clearly defined its scientific mission and integrated research as a central component of its academic model. The establishment of the Research Center, along with the adoption of comprehensive internal regulations and strategic documents, demonstrates the university's institutional commitment to building a sustainable research culture and ensuring the quality and transparency of research processes.

Since its creation in 2019, the Research Center has become the primary coordinating body for planning, implementing, and monitoring research activities. Its functions are guided by the "Strategy for the Development of Scientific Activity (2025–2031)", which defines long-term objectives such as the internationalization of research, development of internal and open grant mechanisms, integration of scientific journals into international databases, enhancement of academic integrity, and modernization of research infrastructure. Supporting documents – including the "Mechanisms for Supporting Scientific Activity," the "Regulation for the Targeted Scientific-Research Project Grant Competition," and the "Rule for the Evaluation of Academic and Invited Staff" – comprehensively regulate the research process, from planning and financing to evaluation and dissemination of results.

HEI's research activities are diversified and oriented toward both institutional and societal needs. The university organizes regular scientific and student conferences, forums, and symposia, addressing multidisciplinary themes such as media literacy, psychology, management, artificial intelligence, and sustainable development. These platforms effectively promote the dissemination of research outcomes and encourage student participation, contributing to the formation of a vibrant academic community. The bilingual peer-reviewed journal Challenges of Modern Science, indexed in Google Scholar and the Iverieli database, further supports the visibility of research results and provides an open-access platform for both academic staff and students.

The institution also demonstrates notable progress in internationalization. It participates in international consortia, has obtained grants from international donors (e.g., Erasmus+, USAID, DAAD), and maintains partnerships with various organizations and scientific foundations. Such activities enhance the university's research capacity and contribute to its alignment with international academic standards.

At the same time, several aspects would benefit from further development. The publication frequency of the scientific journal has been irregular in recent years, and efforts should be focused on ensuring consistency and pursuing inclusion in international citation databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. The visibility of completed and ongoing research projects on the university's website should also be improved to ensure transparency and external recognition of research outcomes. Furthermore, while internal mechanisms for motivating academic staff and students are in place, the level of awareness among personnel regarding the university's research priorities and funding opportunities could be strengthened through regular workshops and information sessions.

The analysis of the institution's research activities shows a clear upward trend in the involvement of both academic staff and students over the reporting period. Full-time and affiliated academic staff are engaged in research through internal targeted grant competitions, participation in university and external conferences, forums and symposia, as well as involvement in international projects (e.g. Erasmus+, USAID, DAAD, EU4Dialogue). Students participate primarily through bachelor's and master's theses and regular student conferences (e.g. 2021, 2024, 2025), where they present research-based work in line with academic standards. A significant part of the research output is published in the university's peer-reviewed, open-access journal Challenges of Contemporary Science, indexed in Google Scholar and the "Iverieli" database, as well as in national peer-reviewed collections and conference proceedings. According to the available documentation, most publications are concentrated in the university's own journal and national outlets, while publications in international peer-reviewed scientific journals are still limited and remain an area for further development.

At the same time, the analysis of 29 affiliated academic personnel indicates uneven research involvement: only 7 individuals (including 5 PhD holders) demonstrated scientific activity during the reporting period, while the remaining 22 did not record any research output. This highlights the need to further stimulate broader staff engagement and strengthen the international visibility and consistency of research outputs (e.g. through regular journal publication, inclusion in major citation databases, and clearer presentation of projects on the university website), which would support the positive development trends described above. Research results are incorporated into teaching through research-oriented subjects, bachelor's and master's thesis supervision, student research conferences and methodological workshops, ensuring a direct link between research outputs and the educational process.

In conclusion, the HEI meets the key requirements of Standard 6.1. and demonstrates consistent progress toward establishing itself as a research-oriented higher education institution. The strategic

framework, regulatory base, and implemented activities reflect a clear institutional vision and commitment to academic development. By strengthening the dissemination of research outcomes, stabilizing publication processes, and deepening engagement with international research networks, the HEI can further consolidate its position as a dynamically developing university with a strong research culture and growing international reputation.

The university has formally defined research priorities: initially linked to internal grant themes and, since mid-2023, determined by the Academic Council in accordance with institutional strategic documents, including the Scientific Research Development Strategy and the 2025–2031 Strategic Plan. These priorities guide internal funding mechanisms, annual conferences and project selection, demonstrating a structured and evolving approach to research policy development.

Evidences/indicators

- Alterbridge's Mission;
- Alterbridge's 7-Year Development Strategy (2025–2031);
- Strategy for the Development of Scientific Activity (2025–2031);
- Strategy for Scientific and Research Development;
- Mechanisms for Supporting Scientific Activity;
- Regulation for the Targeted Scientific-Research Project Grant Competition;
- Rule for the Evaluation of Academic and Invited Staff;
- Research Center Report (2020–2025);
- Relevant Publications and Conference Proceedings;
- The University Budget (allocations for research and grant funding);
- Factual Circumstances confirming implementation and institutional practice;
- Official Website of Alterbridge University: https://alterbridge.edu.ge/en/;
- Site-Visit Interviews;
- Self-Evaluation Report submitted by Alterbridge University.

Recommendations:

R6.1.1. It is recommended that the University ensure the regular and consistent publication of its scientific journal, in order to strengthen research dissemination and support its planned integration into international citation databases.

R6.1.2. It is recommended that the University strengthen staff engagement in research activities by organizing periodic workshops and information sessions on institutional research priorities and available funding opportunities, thereby enhancing awareness and participation.

R6.1.3. It is recommended that the HEI further develop international research projects and partnerships, with a focus on increasing publications in highly indexed journals and promoting collaboration and commercialization opportunities with economic agents.

Suggestions:

S6.1.1. It is suggested that the University consider encouraging and supporting publications in peer-reviewed international scientific journals.

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

Evaluation

☐ 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

The HEI demonstrates a clear institutional commitment to strengthening its research capacity and international presence through a structured system of support mechanisms and coordinated governance. The university's research function is organized under the leadership of the Rector and the Research Center, which together oversee planning, coordination, funding, and evaluation of scientific

activities. The document "Mechanisms for Supporting Scientific Activity" defines financial, administrative, and informational support procedures, while the "Statute of the Targeted Scientific-Research Project Grant Competition" ensures transparent and fair internal funding opportunities.

The HEI has introduced both internal grant competitions and a continuous open funding model that allow academic staff, young researchers, and students to access financial support for research, publication, and participation in international conferences. The internal grant competitions, held annually since 2022, prioritize innovation and student engagement, while the open model ensures flexibility and inclusiveness. These mechanisms can contribute to increasing research motivation, ensuring transparent project evaluation, and promoting student participation in scientific activities. Since 2022, four internal projects have been funded, involving approximately 4 academic staff members and 6 students/young researchers, while the open funding model has supported at least 3 academic staff members in 2024–2025 for conference participation, research implementation, and international publication.

The institution has also made notable progress in internationalization of research. Participation in the Erasmus+ consortium with local and international universities, as well as successful implementation of the U.S. Embassy grant project "Teachers as a Bridge to Better Citizens", which primarily is an educational and capacity-building project with a supporting research component. Regarding Erasmus+ participation, the institution is currently involved in the Erasmus+ consortium project Erasmus+ 2027 – ERIC-GE (2025), submitted within the ERASMUS-EDU-2025-CBHE programme category together with six local universities (four private, two public) and two international partners (Cyprus and Italy). While the project includes research-supporting components, such as fostering joint publications, research networking, and involvement of academic staff in international research activities, it is not a fully research-oriented scientific project. In addition, individual academic staff participation in DAAD-funded research projects and cooperation with international institutions such as Kiel University (Germany) and Elsevier underline the university's progress toward integration into the global scientific community. However, the HEI lacks purely research-oriented projects.

The HEI actively invests in the professional development of academic and administrative staff through participation in international workshops, webinars, and certification programs. Notable examples include collaboration with Elsevier on publication ethics and metrics, DAAD-supported EU4Dialogue workshops, and Altmetrics training on impact measurement tools. These initiatives directly contribute to enhancing research quality, academic integrity, and awareness of international research standards.

While the system for research support and internationalization is clearly evolving, it remains in a formative stage. There is potential for further development of research infrastructure, deeper international partnerships, and broader dissemination of international research outcomes. Increasing the number of externally funded projects and formalizing staff mobility programs would further strengthen the HEI's research profile.

To date, international cooperation involves collaboration with 8 universities within the Erasmus+ consortium (6 Georgian universities and 2 international partners – Cyprus and Italy). In addition, the institution cooperates with several international organizations and platforms, including DAAD, the U.S. Embassy, Elsevier, EU4Dialogue and Enterprise Educators UK, which reflects a widening network of academic partnerships.

These collaborations have already produced tangible outcomes. A total of 5 academic staff members have directly benefited from international mobility or capacity-building activities, including a DAAD-funded research visit to Kiel University (Germany), participation in EU4Dialogue international workshops and conferences, completion of Elsevier's 2-month international training programme, and involvement in an international mentoring programme coordinated by Enterprise Educators UK.

The university has established research support mechanisms and international cooperation initiatives; however, in alignment with the findings under Standards 4.1, 6.1 and 6.2, it is evident that the limited research engagement of affiliated academic staff remains a key constraint. As identified in Standard 4.1, only 7 out of 29 affiliated personnel demonstrate active research output, which directly impacts the institution's overall scientific productivity, publication performance, and the effectiveness of research funding and internationalization activities outlined in Standards 6.1 and 6.2.

Therefore, increasing the proportion of research-active affiliated staff and strengthening their involvement in research projects, publications and international collaborations is essential for fully achieving the university's strategic research objectives and establishing a stronger research profile.

The HEI has mechanisms to attract and support new research-active staff and to involve MA students

in scientific activities through grants, conferences, and mentorship initiatives. However, consistent with the findings under Standards 4.1, 6.1 and 6.2, actual participation remains limited, as only a minority of affiliated staff and a small number of MA students are actively engaged in research. Strengthening systematic support and developing joint supervision practices with international and local professors would enhance research capacity and integration.

Evidences/indicators

- Statute of the Grant Competition for Targeted Scientific-Research Project;
- Strategy for the Development of Scientific Activity;
- Rule on Master's Thesis Completion and Evaluation;
- One-Year Activity Plan of the Research Center (2024);
- Seven-Year Strategic Plan and Three-Year Action Plan;
- Research Center Reports (2020–2025);
- Scientific Research Journal "Challenges of Modern Science";
- Rule on the Prevention, Detection, and Response to Plagiarism;
- Mechanisms for Supporting Scientific Activity;
- Alterbridge University Statute;
- Official Website of Alterbridge University: https://alterbridge.edu.ge/en/;
- Site-Visit Interviews;
- Self-Evaluation Report submitted by Alterbridge University.

Recommendations:

R6.2.1. It is recommended that the university further strengthen its international research partnerships by expanding participation in global grant programmes and formalizing staff and student mobility schemes, ensuring systematic engagement and measurable outcomes.

R6.2.2. It is recommended that the university enhance its research infrastructure and visibility by systematically disseminating information on international projects, outcomes, and collaborations through institutional platforms and communication channels.

Suggestions:
N/A

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

Evaluation

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

6.3. Evaluation of Research Activities

HEI has a system for evaluating and analysing the quality of research/creative-arts activities, and the productivity of scientific-research units and academic/scientific staff.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The HEI has established a structured and formalized system for evaluating the quality and productivity of research activities at both institutional and individual levels. The process is guided by the Strategy for the Development of Scientific Activity and the Rule for the Evaluation of Academic and Invited Staff, which clearly define evaluation criteria, responsibilities, and procedures. The system reflects an alignment with the international best practices and standards developed by leading organizations such as ESQR, IDRC, HCERES, and THE, as well as national quality assurance requirements.

The evaluation process is comprehensive and includes three stages: annual self-assessment by academic staff, review and scoring by a formally appointed Evaluation Commission, and subsequent feedback and monitoring by the School of Management and Communication and the Quality Assurance Service. This structure ensures both accountability and developmental follow-up. The process relies on documented evidence – such as publications, conference participation, and teaching-related outputs – thus supporting objectivity and transparency. The inclusion of external experts in the Evaluation Commission strengthens impartiality and the credibility of results.

The outcomes of evaluations are used not only for assessing performance but also for planning research priorities, identifying capacity-building needs, and recognizing high-performing staff through motivational measures. This integration of evaluation results into human resource management and institutional planning indicates a functional and improving system.

Nevertheless, while the procedures are well defined and implemented, their effectiveness could be further enhanced through a more data-driven approach to analysis and regular publication of aggregated evaluation results. Expanding the evaluation to include qualitative impact indicators – such as international collaboration outcomes, citations, or practical application of research – would strengthen the HEI's ability to assess long-term research effectiveness.

The analysis confirms that the HEI has introduced a formal and structured system for evaluating research activities, supported by clearly defined internal regulations, measurable indicators, and annual assessment procedures. Academic staff submit yearly self-evaluation reports, which are reviewed by a designated commission established by the Rector. Based on these evaluations, the university prepares annual research productivity reports (e.g., Research Center Report 2020–2025) and reaction reports prepared by the School Dean, which summarize key findings and planned follow-up actions. These documents are disseminated internally and partially published through institutional platforms such as the official website and scientific journal, demonstrating that the HEI regularly reports on implemented research activities.

Importantly, evaluation results are not only recorded but also used for further development of research activities. Evidence includes: allocation of internal grant funding based on identified priorities, introduction of open funding mechanisms, targeted support for projects involving young researchers and students, professional development initiatives (e.g., Elsevier trainings, DAAD workshops), and recognition mechanisms such as scientific awards and financial incentives. In cases where staff demonstrate insufficient research activity, individual follow-up measures are applied, including warnings and potential contract termination, indicating that evaluation results directly influence personnel and research planning.

Overall, the HEI meets the requirements of Standard 6.3, demonstrating a coherent, transparent, and evolving system of research evaluation that supports continuous improvement in the quality and productivity of scientific activities.

Evidences/indicators

- Rules for Evaluating Academic and Invited Staff;
- Rule and Conditions of Academic Staff Affiliation;
- Strategy for the Scientific Activities Development;
- Mechanisms for Supporting Scientific Activities;
- Provision for the Grant Competition for a Targeted Scientific-Research Project;
- Rules for Completing and Evaluating a Master's Thesis;
- Research Center One-Year Action Plan for 2024;
- Seven-Year Strategic Plan and Three-Year Action Plan;
- Research Center Report (2020–2025);
- Scientific Research Journal;
- Dynamics of Funding for Research Activities in the HEI Budget over the Last 5 Years;
- Evidence of Staff and Student Involvement in International Scientific Activities;
- Statistics on Co-Supervision Practices by International and Georgian Professors;
- Mechanism for Evaluating the Quality of Research Activities and Related Evaluation Results;
- Reports on Conducted Research (including affiliation of academic staff), Analysis of Evaluation Outcomes, and Evidence of Their Use in Decision-Making;
- Official Website of Alterbridge University: https://alterbridge.edu.ge/en/;
- Site-Visit Interviews;
- Self-Evaluation Report submitted by Alterbridge University.

Recommendations:

R6.3.1. It is recommended that the university regularly publish aggregated research evaluation results to strengthen transparency and support data-driven decision-making.

Suggestions:

S6.3.1. It is suggested that the University consider enhancing its international research profile by increasing participation in international projects and by further promoting publications in highly indexed journals.

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

Evaluation

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

7. Material, Information and Financial Resources

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

7.1 Material Resources

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Alterbridge operates in a modern building located at Tbilisi, Bagebi, Tskneti Highway N67, having nice surroundings (approximately 50 fir trees around). The institution initially presented the lease agreement registered in the Public Registry, dated 28.05.2019, which secured its lawful possession until 28.05.2029. Experts panel issued recommendation on ensuring continuity and the need of extending lease at least until the next authorization date. Within the university position on the draft report university has presented a renewed lease agreement that ensures lawful possession of the institution before 2034. It's appreciable that after the site visit the university initiated timely actions to respond to the panel's observations and showed commitment to continuous improvement. Therefore, the recommendation has been extracted.

According to the lease agreement the university possesses 991,2 sq.m. (major area 619 sq.m. and auxiliary area 372,1 sq.m.). Contradictorily, within the self-evaluation report it's mentioned that the university total area is 2058,9 sq. m. (study area 1025,5 and auxiliary area 1033,4). According to the lease agreement, "the lessor undertakes to provide the lessee with additional space on the third and fourth floor of the same building within the scope of 1067,7 sq.m. of space available on the third and fourth floors upon 6 months prior written notice. The content of the additional space can be determined in detail by the time of the request by the parties within the scope of this specified number of spaces". According to the area currently under the university's lawful governance by lease agreement, the space is insufficient for the requested number of students and staff. Considering the internally approved formula (maximum number of students ≤ (F/4)*3. F = study and auxiliary area) for determining student contingency is not met either. According to the formula and actual number of area posessed by lease agreement the area is sufficient for 743 students and not for the requested 1050. If the university assumes control over the third and fourth floors, it will be able to fully support university life for the intended number of students and staff. The expert panel members requested to visit the fourth floor, but their access was limited. Furthermore, the methodology for determining student contingent previously set the minimum area per student at 2 sq. m (as of 16 March 2019), whereas the revised 2025 version reduces this threshold to 1.3 sq. m per student at one time. This reduction constitutes a regression rather than an improvement, imposing limitations that may adversely affect student access to adequate learning conditions. Consequently, this provision requires enhancement rather than deterioration to ensure alignment with a quality approach. In its position statement, the university asked for the evaluation to be revised, emphasizing its intention to maintain the previously approved student quota of 400. Nonetheless, the expert panel is eligible to issue its assessment solely in accordance with the quota specified in the initially submitted SER.

The university building includes all mandatory spaces: foyer, recreational areas, classrooms for theoretical instruction, administrative office, group workspaces, a library, archive, and sanitary-hygienic units for men, women and one unit for people with disabilities. The internal measurement drawings separate educational and auxiliary areas, ensuring functional distribution and efficiency of educational and administrative activities.

The university's infrastructure (classrooms, administrative office, canteen, library, computer lab, archive, medical room and recreational spaces) doesn't correspond to the requested increased number of students (1050). The available IT equipment, furniture, and learning technologies must adequately support teaching and research activities. The current open-space office arrangement for administrative staff presents challenges related to noise, interruptions, and limited ability to perform tasks requiring concentration, particularly when students arrive, phone calls are handled, and analytical work is underway simultaneously. Notably, During the interviews with administrative staff and according to the satisfaction survey reports working environment/conditions were positively evaluated. To improve the efficiency, productivity, and well-being of administrative personnel, it is suggested to redesign the workspace by creating separate offices or dedicated quiet zones for staff members. Establishing individual or function-specific offices will help minimize noise, reduce disruptions, enhance confidentiality when communicating with students and support higher-quality administrative work.

The canteen is quite modern with approximately 40 places to occupied. Considering the requested number of students and proper administrative staff and lecturers there is a need to increase facilities at the canteen. Notably, the writings on the walls are in Georgian, to foster a truly international environment, it is recommended to include quotes in English as well.

Ownership and use of fixed assets are confirmed by a lease agreement. The documentation (annex of lease agreement - inventory) provided by the institution substantiates the legality of asset possession. Classrooms are equipped with modern IT devices, projectors, furniture, and internet access. A computer lab and library are available for students, providing digital and physical resources. According to the additionally presented excel file – "Inventory placed in the classrooms" at the computer lab/exam center (room N201) there are 20 computers. For the study purposes there are 252 desks and 371 chairs on place. They have to be increased to be enough for 1050 students.

The university confirms the possession of movable assets, such as computers, projectors, and furniture, through annex of lease agreement - inventory.

The SER states that the Labor Safety Service regularly monitors the condition of laboratories and technical facilities, providing relevant reports. Evacuation plans are visibly displayed that was confirmed during the site visit, but the plans were not approved by the authorized entity and were only in Georgian.

The university building has uninterrupted lighting and ventilation system and constant water supply. Sanitary units are available on each floor, with continuous water supply, lighting, and ventilation that was confirmed during the site visit. Under the framework of memorandum with LLC N G Group disinfection and deratization will be conducted (if needed).

All teaching spaces have natural and artificial lighting. Ventilation and air conditioning systems are centrally installed, with individual control available in rooms.

The building has a central heating system and its operation is constantly monitored.

The university maintains comprehensive fire prevention and safety mechanisms, with smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, call buttons, and evacuation plans. The evacuation door meets legal standards (opens outward, non-iron). 2 Security guards are present, and CCTV cameras monitor the building with a written indication that the monitoring is taking place. The medical cabinet is staffed by a medical doctor with scarce knowledge of English language and equipped with necessary supplies. During the interviews the doctor mentioned that in case of English language translation she asks to her colleagues for support, therefore it's recommended to enhance the English proficiency of a doctor to at least B1 level.

The building is fully adapted: a ramp, elevator, wide doors, and toilet for persons with disabilities are in place.

While the SER confirms full physical accessibility, it does not explicitly mention adapted learning materials or individual learning plans for students with special educational needs. Physical accessibility is ensured and academic adaptation for Special Education Needs students is formalized within the internal regulatory document – "Mechanisms for Supporting and Encouraging Students from Vulnerable Groups".

The building has an adapted sanitary unit, a ramp at the entrance and a dedicated parking space for people with disabilities.

Evidences/indicators

- SER;
- Site visit;
- Documents certifying the approval of evacuation plans;
- Contracts with staff;
- Study process management regulation;
- Mechanisms for supporting and encouraging students from vulnerable groups;
- Memorandum with LLC N G Group;
- Mechanisms for Supporting and Encouraging Students from Vulnerable Groups.
- Annex of lease document – inventory.

Recommendations:

R7.1.1. It is recommended that the university formally secure access to the third and fourth floors as stipulated in the lease agreement to ensure sufficient space for the intended number of students and staff and to allow full implementation of university life.

R7.1.2. The institution should increase the number of classrooms, exam centers, computers, desks, and chairs in order to adequately meet the needs of the 1,050 students.

R7.1.3. To foster a truly international environment, it is recommended to include quotes in English within the campus.

R7.1.4. Ensure approval of evacuation plans by the authorized entity and provide them in English together with a Georgian version.

R7.1.5. It is recommended that the university enhance the English proficiency of a doctor to at least the B1 level.

Suggestions:

S7.1.1. It is suggested to revise the Methodology for defining student quota 2025 to increase the minimum area per student, rather than reduce it from 2 sq. m to 1.3 sq. m at one moment of a time.

S7.1.2. It is suggested to create separate offices or quiet zones for administrative staff to minimize noise and interruptions, thereby improving productivity and work quality.

S7.1.3. It's suggested to expand the canteen facilities to accommodate the number of students, administrative staff and lecturers adequately.

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

Evaluation

□ 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

Alterbridge University Library is a structural unit functioning in accordance with internal regulations and national library standards. Its activities are governed by the Provision of the University Library and Library Usage Rules, which ensure the accessibility and effective utilization of information resources for students, academic, and administrative staff. The library's mission is to support educational and research activities through the formation, preservation, and modernization of its information base, using both traditional and digital means.

Since its establishment, the university has demonstrated a systematic approach to developing library services, emphasizing technological modernization and accessibility. Notably, in 2023, the library transitioned to a new digital platform integrated into the university's educational portal (ini.ge), which provides staff and students with unrestricted online access to educational materials across all study programmes. This move has significantly enhanced user access, digital resource management, and remote learning capabilities.

The library's structure and physical infrastructure meet the required functional standards. The facility includes:

- Book archive/storage maintaining appropriate temperature and humidity levels;
- Reading hall equipped with individual and modest group workspace (for 6 people), reading desks(for 10 people), comfortable seating, and computers (6) connected to the internet;
- Dedicated staff office area and separate processing room for cataloguing and maintenance has to be created;
- Access to printers, photocopiers and scanners;
- Open shelving system with thematic arrangement of resources;
- Wi-Fi coverage and uninterrupted internet connection throughout the area.

Adequate workspace and study seating constitute an essential prerequisite for the effective functioning of the library and must correspond proportionally to both the projected increase in student enrollment and the anticipated expansion of academic staff. It is noteworthy that the institution currently lacks a clearly regulated standard specifying the minimum number of computers per student, which should be formally established within the Methodology for Determining the Student Contingent. The number of computers is sufficient for existing student quota, but needs to be increased to be sufficient for the increased quota. In its argumentative position, the university requested an amendment to the evaluation, noting that it wishes to retain the same student quota (400) as previously approved. However, the expert panel is permitted to make evaluations only on the basis of the student quota originally presented in the SER.

The library is equipped with a mechanical ventilation system and lighting that ensures a healthy and comfortable study environment. Rules for using the library are posted visibly in both Georgian and English, and students are guided during orientation sessions conducted regularly by library staff.

As of March 2025, the total collection comprises 2,244 units, of which 1,041 are digital. The collection includes diverse, up-to-date resources aligned with accredited programmes, and the main literature listed in syllabi is available in printed or electronic format. The book fund is continuously updated through direct purchases, partnerships with publishers (e.g., Palitra L, "My Publishing House"), donations from other institutions, and participation in the Georgian Library Association (GLA). Membership in the GLA also enables access to international databases and professional development for library staff.

The electronic catalog of resources is publicly accessible via https://alterbridge.ini.ge/bib/catalog, allowing students and staff to locate and request resources conveniently.

Library management ensures proper cataloguing, registration, and labeling of all materials. Each book has an individual identification code, recorded in both the physical register and the electronic system. A QR feedback mechanism enables users to anonymously evaluate library services and submit suggestions, which are considered during the Quality Management Service's periodic reviews.

The library is open six days per week (09:00–20:00 Monday-Friday, 09:00-15:00 Saturday, total 61 hours), satisfying the requirement for operational hours. Staffed librarians possess appropriate qualifications in library science and database navigation, provide individual and group consultations, assist in using international resources, and organize workshops for students and faculty. Notably, library staff should possess higher than A2-level competence in English, as the university strives for internationalization. Foreign students and staff need to receive adequate consultation and training from them.

Continuous development objectives for 2025–2026 include expanding digital infrastructure, integrating new e-library platforms, increasing international cooperation and further training of staff in modern information management systems.

Evidences/indicators

- SER;
- Site visit;
- Staff files;
- Evidences of meetings by library;
- Library resources;
- 2025-2026 action plan.

Recommendations:

R7.2.1. It is recommended that the university enhance the English proficiency of library staff to at least the B1 level.
R7.2.2. It's recommended to set an internal benchmark for computers within the Methodology for defining student quota.
R7.2.3. Increase number of individual and groupwork areas and computers at the library to be sufficient for requested number of students and planned number of lecturers.
R7.2.4. Dedicated staff office area and separate processing room for cataloguing and maintenance has to be allocated.

Suggestions:
N/A

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

Evaluation

☐ 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

Based on the self-evaluation report, presented documents and information obtained during the site visit, it can be concluded that University Alterbridge has established an information technology infrastructure that adequately supports its academic, administrative and research activities. The IT infrastructure and services are administered by the Information Technology Service, which operates as a structural unit of the university and is responsible for the administration of software, technical support, electronic databases and information security within the local network.
The institution has developed a comprehensive Information Technology Policy and Security Protection Rule, which regulates the use of ICT resources and ensures compliance with data protection principles, including the safeguarding of personal data. The policy establishes unified norms for using university-owned computers and communication technologies, ensuring that all staff adhere to security and operational protocols.

The university's IT infrastructure includes a well-functioning wireless internet network (six Wi-Fi access points), 29 digital security cameras, two servers and modest number of computers, projectors, printers, and other technical equipment distributed across teaching rooms, the library, administrative office and meeting spaces.
Alterbridge actively utilizes information and communication technologies to enhance educational delivery and institutional management. Platforms such as the educational portal ini.ge, Office 365, and the university's official website (alterbridge.edu.ge) serve as the main tools for digital management, internal communication and information dissemination. The student database (ini.ge) provides functionalities for data recording, lecturer–student communication and the exchange of information about academic programmes.
The official website effectively fulfills both communication and informational functions. It contains up-to-date information in Georgian and English regarding the university's mission, structure, programmes, enrolment criteria, expected learning outcomes, qualifications to be awarded, lecturers, regulatory documents, strategic and annual reports and other relevant information. During the site visit, it was confirmed that the website is regularly updated and reflects the institution's academic and administrative activities transparently and promptly, thereby ensuring public access to essential information. Administrative staff profiles are publicly available. According to the authorization standards, information on academic staff profiles must be publicly available. Since this requirement is not largely fulfilled, it is recommended to additionally ensure that detailed academic profiles of lecturers are fully accessible on the university's website.

Notably, at the university web page, part of BBA programme - https://alterbridge.edu.ge/en/business-administration/ as an admission pre requisite, it's indicated that - "International student enrollment is conducted through an interview process." During the interviews programme heads mentioned that applicants have to write English Language test to prove language proficiency. Additionally, within the section - "International students" - https://alterbridge.edu.ge/en/international-students/ interview process is mentioned, but it's not clear what kind of tasks/topic the interview covers. Within the argumentative position university presented the separate link from university web page for international students - https://alterbridge.edu.ge/en/international-students/ where there is a sample of English language test, but there is no information about the interview. The university should ensure that its website accurately reflects all admission requirements for international students at all the areas where information on admission requirements is mentioned, including the English language test sample and information on the interviews, to provide consistent and transparent information across all relevant sections.

The IT Service ensures continuous access to the university's information systems and provides regular technical support to minimize disruptions. The existence of established risk management procedures, although described in general terms, indicates an awareness of IT-related risks and data security responsibilities.
The outlined Digital Transformation Plan for 2025–2031 includes concrete measures such as:
- Assessment and modernization of existing technological resources.
- Strengthening of cybersecurity and data protection mechanisms.
- Development of modern LMS and SIS systems.
- Expansion of hybrid and online learning environments.
- Enhancement of digital literacy among staff and students.
- Promotion of innovation through digital projects and collaborations.

This planned framework demonstrates the university's strategic commitment to aligning its IT infrastructure with contemporary standards and emerging educational technologies.

Evidences/indicators

- SER;
- Site visit;
- University web page.

Recommendations:

R7.3.1. The university should ensure that its website accurately reflects all admission requirements for international students, students at all the areas where information on admission requirements is mentioned, including the English language test sample and information on the interview content.

R7.3.2. Ensure that details on academic profile of lecturers are accessible on university web page.

Suggestions:
N/A

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

Evaluation

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

7.4 Financial Resources

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

According to the information provided in the self-evaluation report and verified during the site visit, the institution develops its annual and medium-term budget in alignment with its strategic and

operational goals. The budgeting process follows a top down approach, involving faculties and administrative units. Financial allocations are economically achievable and supported by the institution's stable tuition-fee income. Nevertheless, the analysis revealed that the HEI's income sources are insufficiently diversified: tuition fees represent over 80% of total revenue, while income from research projects, grants, or donations remains marginal. This heavy reliance on student tuition creates potential risks in case of enrollment fluctuations. Such already occurred in 2024-2025. University has indicated that 107 international students were enrolled on bachelor's programme of business administration but due to visa obtaining issues only 3 of them have active status in 2025 autumn semester. The current enrollment data reveal that the institution's financial position is not sufficiently stable, as it's heavily dependent on the increasing number of students. During previous years there were cases when the owner donated to the university for development. It can be assumed that the institution's financial sustainability is fragile, as it relies heavily on continuous growth in student numbers and at times, on owner contributions to cover financial gaps or support development. The institution should strengthen its long-term financial sustainability by reducing dependence on student number growth and owner contributions, and by developing a diversified revenue strategy that includes external grants, research funding, partnerships, consultancy services, and donor engagement.

The institution has initiated efforts to attract alternative funding, including international cooperation projects and consultancy services, but these activities are not yet systematic. The inclusion of a Donor Relations Manager is highly appreciated, as it will enhance donor engagement, will increase revenue through donations, diversify income sources and support the university's long-term financial sustainability, after the system starts functioning.

Review of the financial documentation and interviews with administrative staff confirmed that the HEI's available financial resources enable the execution of its strategic and annual action plans. Budget allocations cover essential institutional priorities such as academic programme implementation, infrastructure maintenance, staff remuneration, research and staff development and others only for one year and overall, not for each strategic activity. Within the three-year 2025-2028 action plan there has to be defined exact amount of financial resources. Within the three-year action plan there is indicated only the source (ex. From university resources, international funds and others) of financial ensurance. As an additional document the university presented one year action plan during the site visit where exact financial recourse is indicated not for KPIs, but for the united aim. As an argumentative statement on the draft report the university mentioned that financial resources are defined in one year and 7-year strategic plans. Within the mentioned two documents financial resources are not defined for each KPI. According to the authorization standards it's required to have 3-year action plan and there to be defined proper financial resources. Allocating financial resources to each KPI of three-year action plan ensures clarity, feasibility, accountability, efficiency, and transparency, and strengthens the institution's ability to successfully achieve its strategic goals. Defining the exact number of financial resources in the 2025–2028 action plan will ensure realistic budgeting, enable effective prioritization of activities, strengthen financial accountability and support strategic decision-making by aligning planned actions with secured funding.

The HEI regularly prepares annual financial statements that comply with national accounting standards. The reports are reviewed by an independent, certified audit company, whose opinions confirm the accuracy and completeness of financial data. Documentation reviewed during the visit indicates that all financial transactions are properly recorded and traceable. The auditors' reports are published on the university website, contributing to institutional transparency. Interviews with the finance office staff confirmed that internal control procedures are in place and effectively functioning. Therefore, the institution fully complies with this criterion.

The institution's financial strategy ensures ongoing sustainability of core teaching and learning functions. Salaries and operational expenses are covered on a stable basis, and funds are allocated annually for infrastructure maintenance and minor upgrades.

Evidence obtained through document review and staff interviews indicates that while the HEI provides some internal research funding, these resources are limited and distributed on a competitive but small-scale basis. There are institutional-level grant schemes and fixed financial support for affiliated staff ensuring equal access to all lecturers. As a result, the continuity of research funding is fully guaranteed, which may hinder the institution's research productivity and staff motivation.

According to the budget breakdown and evidence reviewed during the site visit, the institution allocates financial resources for supporting staff and student participation in scientific or professional activities. While the policy framework exists for funding such initiatives, the actual budget allocation is relatively low compared to institutional size and aspirations. Therefore, although the existence of such funding mechanisms is a positive aspect, their scope remains inadequate. The institution partially complies

with this criterion.

The library finances are planned to increase annually. The SER indicates regular subscription to electronic databases and gradual renewal of printed resources. However, during interviews, both students and staff expressed the need for expanding access to international academic databases and e-resources, while the number of accesses to library international databases is low. The allocated funds ensure the library's functioning.

The institution has a defined managerial accountability structure with clear distribution of financial responsibilities among central and faculty-level units. Internal financial control procedures and regular monitoring by the finance office ensure compliance with legal and ethical standards. The use of accounting software and established internal audit mechanisms contribute to transparency and efficiency. During the site visit, stakeholders confirmed that budget utilization is periodically reviewed and reported to the governing bodies. The system is functional and supports informed decision-making. The HEI fully complies with this criterion.

The institution conducts financial audit through a certified external auditing company, as required by national regulations. Audit conclusions confirm that the financial operations are lawful and the statements accurately reflect institutional financial conditions. The financial report submitted by the university was accompanied by an audit report from the auditing company. However, the report was not signed. The absence of a signature raised concerns regarding the authenticity and formal approval of the audit. Without a signature, experts panel couldn't fully rely on the report as a verified financial statement. Within the argumentative position on the draft report, the university presented signed version of the same audit report and mentioned that wrong document was submitted initially. As for the publicity of the audit reports and financial statements, the university presented that the reports are publicly available on www.reportal.ge. Currently the reports are not publicly available, as under the section "audit report" it's indicated "No" and under the section "individual/consolidated" it's indicated "individual". On the web page – www.reportal.ge under the section "reporting" – "Request report" the portal requires phone number of the responsible person, the number is not publicly available, therefore the reports are not publicly available for the stakeholders (students, lecturers and others) of the university and for the wider society. The person willing to access audit report needs to register on www.reportal.ge and request reports via indicating the phone number of the person responsible, person whose information is not clear. Since audit reports are not accessible on reportal.ge and individual reports are not accessible, experts panel considers leaving the recommendation unchanged.

The audit reports and financial statements have to be publicly available on the HEI website to ensure transparency and accountability to stakeholders.

Evidences/indicators

- SER;
- Site visit;
- Interviews.

Recommendations:

R7.4.1. The institution should strengthen its long-term financial sustainability by reducing dependence on student number growth and owner contributions, and by developing a diversified revenue strategy that includes external grants, research funding, partnerships, consultancy services, and donor engagement.
R7.4.2. Define the exact amount of financial resources in the 2025–2028 action plan to ensure realistic budgeting, enable effective prioritization of activities, strengthen financial accountability and support strategic decision-making.
R7.4.3. Ensure public availability of audit reports and financial statements on the HEI website for transparency and accountability to stakeholders.

Suggestions:
N/A

Best Practices (if applicable):
N/A

Evaluation

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