



განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

**Higher Education Institution Authorisation
Experts' Report
LEPL - Samtskhe-Javakheti State University**

Expert Panel Members

Chair: Vaidotas Viliūnas, independent consultant on Higher Education, Lithuania

Members:

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Ekaterine Pipia, International Black Sea University, Georgia

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Tbilisi
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Authorisation Report Resume

General information on the educational institution

LEPL - Samtskhe-Javakheti State University was founded in 1990 as the Akhaltsikhe branch of Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University. In 2002, the successful activities of the Akhaltsikhe branch led to the establishment of a higher education institution in Akhalkalaki.

By the Resolution of the Government of Georgia No. 416 of October 3, 2012, a reorganisation was carried out, and a non-profit legal entity, Samtskhe-Javakheti State Teaching University, was created in place of these two institutions. The university was located in two cities 70 km apart, which shaped its life and existence. In 2014, a teaching university changed its status and became a three-level higher education institution, LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University (SJSU), an integral part of southern Georgia.

The university offers 31 programmes – 11 Bachelor's, 7 Master's, 2 one-cycle Education programmes, 8 Doctoral/PhD programmes, a Teacher training educational programme (60 ECTS), a Georgian language preparation educational programme (60 ECTS), and 7 VET programmes. All 31 University programmes are accredited.

The student quota, as determined by the Authorisation Council, is 2100 students for Akhaltsikhe branch, and 300 students for Akhalkalaki branch, 2400 students in total. The total number of active students is 1302, suspended students are 645, and the average graduation rate is 70.7% (according to the SER).

Total number of staff: 241. The number of affiliated academic staff is 77 (Professors 26, Associate Professors 45, Assistant Professors 6). Invited staff involved in teaching 86. Administrative and support staff 78.

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

The panel of experts had the opportunity to visit the LEPL - Samtskhe-Javakheti State University onsite and meet with university representatives on the 27th – 30th of October 2025. Before the visit, the panel received a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and supporting documents to prepare for the site visit. Panel members requested that the university provide the additional documents, and the university provided all missing documents during the site visit.

Besides the presented documents, expert pool members observed and analysed the University's website as another source of information.

The meetings with the Academic Council and Board of Representatives, University Rector and Vice-Rectors, Heads and representatives of Administration departments and services, members of the Self-Evaluation team, Deans of the Faculties and Heads of study programmes, affiliated and invited academic staff and students, including Student Self-Government, as well as graduates and Employer representatives.

Panel members visited two University buildings in Akhaltsikhe and the campus in Akhalkalaki, where they were accustomed to auditoriums and conference rooms, a veterinary clinic and laboratories, a mock court, a library with a reading hall and examination centre, an archive, sports facilities and a dormitory. The expert panel

members drafted the first impressions of the site visit and presented them to the University community representatives at the end of day 4 (30th of October).

Overview of the HEI's compliance with standards

1. Mission and strategic development of HEI

The Mission Statement of the LEPL - Samtskhe-Javakheti State University (SJSU) mainly focuses on the local and regional realities. It is undeniable that the SJSU play a very special economic, social, technological, cultural, demographic and even political role in the South Region of Georgia. The SJSU facilitates the integral, balanced and peaceful development of the region. All members of the University community are active in public dialogue. Although the University has done a lot during recent years for the institutional development, the University's Mission should be better structured and have broader and clearer connections with National and European higher education goals.

The SJSU strategic goals (Strategic Development Plan 2019-2025) were based on its mission, defined priorities and formulated directions. They described by relevant activities and assigned resources, were achievable, time-bound, and measurable (KPI's). Strategic planning was a participatory process that involved staff, students, employers and other stakeholders of the SJSU.

The SJSU has responded responsibly to the recommendations and suggestions of the previous monitoring visits organised by the NCEQE (9-10.07.2024 and 31.03.2025). The work carried out in the implementing the SJSU Strategic Development Plan 2019-2025 and its results is presented in the SER and reflected in this authorisation report.

The SJSU has recently developed and approved a new 7-year Development Strategy (2026-2032) on the basis of the latest Mission Statement, Vision and Values following the Strategic Planning Methodology. The working group, chaired by the Rector, developed 6 strategic directions after the strategic analysis.

2. Organisational structure and management of HEI

The university has established an organizational structure that effectively supports its strategic goals through transparent management procedures and coordinated operational processes. Decision-making is generally timely and aligned with institutional objectives, supported by formalized documentation practices and modern electronic systems. While mechanisms for internationalization, business continuity, and English-language documentation exist, each requires further development to ensure full alignment with current needs and set standards. Overall, the institution demonstrates structured management, active quality assurance practices, and a commitment to ethical conduct, though several components - particularly international engagement, English-language proficiency, and the updating of key strategic documents—would benefit from systematic enhancement.

3. Educational Programmes

SJSU has established a structured and methodologically grounded system for planning, designing, developing, and enhancing its educational programmes. All

programmes are guided by institutional regulations aligned with national legislation, the National Qualifications Framework, the ECTS system, and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. Programme learning outcomes are clearly formulated, discipline-specific, and closely linked to programme goals and curricular components.

Programme development is an inclusive process involving academic staff, students, alumni, employers, and administrative units, supported by continuous internal quality assurance mechanisms. Regular evaluations, stakeholder surveys, and academic performance analyses inform programme refinement and curriculum adjustments. The University offers diverse instructional methods, updated syllabi, and digital tools that promote modern, practice-oriented teaching and learning. The assessment framework is transparent and multifaceted, incorporating various methods, research component evaluation procedures, and structured feedback loops.

However, some aspects of programme management would benefit from further attention. Labour-market research, while undertaken, requires deeper integration into programme development processes; Procedures for joint programmes also need clear articulation, particularly regarding assessment roles and responsibilities of parties. Although individual educational plans and student-centred approaches are formally regulated, their practical implementation remains limited. Strengthening inclusive assessment practices and expanding the effective use of individualized learning approaches would better support diverse learner needs. Additionally, enhancing staff competencies in student-centred and adaptive teaching and assessment methods would further enrich programme quality.

4. Staff of the HEI

The University provides strong support for its 77 affiliated academic staff, 86 invited personnel, and 78 administrative staff through comprehensive benefits including free accommodation, transportation, health insurance, paid academic leave, and funding for conferences and publications, complemented by annual performance evaluations and formal recognition programmes.

However, key areas require improvement: the institution needs better strategies to attract and retain young academics to address generational gaps, and must resolve a critical contradiction in its age policy that simultaneously prohibits and permits the appointment of individuals aged 65 or older to academic positions when they meet qualification requirements.

5. Students and their support services

The University successfully provides a student-centred environment, offering comprehensive support services and effective career guidance mechanisms. Students are well-informed and actively engaged in a wide range of activities that enhance their academic and personal development. Furthermore, the institution demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement by systematically using student survey results to refine and strengthen its support services.

The University also provides opportunities for international mobility, encouraging participation in various international projects and events, and ensuring high awareness of such opportunities.

Moreover, the University promotes extracurricular engagement in sports and educational initiatives, actively supporting student-driven projects. The institution demonstrates social responsibility by considering students' socio-economic status and offering diverse support mechanisms, such as scholarships and flexible tuition payment options. All support mechanisms are transparent, objective, and publicly accessible, ensuring equal opportunities and inclusion for all students.

6. Research, development and/or other creative work

The university's scientific research process demonstrates a solid level of development, supported by a systematic evaluation of academic staff performance and research outcomes. Doctoral programmes are well-established, and dissertation topics frequently address regional challenges.

The university's regulations and mechanisms governing research and doctoral programmes are generally flexible and transparent. However, the introduction of the new national regulation for doctoral studies, requiring the publication of multiple articles in internationally recognized scientific journals, has posed challenges for several programmes, particularly in agriculture.

In terms of research infrastructure, the majority of experimental and laboratory activities are still conducted outside the university through professors' personal networks and cooperation agreements with partner institutions. Nevertheless, the administration has announced plans to invest approximately half a million GEL in laboratory equipment, representing a significant step toward strengthening the research base, although this amount remains insufficient for full-scale infrastructure development.

7. Material, information and financial resources

The University demonstrates continuous progress in strengthening its material and infrastructural base. The university strives for its physical and technological resources to be aligned with academic goals, promoting teaching and research, and creating an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and staff.

Facilities and equipment are regularly updated to meet the needs of existing educational programmes and planned student enrolment. Emergency systems and health protocols are in place to maintain a secure campus atmosphere. The university continuously adapts its infrastructure to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities, including but not limited to ramps, accessible restrooms and etc.

The university demonstrates continuous efforts for its library infrastructure and services to effectively support both educational and research activities, considering the evolving needs of students and staff. The library provides access to academic materials, including printed and digital resources, in alignment with study programmes, research priorities and user feedback. Access to the Internet, Electronic databases and digital resources enhances opportunities for independent learning and scientific inquiry.

The university has integrated IT systems that facilitate academic and administrative efficiency, enhance accessibility, and ensure continuity of operations.

University's financial planning and accountability mechanisms reflect a responsible, goal-oriented approach that sustains its strategic development, research, and educational mission.

Summary of Recommendations

1.1.1. The University's Mission should be better structured and have broader and clearer connections with National and European higher education goals.

1.2.1. It is recommended to systemize and interlink the main planning documents (7-year Development Strategy, 3-years Action plan, Annual plan) with the Rector's and QA annual reports by the respective coding system to ensure their clear traceability and personal responsibility.

1.2.2. The conception and format of the Rector's and QA Annual reports, should follow the structure of all level institutional plans (Strategic, Action and Annual Plans) and contain more analytical and critical information. Respectively, the Strategic Planning Methodology and other related documents should be updated.

2.1.1. It is recommended that the business continuity plan be updated gradually, taking into account current and relevant challenges, with preventive activities reflected in its action plan.

2.1.2. It is recommended that the university strengthen its internationalization policy, increase opportunities for staff and student participation in exchange programmes, and enhance the internationalization of research.

2.1.3. It is recommended that the university strengthen the mechanisms aimed at improving the English language competence of staff and students.

2.2.1. It is recommended that the calculation of the student contingent be based on the criteria established by the university and supported by quantitative indicators of available resources, considering current enrolment, suspension, and mobility data for the existing educational programmes.

2.3.1. It is recommended that the university strengthen the mechanisms aimed at raising awareness of the principles of academic integrity among academic staff and students.

3.3.1. It is recommended that the institution clearly articulate and detail in the obligations, roles, and responsibilities of all participating parties in the assessment of learning outcomes, as well as assessment procedures, as part of joint programme implementation in the Methodology for Planning, Designing and Developing of Educational Programmes.

4.1.1. It is recommended that the Management Policy Document be revised to resolve the internal contradiction between provisions that categorically prohibit the appointment of persons aged 65 or older to academic and administrative positions and provisions that permit such appointments as exceptions when candidates meet standard qualification requirements.

6.1.1. It is recommended to expand funding for internal institutional grants and improve laboratory infrastructure.

Summary of Suggestions

1.2.1. University Strategic Planning Methodology could be updated by the expansion from the result/outcome-focused approach to the result and impact-focused approach, as well as the development of a system of respective and measurable performance indicators.

2.1.1. It is advisable to pay attention to the English translation of the submitted documents and the self-evaluation report to ensure greater accuracy and consistency with the information presented in Georgian.

2.3.1. It is suggested that the university develop formal regulations on the ethical use of artificial intelligence in the educational process. Such regulations would benefit both academic staff and students by raising awareness, guiding responsible use, and helping to prevent academic misconduct.

3.1.1. It is suggested to strengthen SJSU's labour-market research to better anticipate evolving professional trends and ensure programme relevance.

3.1.2. It is suggested to refine the Self-Evaluation Report by emphasizing analytical interpretation of programme data and processes, while reducing redundancy in descriptive sections on regulations.

3.1.3. It is suggested to revise the programme development methodology to include a dedicated section for joint programmes, clearly outlining procedures for design, implementation, evaluation, improvement, and, if necessary, discontinuation, ensuring transparency and effective coordination among partner institutions.

3.2.1. It is suggested to prioritize the integration of innovative, student-centred pedagogies and the reinforcement of individualized learning mechanisms as key strategies to enhance programme quality and responsiveness to evolving academic and professional requirements.

3.2.2. It is suggested that the institution plan and implement targeted measures to strengthen its capacity for developing student-tailored individual educational plans, and, where necessary, ensure the modification of course components to accommodate diverse student needs.

3.3.1. It is suggested that the University strengthen student awareness and understanding of academic integrity requirements and related assessment procedures.

3.3.2. It is suggested that SJSU should ensure inclusiveness in assessment by adapting formats for students with individual or special educational needs.

3.3.3. It is suggested that the SJSU should strengthen the SER with evidence-based analysis and enhance documentation of direct and indirect learning outcomes assessment results, and examples from practices related to the of student's competencies assessment and programmes / course learning outcomes evaluation.

4.1.1. It is suggested to design more strategic mechanisms to attract and retain the young generation of academics.

4.2.1. It is suggested that the university correct the technical error in the academic/scientific staff to total staff ratio target and conduct a comprehensive review of all performance indicators.

6.1.1. It is suggested to broaden the scope of interdisciplinary, regionally focused applied research and strengthen mechanisms for the commercialisation of research outcomes.

6.2.1. Creation of a research mobility fund for young researchers.

6.3.1. Expand assessment indicators beyond quantitative measures (publications, grants) to include innovation, commercialisation potential.

6.3.2. Develop a centralised digital system to collect and disseminate information on all research outputs, increasing visibility and public engagement.

7.1.1. It is advisable to ensure that both campuses in Akhtaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki maintain an equivalent stock and variety of first aid supplies.

Summary of the Best Practices

1.1.1. A special “Mission Day” was held at the University, engaging all staff and students, employers and external stakeholders in the discussion of the new Mission, Vision, Values and Strategy (2026-2032) development.

7.4.1. Active participation in international projects, including initiation of Horizon Europe applications and participation in Erasmus Plus and CIF programmes.

Summary Table of Compliance of HEI with Standards and Standard Components

	Standard	Compl ies wit h Req uire me nts	Subs tanti ally com plies with requ ireme nts	Parti ally Com plies with Req uirem ents	Does not Compl y with Req uirem ents
1.	Mission and strategic development of HEI	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.1	Mission of HEI	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	Strategic development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Organisational structure and management of HEI	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.1	Organisational structure and management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2	Internal quality assurance mechanisms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3	Observing principles of ethics and integrity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Educational Programmes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

Signature of expert panel members

1. Vaidotas Viliūnas (Chair)



2. Diana Mtchedlishvili (Member)



3. Ekaterine Pipia (Member)



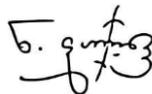
4. Ekaterine Natsvlshvili (Member)



5. Levan Tsitskishvili (Member)



6. Nino Parsadanishvili (Member)



7. Giorgi Merabishvili (Student representative)



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.

<p>1.1 Mission of HEI</p>
<p>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.</p>
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>The Mission Statement of the LEPL - Samtskhe-Javakheti State University (SJSU) mainly focuses on the local and regional realities. Mission Statement defines the characteristics of the HEI based on its scope and main directions of its study programmes and research objectives. It is undeniable that the SJSU play a very special economic, social, technological, cultural, demographic and even political role in the South Region of Georgia. The Georgians and the Armenian minority are the main inhabitants of this region. The SJSU plays a crucial role in the creation and facilitation of the integral, balanced and peaceful development of the region. It is very important that University students and other members of university community are active in public dialogue. The University substantially contributed to the implementation of the recommendations of the previous authorisation. Because of the new Strategy for 2026-2032 development, all members of the University community were actively involved in the discussion and development of the Mission, Vision and Values of the University and explained their approach. Discussion demonstrated that all members of the University community are concerned about the sustainable socio-economic and peaceful development of the region and the particular SJSU role in this process. The Freedom, Nationality and Tolerance were defined as the most important values for the University community.</p> <p>The Vision of the University defines the list of the main educational programmes, the graduates of which will be in the highest demand for the regional development according to the employers' and local authorities' opinion.</p> <p>Although the University has done a lot during recent years for the institutional development, the University's Mission can be better structured and have broader and clearer connections with National and European higher education goals.</p>
<p>Evidence/indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Evaluation Report; • The SJSU Mission and Strategic Plan 2026-2032; • Web page https://sjuni.edu.ge/en/; • Site-visit interview results.
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>1.1.1. The University's Mission should be better structured and have broader and clearer connections with National and European higher education goals.</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>1.1.1. A special "Mission Day" was held at the University, engaging all staff and students, employers and external stakeholders in the discussion of the new Mission, Vision, Values and Strategy (2026-2032) development.</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>
<p>1.2 Strategic Development</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ HEI has a strategic development (7-year) and an action plans (3-year) in place. ○ HEI contributes to the development of the society, shares with the society the knowledge gathered in the institution, and facilitates lifelong learning

- HEI evaluates implementation of strategic and action plans, and duly acts on evaluation results.

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The SJSU strategic goals (Strategic Development Plan 2019-2025) were based on its mission, defined priorities and formulated directions. The strategic goals were described by relevant activities and assigned resources, were achievable, time-bound, and measurable (KPI's). Strategic planning was a participatory process that involved staff, students, employers and other stakeholders of the SJSU. University management used to discuss, revise and update strategic plan (and, if needed) re-approving their action plans.

The Strategic Development Plan 2019-2025 and respective Action plans cover all aspects of the operation of the university, including institutional development, quality assurance, planning and implementation of education provision, academic, administrative and supporting staff, students, research, financial and material resources, library and IT, and infrastructure.

The SJSU has responded responsibly to the recommendations and suggestions of the previous monitoring visits organised by the NCEQE (9-10.07.2024 and 31.03.2025). The work carried out in the implementing the SJSU Strategic Development Plan 2019-2025 and its results is presented in the SER and reflected in this authorisation report in the relevant sections of the quality standards.

The SJSU has recently developed and approved a new 7-year Development Strategy (2026-2032) and Action plan for 2026-2028 on the basis of the latest Mission Statement, Vision and Values following the Strategic Planning Methodology. The working group, chaired by the Rector, developed 6 strategic directions after the strategic analysis. Strategic directions are defined by the respective goals, which are broken down into more detailed tasks. However, there is still the room for improvements.

The main planning documents (7-year Development Strategy, 3-years Action plan, Annual plan) are developed according the Strategic Planning Methodology and meets all requirements. However, in the case of SJSU, the strategic planning and quality assurance cycle (Deming/PDCA cycle) lacks full consistency and completeness. The Rector's Annual reports as an important link in this cycle should be improved. Rector's Annual reports should not only present the narrative and just positive information on what was done and achieved during the last reporting period. Rector's Annual reports should contain an analytical information, discussion on the national and international as well as institutional context as well as comment the trends during the last few years, including the risks management issues, and remind and clarify the goals and priorities for the coming period. It is important not to avoid critical and particularly self-critical information.

The SJSU is declaring an importance of the institutional development and implementation of the quality culture. Quality culture it is not just a checklist or compliance with the requirements. It is about people genuinely caring about excellence, continuous improvement, accountability and trust across all levels of the organization. To ensure such institutional environment the leadership and transparency of HEI top management and administration is one of the core issues. Therefore, it is recommended to systemize and clearly interlink the main planning documents (7-year Development Strategy, 3-years Action plan, Annual plan) with institutional accountability documents (Rector's and QA annual reports) by the respective coding system to ensure their clear traceability and respective personal responsibility. The conception and format of the Rector's and QA Annual reports, should follow the structure of all level institutional plans (Strategic, Action and Annual Plans). Respectively, the Strategic Planning Methodology and/or other related documents should be updated.

University starting the new Strategy period for the seven years (2026-2033). However, is a time to think and plan the further future. Therefore, it is suggested that University Strategic Planning Methodology could be updated by the expansion from the result/outcome-focused approach to the result and impact-focused approach, as well as the development of a system of respective and measurable performance indicators.

Evidence/indicators

- Self-Evaluation Report;
- Strategic Development Plan 2019-2025;
- The SJSU Mission and Strategic Plan 2026-2032;
- Strategic Planning Methodology (Council Resolution No. 3, February 12, 2019, Minutes N1.)
- 3-year (2022-2024) Action Plan;
- 3-year (2026-2028) Action Plan;
- Web page <https://sjuni.edu.ge/en/>;
- Site-visit interview results.

Recommendations:

1.2.1. It is recommended to systemize and interlink the main planning documents (7-year Development Strategy, 3-years Action plan, Annual plan) with the Rector's and QA annual reports by the respective coding system to ensure their clear traceability and personal responsibility.

1.2.2. The conception and format of the Rector's and QA Annual reports, should follow the structure of all level institutional plans (Strategic, Action and Annual Plans) and contain more analytical and critical information. Respectively, the Strategic Planning Methodology and other related documents should be updated.

Suggestions:

1.2.1. University Strategic Planning Methodology could be updated by the expansion from the result/outcome-focused approach to the result and impact-focused approach, as well as the development of a system of respective and measurable performance indicators.

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

The university has developed an organizational structure that supports the effective implementation of its strategic goals. Governance bodies operate with clearly defined mandates, and structural units possess formalized responsibilities that guide coordinated completion of institutional tasks. In general, the structure enables functional decision-making and monitoring of activities aligned with the institution's mission. During the visit, it was identified that a new institutional structure of the university was approved during the reporting period, which was procedurally endorsed first by the Academic Council and then by the Representative Council. Additionally, the statutes of the structural units were approved. Currently, competitions are being conducted in accordance with these new requirements.

Management appointments and elections are regulated by predefined requirements that reflect fairness, legitimacy, and compliance with current legislation. The procedures ensure equitable participation and transparent governance practices. Nevertheless, the inclusion of systematic discussions on candidates' visions and future plans during selection processes would reinforce strategic leadership and create a stronger foundation for institutional development.

Decision-making at different managerial levels is typically timely and oriented toward the efficient resolution of academic, scientific, and administrative matters. The Rector and the Head of Administration present a report on their activities twice a year to the Academic Council and the Representative Council.

Document processing practices comply with established legal norms, and modern technologies, including electronic document processing systems, are in active use, supporting improved accessibility

and streamlined workflow. The university has implemented the e-flow electronic management system, and a separate document circulation system is connected to it, which performs backups. Since 2015, they have been using a unified records management system, which enables the storage and archiving of documents. All administrative personnel are involved, including programme heads and the Speaker of the Representative Council, and efforts are being made to ensure the involvement of academic staff as well. Internal approvals are processed through this system, and both stamps and electronic signatures are utilized. The university also fulfils its duty to maintain the institutional registry in accordance with legislative standards.

Business continuity is recognized as an essential component of sustainable institutional operations. A plan addressing the continuity of core processes is already in place; however, this document requires updating to reflect current and emerging risks comprehensively. Preventive approaches and mitigation strategies should be expanded to ensure readiness for crisis situations that may affect academic delivery, administrative services, or infrastructure. The business continuity plan presented in the authorization package was approved in 2019. Representatives of the institution stated that it was not updated during the reporting period, as it had been reviewed and the methodology remained unchanged. However, the document includes a plan that should have been revised and adapted to the current processes. In response to the request, the university submitted reports on the implementation of the previous years' plan; however, no plan has been developed for the activities scheduled for the coming years. So, it is recommended that the business continuity plan be revised gradually to integrate relevant preventive activities into the operational action plan.

The university has developed mechanisms for monitoring management efficiency and an evaluation system (2020–2025), which describes the report on the implementation of the goals and objectives set out in the university's strategic plan, as well as the SWOT analysis for 2019–2024 and the development prospects for 2026–2032. The document also reviews the report on the implementation of the recommendations received during the external evaluations in the reporting period.

The university demonstrates a growing commitment to internationalization, with established policies that support student and staff mobility, joint initiatives, and participation in international research. Leadership acknowledges the strategic importance of international engagement; however, the scale and impact of current activities remain modest. Increasing the number of exchange opportunities and enhancing institutional support for collaborative research would strengthen international visibility and partnerships. Furthermore, the effective utilization of internationalization outcomes within institutional practices should be given heightened attention. Strengthening mechanisms aimed at improving English language competence among staff and students will further reinforce these efforts and facilitate stronger engagement in international academic environments.

During the visit, it was identified that the university has been involved in various projects since 2012. Within EU-funded grants, equipment was purchased, and laboratories were established. Currently, the institution has 5 active exchange programmes, which include both staff and student mobility. Each semester, 2-3 students are sent to foreign universities through exchange programmes. An online summer school was conducted with the University of Vienna, and there are also short-term summer and winter schools, including with Turkish universities. For example, in the field of veterinary, they cooperate with Kars University, and now they send around 30 students there to complete internships; students are accompanied by administrative staff. Students are also sent to Turkey for short-term programmes. The university has an exchange programme with a university in Germany, where the knowledge gained is recognized only as an internship component, as students' complete internships in the agricultural field. Students are provided with paid internships there. Up to now, more than 20 students participated in mobility within this programme.

It should be noted that the quality of English translations within institutional documents and the self-evaluation report requires additional attention. Ensuring accuracy and consistency between the Georgian originals and English versions will improve clarity, reliability, and international comparability of key information.

Evidences/indicators

- The university structure;
- Functions of the structural units of the university;
- Rules and procedures for election/appointment to management bodies;
- Business continuity plan;
- Mechanisms for monitoring management efficiency and evaluation system;
- Internationalization policy and mechanisms;
- Interview results;
- Self-evaluation report.

Recommendations:

2.1.1. It is recommended that the business continuity plan be updated gradually, taking into account current and relevant challenges, with preventive activities reflected in its action plan.

2.1.2. It is recommended that the university strengthen its internationalization policy, increase opportunities for staff and student participation in exchange programmes, and enhance the internationalization of research.

2.1.3. It is recommended that the university strengthen the mechanisms aimed at improving the English language competence of staff and students.

Suggestions:

2.1.1. It is advisable to pay attention to the English translation of the submitted documents and the self-evaluation report to ensure greater accuracy and consistency with the information presented in Georgian.

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The institution demonstrates a commitment to internal quality assurance, with all structural units actively engaged in supporting quality-related processes. Human, informational, and material resources are allocated in a manner that generally ensures the effective functioning of quality assurance mechanisms. This system promotes continuous assessment and improvement of institutional performance, including teaching quality, resource management, and student services.

The university's quality assurance system demonstrates a clear commitment to continuous improvement in teaching, learning, research, and management. The system effectively supports the development and realization of the potential of students, academic staff, and invited personnel, while also fostering an optimal environment for teaching and learning. The mechanisms in place rely on both internal and external evaluation tools, ensuring that quality assurance processes are continuous and cyclical rather than one-time interventions. The internal quality assurance framework is systematically structured around the PDCA cycle, which provides a coherent and widely recognized methodology for quality enhancement. The application of the PDCA cycle is comprehensive. It is utilized as a model for ongoing development, as a basis for designing new projects, and as a tool for creating or improving processes and products. Additionally, it facilitates the classification and prioritization of problems and root causes during the planning of data collection and analysis. The cycle is also consistently employed during the implementation of institutional changes.

It should be noted that the quality assurance unit has been strengthened in response to the recommendation made during the previous authorization. Specifically, a head was appointed to the faculty quality office, and an additional specialist was added in the larger faculty.

The leadership consistently utilizes evaluation results as a basis for informed decision-making. Data-driven planning and development have contributed to the enhancement of academic and administrative processes, reflecting a culture that values evidence-based improvement. The institution has established a comprehensive staff performance evaluation system covering academic, invited,

administrative, and support personnel, ensuring accountability and fostering professional development aligned with institutional goals.

Student academic performance is monitored through clearly defined mechanisms. Assessment outcomes are analysed and subsequently used to refine teaching approaches and support systems, contributing to improved learning outcomes. Educational programme evaluation and development are collaborative processes, actively involving academic staff, students, employers, and alumni. This inclusive approach supports the relevancy of programmes and responsiveness to labour market and societal needs.

Periodic evaluation of institutional services and resources is carried out, and the findings serve as a basis for targeted improvements. Periodic surveys of various stakeholders are conducted, including semester-based student surveys. The information gathered through these surveys is analysed and used to develop targeted improvement plans. This demonstrates a proactive attitude toward maintaining high quality and adapting to evolving expectations.

The institution has also established procedures for planning the student body. The methodology guiding this process is formally defined and considers benchmarks aligned with institutional priorities. The methodology provides a structured approach to determining student numbers, reflecting a comprehensive consideration of the factors essential for the university's sustainable and effective functioning. In particular, the planning process incorporates the institution's material and technical resources, including facilities required for practical components; the availability and capacity of human resources - academic, invited, administrative, and support staff; current labour market demands; and the specific characteristics and relevance of each educational programme. However, further refinement is necessary to ensure that student body planning fully reflects the quantitative indicators of available resources, including academic staffing, infrastructure, and financial capacity, considering current enrolment, suspension, and mobility data for the existing educational programmes.

Evidences/indicators

- Quality assurance mechanisms and assessment of their effectiveness;
- Analysis of survey results (e.g., students, staff, etc.) and the corresponding reports;
- Procedures for using quality assessment results and the relevant reports;
- Mechanism and methodology for planning the student contingent;
- Interview results;
- Self-evaluation report.

Recommendations:

2.2.1. It is recommended that the calculation of the student contingent be based on the criteria established by the university and supported by quantitative indicators of available resources, considering current enrolment, suspension, and mobility data for the existing educational programmes.

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

2.3. Observing Principles of Ethics and Integrity

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The university has developed comprehensive codes of ethics and conduct for both students and staff. These regulations clearly define behavioural expectations and provide structured procedures for addressing misconduct, reflecting the institution's commitment to fostering a responsible and

respectful academic environment. The administration actively promotes ethical norms through initiatives and informational events, which contribute to building a culture where integrity is valued and upheld. Expanding the scale and frequency of such activities would further strengthen understanding and internalization of ethical standards across the academic community.

Mechanisms to prevent and detect plagiarism are well-established. Academic integrity regulations are in place, and appropriate response procedures are applied when violations occur. Awareness initiatives, combined with the use of plagiarism detection tools such as Turnitin (integrated into Moodle), support the prevention of academic misconduct. A Plagiarism Committee oversees these processes, while the Academic Process Management Office supervises the checking of student submissions. During the reporting period, from 2020 through the Spring semester of 2025, the Commission for the Prevention, Detection, and Response to Plagiarism convened 80 sessions. This demonstrates the university's systematic and proactive approach to addressing academic misconduct and maintaining academic integrity. Nevertheless, further enhancement of educational campaigns would increase the overall effectiveness of these mechanisms.

The university demonstrates a clear commitment to academic freedom. Academic staff benefit from research autonomy, professional freedom, and the ability to develop and periodically revise syllabi, including assessment systems and literature updates. These practices are complemented by a generally shared understanding of responsibilities for maintaining a respectful academic environment. Continued communication and integration of these values into daily academic processes will help ensure consistent understanding among all stakeholders.

However, the ethical use of artificial intelligence remains an emerging challenge. No formal regulations exist, and AI-related ethical considerations are currently addressed on a lecturer-student basis. In response, the university has organized meetings, training sessions, and a summer workshop on the ethical use of AI in education, attended by students, staff, and other stakeholders. It is suggested that the university develop formal regulations on the ethical use of artificial intelligence in the educational process. Such regulations would benefit both academic staff and students by raising awareness, guiding responsible use, and helping to prevent academic misconduct.

During the visit, it became apparent that further efforts are needed to enhance communication and awareness of academic integrity among both staff and students. The Academic Integrity Code should also be more widely disseminated. Students reported that the university maintains a strict approach to plagiarism and academic dishonesty during examinations. The Examination Centre is rigorous, examination scripts are encrypted, and students have the right to appeal, although no students interviewed had found it necessary to use this mechanism.

Evidences/indicators

- Codes of ethics and conduct, and procedures for responding to violations;
- Procedures and mechanisms for detecting, preventing, and responding to instances of plagiarism;
- The internal regulations of the university;
- Interview results;
- Self-evaluation report.

Recommendations:

2.3.1. It is recommended that the university strengthen the mechanisms aimed at raising awareness of the principles of academic integrity among academic staff and students.

Suggestions:

2.3.1. It is suggested that the university develop formal regulations on the ethical use of artificial intelligence in the educational process. Such regulations would benefit both academic staff and students by raising awareness, guiding responsible use, and helping to prevent academic misconduct.

Best Practices (if applicable):

N/A

Evaluation

- Complies with requirements
- Substantially complies with requirements**
- Partially complies with requirements
- Does not comply with requirements

3. Educational Programmes

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

3.1 Design and Development of Educational Programmes

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

LEPL Samtskhe–Javakheti State University (SJSU) offers a comprehensive portfolio of educational programmes that are organized across its various faculties and encompass the full spectrum of Bologna cycle levels, including undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral studies. Currently, the University administers a total of 31 accredited programmes, comprising 11 Bachelor's, 7 Master's, 2 one-cycle teacher education programmes, 8 PhD/Doctoral (including 2 joint PhD programmes, implementing in Georgian and English languages), a teacher-training course (60 ECTS), a Georgian language preparatory programme (60 ECTS), and 7 Vocational Education and Training (VET) programmes. All programmes have received formal accreditation, ensuring alignment with national and international quality standards. This broad spectrum demonstrates SJSU's commitment to delivering varied and high-quality educational opportunities that respond to both local and international standards.

SJSU has established a robust, systematic methodology for the planning, design, development, and termination of its academic programmes. The guiding document, *"Methodology for Planning, Developing, Approval, and Improving Higher Education Programmes, Changes Input and Cancellation Procedures"* (Evidence 3.1- appended to the SER), codifies all relevant procedures. These regulatory procedures ensure alignment of each programme with the University's mission, strategic priorities, and action plans, while also complying with the legal and regulatory framework provided by: the Law of Georgia "On Higher Education"; the Law "On the Development of Education Quality"; accreditation and authorization regulations of the MoES of Georgia; the National Qualifications Framework; the Classifier of Fields of Study, and the Subject Benchmark Statements for HE programmes (in fields, where such standards have been developed,- e.g. in Veterinary, Law, Teacher Training, Public Administration, Business Administration, and etc.). These legal and procedural foundations ensure that programme operations remain consistent with national quality assurance requirements.

The Quality Assurance Service (QAS) at SJSU operates within a formally approved regulatory framework: the *"Quality Assurance Mechanisms of LEPL Samtskhe–Javakheti State University"* (Academic Council Resolution No.14, Minutes No.4, 17 February 2018). Article 4 of this document explicitly defines the methodology for programme planning, development, and improvement. According to this methodology, the process is inclusive and participatory: academic staff, invited lecturers, administrative employees, students, alumni, employers, and external experts - all contribute to the elaboration and/or revision of programmes.

This collaborative approach is affirmed by both the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and stakeholder interviews conducted during the site visit: programme development is carried out by specialized development groups appointed by the Rector, comprising representatives from all relevant constituencies. These groups produce draft curricula, which are then reviewed by the QAS to verify alignment with institutional goals and quality standards. Following positive evaluation, programmes proceed to faculty boards for review, and ultimately to the Senate for final approval. Interview feedback indicates that, overall, this process is effective, participatory, and transparent, though there is room for deeper engagement from external stakeholders - particularly employers and alumni - in order to further ensure relevance to professional practice.

Regarding the continuous programme review and enhancement the panel noted that SJSU has instituted a continuous, evidence-based system for programme evaluation and enhancement. Through regular surveys, stakeholder interviews, and internal analyses, the QAS generates actionable recommendations which are forwarded to the Senate for implementation. For example, the addition of legal modules in certain curricula was driven by internal faculty proposals; updates to other programmes were initiated by invited specialists, reflecting emergent trends in the relevant disciplines.

Based on presented documentation and interviews, the panel noted that starting from the 2024–2025 academic year, the University launched two 180-credit bachelor's programmes: Public Governance and Business Administration. Moreover, in the process of programme improvement, the following programme changes have been implemented in accordance with:

- Amendments to Order No. 3 (2007) on credit calculation rules;
- Modified University regulations on student assessment;

- Order No. 224/n (2011) regarding procedures for applicants admitted without national exams;
- Requirements of the *Framework Document for Doctoral Education* (Order No. 141/n, 30 August 2024), leading to revisions in doctoral programmes and Dissertation Councils.

In 2025, doctoral programmes in Informatics and Agronomy were transferred to full-time format in line with institutional and ministerial directives.

These practices illustrate the University's responsiveness to both academic developments and market needs, and the active involvement of academic staff in refining programmes.

In addition, it should be mentioned that according to the detailed 2023-2024 (and where applicable - 2024-2025) programme evaluation reports (Evidence No. 3.3, appended to the SER), stakeholders - including students, faculty, and external partners - express a high level of satisfaction with current programmes. The evaluation data strongly indicate that SJSU's programmes are effective in delivering their intended educational outcomes and remain aligned with the University's mission.

While the existing system is well-designed and effectively implemented, the panel suggests that SJSU strengthen its labour market research capacity. More systematic and granular research into evolving professional trends would help ensure that current and future programmes remain closely aligned with the requirements of the labour market, particularly in the context of rapid economic, technological, and societal change.

The panel noted that the SER demonstrates formalized relationships with employers through agreements, surveys, and employment forums; however, evidence of deeper collaborative engagement in curriculum design, assessment development, and systematic programme improvement remains limited. Documentation of employer participation in curriculum committees, the co-development of assessment criteria, and the structured integration of employer feedback into programme revision processes is largely absent.

While interviews with employers and academic staff indicate that recommended courses and topics (such as Project Management, Russian Language, Agribusiness, Agrobiodiversity, Biotechnology, Investment Funding, and Organizational Development) have been incorporated into the programmes, and that learning components and activities focused on strengthening practical skills and competencies have been developed, these developments are not clearly reflected in the SER and the accompanying Programme Evaluation Reports. Analysis of survey data further shows that approximately 28% of employer suggestions were not implemented.

Nevertheless, the interviews provide a more positive picture of employer involvement, suggesting informal influence beyond what is formally documented, with approximately 15–20% of employer and external stakeholder suggestions incorporated into courses and/or programmes.

For programme development grounded in labour market research, it is essential not only to reflect on the findings of employer and graduate surveys, but also to apply a standardized methodology that enables a systematic and comprehensive analysis of occupational development trends and the skills required for successful employment. This approach ensures the alignment of intended learning outcomes with labour market demands and key employability competencies, and, most importantly, facilitates the integration of future-oriented courses and thematic areas into the programme.

With regard to student involvement in the programme development process, the following should be noted: although the methodology envisages active student participation in programme development in various forms—through surveys, membership in self-evaluation and/or programme development groups, and the submission of their ideas through other mechanisms—the reviewed documentation and interview findings indicate that student involvement is predominantly limited to satisfaction surveys. Students appear to be less informed about the activities of self-evaluation and programme development groups. Therefore, it would be desirable to further enhance and systematize student engagement in the programme development process.

The University demonstrates a high level of compliance and responsiveness to the recommendations and suggestions issued within the framework of authorization and accreditation procedures, and integrates them into its educational programmes to the fullest extent possible. This is substantiated by the Self-Evaluation Report and the accompanying evidence which document the programme-level modifications carried out on the basis of recommendations received during the cluster accreditation process.

It should be emphasized, however, that certain submitted reports did not fully reflect all programme-level adjustments recommended for the advancement of individual programmes within the cluster accreditation framework. Nevertheless, following the review of additional requested documentation and the findings obtained through panel interviews, the panel noted that the majority of these recommendations have already been implemented or are currently in the process of implementation. Their complete reflection in the SER (and/or in enclosed documents) was constrained primarily by the

deadlines for the submission of the self-evaluation materials. In addition, it should be emphasized that, despite its considerable length, the submitted SER provides only limited analytical insight into the activities undertaken for programme development. Several sections largely replicate the key provisions of the normative documents and regulatory procedures, presented as evidence, rather than offering substantive analysis of programme-level processes and improvements.

Detailed information on programme design, development, and the corresponding analytical reflections are instead dispersed across various annexes, such as academic performance reports, learning outcomes assessment analyses, reports on the implementation of recommendations, and meeting minutes, which present the information with varying levels of depth, completeness, and consistency.

Thus, while reviewing the presented SER, the panel noted that evidence is largely missing; most descriptions are procedural rather than analytical; no actual programme performance indicators are integrated; no SWOT or risk analysis for educational programmes are considered in this document. Notably, the Self-Evaluation Report, while acknowledging existing challenges, highlights a critical area for improvement in Standard 3: "Adding some educational programmes to the education sector based on the needs of the regions", and nothing is mentioned about potential risks related to the programme implementation (for instance, Joint PhD programmes) or other challenges.

In this context, the panel suggests that the University further refine its approach to generating and presenting programme-related information within the Self-Evaluation Report. The report would benefit from a clearer emphasis on analytical interpretation of data and processes, while the descriptive presentation of regulatory frameworks should be streamlined to avoid redundancy and enhance the overall clarity and evaluative character of the document.

Finally, it should be noted that the University implements two joint doctoral programmes, the overarching principles of which are regulated by specific agreements concluded between the partner institutions. However, the University's approved methodology for programme development and revision does not explicitly delineate or thoroughly explain the procedures specific to the development, implementation, evaluation, enhancement, or -where necessary -termination of joint programmes. As a result, the methodology does not clearly define the roles, responsibilities, and obligations of the involved stakeholders throughout the full cycle of joint programme management.

Due to objective circumstances, the expert panel was unable to conduct comprehensive interviews with the coordinators of the joint programmes. Nonetheless, based on interviews with programme implementers, students, representatives of the Quality Assurance Service, and administrative personnel, as well as through the review of additionally requested documentation, the panel was able to clarify several key aspects related to the functioning and management of the joint doctoral programmes.

In this context, the institution additionally provided a Cooperation Agreement between LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University and LEPL E. Kharadze National Astrophysical Observatory of Georgia concerning the development and implementation of a joint programme. The agreement clearly specifies the roles, responsibilities, and obligations of the partner institutions in the development, implementation, and further improvement of the Doctoral Programme in Astronomy.

It should be noted that SJUNI has formally defined, through a contractual arrangement, the scope of participation, contributions, and responsibilities of the partner institutions in the development and implementation of the joint programme. This framework provides a solid basis for collaboration and may be further refined and incorporated into the institutional methodology in the form of detailed procedural guidelines.

In light of these findings, it is suggested that the University revise its programme development methodology to include a dedicated and detailed section addressing the specific processes associated with joint programmes. Such a section should clearly outline the procedures for programme development, implementation, evaluation, ongoing improvement, and, where applicable, their discontinuation, thereby ensuring transparency, consistency, and effective coordination among all partner institutions.

Evidences/indicators

- Methodology for Planning, Designing and Developing of Educational Programmes;
- Self-Evaluation Report (and enclosed documents related to programme elaboration, development and implementation);
- Educational Programmes (and enclosed documents - Official meeting minutes and programme reports, including External Evaluation Reports);
- Quality Assurance Service Reports for 2023-2024 years;
- Regulation of the Learning Process document;
- Agreements on the implementation of joint programmes;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site Interviews.
<p>Recommendations: N/A</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>3.1.1. It is suggested to strengthen SJSU’s labour market research to better anticipate evolving professional trends and ensure programme relevance.</p> <p>3.1.2. It is suggested to refine the Self-Evaluation Report by emphasizing analytical interpretation of programme data and processes, while reducing redundancy in descriptive sections on regulations.</p> <p>3.1.3. It is suggested to revise the programme development methodology to include a dedicated section for joint programmes, clearly outlining procedures for design, implementation, evaluation, improvement, and, if necessary, discontinuation, ensuring transparency and effective coordination among partner institutions.</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable): N/A</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>
<p>3.2 Structure and Content of Educational Programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Programme learning outcomes are clearly stated and are in line with higher education level and qualification to be granted ○ With the help of individualized education programmes, HEI takes into consideration various requirements, needs and academic readiness of students, and ensures their unhindered involvement into the educational process.
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>Review of the submitted documentation and findings from panel interviews confirm that LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University (SJSU) generally complies with the requirements related to the structure, content, and development of educational programmes. The institution has established regulatory and methodological frameworks that ensure programmes are systematically designed, clearly articulated, and aligned with national legislation and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). As of the reporting period, the institution implements 31 accredited educational programmes, and the successful completion of cluster accreditation procedures provides additional evidence of compliance with national standards.</p> <p>Regarding alignment with national frameworks, Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs) are, in most cases, explicitly mapped to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the Study Field Classifier, in accordance with Order No. 69/n of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (10 April 2019). The SJSU Programme Development Methodology, approved at the institutional level, ensures consistency of programme design across faculties.</p> <p>The structure of educational programmes complies with the requirements of the current classifier of fields of study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor’s programmes (minimum 180 credits; typically, 240 credits): defined core curriculum (minimum 120 credits), optional components, opportunities for additional/minor programmes (30–60 credits), and the possibility of concentrations (up to 30 credits, including a thesis). • Master’s programmes (minimum 60 credits; typically, 120 credits): defined concentration areas (at least 50% of total credits), research components, and integration of teaching and research. • Doctoral programmes (minimum 3 years): educational component (up to 60 credits), a substantial research component, and a dissertation requirement.

- Integrated programmes (300–308 credits): combined Bachelor’s/Master’s qualifications aligned with professional standards (e.g., Primary Education Teacher Training, Veterinary Medicine).

Analysis of PLO development processes and review of programme documentation indicate that the university applies a systematic and coherent approach to defining learning outcomes. Programme objectives and PLOs reflect the specificities of the field, qualification level, and programme type, integrating knowledge, skills, and competencies expected at the corresponding NQF level. The development process relies on:

- Subject Benchmark Statements prepared by the National Centre for Education Quality Development;
- Labour market and employer requirements;
- International programme benchmarks;
- Inputs from academic and invited staff, employers, and alumni;
- Findings from internal assessments of learning outcomes.

Quality assurance mechanisms for programme monitoring and improvement are formalized and operational. Graduate employment data show that approximately 70% of surveyed graduates are employed, with a similar proportion working within their qualification field, indicating satisfactory alignment between programme content and labour market needs.

However, regarding the integration of employers’ needs and labour market research findings into the development of programme learning outcomes, the panel identified a notable shortcoming (as it is mentioned above in 3.2). Although the activities undertaken by the University Quality Assurance Service (QAS) formally indicate an effort to align programme learning outcomes with labour market requirements, the actual level of alignment remains limited. Review of the submitted documentation, particularly the consolidated labour market analysis produced by the QAS, alongside analyses of employer and graduate survey results conducted across various programmes, reveals that, in several instances, the identified needs and proposed recommendations do not sufficiently capture the relevant information necessary for the meaningful formulation or revision of programme learning outcomes. Thus, in light of these findings, the panel noted that the employment rate by qualification (48% seeking to reach 60%) indicates room for strengthening the alignment between programme content and stated learning outcomes and specific labour market requirements.

Moreover, The results of the employer survey highlighted the key recommendations that were proposed for the purpose of programme development: (1) The programme should incorporate practical skills that ensure students achieve a professional readiness level; (2) The programme objectives and learning outcomes should encompass teamwork skills, critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and creativity; (3) The learning outcomes should respond to the economic and social needs of the local region.

These points were also confirmed during the interview process. It is important to note that SJSU and the programme teams have made every effort to take these advices into account as fully as possible during the process of designing and modifying the programme and its courses. However, it should also be emphasized that no additional, more significant recommendations relevant to the programmes or courses learning outcome development objectives were identified either through the survey analysis or the interviews.

It is noteworthy that both the analysis of the submitted documentation and the results of the interviews revealed varying levels of employer involvement in the development of programme and course objectives, as well as learning outcomes. The findings indicate that programmes in Veterinary Medicine, Teacher Education, and Business Administration are more closely aligned with employer needs, whereas employer engagement in Information Technology and Law programmes appears comparatively limited. In this context, it is recommended that SJSU strengthen communication and collaboration with employers across all fields, ensuring their active participation in the formulation of learning outcomes and the assessment of student competencies. Furthermore, employers’ expertise should be more systematically leveraged in the evaluation of practical components and research outcomes.

Despite the above, the panel noted that, generally, the programme learning outcomes are clearly stated, learning outcomes for certain fields are based on Subject benchmark Statements, are logically distributed and are in line with the level of higher education and qualification to be granted.

SJSU utilizes various standard methods for measuring programme learning outcomes. The curriculum mapping determines the links between the mandatory courses and the learning outcomes thus providing the achievement of programme learning outcomes as a whole.

The syllabi of compulsory and elective courses give clear information on the programmes and the number of ECTS/credit hours allocated per course.

Programme syllabus have been prepared in accordance with the instruction provided under the methodology for planning, designing and developing of educational programmes document providing the information on the course title, code, lecturer, learning hours, prerequisites for admission, objectives, learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods, lecture weeks, evaluation system, mandatory/basic literature and other educational materials. Moreover, syllabi are developed using standardized tools, including those produced through Erasmus+ ASSET and Erasmus+ CURE-S projects. Modern digital tools (e.g., Mindomo, Thinglink) are actively integrated. All specific written assignments such as essays, course projects, theses, etc., are checked via Turnitin Feedback Studio to prevent plagiarism. Students additionally receive support in academic writing, library use, and digital resource management.

The programmes offer students flexibility in the choice of elective courses. The process is implemented prior to the beginning of the semester through the student base programme accessible by students from any computer connected to the Internet. Students are provided with the information about the mandatory and elective courses offered within the programme to make the choice within the maximum credits allowed in the current semester.

Teaching and learning methods used within the programmes as defined under the syllabus of the relevant programme course, generally reflect specifics of the field (the syllabi of various courses provide different teaching and learning methods specific to the subject) and ensure achievement of learning outcomes of the programme.

Regarding the compliance with resources, the panel noted that each programme is assessed for compliance with: staffing capacity, laboratory and practical facilities, library and digital resources, internship and practice opportunities, and financial sustainability.

Regarding the development of Individual Educational Plans, the panel noted the following: the institution has also formalized a student-centred approach through the development and implementation of Individual Educational Plans (IEPs). Article 12 of the *Regulatory Rules of the Educational Process* establishes the procedures for developing individual curricula for students with disabilities or special educational needs. The process includes:

- Submission of an application with supporting documentation;
- Consultation with relevant organizations (e.g., unions of the blind and deaf, disability associations) to obtain recommendations for curriculum adaptation;
- Design of individualized curricula considering academic preparedness, special educational needs, teaching and assessment adaptations, learning environment requirements, and necessary human resources;
- Approval of individual curricula by faculty councils based on recommendations of faculty quality assurance services;
- Implementation in accordance with Articles 5, 6, and 10 of the Regulatory Rules, ensuring academic integrity and appropriate accommodations.

This structured approach demonstrates the institution's commitment to inclusive education, accessibility, and support for diverse student needs.

Despite the above, analysis of the submitted documentation and interview findings indicates that while individual curriculum mechanisms exist, the documentation does not extensively detail implementation outcomes or the number of students benefiting from such accommodations. Moreover, SJSU's experience in developing individual educational plans is limited to cases arising from student mobility or additional needs related to academic performance or status restoration. Almost all programmes demonstrated experience in developing individual study plans in the context of internal and external mobility, reinstatement of student status, management of "academic debt", or in cases when students choose elective courses, where the study process is somehow adapted to students' needs, and HEI / Faculty supports students in development of their own individual study plans. Interviews conducted

with the HEI administration, academic and invited staff, as well as students and graduates, confirmed that the university takes students' needs into consideration and actively supports them in the teaching-learning process through flexible teaching and assessment methods implemented within different courses. Furthermore, the programme development methodology, as well as the teaching and learning regulations somehow include information related to ensuring a learning environment tailored to students' needs, which, if further refined and included in methodology as separate provision or article /point, will represent a positive step forward. At the same time, the interviews clarified that, to date, the HEI has not faced cases requiring the modification of programmes and/or individual courses based on specific individual needs of students. No evidence was identified within any programme of individual educational plans designed specifically for students with special educational needs, nor of practices involving the modification of programme or course learning outcomes to accommodate such needs. As a result, academic and invited staff involved in programme implementation process only a broad, conceptual understanding of the measures required to design an inclusive, student-centred educational plan and of the potential mechanisms for adjusting programme or course learning outcomes when necessary.

It is also noteworthy that, within the teacher education programmes (300 ECTS and 60 ECTS) of the Faculty of Education, courses related to inclusive education are integrated into the curriculum. Moreover, the academic staff involved in these programmes have completed specialised training in inclusive education. This demonstrates that the HEI has the capacity to apply this knowledge and experience, where necessary, and to adapt teaching and assessment processes to the needs of students with special educational needs.

Nevertheless, to summarize mentioned above, it can be said that the HEI has both practical experience and procedurally defined mechanisms for developing individualized study plans; however, for authorization purposes, this experience was not sufficiently documented, which necessitated additional clarification and verification.

Thus, individualized learning plans provide essential support for students with diverse academic backgrounds and special educational needs. Comprehensive data collection and analytical frameworks can enhance the monitoring of individual student progress and outcomes.

Also, integrating student-centred pedagogies with modern technologies and interactive learning tools enables programmes to meet contemporary educational standards while strengthening interdisciplinary and practice-oriented curricula. This approach better aligns academic offerings with professional and societal demands.

Therefore, institutions should prioritize two key strategies: implementing innovative, student-centred pedagogies and strengthening individualized learning mechanisms. These initiatives will enhance programme quality and responsiveness to evolving academic and professional requirements.

Considering the above, it is suggested to prioritize the integration of innovative, student-centred pedagogies and the reinforcement of individualized learning mechanisms as key strategies to enhance programme quality and responsiveness to evolving academic and professional requirements.

In addition, to mitigate potential challenges, the expert panel suggests that the institution should strengthen the awareness and competencies of academic and invited staff regarding the development of individual educational plans, as well as the adaptation of course learning outcomes and/or teaching, learning, and assessment methods to align with students' abilities and needs.

Regarding the Programme Catalogue and Information Accessibility it should be mentioned that the QAS has developed and maintains a comprehensive catalogue of higher education programmes, which is periodically updated to reflect programme modifications. This catalogue is publicly accessible via the university website (<https://sjuni.edu.ge/>), ensuring transparency and facilitating informed decision-making by prospective students. The programme catalogue provides the information on the programme title, the prerequisite for admission, the qualification to be awarded, duration of study, the programme credits, the programme structure, programme compliance with the mission, the goals of the programme, programme learning outcomes, learning - teaching methods, the method of evaluation, etc. The programme catalogue is updated according to the changes made in the programme.

Evidences/indicators

- Methodology for Planning, Designing and Developing of Educational Programmes;
- Educational Programmes and Course syllabi;
- Self-Evaluation Report;

- Interviews;
- SJSU's official web-site.

Recommendations:

N/A

Suggestions:

3.2.1. It is suggested to prioritize the integration of innovative, student-centred pedagogies and the reinforcement of individualized learning mechanisms as key strategies to enhance programme quality and responsiveness to evolving academic and professional requirements.

3.2.2. It is suggested that the institution plan and implement targeted measures to strengthen its capacity for developing student-tailored individual educational plans, and, where necessary, ensure the modification of course components to accommodate diverse student needs.

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

Based on review of presented Self-Evaluation Report, enclosed documentation (particularly, QAS reports on PLOs assessment) and site interviews results, the panel noted that LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University has established a learning outcomes assessment system, that is compliant with Georgian legislation and institutional regulatory documents. Student assessment is conducted in accordance with Order No. 3 (05.01.2007) of the MoES and the internal rules governing the educational process. Both midterm and final assessments are mandatory, and a course is deemed completed only when a student meets the minimum competency thresholds defined for each component.

The University applies a 100-point assessment scale, which incorporates five types of positive evaluations (A-E) and two types of negative evaluations (FX and F). Procedures for re-examinations, conditions for awarding FX, and rules for conducting additional examinations are clearly articulated, ensuring transparency and fairness in the process.

Assessment of learning outcomes is implemented through a broad range of methods, selected in accordance with course specifics and disciplinary requirements. These include practical assignments, laboratory work, theoretical tasks, tests (open, closed, and combined), presentations, essays, case studies, oral examinations, quizzes, and, where applicable (particularly, for clinical programmes such as veterinary medicine), field-specific methods - Clinical Case Discussion (CBL), OSCE/OSPE. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that SJSU has developed detailed regulations: "Rules of Conduct for Objectively Structured Clinical and Objectively Structured Practical Examinations," demonstrating commitment to standardized, objective assessment in clinical education. In addition, the university utilizes simulation environments with models and standardized patients, enabling veterinary cases modelling and targeted demonstration of clinical and practical abilities in controlled settings. This student-oriented virtual environment represents a significant investment in contemporary educational methodology.

Regarding the Evaluation of the Research Component the panel noted that SJSU has established clear, regulation-based procedures for assessing research components at the master's and doctoral levels, ensuring transparency, academic rigor, and alignment with programme learning outcomes. The research component may be implemented in various formats such as theses, applied research projects, laboratory work, or field studies depending on programme needs and field-specific (disciplinary) characteristics.

Master's theses and equivalent forms of scholarly work - such as creative, executive, or applied

research projects—are evaluated in the semester of completion or in the subsequent semester, as stipulated by institutional regulations. The assessment system allows students who receive an FX (41–50 points) to revise and resubmit the research component in the next semester. A grade of F (40 points or below) results in the permanent loss of the right to re-submit the same research component, reinforcing the seriousness of academic requirements at this level.

Regarding the Doctoral Dissertation Assessment, it can be mentioned that SJSU employs a multi-tiered, internationally recognizable evaluation scale for doctoral dissertations, ensuring a nuanced assessment of scholarly quality. The scale includes the following categories: a) Summa cum laude – excellent thesis; b) Magna cum laude – exceeds requirements in every respect; c) Cum laude – exceeds requirements; d) Bene – meets basic requirements; e) Rite – meets requirements despite shortcomings; f) Insufficient – fails to meet requirements due to substantial deficiencies; g) Sub omni canone – completely unsatisfactory and not meeting academic standards.

A positive evaluation (a–e) leads to degree conferral. An “insufficient” (f) evaluation allows the doctoral candidate to revise and resubmit the dissertation within one year, while a “completely unsatisfactory” (g) evaluation results in the irrevocable loss of the right to resubmit that dissertation.

Evaluation of Doctoral Seminars and Assistantships also are assessed based on 100-point system. Particularly, Doctoral Seminars are assessed using a 100-point scale, distributed as follows:

- (i) Supervisor’s assessment: up to 60 points (positive threshold: 31+ points);
- (ii) Commission’s assessment: up to 40 points (positive threshold: 20+ points);
- (iii) Overall positive assessment: 51+ points. While Professor's Assistantship activities are evaluated using the institution’s standard 100-point assessment system, which includes five positive and two negative evaluation categories.

In addition, SJSU has established a clear and regulation-based framework for the planning, supervision, and evaluation of the research component across its educational programmes. The process is governed by the institutional rule “Scientific-Research Component Planning, Implementation and Evaluation Rule” (approved by Academic Council Decision No. 8, June 9, 2023), which defines the responsibilities of supervisors, students, Programme Heads, and evaluation commissions, as well as the organizational and methodological requirements for conducting research.

Supervisors are appointed based on academic expertise relevant to the chosen research topic. The evaluation is conducted by a commission composed of qualified academic staff and is based on clearly defined criteria that assess the relevance of the research problem, methodological soundness, quality of data analysis, academic writing, and the student’s ability to present and defend results. Both the written work and the oral defence contribute to the final grade, which is awarded according to the University’s 100-point evaluation scale.

Quality assurance mechanisms are embedded throughout the process. Programme Heads and the QAS systematically analyse defence outcomes, the quality of submitted research work, as well as student and supervisor feedback. Findings from these analyses are used to refine methodological guidelines, adjust component structure, and improve supervisory practices in line with programme learning outcomes.

Based on a comprehensive review of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER), enclosed documentation, and evidence gathered during site visit interviews, the panel confirmed that procedures governing student competency assessment are publicly accessible through multiple institutional web platforms, including the university website, examination centre portal, and individual faculty websites. This multi-level accessibility ensures transparency and provides equitable access to assessment information for all students. It should also be noted separately that Article 17 of the University’s Regulatory Rules defines standardized procedures for examination scheduling, conduct, result evaluation, and appeals, which are transparent, and visible for all students.

The site visit confirmed that students are generally informed about assessment criteria, learning outcomes, and appeal procedures. However, the panel identified individual cases that highlight the need for enhanced student awareness, particularly regarding academic integrity policies and procedures for evaluating written assignments through plagiarism detection mechanisms.

It is also noteworthy that, although SJSU has formally developed guidelines for the use of digital tools in the assessment process, such as Turnitin and LMS-integrated grading systems. Moreover, the SER and enclosed documents explicitly mention: **Turnitin Feedback Studio**: Used to check all specific written assignments (essays, course projects, theses) to prevent plagiarism; **LMS and grading tools**: Syllabi developed using standardized tools from Erasmus+ ASSET and Erasmus+ CURE-S projects; **Modern digital tools**: Mindomo, Thinglink are actively integrated; **Student portal**: Accessible online for course selection. However, the panel noted individual cases highlighting the need for enhanced

student awareness regarding plagiarism detection mechanisms and academic integrity policies. Interviews with students revealed limited practical experience in applying these tools for the evaluation of individual assignments. It is recommended that SJSU place greater emphasis on the systematic and consistent use of digital tools in the assessment process to enhance transparency and ensure academic integrity. Furthermore, the validity and reliability of assessment instruments should be strengthened through regular internal reviews and moderation procedures.

Thus, the University should strengthen student awareness and understanding of academic integrity requirements and related assessment procedures. In particular, SJSU should ensure that all students receive comprehensive and systematic information regarding plagiarism prevention, the use of plagiarism detection tools, and the procedures applied in evaluating written assignments. Consistent communication of these policies across faculties and programmes will enhance transparency, promote integrity, and support the fair implementation of assessment standards.

The expert panel commends the institution's development of a robust learning outcomes assessment mechanism. However, the strengthening of this mechanism, assessment practices at both programme and course levels demonstrate insufficient attention to inclusivity principles. The current system lacks adequate provisions for adapting assessment formats to accommodate students with individual or special educational needs, thereby limiting equitable access to fair evaluation of student learning achievements. In regard with this, the panel suggests that SJSU should ensure inclusivity in assessment by adapting formats for students with individual or special educational needs. For this the university should develop and implement a comprehensive policy framework for inclusive assessment that includes:

- clear procedures for identifying students requiring assessment accommodations;
- systematic protocols for adapting assessment formats and conditions;
- training for faculty on implementing inclusive assessment practices;
- regular monitoring and evaluation of accommodation effectiveness.

While reviewing the SER and enclosed documents, the panel also identified that the submitted documentation does not provide a clear description of the conditions and procedures for assessing learning outcomes within the framework of joint programme implementation. Furthermore, the respective responsibilities of the partner institutions in this process are not sufficiently defined. Although the expert panel sought additional clarification during the visit, several aspects of the assessment process remain ambiguous and require further elaboration. The expert panel suggests that the institution clearly articulate and detail the obligations, roles, and responsibilities of all participating parties in the assessment of learning outcomes as part of joint programme implementation.

Regarding the learning outcomes assessment approaches employed by SJSU, the following observations can be made based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and supporting documents. The institution utilizes a cyclical quality assurance system grounded in the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) model to evaluate programme learning outcomes. The assessment approaches identified include:

1. Direct Assessment Approaches - While the report emphasizes administrative mechanisms for assessment, direct evaluation of student performance is integrated into several processes (a) Course-Level Assessments: Syllabi specify learning, teaching, and assessment methods, which are periodically reviewed and updated to ensure alignment with programme outcomes. (b) Plagiarism Detection: Turnitin Feedback Studio is used to check all written assignments, serving as a direct measure of academic integrity and the quality of student work. (c) Dissertation Reviews (Graduate Level): For doctoral programmes, assessment is conducted through preliminary reviews by specialists and a final defense before a Dissertation Council, which may include international peer review or feedback from foreign universities. (d) Certification of Practical Skills: Practical training takes place at partner organizations and laboratories, where student performance is evaluated in a professional context.

2. Indirect Assessment Approaches -The university extensively employs systematic surveys and feedback mechanisms to evaluate programme effectiveness and the achievement of learning outcomes indirectly: (a) Graduate Surveys: Conducted annually to monitor programme quality and graduates' career progression. (b) Employer and Partner Surveys: Administered annually to assess programme relevance to labour market needs and identify requirements for new programme development. (c) Freshman Satisfaction Surveys: Conducted at the beginning of the first semester to capture student expectations and identify potential risks. (d) Student Mobility Research: Conducted each semester to analyse student movements and mitigate attrition risks. (e) Practice Manager Feedback: Annual feedback from internship supervisors is collected to assess the programme's effectiveness in preparing

students for professional practice. (f) Internal Quality Audits: Each faculty's Quality Assurance Service prepares self-assessment reports analysing experiences gained and results achieved during programme implementation.

Moreover, based on interview results, the panel confirmed that SJSU employs both direct and indirect assessment approaches. Direct assessment is based on an analysis of student academic performance data, including trends in grade distribution. Anomalies, such as consistently high proportions of A or F grades, are used as indicators to re-examine the appropriateness of course difficulty, teaching methods, and assessment instruments. Indirect assessment incorporates student, graduate, and employer surveys, as well as observations conducted by programme directors and consultations with academic staff. A result is considered noteworthy when 30% or more respondents indicate insufficient attainment of competencies aligned with programme requirements.

The University has established a structured mechanism for responding to assessment findings. This includes a first stage of qualitative inquiry (focus groups, interviews, analysis of syllabi and students' work) and a second stage involving concrete curriculum modifications, such as changes in assessment methods, contact hours, programme component credits, literature, or prerequisites. The QAS coordinates the evaluation process, while Programme Heads are responsible for interpreting outcomes and initiating necessary actions in collaboration with course instructors.

Monitoring of student academic performance is conducted each semester as part of the internal quality assurance cycle and serves as an additional mechanism for evaluating the achievement of intended learning outcomes and informing programme development. Within the framework of academic performance monitoring, information is collected on the level of academic performance of the contingent of students. Monitoring of academic performance is carried out based on statistical data of academic performance, which are derived from the sources of final exams (or relevant tasks for final assessment such as final research or practical projects; thesis, etc). With this approach, lecturers evaluate the degree of difficulty of the syllabus of the teaching course in relation to the group's capabilities. As a result of the analysis of this data, a periodic review is carried out to enhance the educational programmes and improve the learning results.

Thus, the assessment system is well-regulated, transparent, and grounded in national and institutional norms. The institutional framework ensures transparency, consistency, and alignment with programme learning outcomes. The existence of diverse assessment methods and the use of both direct and indirect assessment approaches contribute to the validity of learning outcomes measurement and support continuous improvement.

The procedures for evaluating the research component are well-organized, transparent, and academically sound. The University's regulatory framework and quality assurance practices provide a solid basis for ensuring that students achieve the intended research-related learning outcomes.

In addition, the use of qualified supervisors, standardized evaluation criteria, and commission-based assessment supports objectivity and academic rigor. Internal quality assurance mechanisms effectively monitor the implementation and outcomes of the research component and contribute to continuous improvement. Minor enhancements related to documenting impact and strengthening data-driven monitoring would further reinforce compliance.

Also, the procedures for managing critical findings - such as atypical grade distributions - reflect a systematic approach to quality enhancement. The two-stage response mechanism, involving qualitative analysis and subsequent programme modification, indicates operationalization of the PDCA cycle within the assessment framework.

However, while the system is comprehensive, the SER provides limited evidence on the systematic integration of findings from indirect assessments (e.g., employer feedback) into concrete curriculum revisions across programmes. Additionally, documentation demonstrating explicit alignment between individual programme learning outcomes and corresponding assessment methods may be strengthened to enhance transparency and external auditability. Finally, the presentation of measurable outcomes resulting from implemented corrective actions would further reinforce evidence of effectiveness.

In addition, the presented SER does not include enough information about the examples of programme revisions and their justification; number of surveys conducted and results summary, and so on. Moreover, the panel identified a need for a more consistent link between assessment results and programme improvement actions. Thus, it is suggested that SJSU should strengthen the SER with evidence-based analysis, enhance documentation of direct and indirect learning outcomes assessment results, and examples from practices related to the student's competencies assessment and programmes / course learning outcomes evaluation.

While the fundamental systems are strong, opportunities exist to enhance documentation of outcomes,

strengthen inter-rater reliability mechanisms, and more explicitly emphasize formative assessment approaches. The institution's ongoing accreditation activities and responsiveness to external evaluation recommendations suggest capacity for addressing these developmental areas.

The panel noted that the university's commitment to continuous improvement is evidenced by multiple regulatory updates during the reporting period and systematic use of evaluation data to drive programme development. The institution has made significant investments in modern assessment technologies, particularly in clinical education, demonstrating forward-looking educational practice.

According to the above-mentioned, the panel confirms that LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University demonstrates compliance with authorization standards regarding the assessment of educational programmes. The institution has developed comprehensive frameworks, clear documentation, and systematic processes that ensure:

- Assessment systems are transparent, fair, and promote academic achievement;
- Multiple assessment methods appropriate to different disciplines are employed;
- Robust appeals and quality assurance mechanisms protect student rights.

Evidences/indicators

- Mechanisms for Evaluating Educational Programme Learning Outcomes;
- Educational programmes and course syllabi;
- Self-Evaluation Report and enclosed reports on PLOs Assessment, Student's academic achievement analysis, etc.;
- Student survey results;
- Site Interview results.

Recommendations:

3.3.1. It is recommended that the institution clearly articulate and detail the obligations, roles, and responsibilities of all participating parties in the assessment of learning outcomes, as well as assessment procedures, as part of joint programme implementation in the Methodology for Planning, Designing and Developing of Educational Programmes.

Suggestions:

3.3.1. It is suggested that the University strengthen student awareness and understanding of academic integrity requirements and related assessment procedures.

3.3.2. It is suggested that SJSU should ensure inclusiveness in assessment by adapting formats for students with individual or special educational needs.

3.3.3. It is suggested that the SJSU should strengthen the SER with evidence-based analysis and enhance documentation of direct and indirect learning outcomes assessment results, and examples from practices related to the of student's competencies assessment and programmes / course learning outcomes evaluation.

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The University has a personnel development policy, which covers major principles of general management, strategic planning methodology, human resource management, financial and resource management, and document management. The personnel policy document identifies the mechanisms that support staff professional growth and skill development through training, research projects, conferences, and mobility programmes. The University maintains job descriptions for each department, which are detailed in the respective departmental regulations. Personnel selection, hiring, and onboarding follow recruitment regulations and labour laws. The Human Resources Department manages new employee orientation, including an introduction to organizational culture, and facilitates access to necessary resources such as funding, equipment, and materials needed for job performance. It was confirmed by the interview results.

The University has affiliation rules for the academic staff. There is a formal contract between the university and an academic staff member that outlines the mutual rights and responsibilities concerning their employment relationship. Affiliated academic staff are entitled to several benefits, including free accommodation in university dormitories and complimentary use of transportation facilities, both subject to university regulations. They receive university-co-financed health insurance and may take a paid academic leave for one semester every five years for professional development. The university provides full or partial funding for participation in national and international conferences and symposiums, as well as financial support for publishing research articles in international journals, textbooks, and scholarly books. Evidence from institutional funding records and interviews with academic staff demonstrates widespread utilization of these opportunities among affiliated personnel.

The University maintains two distinct types of governing bodies: academic boards and representative boards. Academic boards primarily focus on educational matters, including curriculum development, academic standards, research policies, and degree requirements. Representative boards, on the other hand, typically address broader institutional concerns, including strategic planning, financial oversight, and the interests of stakeholders. In both types of boards, academic personnel play a contributory role, as confirmed by the interview results.

According to the self-evaluation report and interview result findings, the university administration demonstrates an ongoing commitment to staff welfare by continuously investing in professional development opportunities and enhancing workplace conditions. This includes creating supportive environments that foster career growth, providing access to training and skill-building programmes, and regularly assessing and improving the physical and organizational aspects of the work environment. The interviewees provided specific examples to corroborate this.

To enhance workplace conditions for university personnel, various initiatives have been implemented to create a more conducive, secure, and professionally enriching environment. Individual contributions and collaborative efforts are formally recognized through expressions of gratitude and certificates of achievement. Collaborative work serves as a key metric for measuring goal attainment effectiveness, as it channels collective efforts toward shared institutional objectives. A monetary incentive system has been established for staff members (as documented in Representative Council Resolutions). Additional recognition methods include awarding certificates and designating winners across various categories, particularly those based on student research outcomes. Throughout the reporting cycle, 29 administrative employees and 34 academic staff members received certificates of recognition, with some awards determined by student evaluation feedback.

According to the self-evaluation report and interview findings, the human resources management department oversees the onboarding process for new employees, including orientation to the organization's culture and practices.

The University employs 77 affiliated academic staff members with the following rank distribution: 26 professors, 45 associate professors, and 6 assistant professors. Besides these affiliated academic

personnel, the University has 86 invited personnel distributed among the faculties: Education, Humanities and Social Sciences -39, Business Administration -10, Law -9, and Engineering, Agriculture and Natural Sciences -28. According to the self-evaluation report, 73% of the invited personnel are female and 27% are male. The University also employs 78 administrative and support staff. During the interviews, the administration acknowledged the importance of addressing the evident generational gaps among administrative and academic personnel. Though, the University has the general mechanisms, it is suggested to design more strategic mechanisms to attract and retain the young generation of academics.

The Personnel Evaluation Rules provide for measuring the effectiveness of each employee during their work period, the work performed in administrative and academic positions, and their contribution to management development. The University conducts annual staff performance assessments and satisfaction surveys to improve human resources management, completing evaluations within 30 days of each January. Results inform strategic planning by Human Resources, Administration, Quality Assurance, and unit heads to enhance organizational culture and operational effectiveness. The University has provided the analysis of Academic Personnel's Annual Reports on Scientific-Pedagogical Work, Self-Assessment, and University Environment Satisfaction Survey from 2019 to 2024 academic years. The University has provided the documents analysing the administrative personnel's satisfaction results for the years 2019-2025.

The self-evaluation report presents key performance indicators for a university, comparing current achievements with target benchmarks to be reached by 2031. The ratio of academic/scientific staff to administrative and support staff is currently 1:1, matching the target benchmark. The administrative staff-to-student ratio aims to move from 1:25.2 to 1:30. Notably, the University is not planning to increase the student contingent. The internal regulation documents specify qualification requirements for academic and invited personnel's positions based on job responsibilities. A thorough review of academic personnel documentation confirmed that qualifications align with established requirements. The general management policy document outlines the qualification requirements for the academic and administrative personnel. Article 7 of this document states that 'A person who has reached the age of 65 cannot be elected to a university academic position, and a person holding an academic position who has reached the age of 65 shall be released from their academic position after the expiration of their term of election to the academic position. As an exception, a person over the age of 65 may be elected to a university academic position if they satisfy the requirements established for candidates participating in an academic competition. Appointment to an academic position shall be carried out in accordance with the procedure established by this article' (p. 16). The exception in paragraph 6 states that someone over 65 may be elected to an academic position if they meet the requirements. However, paragraph 5 explicitly states that a person who has reached 65 cannot be elected to a university academic position. Meeting qualification requirements and competitive standards should not constitute an exceptional circumstance—these are baseline expectations for all candidates, regardless of age. Similar descriptions are provided for administrative positions as well. It is recommended that the Management Policy Document be revised to resolve the internal contradiction between provisions that categorically prohibit the appointment of persons aged 65 or older to academic and administrative positions and provisions that permit such appointments as exceptions when candidates meet standard qualification requirements.

The University's internal regulation documents provide detailed qualification requirements for academic and administrative personnel positions, clearly defining the competencies, educational background, experience, and skills necessary for each role based on specific job responsibilities.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-evaluation Report;
- Human Resources Management Policy Documents;
- Rules for Selecting Academic and Invited Personnel;
- Rules for Conducting Academic Personnel Attestation;
- Rules and Conditions for Academic Personnel Affiliation;
- Contract Samples;
- Job Descriptions;
- Academic Personnel Documents;
- Staff Performance Assessment Documents;

- University Website;
- Interview Findings.

Recommendations:

4.1.1. It is recommended that the Management Policy Document be revised to resolve the internal contradiction between provisions that categorically prohibit the appointment of persons aged 65 or older to academic and administrative positions and provisions that permit such appointments as exceptions when candidates meet standard qualification requirements.

Suggestions:

4.1.1. It is suggested to design more strategic mechanisms to attract and retain the young generation of academics.

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. The mandatory pedagogical workload is defined and includes conducting contact hours per week/year as follows: Professor – 8/240 hours, Associate Professor – 10/300 hours, and Assistant Professor – 12/360 hours. The maximum teaching hours for the invited personnel are 15. The university also regularly monitors the workload of its personnel outside the institution. This practice ensures that faculty members can balance their responsibilities effectively, both within the university and in their external commitments. To support sustainable research development, the university has established a workload scheme that defines mandatory scientific activity requirements for academic staff. Each activity is assigned specific hours, and faculty must publish one paper in an impact factor journal every two years. Eligible activities include:

- implementing scientific components of educational programmes and publishing research papers;
- conducting research projects; participating in conferences, forums, symposia, and congresses;
- editing and reviewing scientific publications;
- providing scientific consulting and expert services;
- engaging in public science communication.

Academic staff performance is assessed through annual self-evaluation reports that calculate mandatory and optional scientific activities across all three higher education levels, as detailed in the university's research activity concept and personnel evaluation procedures. Documentation supports this approach, and interview results corroborate the effectiveness of monitoring outside workload.

The University has formula for calculating student enrolment capacity (total number) is based on the following criteria:

- (a) teaching space (sq.m) divided by 2;
- (b) number of academic personnel multiplied by 30 (student number);
- (c) material-technical base – number of computers and other technical equipment multiplied by 15 students;

(d) number of administrative and support personnel multiplied by 30 (student number).

Student enrolment for individual educational programmes is determined based on the following trends and criteria:

- applicant and enrolment data from the past five years;
- student mobility data from the past five years;
- periodic market research, particularly when initiating new programmes or modifying existing ones;
- graduate employment rates;
- and availability of human resources (academic, scientific, invited, and administrative personnel), material, financial, and library resources.

For new programmes, the following factors are considered:

- labour market and employer research;
- experience from analogous programmes at other universities;
- and adequate material-technical resources and human resources (academic, scientific, invited, and administrative personnel) to support the planned student enrolment.

Student enrolment planning at each study level has specific characteristics:

- at the bachelor's level, the specifics of the educational programme and its components must be considered;
- at the master's level, the number of academic personnel available to supervise master's theses must be considered;
- at the doctoral level, the capacity and readiness of potential supervisors must be assessed;
- and for Georgian language preparatory programmes, Georgian law establishes enrolment quotas as a percentage of total bachelor's admissions - 5% for Azerbaijani speakers, 5% for Armenian speakers, 1% for Abkhazian speakers, and 1% for Ossetian speakers.

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 self-evaluation report presents key performance indicators for a university, comparing current achievements with target benchmarks to be reached by 2031. The ratio of academic/scientific staff to total staff stands at 1:31, with a target benchmark of 1:3. During the interview, it was clarified that the target benchmark of 1:3 is a technical mistake, and it should be 1:31 again. Although it is technical, it needs refinement. Academic/scientific staff ratio to invited staff is 1:1.1, with a goal of reaching 1:1. The academic, scientific, and invited staff to student ratio is currently 1:11.9, with a target of 1:15. The same staff categories relative to higher education programmes show a ratio of 5.2:1, with a target of 5:1. Affiliated staff to academic and invited staff ratio is 1:2.1, targeting 1:2. The supervision ratios indicate increased student loads per supervisor: the supervisor to Master's student ratio targets an increase from 1:2.6 to 1:3, while the supervisor to doctoral student ratio aims to move from 1:2.4 to 1:2. The retention rate for the affiliated academic personnel is planned to be reduced from 99.50% to 99%. It is suggested that the university correct the technical error in the academic/scientific staff to total staff ratio target (currently stated as 1:3 instead of the correct 1:31) and conduct a comprehensive review of all performance indicators.

Evidence/indicators

- Self-evaluation Report;
- University Website;
- Student Body Planning Methodology;
- Academic Personnel Workload;
- Staff Planning Methodology;
- Interview Findings.

Recommendations:

N/A

Suggestions:

4.2.1. It is suggested that the university correct the technical error in the academic/scientific staff to total staff ratio target and conduct a comprehensive review of all performance indicators.

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The university has established rules governing student enrolment, suspension and termination of status, mobility procedures, qualification granting, and the recognition of education.

The charters for the university's bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programmes outline the procedures for student admission and the awarding of qualifications, all of which comply with Georgian higher education legislation.

The procedures for suspension and termination of student status are detailed in Articles 13 and 14 of the "Rule for Regulating the Educational Process," ensuring a transparent and equitable process. The mobility procedures are defined in the internal and external mobility regulations, specifically in Articles 5 and 6.

During the interview, students confirmed that they are familiar with these procedures and have access to the relevant documents. All regulations are publicly available and accessible to students and other stakeholders on the university's website. (<https://sjuni.edu.ge/წესები-და-ინსტრუქციები/>)

The contract between students and the university is in accordance with the current legislation on education in Georgia. Students confirmed that they had the opportunity to read their agreements when they enrolled at the university.

Samtskhe-Javakheti State University ensures effective and timely implementation of the above-mentioned procedures to protect student rights and lawful interests. At the beginning of the academic year, the SJSU has one week of orientation days, during this period, Dean and the student support department instructs students about their rights and obligations included in the contract, which was also confirmed during the interviews.

Samtskhe-Javakheti State University has a mechanism for the protection of student rights, students' appeal mechanisms related to the study process, academic and administrative bodies that is highlighted in the Rule for Regulating the Educational Process.

Students' surveys include questionnaires including evaluating the academic as well as the administrative staff of the university. Students are also asked to appeal if there is something that they do not agree with in the learning process. Samtskhe-Javakheti State University utilizes the student

information system (<https://sjuni.edu.ge/>, <https://moodlesjuni.edu.ge/>), where students can register, select courses, review the programme and address any kind of issue about the lecturer or the subject.

The university also operates a student self-government body. Its objectives, authority, organizational structure, election procedures for members and the president, as well as other relevant matters, are defined in the Student Self-Government Regulations.

Evidence/indicators

- Master’s Programmes Charter;
- PhD Programmes Charter;
- Self-evaluation report;
- Student Information System (<https://moodlesjuni.edu.ge/>);
- University webpage (<https://sjuni.edu.ge/>);
- Rule for Regulating the Educational Process;
- Student Self-Government Regulation;
- Interview results.

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

5.2 Student Support Services

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

Students are offered comprehensive advising and support to help them plan their studies and strengthen their academic performance. Interviews with both staff and students confirmed that the Dean and student support services provide organized consultations at the beginning of each semester. Furthermore, professors offer course-specific guidance in accordance with the syllabus, which sets out the course goals, learning outcomes, content, teaching and learning approaches, and assessment methods.

Samtskhe-Javakheti State University supports students’ professional growth and facilitates their integration into the labour market through a range of activities, including information sessions, career forums, and regular updates on job vacancies. To strengthen these efforts, the university has established a new structural unit—the Career Growth and Development Centre—dedicated to carrying out these functions effectively.

Employers are actively involved in the creation, development and implementation of educational programmes in Samtskhe-Javakheti State University. To identify the employers’ requirements, the Career Growth and Development Centre is involved in the organization of focus groups. Feedback received from companies are considered during the development of the programme curricula and specific courses. Above mentioned processes also were confirmed during the interviews with stakeholders.

Information about international mobility as well as some international projects is available via email. The university gives several chances to students to participate in international mobility Erasmus+. Institution creates some opportunities for students' participation in various projects, ensures students' awareness on various domestic and international projects and events carried out outside of the institution.

Samtskhe-Javakheti State University ensures student information and involvement in various university, local or international projects and events that cover extracurricular activities – sports, arts, educational activities and supports students' initiatives by internal funding.

The university maintains transparent and objective mechanisms to support students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and information about these measures is publicly available. According to the regulation on scholarships and grants, Samtskhe-Javakheti State University provides flexible payment options and offers various scholarships to assist its students. During interviews students confirmed about financial supporting mechanisms.

Evidences/indicators

- Self-evaluation report;
- Rule for Regulating the Educational Process;
- Student, Alumni and Employer Survey Result Analysis;
- University webpage (<https://sjuni.edu.ge/>);
- Completed and Planned Student Initiatives and Activities;
- Memorandums;
- Interview results.

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

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

Research and creative and performing activities form a core mission of the LEPL – Samtskhe-Javakheti State University (SJSU) and are fully aligned with its Strategic Development Plan 2026–2032. The plan prioritises the internationalisation of research and creative work, as well as the strengthening of the university's role within the Samtskhe-Javakheti region. Research and creative activities are conducted in accordance with the institution's Research Concept, approved by the

Academic Council and regularly updated to define research priorities, organisational principles, academic freedom, and quality assurance mechanisms.

The main research and creative domains include agricultural and veterinary sciences, humanities, economics, natural sciences, and field-specific creative practices — each addressing key regional and national development challenges. Doctoral programmes operate under national regulations and the university's Dissertation Council, ensuring transparent admission, supervision, and defence procedures. Both local and international supervisors are engaged, and all are required to be active researchers with recent publications in international peer-reviewed journals, ensuring strong scientific standards. Plagiarism prevention procedures and ethical research conduct are embedded in doctoral supervision and assessment processes, reinforcing academic integrity.

Ethical aspects of biomedical research are governed by the Bioethics Committee, established in 2022, which operates under OIE, WHO, and FAO standards. The Committee reviews and monitors studies involving animals and biological materials, ensuring compliance with ethical and legal norms — particularly important for veterinary research. Research outputs are systematically monitored through internal quality assurance mechanisms, including annual staff evaluations, reporting procedures, and institutional review processes.

The university has institutionalised internal scientific grant competitions that encourage innovation and support early-career researchers and doctoral students. In 2025, funded projects focused on zoonoses, greenhouse gas efficiency, and cultural heritage. At the national level, the university successfully participates in programmes of the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia, addressing themes such as religious and ethnic minorities, linguistic heritage, and regional socio-economic development. Research outcomes are increasingly integrated into teaching and student learning through curriculum updates, supervision of student research projects, and the involvement of students in ongoing research and creative activities.

Despite steady progress in research and creative activity development, limited laboratory infrastructure and modest financial resources (4–5% of the total budget) still constrain experimental and laboratory work. While future investments in laboratory facilities and field research are planned, current capacities remain insufficient for large-scale scientific activity. Nevertheless, the university demonstrates consistent progress in institutionalising research and creative work, supporting young scientists, safeguarding academic freedom, preventing academic misconduct, and maintaining ethical and transparent doctoral procedures. The strategic direction is sound, though strengthening material and financial capacity remains essential for long-term sustainability and competitiveness.

Evidence/indicators

- Research Concept approved by Academic Council (2020, revised 2022–2025);
- Participation in SRNSFG and Horizon Europe programmes;
- Functioning Bioethics Committee (Statute approved 16.02.2022);
- Doctoral supervision regulations ensuring transparent evaluation;
- Self-Evaluation Report;
- The SJSU Mission and Strategic Plan 2026-2032;
- Web page <https://sjuni.edu.ge/en/>;
- Site-visit interview results;
- The budget of the university;
- Financing dynamics over the last 5 years.

Recommendations:

6.1.1. It is recommended to expand funding for internal institutional grants and improve laboratory infrastructure.

Suggestions:

6.1.1. It is suggested to broaden the scope of interdisciplinary, regionally focused applied research and strengthen mechanisms for the commercialization of research outcomes.

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

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

Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements

The LEPL – Samtskhe-Javakheti State University (SJSU) has established a supportive environment for the advancement of research and creative/performing activities and the promotion of international collaboration through a combination of administrative structures, strategic planning, and targeted initiatives. The university's research and creative activities policy is fully aligned with its overarching strategic objectives and internationalisation priorities.

A key milestone in this regard is the establishment of the Horizon Europe Office in 2022, which serves as the primary platform for the university's integration into the European Research Area. The Office supports both research and creative disciplines by providing training and consultations for proposal development, maintaining close communication with the National Contact Point (NCP), and facilitating the participation of academic staff and students in international research and creative consortia. Over the past three years, 25 academic and administrative staff members have completed specialised training, and 18 information sessions have been conducted. University representatives have also participated in 20 brokerage and partnership-building events held in Brussels and other European cities. As a tangible outcome, several international grant proposals have been submitted under Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ frameworks, contributing to increased visibility and collaboration.

Research support mechanisms operate at both the institutional and faculty levels, encompassing project administration, quality assurance, and dissemination, as well as mobility and partnership support. Student involvement is ensured through participation in international projects, joint research and creative initiatives, supervised theses linked to ongoing projects, and mobility opportunities under Erasmus+ and other European schemes. The university actively encourages the engagement of young researchers and fosters interdisciplinary collaboration across faculties.

The university's consistent progress in the internationalisation of its research and creative profile is particularly noteworthy. The growing number of partnerships, participation in European networks, and increased coordination of joint research and creative initiatives demonstrate a clear upward trajectory. Monitoring and evaluation of internationalisation activities are conducted through internal reporting mechanisms, annual performance evaluations, and Quality Assurance reviews, which assess participation levels, outputs, and impact.

Institutional commitment and involvement in major European programmes such as Horizon Europe, WIDERA, MSCA, and Erasmus+ mark a significant step toward alignment with EU research standards. These initiatives are supported by dedicated administrative structures and allocated financial resources, providing a sustainable—though still limited—basis for continued international research and creative collaboration.

Evidence/indicators

- Research Concept approved by Academic Council (2020, revised 2022–2025);
- Participation in SRNSFG and Horizon Europe programmes;
- Long-term partnerships with EU and other foreign/ national universities and research centres.
- Self-Evaluation Report;
- The SJSU Mission and Strategic Plan 2026-2032;

- Web page <https://sjuni.edu.ge/en/>;
- Site-visit interview results;
- The budget of the university;
- Financing dynamics over the last 5 years.

Recommendations:

N/A

Suggestions:

6.2.1. Creation of a research mobility fund for young researchers.

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 LEPL – Samtskhe-Javakheti State University (SJSU) has established a system for assessing and analysing the quality and productivity of its research and creative/performing activities. The Quality Assurance Service plays a central role in this process, collecting data on academic staff publications, creative outputs and performances, participation in grant projects, and conference attendance. These indicators are incorporated into the annual performance evaluations of academic staff and inform decisions regarding promotions and contract renewals. The Quality Assurance Service regularly monitors these evaluations, identifying strengths and areas for improvement. The results are submitted to the Academic Council and used to guide strategic and operational planning. This monitoring framework ensures accountability and links individual academic achievements to overall institutional performance.

Currently, the university’s evaluation system primarily relies on quantitative indicators, such as the number of publications and grant participation. However, qualitative aspects — including the artistic and societal impact of creative activities, innovative research outcomes, citation-based impact indicators, commercialisation potential, and societal relevance — are not yet systematically incorporated. The introduction of bibliometric tools, the creation of a centralised digital research database, and the adoption of key performance indicators (KPIs) would enhance the accuracy, consistency, and comprehensiveness of the assessment and enable clearer impact tracking across scientific and creative fields.

Overall, the university demonstrates steady progress in establishing flexible internal control systems for research quality. The process is transparent and aligned with strategic objectives, and student involvement is ensured through participation in course evaluations, research-based learning activities, and feedback on supervision and research-led teaching. External benchmarking and peer comparison, including reference to national and international publication databases and comparable institutions, are increasingly used to contextualise performance. Feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and structured input from academic staff, students, and external stakeholders, inform ongoing methodological refinement, although further development is needed to achieve closer alignment with international standards.

Evidence/indicators

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual assessment reports on research productivity; • Review by the Vice-Rector and the Quality Assurance Office; • Self-Evaluation Report; • Site-visit interview results.
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>6.3.1. Expand assessment indicators beyond quantitative measures (publications, grants) to include innovation, commercialisation potential.</p> <p>6.3.2. Develop a centralised digital system to collect and disseminate information on all research outputs, increasing visibility and public engagement.</p>
<p>Best Practices (if applicable):</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements</p>

7. Material, Information and Financial Resources

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

<p>7.1 Material Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The institution possesses or owns material resources (fixed and current assets) that are used for achieving goals stated in the mission statement, adequately responds to the requirements of educational programmes and research activities, and corresponds to the existing number of students and planned enrolment. ○ HEI offers environment necessary for implementing educational activities: sanitary units, natural light possibilities, and central heating system. ○ Health and safety of students and staff is protected within the institution. ○ HEI has adapted environment for people with special needs
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>Samtskhe-Javakheti State University (SJSU) Total area of the Samtskhe-Javakheti State University in square meters equals 12,537.32 m², from which 4,857.65 m² are used for academic purposes, while 7,679.67 m² represent auxiliary area used by the institution.</p> <p>Since its previous authorisation, SJSU has demonstrated continuous progress in developing and modernising its material and infrastructural base to effectively support its mission, vision, and strategic objectives. The university's main facilities are distributed across 4 buildings spread across two cities in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region-Akhaltzikhe and Akhalkalaki-and include academic and administrative spaces, additionally supported by auxiliary buildings equipped to ensure the effective implementation of educational and research activities.</p> <p>The university possesses the necessary real estate and movable property to carry out its functions as a higher educational institution. The infrastructure comprises equipped classrooms, laboratories, libraries and sports halls, administrative offices, and spaces for individual and group learning. All facilities meet the operational needs of accredited and planned academic programmes and are maintained in accordance with national safety and hygiene standards.</p> <p>SJSU regularly upgrades its material and technological resources to ensure that the learning environment corresponds with institutional development goals and student enrolment plans. Continuous improvements are made to heating, ventilation, lighting, and information technology systems to guarantee a secure and technologically supported academic environment.</p> <p>The university's health and safety infrastructure encompass emergency response systems, evacuation procedures, and on-site medical facilities staffed by qualified professionals. As part of the facility</p>

observation, the Akhalkalaki campus was also inspected. During the visit, it was noted that the range of first aid medicines available at the Akhalkalaki campus was less extensive compared to the Akhaltsikhe campus. Therefore, it is advisable to ensure that both campuses maintain an equivalent stock and variety of first aid supplies.

Fire safety equipment, clear evacuation signage, and 24-hour security surveillance are in place across all university buildings.

Ensuring an inclusive and accessible environment remains a key institutional priority. All academic buildings are equipped with ramps, adapted restrooms, elevators, and designated parking spaces for persons with disabilities. These measures provide unhindered access to all areas and activities of the university, fully complying with the established technical regulations.

Recent rehabilitation and reconstruction work, including the rehabilitation of the roof of the first building, have further enhanced the quality of the university's physical environment. As a result, the institution now provides a safe and inclusive academic infrastructure that effectively supports teaching, learning, and research processes. Samtskhe-Javakheti State University (SJSU) provides a strong academic and applied environment supported by specialised laboratories and research facilities that serve both teaching and regional development priorities. The University maintains discipline-specific labs for practical training and research (e.g., natural sciences and applied studies), equipped to support experimental work, field-based analysis, and student project activity, alongside dedicated IT and digital learning facilities used for data work, online instruction, and skills development. SJSU's library functions as a central learning hub, offering structured print collections and growing access to digital resources (e-catalogues, electronic databases and e-learning materials), supported by reading/study spaces and staff assistance for information literacy. The University applies clear monitoring and maintenance mechanisms for its infrastructure through designated responsible units (technical services/IT support and facility management), with routine equipment checks, usage logs where relevant, scheduled servicing, and user reporting channels to ensure continuity and safe operation of laboratories and digital systems. In addition, SJSU includes creative and performing spaces that enable cultural and educational programming—such as halls and venues suitable for lectures, exhibitions, screenings, and performances—supporting public engagement, student creativity, and community-facing events.

Evidence/indicators

- Extracts from the public registry;
- Emergency management mechanisms;
- Material, informational and financial resources;
- Facility Observation;
- Self-evaluation report.

Recommendations:

N/A

Suggestions:

7.1.1. It is advisable to ensure that both campuses in Akhtaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki maintain an equivalent stock and variety of first aid supplies.

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

Samtskhe-Javakheti State University demonstrates continuous efforts in developing its library infrastructure and services to effectively support educational and research activities. The university's Scientific Library operates in three modernly equipped reading halls located in Akhaltsikhe (Buildings

I and II) and Akhalkalaki (Building IV). Each facility is furnished with updated technical equipment, including computers with internet access and multifunctional devices (printer, scanner, copier).

Wireless internet and audiovisual tools (projectors, smart boards) are available in reading rooms, ensuring a comfortable, technology-enhanced learning environment. The library provides both printed and electronic collections in Georgian and foreign languages, aligned with study programmes and professional fields. Trained staff are assigned at the library, ensuring the availability of resources for students and academic staff.

Library users are registered through the Openbiblio electronic catalogue, which manages circulation, cataloguing, and access to digital resources. The library also functions as a branch of the National Scientific Library of Georgia, providing extended access to national and international academic resources.

SJSU Library is a member of the Georgian Library Association, the Elsevier Consortium, and the Georgian Libraries Integrated Information Network Consortium, granting access to major international databases, including ScienceDirect, Scopus, Cambridge, SAGE, Edward Elgar, Royal Society, and others. Through the "Electronic Information for Libraries – eIFL" project, academic staff and students benefit from access to peer-reviewed journals and open-access publishing opportunities.

The library continuously renews its book fund in line with updated academic programmes, including publications produced by the University Printing House. It supports all levels of study—bachelor's, master's, doctoral, and professional—by ensuring that course literature corresponds to programme requirements. Coordination with faculties and quality assurance offices ensures the timely acquisition of necessary materials each semester.

To strengthen research competencies, the library organises training sessions and workshops for students and faculty on academic writing, citation standards, the use of international databases, and research ethics. Specialised services and staff are designated to assist persons with disabilities, ensuring equal access to educational resources.

Overall, the Samtskhe-Javakheti State University Scientific Library ensures an inclusive and resource-rich academic environment that effectively supports the institution's educational and research missions while continuously improving its services in line with international standards and technological development.

Samtskhe-Javakheti State University (SJSU) actively supports creative and performing activities as an integral part of its academic and community mission, providing halls and multipurpose spaces that host cultural events, performances, exhibitions, public lectures, and student-led creative initiatives that strengthen regional cultural life. The University places growing emphasis on digital literacy and open science, promoting the use of digital tools in teaching and research, encouraging open access to academic outputs, and supporting students and staff in developing skills related to digital research methods, data use, and responsible knowledge sharing. Looking ahead, SJSU has clear development plans for its library services, including the expansion of digital collections, improved access to electronic databases, the integration of modern information management systems, and the enhancement of user-oriented services that support research, learning, and open educational resources, ensuring the library evolves aligned with international academic standards.

Evidence/indicators

- Contracts for the purchase of books and magazines, and newspapers;
- Agreements AAIP Georgia Libraries Integrated Informational Network Consortium 2017;
- Library regulations, rules for using the library;
- Self-evaluation report;
- Interviews conducted during the Authorisation visit.

Recommendations:

N/A

Suggestions:

N/A

Best Practices (if applicable):

N/A

Evaluation

- Complies with requirements**
- Substantially complies with requirements
- Partially complies with requirements

<input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements
<p>7.3 Information Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ HEI has created infrastructure for information technologies and its administration and accessibility are ensured ○ Electronic services and electronic management systems are implemented and mechanisms for their constant improvement are in place ○ HEI ensures business continuity ○ HEI has a functional web-page in Georgian and English languages.
<p>Descriptive summary and analysis of compliance with the standard component requirements</p> <p>Samtskhe-Javakheti State University has developed a robust information technology infrastructure that supports teaching, research, and administrative operations. The university's academic buildings in Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki are equipped with computers, laptops, servers, printers, and audiovisual devices available for students, academic, and administrative staff.</p> <p>A unified information space (intranet) connects all university facilities, providing access to electronic services and ensuring smooth data exchange between campuses. The central Wi-Fi network covers all classrooms, laboratories, and administrative offices. The server infrastructure, protected by a firewall and backed up regularly, operates under Linux and Windows Server systems, ensuring data security and reliability.</p> <p>The network is continuously monitored and upgraded by the Information Technology Management Department, which also oversees cybersecurity measures and video surveillance systems across all university buildings. The infrastructure is supported by uninterrupted and backup power supplies to ensure stable operation in all conditions.</p> <p>The university effectively utilises several digital management platforms, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moodle (since 2012) for e-learning and online examinations; • Electronic learning management system (since 2011) for students' academic registration, grading, and scheduling; • Electronic Document Management System (eflow.emis.ge) with digital signature integration (since 2017). <p>The university maintains a bilingual website (Georgian and English) that provides updated institutional information, promotes transparency, and supports academic communication.</p> <p>Overall, the IT infrastructure of Samtskhe-Javakheti State University ensures secure, efficient, and technology-enhanced learning and administrative environments in full alignment with institutional and educational objectives.</p> <p>Samtskhe-Javakheti State University (SJSU) places strong emphasis on training and digital literacy initiatives, offering structured support to students and staff in the use of digital tools, online learning platforms, and research-related technologies to enhance teaching, learning, and professional skills. The University provides research support functions through academic and administrative units that assist with research planning, data management, project implementation, and dissemination of research outputs. In terms of IT accessibility, SJSU is committed to inclusive digital access by ensuring that its information systems, online platforms, and computer facilities are designed or adapted to be usable by persons with disabilities, including accessible workstations, assistive software where required, and barrier-free access to digital services. Looking to the future, SJSU plans to further strengthen its digital and research infrastructure through targeted investments in IT systems, expanded training programmes, and enhanced support services, supported by clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms such as user feedback collection, and performance reviews to ensure continuous improvement and sustainability.</p>
<p>Evidence/indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic document circulation system www.eflow.emis.ge; • Website www.sjuni.edu.ge; • Website hosting and domain name purchase agreement #02/178 30.12.2024; • Internet Service Purchase Agreement #02/172 19.12.2024; • Self-evaluation report.
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Suggestions:</p>

N/A
Best Practices (if applicable): N/A
Evaluation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Partially complies with requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Does not comply with requirements
7.4 Financial Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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
<p>Samtskhe-Javakheti State University maintains a stable and sustainable financial position, ensuring the effective implementation of its strategic and mid-term action plans. The university's unified budget is developed in accordance with Georgian legislation and institutional priorities, ensuring transparency and accountability.</p> <p>The university's diversified funding (GEL) sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tuition fees: 4,407,900.00; ● Funding received from the state budget: 320,512.00; ● Including promotion of higher education institutions: 14,000.00; ● Including state scholarships for students: 303,000.00; ● Funds allocated from the local budget: 15,000.00; ● Revenues allowed by law: 590,354.10; ● Other revenues: 390,354.10. <p>Tuition fee income remains the main and consistently growing source of financial stability. The budget structure provides targeted funding for the development of academic programmes, research activities, human resources, library enhancement, and digital infrastructure. Dedicated allocations cover scientific projects, doctoral research, publication co-financing, library development, and the renewal of educational and laboratory equipment.</p> <p>SJSU actively participates in internationally funded projects (TEMPUS, ERASMUS+, and CIF initiatives), securing significant financial and material resources that support curriculum modernisation, staff training, and infrastructure improvement and therefore is to be considered as a best practice for the regional university. The total value of implemented and ongoing EU-funded projects exceeds €433,000, with additional national grants allocated for laboratory and innovation development.</p> <p>Financial management at the university follows the principles of efficiency, legality, and transparency. Regular internal reporting and audits ensure effective monitoring of budget implementation and performance. The financial system fully supports the university's educational, research, and infrastructural development objectives, contributing to its long-term institutional sustainability.</p>
Evidence/indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The budget of the university; ● Financing dynamics over the last 5 years; ● Self-Evaluation Report.
Recommendations: N/A
Suggestions: N/A
Best Practices (if applicable): 7.4.1. Active participation in international projects including initiation of Horizon Europe applications and participation in Erasmus Plus and CIF programmes.

Evaluation

- Complies with requirements**
- Substantially complies with requirements
- Partially complies with requirements
- Does not comply with requirements