



**NATIONAL CENTER FOR  
EDUCATIONAL QUALITY  
ENHANCEMENT**

**Accreditation Expert Group Report on Higher Education Programme**

For educational programmes implemented within the first and second levels of higher education and Georgian language preparation educational programme

**International Relations and Politics 3-Year Joint Programme (with New Jersey City University – NJCU, USA)**

**Caucasus University**

Evaluation Date(s): Site Visit on 27 March 2026

Report Submission Date:

Tbilisi

## Information about a Higher Education Institution <sup>1</sup>

Name of Institution Indicating its Organizational Legal Form	Caucasus University LLC New Jersey City University (USA)
Identification Code of Institution	Caucasus University LLC - 205050567 New Jersey City University - 185129
Type of the Institution	University

## Expert Panel Members

<b>Chair</b> (Name, Surname, HEI/Organisation, Country)	Professor Dibyesh Anand, University of Westminster, UK
<b>Member</b> (Name, Surname, HEI/Organisation, Country)	Dr Sandro Tabatadze, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia
<b>Member</b> (Name, Surname, HEI/Organisation, Country)	Natia Gegelashvili, East European University (EEU), Georgia
<b>Member</b> (Name, Surname, HEI/Organisation, Country)	Professor Irma Kurdadze, Samtskhe-Javakheti State University, Georgia
<b>Member</b> (Name, Surname, HEI/Organisation, Country)	Salome Alania, Field Expert, Georgia

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<sup>1</sup> In the case of joint education programme: Please indicate the HEIs that carry out the programme. The indication of an identification code and type of institution is not obligatory if a HEI is recognised in accordance with the legislation of a foreign country.

## I. Information on the education programme

Name of Higher Education Programme (in Georgian)	საერთაშორისო ურთიერთობებისა და პოლიტიკის 3-წლიანი ერთობლივი პროგრამა (ნიუ ჯერსის სიტი უნივერსიტეტთან ერთად - NJCU, აშშ)
Name of Higher Education Programme (in English)	International Relations and Politics 3-Year Joint Programme (with New Jersey City University – NJCU, USA)
Level of Higher Education/programme	Bachelor's Studies
Qualification to be Awarded <sup>2</sup>	1. Caucasus University – Bachelor of International Relations 2. New Jersey City University (USA) – Bachelor of Arts in Political Science
Name and Code of the Detailed Field	0312 Political Science and Civics
Indication of the right to provide the teaching of subject/subjects/group of subjects of the relevant cycle of the general education <sup>3</sup>	-
Language of Instruction	English
Number of ECTS credits	200

<sup>2</sup> In case of implementing a joint higher education programme with a higher education institution recognized in accordance with the legislation of a foreign country, if the title of the qualification to be awarded differs, it shall be indicated separately for each institution.

<sup>3</sup> In case of Integrated Bachelor's-Master's Teacher Training Educational Programme and Teacher Training Educational Programme

Programme Status (Accredited/ Non-accredited/ Conditionally accredited/ Newly proposed/International accreditation) Indicating Relevant Decision (number, date)	New
Additional requirements for the programme admission (in the case of an art-creative and/or sports educational programme, passing a creative tour/internal competition, or in the case of another programme, specific requirements for admission to the programme/implementation of the programme)	-
The quota for MD students requested by the HEI (In the case of Medical Doctor one-cycle educational programme)	-

## II. Accreditation Report Executive Summary

### ☒ General Information on Education Programme

The programme under review is a newly proposed joint Bachelor's programme in International Relations and Politics, to be delivered collaboratively by Caucasus University (CU), a private university in Tbilisi, Georgia established in 2004, and New Jersey City University (NJCU), a public university in Jersey City, New Jersey, USA. The programme comprises 200 ECTS (120 US credits) over three academic years: the first two years (150 ECTS) at Caucasus University and the third year (50 ECTS / 30 US credits) at NJCU. Graduates receive dual qualifications: a Bachelor of International Relations from CU and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from NJCU.

The programme was approved by the Caucasus University President (Order N01/01-84, 04.11.2025). It builds on CU's existing Georgian- and English-language programmes in Diplomacy and International Relations, which have operated since 2009 and 2020 respectively. The programme is structured around 155 ECTS of field-specific courses (140 mandatory, 15 elective) and 45 ECTS of free component courses (including English and a second foreign language).

A distinctive feature is the UN Workshop Capstone course delivered at NJCU, linked to the National Model United Nations (NMUN) competition in New York, which is presented as a signature experiential learning component.

### ☒ Overview of the Accreditation Site Visit

The site visit was conducted in a hybrid format with two members of the panel being online while others were there in person. The panel had a strong element of coordination and found the visit useful.

#### o Brief Overview of Education Programme Compliance with the Standards

The programme demonstrates generally sound design across the five accreditation standards. The objectives and learning outcomes are clearly articulated and logically connected, and a detailed learning outcomes assessment mechanism has been developed. The curriculum is coherent, the credit structure is transparent, and the programme benefits from CU's established institutional infrastructure in terms of library resources, IT facilities, and quality assurance processes.

However, the expert panel identifies significant concerns relating to the sustainability and viability of the partnership arrangement with NJCU, given that institution's ongoing merger with Kean University (legislatively formalised in January 2026, with completion expected by July 2026). The Self-Evaluation Report, dated November 2025, makes no reference to this merger despite its potential to fundamentally alter the third-year delivery arrangement, degree-awarding capacity, and programme identity. The interview during the site visit clarified the picture.

### ☒ Recommendations

- ❑ The HEI should seek written assurance from NJCU (or its successor entity under the Kean merger) that the third-year programme component and the BA in Political Science degree award will continue to be available to students enrolled in this joint programme. (1.4)
- ❑ The HEI must perform a risk assessment addressing the financial and operational implications of the NJCU-Kean merger for this programme, including the financial terms of the partnership arrangement and any contingency funding provisions. (4.5)

o **Suggestions**

1. The programme objectives could more explicitly articulate the distinctive value added by the joint structure itself - i.e., what competences are developed specifically because students' study in two different national and institutional contexts, beyond what could be achieved at either institution alone. (1.1)
2. The HEI should consider introducing more formative elements that develop responsibility and autonomy (PLO 7) progressively from the first year, rather than concentrating them in the capstone year. (1.2)
3. The HEI should set a clear timeline (e.g., within the first year of operation) for a pilot review of the assessment mechanism to identify any practical issues before the full three-year cycle is complete. (1.4)
4. The benchmarking exercise could be strengthened by including at least one comparator from the US system, given that one-third of the programme is delivered there. (1.4)
5. The HEI should ensure that syllabi for the NJCU-delivered courses (Year 3) are presented in a format consistent with those of CU-delivered courses, with explicit mapping to programme learning outcomes, to support the transparency and documentation requirements of the European Approach (Standard 8) and to facilitate coherent learning outcomes assessment across both institutional settings. (1.5)
6. The HEI should strengthen the systematic integration of digital diplomacy into the core curriculum to better address emerging labour market demands and enhance students' analytical and strategic competencies in technologically mediated diplomatic contexts. (2.2)
7. Establish a regular and structured feedback mechanism to further strengthen communication with employers, for example, through periodic focus groups or annual consultations. (2.2)
8. The HEI should consider introducing a structured optional internship component, potentially during the summer between Years 2 and 3, which could be facilitated through CU's existing employer partnerships or through NJCU's connections in the New York/New Jersey area. (2.2)

9. The HEI should develop a brief pedagogical framework document that addresses how teaching and learning approaches are coordinated between CU and NJCU, acknowledging differences in pedagogical tradition while ensuring coherence of student experience. (2.3)
10. The HEI should produce a clear grade equivalence table and credit transfer protocol, documented and accessible to students, explaining how CU grades translate to the NJCU transcript and vice versa. (2.4)
11. The HEI's Career Service Centre to adopt a more structured and proactive engagement approach by introducing regular, well-organized activities such as career workshops, employer networking events, and thematic panel discussions. In addition, diversifying communication channels beyond email such as interactive platforms, mentoring schemes, and one-on-one career consultations. (3.1)
12. HEI would benefit from a more frequent evaluation of the labour market's needs and demands and establishing of a mechanism of permanent communication with the potential employers (International Organizations, NGOS and Public sector) at least once a year in order to inform the student support. (3.1)
13. The HEI should develop and document a specific support protocol for the Year 3 transition to NJCU, covering visa/immigration, housing, orientation at the partner institution, ongoing pastoral support, and mechanisms for students to raise concerns while abroad. (3.1)
14. Ensure a more balanced staff structure by gradually increasing the proportion of affiliated academic staff to enhance programme sustainability and academic continuity. (4.1)
15. It is suggested that as part of continuous professional development, the research performance of affiliated academic staff continue to be strengthened through more systematic support and monitoring of publication output and international academic visibility. (4.3)
16. The HEI should develop joint staff development activities between CU and NJCU staff involved in the programme, such as collaborative teaching workshops or joint research seminars, to strengthen the partnership's academic dimension. (4.3)

**☒ Brief Overview of the Best Practices (if applicable)<sup>4</sup>**

The UN Workshop Capstone course at NJCU represents a potentially distinctive integrative learning experience that could serve as a model for applied learning

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<sup>4</sup> A practice that is exceptionally effective and that can serve as a benchmark or example for other educational programme/programmes.

in international relations programmes, provided the partnership with NJCU (or its successor) is secured.

**☒ Information on Sharing or Not Sharing the Argumentative Position of the HEI**

We received the HEI's response to the draft report where they respond to the two recommendations (1.4 and 4.5), both connected to the partner institution's merger and hence change of status from NJCU to Kean University. As our draft report highlights, we had felt assured to an extent by the verbal statements made by the representatives of NJCU but made the recommendations because the written submissions before the exercise had not referenced this major institutional change and measures to mitigate it. The argumentative position by the HEI refers to the verbal assurance during the site visit, publicly available documents on the website as well as a letter from a senior leader of NJCU-Kean University, to make a case that the recommendations are already addressed. While the letter and submissions provide greater assurance, we would still leave the recommendations in our final report because of two reasons: a) the letter from NJCU-Kean University is undated and we are not obliged to accept documentation submitted this late; b) we would request the Council to be aware of these recommendations and make its own judgement – it would be irresponsible for the Expert Panel not to bring this to the Council attention. Informally, the letter and the argumentative position assures us to a great extent but due to the importance of the issue, we maintain our recommendation for the Council's decision.

**☒ Quantitative Data Analysis of the educational programme in accordance with the requirements of the accreditation standards, for example:**

This is a new programme that develops from existing but different programmes at the School of Public Administration since 2009. While the ratio of academic/scientific/invited as well as of affiliate academic staff to students enrolled is not relevant, the total number of staff involved is. The number is sufficient for the programme of this size. Ratio of the academic/scientific staff (14) to invited staff (20) is 7:10. This is sufficient for the programme.

Moreover, the scientific/research index of the individuals involved in the programme for the last 5 years is 117 with 40 publications in international journals and 21 in local journals.

### III. Summary Table of Compliance of the programmes with the standards

	Standard	Evaluation
1.	1.1. Educational Programme Objectives, Learning Outcomes and their Compliance with the Programme	Complies
1.1	<a href="#">Programme Objectives</a>	Complies
1.2	<a href="#">Programme Learning Outcomes</a>	Complies
1.3	<a href="#">Evaluation Mechanism of the Programme Learning Outcomes</a>	Complies
1.4	<a href="#">Structure and Content of Educational Programme</a>	Substantially
1.5	<a href="#">Academic Course/Subject</a>	Complies
2.	Methodology and Organization of Teaching, Adequacy of Evaluation of Programme Mastering	Complies
2.1	<a href="#">Programme Admission Preconditions</a>	Complies
2.2	<a href="#">The Development of Practical, Scientific/Research/ Creative/ Performance and Transferable Skills</a>	Complies
2.3	<a href="#">Teaching and Learning Methods</a>	Complies
2.4	<a href="#">Student Evaluation</a>	Complies
3.	Student Achievements and Individual Work with Them	Complies
3.1	<a href="#">Student Consulting and Support Services</a>	Complies
3.2	<a href="#">Master's Student Supervision</a>	Select Appropriate
4	Providing Teaching Resources	Complies
4.1	<a href="#">Human Resources</a>	Complies
4.2	<a href="#">Qualification of Supervisors of Master's Student</a>	Select Appropriate
4.3	<a href="#">Professional Development of Academic, Scientific and Invited Staff</a>	Complies
4.4	<a href="#">Material Resources</a>	Complies
4.5	<a href="#">Programme/Faculty/School Budget and Programme Financial Sustainability</a>	Substantially

5	5. Teaching Quality Enhancement Opportunities	Complies
5.1	<a href="#">Internal Quality Evaluation</a>	Complies
5.2	<a href="#">External Quality Evaluation</a>	Complies
5.3	<a href="#">Programme Monitoring and Periodic Review</a>	Complies

Guidelines and Standards (See link)

[Accreditation Standards for Higher Education Programmes](#)

[Guideline for Assessment of Accreditation Standards of Higher Education Programmes](#)

Suggestions on the evaluation of the methodology for determining the threshold number of student quotas on a higher education institution educational programme of a certified medical doctor

[Assessment criteria](#)

Definitions:

Recommendations - should be considered by the HEI in order to comply the programme with the requirements of the standard

Suggestions - non-binding suggestions for the programme development

## IV. Compliance of the Programme with Accreditation Standards

### 1. Educational Programme Objectives, Learning Outcomes and their Compliance with the Programme

A programme has clearly established objectives and learning outcomes, which are logically connected to each other. Programme objectives are consistent with the mission, objectives and strategic plan of the HEI. Programme learning outcomes are assessed on a regular basis to improve the programme. The content and consistent structure of the programme ensure the achievement of the set goals and expected learning outcomes.

#### 1.1 Programme Objectives

Programme objectives consider the specificity of the field of study, level and educational programme, and define the set of knowledge, skills and competences a programme aims to develop in graduate students. They also illustrate the contribution of the programme to the development of the field and society.

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### Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

The joint programme sets out four objectives: (I) providing comprehensive knowledge of international relations and politics; (II) equipping students with understanding of theories, principles and practices of governance, diplomacy and global politics; (III) developing research, analytical and professional communication skills in multiple languages; and (IV) preparing competitive, practice-oriented specialists with democratic values. These objectives are consistent across the Self-Evaluation Report, the Programme Document, the Learning Outcomes Evaluation Mechanism (Annex 1), and were corroborated during the site visit interviews.

Article 3(1) of the Law of Georgia on Higher Education requires higher education to "facilitate the formation of Georgian and international cultural values and to focus on ideas of democracy and humanism," to "realise personal potential, develop creative skills, [and] train persons with competences relevant to present-day requirements," and to "ensure competitiveness of persons with higher education in domestic as well as in international labour markets." The programme objectives directly address these legislative goals: Objectives I and II align with the knowledge and cultural formation requirements, Objective III with the development of competences relevant to present-day professional demands, and Objective IV with the competitiveness and democratic values mandates.

As this is a joint programme under Article 49<sup>1</sup> of the Law on Higher Education — defined in Article 2(z<sup>59</sup>) as "an educational programme carried out between a Georgian higher education institution/institutions and/or a higher education institution recognised under the legislation of a foreign country" — and given its dual-degree structure, the programme must also be assessed against the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (approved by EHEA ministers, May 2015). Standard 1.1 of the European Approach requires that cooperating institutions be "recognised as higher education institutions by the relevant authorities of their countries" and that "their respective national legal frameworks should enable them to participate in the joint programme and, if applicable, to award a joint degree." Both Caucasus University (authorised in Georgia) and NJCU (accredited in the United States) satisfy this eligibility requirement; however, the implications of the NJCU–Kean University merger for NJCU's ongoing degree-awarding capacity are considered under Standard 1.4 below.

Further, Standard 1.2 of the European Approach requires that the joint programme "be offered jointly, involving all cooperating institutions in the design and delivery of the programme." The SER, Programme Document, and site visit evidence confirm that both institutions contributed to programme design, with CU delivering Years 1–2 and NJCU delivering Year 3, and that collaborative design processes (including external review by scholars from the University of St Andrews and Babeş-Bolyai University) were undertaken.

The four objectives cover the full spectrum from foundational knowledge (Objectives I, II) through applied skills (Objective III) to values and professional readiness (Objective IV), which is relevant and appropriate for a first-cycle programme in this field. The objectives appropriately define the knowledge, skills, and competences the programme aims to develop, consistent with Article 48(2) of the Law on Higher Education, which states that the purpose of a Bachelor's Programme is "to deepen the knowledge of theoretical aspects of academic disciplines in order to ensure the training of persons through research programmes for continuing studies for a Master's academic degree and for working within the limits determined by the legislation of Georgia." The objectives' reference to preparation for Master's-level study and professional employment fulfils this statutory requirement.

Overall, the programme objectives are clearly formulated and reflect the specificity of the field, the expected level of knowledge, skills, and competences for graduates, and the legislative and European framework requirements applicable to a joint Bachelor's programme. The emphasis on language proficiency, cross-cultural competencies, and independent research further

contributes to graduates' preparedness for both regional and international contexts.

The program goals align with Caucasus University's overall strategic objectives and support its internationalization strategy. The same is true for New Jersey City University, as confirmed through document reviews and interviews with administration representatives. Therefore, there is explicit strategic alignment of the programme with the institutions. The program, as evidenced in SER and during the site visit, identifies the labour market gap that it will cater to. The objectives and the information about the programme are publicly available via the website.

These program goals are publicly accessible. Additionally, both the self-assessment report and interviews with the program team revealed that the goals were developed based on a comprehensive labor-market survey encompassing both local and international sectors. According to the program management, this survey indicated that there is currently no joint bachelor's program in the country offering degrees in both international relations and political science. The integration of these fields is also reflected in the program goals.

### **Evidences/Indicators**

- o Self-Evaluation Report, Section 1.1
- o Programme Document (Programme Objectives section)
- o Learning Outcomes Evaluation Mechanism (Annex 1), Section IV (Goals–Outcomes Map)
- o Caucasus University mission statement (referenced in SER)
- o Law of Georgia on Higher Education, Articles 3, 48, and 49<sup>1</sup>
- o European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, Standards 1.1 and 1.2
- o Site Visit

### **Recommendations:**

- o No recommendations

### **Suggestions for the Programme Development**

- o The programme objectives could more explicitly articulate the distinctive value added by the joint structure itself – i.e., what competences are developed specifically because students' study in two different national

and institutional contexts, beyond what could be achieved at either institution alone.

## Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Evaluation
<b>1.1 Programme Objectives</b>	<b>Complies</b>

### 1.2 Programme Learning Outcomes

- The learning outcomes of the programme are logically related to the programme objectives and the specifics of the study field.
  - Programme learning outcomes describe knowledge, skills, and/or the responsibility and autonomy that students gain upon completion of the programme.
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### Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

The programme defines seven learning outcomes across three categories: Knowledge (PLOs 1–3), Skills (PLOs 4–6), and Responsibility and Autonomy (PLO 7). These are consistent across all reviewed documents and are logically derived from the four programme objectives. Through the SER and interviews during the site visit, it was clear that the programme content and learning outcomes are consistent with developments in the field of International Relations and Politics and responsive to changing needs of global politics. It is also evident that the programme has been developed through close collaboration between all stakeholders including academics, research and visiting staff, students, graduates, and employers.

The learning outcomes must be assessed against Article 3 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which provides the qualifications descriptor for each cycle of higher education. For a first-cycle (Bachelor's) programme, the NQF (Article 3.6) requires learning outcomes across six criteria: (a) Knowledge and understanding — “Advanced knowledge of the field of study, including critical analysis of theories and principles; understanding of complex

matters of the field of study”; (b) Applying knowledge — “Ability to use field specific methods and also certain selected methods for the solution of problems; ability to carry out research and practical projects under predetermined directions”; (c) Making judgements — “Ability to select and interpret field specific data, also to analyse abstract data and/or situations using standards and certain selected methods, ability to make sound judgement”; (d) Communication skills — “Ability to prepare a detailed written report on ideas, current problems and solutions to them and to communicate information orally to specialists and non-specialists in the Georgian and foreign languages; ability to creatively use modern information and communication technologies”; (e) Learning skills — “Ability to evaluate own learning process in a coherent and comprehensive manner; ability to identify further learning needs”; and (f) Values — “Ability to participate in the formation of values and strive for their establishment.”

Mapping the programme’s seven PLOs against these NQF descriptors: PLOs 1–3 (knowledge of international relations theory, Georgian and American political systems, and global governance structures) correspond to descriptor (a); PLOs 4–5 (research methods, professional communication in multiple languages) correspond to descriptors (b), (c), and (d); PLO 6 (applied problem-solving in diplomatic and policy contexts) corresponds to descriptor (b); and PLO 7 (responsibility and autonomy, including ethical conduct and independent project work) corresponds to descriptors (e) and (f). The alignment is broadly comprehensive.

Furthermore, Standard 2 of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes requires that “the intended learning outcomes should align with the corresponding level in the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA), as well as the applicable national qualifications framework(s)” (Standard 2.1), and that they “should comprise knowledge, skills, and competencies in the respective disciplinary field(s)” (Standard 2.2). The programme’s PLOs satisfy both requirements: they are formulated using action verbs consistent with Bloom’s Taxonomy (explains, identifies, distinguishes, analyses, communicates, applies, plans), ensuring measurability, and they appropriately correspond to Level VI of the National Qualifications Framework.

The European Approach further requires (Standard 2.3) that “the programme should be able to demonstrate that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.” As the programme has not yet been delivered, this can only be assessed prospectively through the design of the assessment mechanism (see Standard 1.3 below).

However, the panel notes a structural concern regarding the distribution of learning outcomes across the programme. PLOs 1–6 are served by various courses across all three years. PLO 7 (responsibility and autonomy), however, appears to be served by only a limited number of courses concentrated in the final year at NJCU. While this is understandable given the capstone nature of the third year (particularly the UN Workshop), it means that the competences described by the NQF first-cycle descriptors for learning skills — “ability to evaluate own learning process in a coherent and comprehensive manner; ability to identify further learning needs” (Article 3.6(e)) — and values — “ability to participate in the formation of values and strive for their establishment” (Article 3.6(f)) — are addressed primarily through a limited set of courses at the end of the programme rather than being developed across all three years.

Both the document review and face-to-face interviews revealed that the development of the learning outcomes was a collaborative effort between both universities. In addition to institutional collaboration, various stakeholders—including the academic team for the program, the quality assurance service, and the program director—actively participated in developing the learning outcomes and their mappings (e.g., the aim and learning outcomes map and the curriculum map). This process underwent internal quality assurance checks before being sent for external evaluation.

The learning outcomes are based on the program's goals, ensuring a coherent educational framework. Additionally, the self-assessment report included a map outlining the alignment between the program goals and the learning outcomes. During the interviews, further questions were posed to confirm the accuracy of the documentation. Overall, the learning outcomes also meet the requirements.

### **Evidences/Indicators**

- o Self-Evaluation Report, Section 1.2
- o Programme Document (Learning Outcomes section)
- o Learning Outcomes Evaluation Mechanism (Annex 1)
- o National Qualifications Framework, Article 3.6 (first-cycle descriptors)
- o European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, Standards 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3
- o Site Visit

### **Recommendations:**

- o No recommendations.

### **Suggestions for the Programme Development:**

- o The HEI should consider introducing more formative elements that develop responsibility and autonomy (PLO 7) progressively from the first year, rather than concentrating them in the capstone year. This would strengthen the programme's capacity to ensure that graduates achieve the NQF first-cycle descriptors for learning skills (Article 3.6(e)) and values (Article 3.6(f)) through sustained engagement across the full duration of the programme.

## Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Evaluation
<b><u>1.2</u></b> <b><u>Programme</u></b> <b><u>Learning</u></b> <b><u>Outcomes</u></b>	<b>Complies</b>

### 1.3 Evaluation Mechanism of the Programme Learning Outcomes

- ☒ Evaluation mechanisms of the programme learning outcomes are defined; the programme learning outcomes evaluation cycle consists of defining, collecting and analyzing data necessary to measure learning outcomes;
- ☒ Programme learning outcomes assessment results are utilized for the improvement of the programme.

### Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

The evaluation mechanism is set out in detail in the documentation supplied. The mechanism employs both direct assessment (monitoring student performance in mandatory courses) and indirect assessment (enrolment dynamics, completion rates, mobility data, graduate employment statistics, stakeholder surveys).

The direct assessment methodology is clearly defined: a learning outcome is considered achieved if at least 80% of registered students (or at least 10 students) meet the minimum competency threshold and earn the corresponding credits. Multiple groups are averaged arithmetically. The

observation plan specifies the semester, course, and assessment components (quizzes, tests, essays, presentations, exams) for each learning outcome, beginning from the 2026 Fall Semester. The course-to-outcome rubrics in Annex 1 are thorough, providing four-level descriptors (Insufficient, Sufficient, Good, Excellent) for each course's contribution to each PLO.

Standard 2.3 of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes requires that “the programme should be able to demonstrate that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.” Standard 9 further requires that “the cooperating institutions should apply joint internal quality assurance processes in accordance with part one of the ESG.” Standard 5.2 of the European Approach requires that “the examination regulations and the assessment of the achieved learning outcomes should correspond with the intended learning outcomes” and that “they should be applied consistently among partner institutions.” The mechanism described in the SER and Annex 1 is designed to satisfy these requirements: it specifies measurable thresholds, defines observation plans linked to specific courses and semesters, and provides rubrics that could, in principle, be applied consistently across the programme.

Article 63(2)(a) of the Law of Georgia on Higher Education identifies “the purpose of an educational programme, outcomes of studies and their compliance with the programme” as the first accreditation standard. Article 25 requires that “educational, scientific research work conducted by a higher education institution, and the quality of the professional development of its personnel, shall be subject to systematic assessment.” The mechanism as designed provides a framework for such systematic assessment.

However, at this stage, the mechanism is prospective — the programme has not yet been delivered. The SER's characterisation of the mechanism as “a well-organised, outcome-oriented system” is therefore an aspiration rather than a demonstrated fact. While the panel assumes this confidence is based on practice in existing cognate programmes at Caucasus University, the mechanism has yet to be tested in the specific context of a joint programme spanning two

institutional and national settings. The European Approach’s emphasis on joint quality assurance processes (Standard 9) makes the cross-institutional dimension particularly important and hence we make a suggestion below.

### **Evidences/Indicators**

- o Self-Evaluation Report
- o Learning Outcomes Evaluation Mechanism (Annex 1)
- o Regulation on Implementation of Educational Programmes (Article 7)
- o Law of Georgia on Higher Education, Articles 25 and 63
- o European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, Standards 2.3, 5.2, and 9
- o Site Visit

### **Recommendations:**

- o No recommendations

### **Suggestions for the Programme Development**

- o It is suggested that the HEI should set a clear timeline (e.g., within the first year of operation) for a pilot review of the assessment mechanism to identify any practical issues before the full three-year cycle is complete.

### **Evaluation**

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Evaluation
<b><u>1.3 Evaluation Mechanism of the Programme Learning Outcomes</u></b>	<b>Complies</b>

### **1.4. Structure and Content of Education Programme**

- The Programme is designed according to HEI’s methodology for planning, designing and developing of education programmes.

- ☒ The Programme structure is consistent and logical. The content and structure of the programme ensure the achievement of programme learning outcomes. The qualification to be granted is consistent with the content and learning outcomes of the programme.
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## Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

The programme is designed in accordance with CU's institutional regulation for programme development (approved October 2024), which sets out a structured process for initiation, development, approval, and quality assurance of educational programmes. The regulation requires governing board approval, labour market analysis, employer consultation, external expert review, and benchmarking — all of which the SER claims have been completed.

Credit structure. Article 46(2)(a) of the Law of Georgia on Higher Education requires that a Bachelor's Programme "consists of at least 240 credits." The NQF (Article 2.5) confirms this: "The credit value of a Bachelor's educational programme is at least 240 credits." This programme comprises 200 ECTS over 3 years. Article 46(2<sup>1</sup>) of the Law provides that "the educational programme for one academic year consists of an average of 60 credits." Standard 3 of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes requires that "the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) should be applied properly and the distribution of credits should be clear" (Standard 3.2), and that "a joint bachelor programme will typically amount to a total student workload of 180–240 ECTS-credits" (Standard 3.3). The 200-ECTS total falls within the European Approach range. The programme is structured as a joint programme under Article 49<sup>1</sup> of the Law, awarding dual qualifications: a Bachelor of International Relations from CU and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from NJCU. The credit structure reflects this dual-qualification design, with each institution's credit requirements operating under its respective national framework.

Programme structure. The programme structure is logically organised: 200 ECTS over 3 years (6 semesters), with 75 ECTS per year at CU (semesters I–IV) and 50 ECTS at NJCU (semesters V–VI). The curriculum comprises field-specific courses (155 ECTS: 140 mandatory + 15 elective) and free component courses (45 ECTS: 15 university mandatory + 10 English + 20 second foreign language). The credit allocation is consistent across the SER and Programme Document.

The curriculum follows a logical knowledge-building progression. Year 1 provides foundational courses (Contemporary Thought, Civilisation, Introduction to Political Science, Introduction to IR, Statistical Reasoning, Social Psychology). Year 2 deepens with theoretical and regional specialisation (Theories of IR, International Security, EU Institutions, International Economics, International Law). Year 3 at NJCU offers American and global perspectives (US Politics, State and Local Government, International Political Economy, Civil Liberties, UN Workshop Capstone). Prerequisites are specified where appropriate. This progression aligns with Standard 3.1 of the European Approach, which requires that “the structure and content of the curriculum should be fit to enable the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.” Cooperation agreement. Standard 1.3 of the European Approach requires that “the terms and conditions of the joint programme should be laid down in a cooperation agreement,” covering in particular: denomination of the degree(s) awarded, coordination and responsibilities of partners regarding management and financial organisation, admission and selection procedures, mobility of students and teachers, and examination regulations including recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures. The programme is governed by an agreement between CU and NJCU that addresses these elements.

Benchmarking. The benchmarking exercise compared the programme against five universities outside Georgia (LSE, SOAS, Queen’s Belfast, Birmingham, Forward College), showing broad curricular alignment. External review was conducted by experts from the University of St Andrews and Babeş-Bolyai University, and their letters are strong.

Structural concern regarding the NJCU–Kean University merger. A significant structural concern arises from the NJCU–Kean University merger, which the expert panel raised during the site visit. In January 2026, the New Jersey state legislature formalised the merger, with completion expected by July 2026. If NJCU ceases to exist as an independent degree-granting institution, the programme’s structural premise — a third year at NJCU leading to a BA in Political Science from NJCU — may be fundamentally affected. This has direct implications for compliance with the European Approach Standard 1.1, which requires that participating institutions “be recognised as higher education institutions by the relevant authorities of their countries” and that “their respective national legal frameworks should enable them to participate in the joint programme and, if applicable, to award a joint degree.” It also affects Standard 1.3 (cooperation agreement), since the existing agreement is between CU and NJCU, and the legal identity of the contracting partner may change.

Under Article 49<sup>1</sup>(3) of the Law of Georgia on Higher Education, a joint programme requires an agreement between the implementing institutions, and “the draft agreement under this paragraph must be agreed upon with the National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement.” Any change in the identity of the partner institution would necessitate a new or amended agreement.

The SER, dated November 2025, makes no reference to this merger despite its potential to fundamentally alter the third-year delivery arrangement, degree-awarding capacity, and programme identity. It was surprising to see the merger not referenced in the SER. An assurance from the partner institution will ensure continued compliance with the eligibility requirements of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (Standard 1.1), the cooperation agreement requirements (Standard 1.3), and Article 49<sup>1</sup> of the Law of Georgia on Higher Education, which requires a valid agreement between the implementing institutions. However, the expert panel had a robust discussion with the HEI and its US partner during the site visit and received reassurance

regarding the continuation of the partnership under the successor entity. While this was reassuring, the panel considers that formal written assurance is necessary.

### **Evidences/Indicators**

- o Self-Evaluation Report, Section 1.4
- o Programme Document (Curriculum section, including semester-by-semester course listing)
- o Regulation on Implementation of Educational Programmes
- o Benchmarking analysis (referenced in SER Section 5.2)
- o External expert evaluation letters from St Andrews and Babeş-Bolyai
- o Law of Georgia on Higher Education, Articles 46, 48, and 49<sup>1</sup>
- o National Qualifications Framework, Articles 2.5 and 4.2
- o European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, Standards 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3
- o Online research confirming NJCU-Kean merger (Governor Murphy legislation, January 2026)
- o Site Visit

### **Recommendations:**

- o The HEI should seek written assurance from NJCU (or its successor entity under the Kean merger) that the third-year programme component and the BA in Political Science degree award will continue to be available to students enrolled in this joint programme.

### **Suggestions for the Programme Development**

- o The benchmarking exercise could be strengthened by including at least one comparator from the US system, given that one-third of the programme is delivered there and the programme awards a US degree alongside the Georgian qualification.

### **Evaluation**

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Evaluation
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**1.4 Structure and  
Content of  
Educational  
Programme**

**Substantially**

**1.5. Academic Course/Subject**

- The content of the academic course / subject and the number of credits ensure the achievement of the learning outcomes defined by this course / subject.
  - The content and the learning outcomes of the academic course/subject of the main field of study ensure the achievement of the learning outcomes of the programme.
  - The study materials indicated in the syllabus ensure the achievement of the learning outcomes of the programme.
- 

The analysis of the programme documentation indicates that the courses of the curriculum are coherent, systematically organized, and aligned with both programme-level and course-level learning outcomes. The learning outcomes of individual academic courses and subjects are clearly formulated and demonstrate consistency with the overarching programme learning outcomes, ensuring that each component contributes meaningfully to the development of the intended competencies within the main field of study.

The content of each course corresponds appropriately to its stated learning outcomes, reflecting a logical and well-integrated curriculum design. Credit allocation across courses appears proportionate to the scope and complexity of the subject matter, with most courses assigned 5 ECTS credits, which is consistent with standard academic practice. Furthermore, the balance between contact hours and independent study is adequate and takes into account the specific nature and requirements of each course, supporting the effective achievement of learning outcomes. The number of contact hours is aligned with course content and expected learning outcomes, ensuring sufficient instructional engagement.

Assessment mechanisms are comprehensive, with each learning outcome of every course being subject to evaluation through appropriate methods. This

indicates a systematic approach to measuring student achievement and ensures that intended competencies are effectively monitored and verified.

The programme documentation confirms that all courses are clearly listed with their respective codes, ECTS credits, prerequisites, and semester allocation. Syllabi are available for each course and include essential components such as course objectives, learning outcomes, teaching methods, assessment criteria, and required literature. The compulsory literature and other teaching and learning resources specified in the syllabi are relevant to the course content, aligned with learning outcomes, and reflect current developments in the field. Importantly, they incorporate recent scholarly contributions and account for the specific characteristics of each academic subject.

The curriculum covers all core areas expected of an International Relations and Political Science programme, including foundational courses in political science, international relations theory, comparative politics, diplomacy, public administration, economics, international law, and research methods. The elective component further strengthens the programme by offering contemporary and specialized topics such as Digital Diplomacy, Green Politics and Sustainable Development, Middle East Politics, International Terrorism, and Ethics of War.

The inclusion of NJCU (POLI-coded) courses adds a valuable comparative dimension, particularly in relation to American political institutions and global issues, thereby enhancing the international character of the programme and justifying its joint structure. The UN Workshop (POLI 440), serving as a capstone course, represents a flagship component that integrates theoretical knowledge with practical application.

Finally, the mapping of course-level learning outcomes to programme learning outcomes, as presented in Annex 1, demonstrates a high degree of internal

consistency and alignment across the curriculum, confirming that the programme is designed in a structured and outcome-oriented manner.

Standard 8 of the European Approach (Transparency and Documentation) requires that “relevant information about the programme like admission requirements and procedures, course catalogue, examination and assessment procedures etc. should be well documented and published by taking into account specific needs of mobile students.” The availability of syllabi with clearly specified assessment criteria and literature supports compliance with this transparency standard, which is particularly important for a joint programme where students transition between two institutional settings.

### **Evidences/Indicators**

- Programme Document (full curriculum table with course codes, credits, semesters)
- Self-Evaluation Report, Section 1.5
- Learning Outcomes Evaluation Mechanism (Annex 1) — course-to-PLO mapping
- National Qualifications Framework, Articles 1.2 and 3.6
- European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, Standards 2.3, 3.2, 5.1, and 8
- Site visit

### **Recommendations:**

- No recommendation

### **Suggestions for the Programme Development**

- The HEI should ensure that syllabi for the NJCU-delivered courses (Year 3) are presented in a format consistent with those of CU-delivered courses, with explicit mapping to programme learning outcomes, to support the transparency and documentation requirements of the European Approach (Standard 8) and to facilitate coherent learning outcomes assessment across both institutional settings.

## Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Evaluation
<b>1.5. Academic Course/Subject</b>	<b>Complies</b>

### **2. Methodology and Organisation of Teaching, Adequacy of Evaluation of Programme Mastering**

Prerequisites for admission to the programme, teaching-learning methods and student assessment consider the specificity of the study field, level requirements, student needs, and ensure the achievement of the objectives and expected learning outcomes of the programme.

#### **2.1 Programme Admission Preconditions**

The HEI has relevant, transparent, fair, public and accessible programme admission preconditions and procedures that ensure the engagement of individuals with relevant knowledge and skills in the programme to achieve learning outcomes.

The admission prerequisites for this program reflect its specific requirements, ensuring that applicants have the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies to succeed.

A key requirement for admission is the successful completion of the Unified National Exams, which includes a mandatory English language exam. Exceptions to this general enrollment criterion are allowed only in accordance with established legislation. Specifically, individuals may qualify for enrollment in the program without taking the Unified National Exams if they can demonstrate English language proficiency at the B2 level. It can be evidenced by an IELTS score of 6.0, a TOEFL score of 78, or another recognized international certificate at the B2 level. Alternatively, candidates may qualify by passing the university's own B2-level English exam.

Additionally, enrollment in the program on a mobility basis is permitted, provided it is in accordance with the procedures established by law. The information on these prerequisites has been confirmed through multiple

interviews with the program director, university administration, and representatives from the quality assurance service. Consequently, the prerequisites and admission procedures are in line with current legislation. Furthermore, these requirements are logically connected to the program's outcomes, content, level, the qualifications awarded, and the language of instruction. The admission criteria and processes are fair, transparent, and accessible to all applicants.

### **Evidences/Indicators**

- o Educational programme;
- o Website
- o Student body planning methodology for educational programme;
- o Site Visit

### **Recommendations:**

- o No recommendations

### **Suggestions for the Programme Development**

- o N/A

### **Evaluation**

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Evaluation
<b><u>2.1 Programme Admission Preconditions</u></b>	<b>Complies</b>

### **2.2. The Development of Practical, Scientific/Research/Creative/Performing and Transferable Skills**

Programme ensures the development of students' practical, scientific/research/creative/performing and transferable skills and/or their involvement in research projects, in accordance with the programme learning outcomes.

The programme demonstrates compliance with the standard requirements for the development of practical, scientific, and transferable skills. This

assessment is supported by three interrelated dimensions. First, the defined learning outcomes comprehensively integrate discipline-specific knowledge with transversal competencies, ensuring both academic rigor and applicability beyond the field. Second, the adopted teaching and learning methods are explicitly oriented toward the practical application of these skills, fostering analytical, communicative, and problem-solving capacities. Third, the programme's collaborative structure and internationalized learning environment further strengthen the transferability of competences and enhance graduate employability. In this regard, the UN Workshop constitutes a particularly effective model of skills-based learning, combining simulation, research, and applied policy engagement.

Evidence derived from programme documentation and stakeholder interviews indicates a consistently high level of employer satisfaction. The integration of practical components is partially constrained by legal and administrative protocols governing placements within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other governmental institutions. Nevertheless, Caucasus University has proactively mitigated these constraints through the establishment of formal memoranda of cooperation, enabling structured internship opportunities in Parliament, the Ministry of Defence, and related public sector bodies. Consequently, graduates demonstrate strong employability across multiple sectors, particularly within the civil service. This outcome is further reinforced by the programme's emphasis on research competencies and institutional support mechanisms, including job fairs. At the same time, comparatively limited employment opportunities within Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and international organizations may restrict students' exposure to broader civic and transnational professional environments.

Internships are currently classified as extracurricular activities and do not carry academic credit. By contrast, within the joint degree framework in the United States, students participate in a UN Capstone Programme a semester-long, credit-bearing component almost equivalent to a BA thesis (5 ECTS). This module integrates simulation-based learning with substantial research requirements, including the preparation of a position paper, participation in UN simulation exercises, and the completion of two research papers. The programme has been developed through extensive stakeholder consultation, involving representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, think tanks, and analytical organizations. The design process incorporated multiple formats, including interviews, structured consultations, questionnaires, and in-person discussions. Additional engagement with the

local UN Country Team—comprising UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF, and other agencies has ensured alignment with international professional standards. Continued dialogue with stakeholders is planned to maintain responsiveness to evolving labour market demands. Nonetheless, there remains a clear need to expand the internship portfolio to diversify students' practical learning opportunities.

As the programme progresses, there is a growing emphasis on the practical application of knowledge. In the later semesters, professors increasingly integrate practical components into their teaching, including UN simulations, debates, and applied exercises. Students evaluate their professors through anonymous online surveys conducted each semester. In addition, the university supports student participation in conferences, although these do not substitute for formal internships or practical placements. Regarding student feedback, students report that their voices are generally heard. Various dialogue formats, including discussions with faculty members and the dean, are used to gather input, and many students have actively participated in these processes.

The programme's responsiveness to labour market needs is further evidenced by employer evaluations included in the self-evaluation report. Interviews conducted during the site visit confirm that employers perceive the programme as well-structured, with clearly defined objectives and learning outcomes, and report consistently positive experiences with HEI graduates. At the same time, several areas for enhancement were identified. In particular, stakeholders recommended strengthening the digital diplomacy component, with greater emphasis on advanced digital competences. While such elements are present within the curriculum, their further development would increase relevance in a rapidly evolving professional context. Additionally, given the growing importance of artificial intelligence, expanding training in data analysis and its applications in diplomacy is advisable. It was also observed that employer engagement is currently conducted primarily on an individual and ad hoc basis, relying on email communication and interviews rather than institutionalized formats such as focus groups or advisory boards.

### **Evidences/Indicators**

- Site Visit
- Self-evaluation report;
- Students' Evaluation Report;

- o Employers' Evaluation Report;
- o Labour Market Study;
- o Respective agreements / memorandums with economic agents, employers and objects of practice.

**Recommendations:**

- o N/A

**Suggestions for the Programme Development**

- o The HEI should strengthen the systematic integration of digital diplomacy into the core curriculum to better address emerging labour market demands and enhance students' analytical and strategic competencies in technologically mediated diplomatic contexts.
- o Establish a regular and structured feedback mechanism to further strengthen communication with employers, for example, through periodic focus groups or annual consultations.
- o The HEI should consider introducing a structured optional internship component, potentially during the summer between Years 2 and 3, which could be facilitated through CU's existing employer partnerships or through NJCU's connections in the New York/New Jersey area.

**Evaluation**

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Evaluation
2.2. <u>The Development of practical, scientific/research/creative/performing and transferable skills</u>	Complies

**2.3. Teaching and Learning Methods**

The programme is implemented by use student-oriented teaching and learning methods. Teaching and learning methods correspond to the level of education, course/subject content, learning outcomes, and ensure their achievement.

The SER lists a wide range of teaching methods: verbal/oral methods, working with texts, written work, demonstration, case study analysis, problem-based learning, inductive and deductive methods, group work, collaborative learning, heuristic methods, brainstorming, action-oriented learning, and comparative and historical methods. Specific methods for each course are stated to be outlined in the syllabi. These methods are appropriate for the discipline and broadly align with student-centred approaches. The combination of lecture-based and participatory methods is suitable for an undergraduate programme in international relations and political science.

The evaluation of teaching and learning methods indicates that the programme largely complies with the established standard, demonstrating coherence between pedagogical approaches, programme objectives, and intended learning outcomes.

First, the teaching and learning methods outlined in the programme are appropriately diverse and combine both conventional and active, practice-oriented approaches, including discussion and debate, group work, problem-based learning (PBL), case analysis, action-oriented learning, practical methods, and e-learning. This range of methods is well aligned with the content, level, and intended learning outcomes of the Bachelor's Programme in International Relations and Politics. It provides an appropriate pedagogical basis for the development of both disciplinary knowledge and key transferable competences, including analytical reasoning, communication, negotiation, and critical thinking. This alignment is particularly evident given that the programme learning outcomes explicitly emphasize analysis, evidence-based reasoning, communication, and problem-solving, all of which are supported by the teaching methods identified in the programme documentation.

Second, the programme structure and course content indicate that student engagement is embedded not merely at a formal level, but as a substantive feature of the learning process. Methods based on discussion, debate, case-based analysis, collaborative work, and practical assignments foster meaningful interaction both between students and academic staff and among students themselves. In this regard, particular attention should be drawn to courses such as *The United Nations and Global Politics* and *The United Nations Seminar*, whose formats are clearly oriented toward participatory, simulation-based, and practice-focused learning. These components are especially relevant to the profile of the programme and are consistent with its stated objective of preparing practice-oriented and competitive graduates.

The programme also demonstrates a positive approach to the development of student autonomy and responsibility. Its learning outcomes explicitly refer to the planning and implementation of individual and group projects in accordance with ethical norms and the principles of academic integrity. This is further reinforced through teaching methods such as guided reading, research assignments, presentations, independent study, and problem-based learning, all of which require students to take active responsibility for their own learning process. The programme's workload distribution additionally supports this assessment, as independent work constitutes a substantial component of the overall student effort.

With regard to methodological flexibility, the programme formally recognizes that teaching and learning methods should complement one another and be adapted to the specific nature of each course through individual syllabi. It is also indicated that, where necessary, an individual study plan tailored to students' interests and academic preparedness may be developed. This provides a basis for compliance with the relevant criterion. At the same time, the available documentation does not demonstrate in sufficient detail how this principle is operationalized in practice, particularly with respect to differing levels of academic preparedness, special educational needs, or the cultural and academic adaptation of international students. Thus, while the principle of flexibility is clearly acknowledged, its practical implementation could be documented more explicitly.

In terms of electronic and distance learning, the programme appears to meet the basic requirements. The documentation explicitly refers to e-learning, while the institutional infrastructure—including an electronic assessment system, digital platforms, computer laboratories, Wi-Fi access, and relevant technical equipment—provides an adequate material basis for such delivery. This suggests that, where necessary, the Higher Education Institution is capable of ensuring continuity of learning in electronic or distance formats without altering the programme's objectives or intended learning outcomes. Nevertheless, the case would be stronger if more concrete examples were provided regarding the implementation of online or hybrid teaching in practice-oriented components such as debates, simulations, and group-based assignments.

These findings were further corroborated during the site visit interviews conducted with programme management and academic staff, as well as with students and graduates of the related programme. Overall, the evidence indicates that the teaching and learning methods are broadly appropriate to the programme level, content, and intended learning outcomes, and that they support active student participation, interaction, autonomy, and the

development of analytical and critical skills. At the same time, some aspects—particularly the practical implementation of individualized support and the application of flexible methods in diverse student contexts—would benefit from more explicit documentation and systematic demonstration in the accreditation materials.

### **Evidences/Indicators**

- o Educational programme
- o Teaching - learning methods;
- o Electronic resources utilized to implement the programme in the HEI;
- o Site Visit

### **Recommendations:**

- o N/A

### **Suggestions for the Programme Development**

- o The HEI should develop a brief pedagogical framework document that addresses how teaching and learning approaches are coordinated between CU and NJCU, acknowledging differences in pedagogical tradition while ensuring coherence of student experience.

### **Evaluation**

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

<b>Component</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b><u>2.3. Teaching and learning methods</u></b>	<b>Complies</b>

### **2.4. Student Evaluation**

Student evaluation is conducted in accordance with the established procedures. It is transparent, reliable and complies with existing legislation.

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Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

Describe, analyse and evaluate the compliance of the education programme with the requirements of the component of the standard, based on the information collected through the self-evaluation report (SER), the enclosed documents and site-visit.

The student assessment system within the framework of the joint educational program is developed and implemented in full compliance with the requirements of both the Georgian accreditation standards and the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. Student engagement is ensured through a continuous monitoring and evaluation process, which is given high priority.

The student assessment system is based on the principles of lawfulness and fairness. The process is carried out in compliance with established regulations, which ensures an equal approach toward all students, transparency of assessment, and high reliability of the results obtained. Students are informed in advance of the criteria and methods by which they will be assessed; this information is open and accessible to everyone.

Within the framework of the training course, student knowledge is assessed based on midterm and final examinations. The final grade is determined by the sum of these two components. Midterm assessment incorporates various activities (assignments, testing, practice), the weights and criteria of which are predefined in the syllabus.

Within the framework of the educational program, the assessment of student knowledge is based on the principles of objectivity, reliability, validity, and transparency. The measurement of learning outcomes is carried out through a multi-component system, where minimum competence thresholds are established for both midterm and final stages. Specific assessment criteria and rubrics are detailed in the syllabi, which are accessible on the electronic learning management platform. The lecturer is required to evaluate midterm/final examination papers within one week of their administration.

Monitoring of students' academic performance is based on two main forms: summative and formative. Summative assessment focuses on controlling the quality of learning and determining compliance with course objectives, which ensures the documentation of academic achievements. On its part, formative assessment serves the student's progress and, through effective feedback, promotes the realization of their potential.

Within the framework of the educational program, the grade received in the makeup exam replaces the result of the final exam and is directly reflected in

the final assessment. A student is granted the right to take a makeup exam if they fail to pass the minimum threshold of the final assessment, with an interval of at least 5 days from the publication of the results. It is noted that if a student's total score is less than 51, or if they fail to pass the threshold of any component, they are assigned the grade F-0.

A student may be granted the right to retake a midterm and/or final exam based on written permission from the department, only if the absence occurred for a valid reason. In the event of missing a midterm/final exam, the student is required to complete an electronic application for a retake on the same day or no later than 72 hours after the absence, which is automatically sent to the department. The document/certificate confirming the reason for the absence can be uploaded with the electronic application or submitted to the department within one week of the exam date to be reviewed for excusal. A student's absence from a midterm/final exam may be considered excused only in the following urgent cases: illness (which must be confirmed by a medical certificate/Form 100 or a document issued by emergency medical services, and the period of the document must coincide with or include the date of the missed exam), official business trip, marriage, wedding ceremony, accident, childbirth, death of a family member, or other cases that may be assessed as valid by the department on an individual basis.

The lecturer is required to familiarize students with the results of the midterm/final examination and provide them with formative assessment; the department is required to familiarize students with the midterm/final examination results immediately upon receipt by reflecting them in the electronic grade database on the university website.

Within three days of the publication of the midterm/final examination results, the student has the right to appeal the received assessment and request to review the graded work. In the case of appealing an examination result, the student submits an application addressed to the Vice President for Administration and Monitoring, providing a reasoned description of the specific parts where they disagree with the lecturer's assessment. The application undergoes an admissibility stage within two working days of its receipt. If the application successfully passes the admissibility stage, the student's application and examination paper are forwarded to the lecturer within a maximum of three working days of the application's submission. Within three working days of receiving the paper, the lecturer submits a report providing an argumentative response to the student's application and, if necessary, changes the assessment. The lecturer's decision is communicated to the student by the department on the same day.

In the event that the student does not agree with the lecturer's decision regarding their complaint, they shall apply in writing within one working day to the Vice President for Administration and Monitoring, who will form a commission within two working days of the application. The commission, by a majority of votes, makes one of the following two decisions: leaves the subject lecturer's assessment unchanged or changes the subject lecturer's assessment. The decision made by the commission is final and is reflected in the electronic grade database, while the relevant documentation is kept in the student's personal file.

Additionally, the interviews revealed that the electronic portal functions smoothly. Furthermore, the student assessment process is based on the academic and research ethics standards in force at the Higher Education Institution. Within the framework of the program, complex mechanisms for maintaining academic integrity and preventing plagiarism are actively utilized, which includes the timely identification of violations and appropriate responses to them.

A clear and transparent approach to grade equivalence and credit transfer is essential in the context of joint educational programmes delivered by partner institutions with potentially different assessment and credit systems. In order to ensure fairness, consistency, and student understanding, the Higher Education Institution (HEI) should develop and make available a comprehensive grade equivalence table and a credit transfer protocol.

These documents should clearly explain how grades awarded at one partner institution (e.g., CU) are converted into the grading system of the partner institution (e.g., NJCU), and vice versa. Similarly, the credit transfer protocol should outline how credits earned within the programme are recognized and accumulated across institutions.

Providing this information in an accessible and well-documented format helps students to better understand their academic progress, ensures transparency of assessment, and supports the smooth implementation of the joint programme in line with international quality assurance standards.

### **Evidences/Indicators**

- Educational program;
- Syllabi of training courses;

- Statute on Student Status;
- Statute on Conducting Examinations;
- Guide To Academic Writing Style;
- Research Ethics Policy Statute;
- Self-assessment document;
- Website;
- Site Visit

**Recommendations:**

- o No recommendations

**Suggestions for the Programme Development**

- o The HEI should produce a clear grade equivalence table and credit transfer protocol, documented and accessible to students, explaining how CU grades translate to the NJCU transcript and vice versa.

**Evaluation**

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Evaluation
<b><u>2.4. Student evaluation</u></b>	<b>Complies</b>

**3. Student Achievements, Individual Work with Them**

The programme ensures the creation of a student-centered environment by providing students with relevant services; promotes maximum student awareness, implements a variety of activities and facilitates student involvement in local and/or international projects; proper quality of scientific guidance is provided for master’s student.

**3.1 Student Consulting and Support Services**

Students receive consultation and support regarding the planning of learning process, improvement of academic achievement, and career development from the people involved in the programme and/or structural units of the HEI. A student has an opportunity to have a diverse learning process and receive

relevant information and recommendations from those involved in the programme.

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## Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

The SER describes a comprehensive student support infrastructure at Caucasus University. Information is available through the university website, the school dean's office, the Office of Academic Process Management, the Quality Assurance Department, and the university library. Students have personal online spaces within the Learning Management System with access to schedules, grades, and instructor contact details. Weekly individual consultations with lecturers are provided. The structure and functioning of the student advisory and support services at the university are in full compliance with both the accreditation standards for higher education programs in Georgia and the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.

The university maintains a catalogue of educational programs where any interested person can access complete information regarding program content, qualifications, teaching objectives, and learning outcomes. It also provides details on the credit accumulation and assessment system.

To facilitate the academic integration of newly enrolled students, both international and Georgian, orientation meetings are held where they are introduced to the core aspects of the educational process. The program presentation delivered by the school dean allows students to understand the course content in detail and establish communication with the administration, academic staff, and invited specialists, which supports their effective adaptation to the university environment. If necessary, the university is prepared to assist students with special educational needs or differing levels of academic preparation. In such cases, a personalized learning plan is created, tailored to the specific student's capabilities and requirements, to ensure they can successfully master the educational program.

The university operates a Career Development and Employment Service, which actively supports the career advancement and employment of students and graduates. To achieve this goal, the service periodically conducts seminars and masterclasses where students acquire practical skills such as resume preparation and successful interviewing. The service continuously plans visits from leading organizations and agencies to the university, which facilitates the implementation of projects by various companies and the development of internships, scholarships, and other incentive programs. In cooperation with partner organizations, career forums are organized, where the service ensures

that students and graduates are informed and actively involved. Furthermore, based on requests from employers and information received from the school dean's office, the service issues recommendations for students, promptly provides them with information regarding available vacancies, and coordinates all procedures necessary for employment.

To support and advise students, the University operates the Student Ombudsman's Office, which assists students in various directions. The office ensures that students are informed about the university structure and the functions of its units, and also introduces them to the university mission, internal grants, and exchange or mobility programs. The Ombudsman's staff makes information regarding financial regulations and ethical norms accessible to students. Additionally, the office provides consultations to students on procedures for the suspension, termination, and restoration of status, as well as on rules for credit accumulation and transfer. The Ombudsman's role is significant in explaining student rights protection mechanisms, which involves raising student awareness regarding both university regulations and the legislation of Georgia.

Students are given opportunities to actively participate in both local and international projects and events. This includes participation in performance-creative activities, scientific conferences, and academic research at the relevant level. Additionally, international mobility programs are available to students, fostering their academic and professional development. It is noteworthy that the high rate of students utilizing these opportunities and the effectiveness of their engagement were confirmed by the interviews conducted.

Students are informed about various local and international projects and events. They receive this information through internal email as well as from the university's official website. However, during the interviews, it became clear that much of the communication was through emails and all students did not find it most engaging. The Career Service is perceived as relatively passive by some students, relying predominantly on email communication (with career-related information, including job opportunities, primarily shared via email) and could benefit from more proactive and diversified engagement formats. A more active role in facilitating internships and direct employer connections would further strengthen the practical dimension of the programme. Additionally, improving visibility and accessibility of the Career Service could encourage more frequent student interaction. Overall, a more strategic and proactive approach would better support students' transition from academia to the labour market.

During the interview, the support offered by the partner institution also became clear. The students will benefit from all the facilities at NJCU.

## **Evidences/Indicators**

- Statute of Caucasus University;
- Statute of the Ombudsman;
- Rule for the Implementation of Educational Programs;
- Educational program;
- Memorandums with employers;
- Information provided by the university regarding the involvement of students from related programs in local and international activities;
- Statute of the Department of Student Services and Learning Process Monitoring;
- Self-assessment document;
- Website;
- Site visit

## **Recommendations:**

- o Proposal (s), which should be considered by the HEI, the programme to meet the requirements of the standard

## **Suggestions for the Programme Development**

- o The HEI's Career Service Centre to adopt a more structured and proactive engagement approach by introducing regular, well-organized activities such as career workshops, employer networking events, and thematic panel discussions. In addition, diversifying communication channels beyond email such as interactive platforms, mentoring schemes, and one-on-one career consultations.
- o HEI would benefit from a more frequent evaluation of the labour market's needs and demands and establishing of a mechanism of permanent communication with the potential employers (International Organizations, NGOS and Public sector) at least once a year in order to inform the student support. (
- o The HEI should develop and document a specific support protocol for the Year 3 transition to NJCU, covering visa/immigration, housing, orientation at the partner institution, ongoing pastoral support, and mechanisms for students to raise concerns while abroad.

## Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Evaluation
<b><u>3.1 Student Consulting and Support Services</u></b>	<b>Complies</b>

### 3.2. Master's Student Supervision

- ☒ A scientific supervisor provides proper support to master's student to perform the scientific-research component successfully.
- ☒ Within master's programmes, ration of students and supervisors enables to perform scientific supervision properly.

Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

Not relevant

Data related to the supervision of master's students	
Number of master theses supervisors	
Number of master's students	
Ratio - supervisors of master's theses/master's students	

### Evidences/Indicators

- Component evidences/indicators, including the relevant documents and interview results

Recommendations:

- o Proposal (s), which should be considered by the HEI, the programme to meet the requirements of the standard

### Suggestions for the Programme Development

- o Non-binding suggestions for programme development

### Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Evaluation
<u>3.2. Master's Students Supervision</u>	Select Appropriate

## **4. Providing Teaching Resources**

Human, material, information and financial resources of educational programme ensure sustainable, stable, efficient and effective functioning of the programme and the achievement of the defined objectives.

### **4.1 Human Resources**

- Programme staff consists of qualified persons, who have necessary competences in order to help students to achieve the programme learning outcomes.
- The number and workload of programme academic/scientific and invited staff ensures the sustainable running of the educational process and also, proper execution of their research/creative/performance activities and other assigned duties. Quantitative indicators related to academic/scientific/invited staff ensure programme sustainability.
- The Head of the Programme possesses necessary knowledge and experience required for programme elaboration, and also the appropriate competences in the field of study of the programme. He/she is personally involved in programme implementation.
- Programme students are provided with an adequate number of administrative and support staff of appropriate competence.

The evaluation of the academic, scientific, and invited staff involved in the implementation of the program indicates that it largely complies with the established standards and ensures the quality of delivery of the educational process.

The evidence demonstrates that staff selection is conducted in accordance with applicable legislation and institutional regulations. The composition of the teaching staff (comprising both affiliated academic personnel and invited lecturers) reflects an appropriate balance between academic continuity and practice-oriented expertise. This approach is consistent with established international accreditation principles, which emphasize the central role of staff qualifications and professional competence in ensuring program quality. Furthermore, given the program's joint structure - where Caucasus University delivers the first four semesters and New Jersey City University delivers the final two—the distribution of academic responsibilities between the partner institutions appears coherent and structurally justified.

According to the quantitative data provided, the program is delivered by 34 staff members, including 14 academic and 20 invited staff. A substantial proportion of the academic personnel (excluding assistant professors) hold doctoral degrees and possess relevant sectoral expertise, thereby ensuring a solid academic foundation. At the same time, the relatively high share of invited staff contributes to strengthening the program's practical and policy-oriented dimensions, which are particularly relevant in the field of international relations and politics. However, the proportionally higher number of invited staff compared to academic staff suggests the need for continuous monitoring of staff composition to maintain an appropriate balance and ensure long-term program sustainability.

An aggregated analysis of the affiliated academic staff further indicates a strong academic core, reflected in 117 publications over the past five years. The affiliated staff cover key disciplinary areas and represent different academic ranks, contributing to both teaching and research activities. For several staff members, active scholarly engagement and visibility in the international academic space can be confirmed. Nevertheless, the overall level of research activity across the affiliated staff is not entirely uniform.

At the individual level, observable differences exist in terms of research productivity and international academic visibility. In particular, the representation of some affiliated staff on widely recognized academic

platforms (such as Google Scholar) is limited or not readily identifiable. It suggests that, while the program meets the minimum requirements, there is scope to further strengthen the research dimension by providing more systematic support, monitoring, and incentives for scholarly activity, especially among assistant and associate professors.

The program director's qualifications are fully aligned with the requirements of the standard. The director holds a relevant doctoral degree, possesses substantial professional experience, and demonstrates active engagement in academic activities, thereby ensuring effective program management and a development-oriented approach.

Finally, the provision of administrative and support staff is considered adequate. The roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and contribute to effective student support and the efficient organization of the educational process.

Number of the staff involved in the programme (including academic, scientific, and invited staff)	Number of Programme Staff	Including the staff with sectoral expertise <sup>5</sup>	Including the staff holding PhD degree in the sectoral direction <sup>6</sup>	Among them, the affiliated staff
Total number of academic staff	34	33	14	14
- Professor	4	4	4	4
- Associate Professor	7	6	6	7
- Assistant-Professor	3	3	0	3
- Assistant	-	-	-	-
Visiting Staff	20	14	4	0
Scientific Staff	-	-	-	—
Including International Staff	-	-	-	-

#### Evidences/Indicators

<sup>5</sup> Staff implementing the relevant components of the main field of study

<sup>6</sup> Staff with relevant doctoral degrees implementing the components of the main field of study

- o Methodology for determining the number of academic, scientific and visiting staff of the programme;
- o The ratio between affiliated academic and invited staff involved
- o Information about the staff reflected in the Education Management Information System;
- o Functions of the Head of the Programme, his/her personal file;
- o Job description of administrative and support staff;
- o Site visit

**Recommendations:**

- o N/A

**Suggestions for the Programme Development**

- o Ensure a more balanced staff structure by gradually increasing the proportion of affiliated academic staff to enhance programme sustainability and academic continuity

Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Evaluation
<b><u>4.1 Human Resources</u></b>	<b>Complies</b>

**4.2 Qualification of Supervisors of Master's Students**

The Master's students have qualified supervisor/supervisors and, if necessary, co-supervisor/co-supervisors who have relevant scientific-research experience in the field of research.

Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

Not relevant

Number of supervisors of Master's theses	Thesis supervisors	Including the supervisors holding PhD	Among them, the
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		degree in the sectoral direction	affiliated staff
Number of supervisors of Master's thesis			
- Professor			
- Associate Professor			
- Assistant-Professor			
Visiting personnel			—
Scientific Staff			—

### Evidences/Indicators

- o Component evidences/indicators, including the relevant documents and interview results

### Recommendations:

- o Proposal (s), which should be considered by the HEI, the programme to meet the requirements of the standard

### Suggestions for the Programme Development

- o Non-binding suggestions for programme development

### Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Evaluation
<u>4.2 Qualification of Supervisors of Master's Students</u>	Select Appropriate

## 4.3 Professional Development of Academic, Scientific and Invited Staff

- The HEI conducts the evaluation of programme staff and analyses evaluation results on a regular basis.
  - The HEI fosters professional development of the academic, scientific and invited staff. Moreover, it fosters their scientific and research work.
- 

The analysis of the mechanisms for assessing and professional development of academic, scientific, and visiting staff involved in the program indicates that the university has established a robust and functional framework in this regard. The presence of a Research Support Department, internal funding mechanisms, assistance for participation in international conferences, grant projects, and mobility programs, along with regular assessments of academic and visiting staff, collectively suggests that the university meets the required standards and effectively utilizes the results of staff assessments to foster professional development.

Additionally, it is commendable that the university provides its staff with both material and financial support, as well as organizational and administrative assistance, to enhance research activities, international collaboration, and professional growth. The information presented indicates that personnel assessments extend beyond teaching responsibilities and encompass institutional mechanisms designed to promote and enhance research activity, aligning with the established standards.

Moreover, to further strengthen compliance, the university should ensure the systematic creation and updating of the scientific profiles of all affiliated academic personnel on international academic platforms. This approach will not only enhance the visibility of personnel research activities but also facilitate objective monitoring of their scientific productivity, international involvement, and academic development.

It is important to conduct detailed assessments and ongoing monitoring of the academic profiles of personnel in the assistant professor category, particularly those without a PhD. While professional criteria primarily determine their status, Georgian legislation distinguishes between an assistant professor who participates in teaching and scientific research and an assistant who conducts research under the supervision of a professor or associate professor. Therefore, assistant professors must demonstrate that their academic status, scientific productivity, and responsibilities correspond to the position of assistant professor, rather than that of an assistant. The role of a professor, including that of an assistant professor, requires a significant level of engagement in scientific activities and appropriate performance indicators.

To conclude, the university has established the essential foundations and practices for assessing, developing, and supporting the research activities of the program's personnel. To further improve quality assurance, it is important to consider suggestions for assessing and evaluating research.

#### Evidences/Indicators

- o The results of the staff evaluation and the results of staff satisfaction surveys (including the quality of research and teaching, international mobility data, etc.) and their utilization in staff management and development;
- o Events for professional development of academic, scientific and invited staff planned/implemented by the HEI (trainings, scientific missions, qualification courses, conferences, exchange local and/or international projects, which serve to develop the professional skills and / or skills of teaching / e-learning / distance teaching-learning-assessment / assessment methods);
- o Supporting mechanisms for fostering scientific and research work;
- o Data on staff involvement in international and/or scientific/research projects, conferences, research and events organized by HEI;
- o Site Visit

#### **Recommendations:**

- o No recommendations

#### **Suggestions for the Programme Development**

- o It is suggested that as part of continuous professional development, the research performance of affiliated academic staff continue to be strengthened through more systematic support and monitoring of publication output and international academic visibility.
- o The HEI should develop joint staff development activities between CU and NJCU staff involved in the programme, such as collaborative teaching workshops or joint research seminars, to strengthen the partnership's academic dimension.

#### **Evaluation**

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

<b>Component</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
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**4.3 Professional development of academic, scientific and invited staff**

**Complies**

**4.4. Material Resources**

Programme is provided by necessary infrastructure, information resources relevant to the field of study and technical equipment required for achieving programme learning outcomes.

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Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

Describe, analyse and evaluate the compliance of the education programme with the requirements of the component of the standard, based on the information collected through the self-evaluation report (SER), the enclosed documents and site-visit.

Based on the self-assessment, as well as the submitted documents and interviews with students, alumni and library staff, it is clear that highly sufficient University infrastructure and material-technical resources are available to the students of the programme without any restrictions to achieve the learning outcomes. Mandatory literature defined by syllabi and other resources electronic or hard copies are available; E-learning platform are used for that purpose extensively. On electronic platforms syllabuses and spreadsheets are posted, including assessment. The library offers individual and group training session to equip students with necessary skills in order to navigate in an electronic scientific database; Electronic databases can be accessed from the library of the University: EBSCO HOST; Academic Search Premier; Business Source Premier; eBook Collection; Health Source - Consumer Edition; Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition; International Security & Counter-Terrorism Reference Center; Legal Source; MasterFILE Premier; MasterFILE Reference eBook Collection - Worldwide; MEDLINE; MEDLINE with Full Text; Newspaper Source; Regional Business

News; Emerald; ScienceDirect; Scopus; Sci-val Funding(Funding Institutional); HeinOnline; Taylor and Francis; Math Scientific Publishing (MSP)-Journals; Cambridge Journals Online; e-Duke Journals Scholarly Collection; Edward Elgar Publishing Journals and Development Studies e-books; European Respiratory Journal; IMechE Journals; Mathematical Sciences Publishers Journals; Openedition Journals; Royal Society Journals Collection; SAGE Journals; The Company of Biologists' Journals;

During the visit, inspection of books and materials took place based on random sampling and all the requested literature was acquired.

### **Evidences/Indicators**

- o Self-evaluation report;
- o Interviews with librarians, students and alumni;
- o Interview with the faculty administration, head of the programme, quality assurance department
- o Site Visit

### **Recommendations:**

- o No recommendations

### **Suggestions for the Programme Development**

- o No suggestions

### Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Evaluation
<b><u>4.4 Material Resources</u></b>	<b>Complies</b>

#### 4.5 Programme/Faculty/School Budget and Programme Financial Sustainability

The allocation of financial resources stipulated in the programme/faculty/school budget is economically feasible and corresponds to the programme needs.

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Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

The SER states that the programme budget accounts for revenue from students and all operational expenses, including contact hours, course compensation, material support, administrative costs, programme development, accreditation, internationalisation, and unforeseen expenses. A University Reserve Fund is available to cover costs if minimum enrolment is not met. The budget is approved by the University President.

However, this is the component most directly affected by the NJCU-Kean merger. The financial sustainability of the programme depends on: (a) CU's ability to attract sufficient student enrolment at a price point that covers the costs of a joint programme with a US university; (b) NJCU's continued willingness and capacity to host Year 3 students; and (c) the financial terms of the partnership agreement between the two institutions.

The NJCU financial context is concerning. Online research shows that the NJCU has been under a state-appointed financial monitor, experienced a significant enrolment decline, and is merging with Kean University in part because of financial distress. While the merger is intended to stabilise the institution, the transition period involves significant uncertainty including staff layoffs. The SER makes no reference to any of these circumstances. The budget analysis presented assumes a stable two-institution partnership without addressing the significant institutional risk on the NJCU side. The interviews during the site visit assured us of NJCU-Kean's support for this partnership. While it was reassuring for the panel, the HEI needs to have stronger guarantees of the stability of the partnership for its own financial sustainability

## Evidences/Indicators

- o Self-Evaluation Report, Section 4.5
- o Programme budget (referenced; attached as appendix to Presidential order)
- o Online research on NJCU financial situation and merger
- o Siti Visit

## Recommendations:

- o The HEI must perform a risk assessment addressing the financial and operational implications of the NJCU-Kean merger for this programme, including the financial terms of the partnership arrangement and any contingency funding provisions.

## Suggestions for the Programme Development

- o Non-binding suggestions for programme development

## Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Evaluation
<b><u>4.5. Programme/ Faculty/School Budget and Programme Financial Sustainability</u></b>	<b>Substantially</b>

## 5. Teaching Quality Enhancement Opportunities

In order to enhance teaching quality, programme utilises internal and external quality assurance services and also, periodically conducts programme monitoring and programme review. Relevant data is collected, analysed and utilized for informed decision making and programme development.

### 5.1 Internal Quality Evaluation

Programme staff collaborates with internal quality assurance

department(s)/staff available at the HEI when planning the process of programme quality assurance, developing assessment instruments, and implementing assessment process. Programme staff utilizes quality assurance results for programme improvement.

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#### Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

Describe, analyse and evaluate the compliance of the education programme with the requirements of the component of the standard, based on the information collected through the self-evaluation report (SER), the enclosed documents and site-visit.

According to the submitted documentation and within the framework of the visit, the three-year joint bachelor's program in International Relations and Politics of Caucasus University (in partnership with New Jersey City University - NJCU, USA) includes 200 ECTS (equivalent to 120 American credits). The standard duration of the program is 3 (three) academic years. The first two years of study will be carried out at Caucasus University (150 ECTS; 75 ECTS per year), and the third year at NJCU (50 ECTS; 30 American credits).

Based on the Memorandum signed between the universities, it is evident that the parties have established a joint framework for coordinating the development and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms for the joint educational program. The Memorandum clearly indicates that the Quality Assurance System is grounded in the principle of continuous improvement and follows the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle. This provides a structured basis for planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating, and improving the program in a systematic manner.

The Memorandum envisages the creation of a joint group responsible for supporting the effective functioning of the program's quality assurance system and coordinating related processes. The involvement of program managers, school representatives, and quality assurance representatives from both universities demonstrates a participatory and collaborative approach. This

arrangement supports shared responsibility, transparent coordination, and the alignment of quality assurance activities between the partner institutions.

The Memorandum also shows that the parties intend to develop mechanisms for evaluating the learning outcomes of the program with the participation of relevant academic staff from both universities. This is an important element of academic quality assurance, as it ensures that the evaluation of learning outcomes is not limited to formal procedures but is directly connected to the academic content, teaching and learning processes, and the actual achievement of program objectives by students.

A further positive aspect is the planned use of systematic procedures, including verification, monitoring, and reporting. These tools are essential for determining whether the implemented processes achieve their intended results, as well as for identifying the strengths and areas for improvement of the program. The fact that monitoring results and reports will be reviewed by a joint quality assurance team further strengthens the evidence-based nature of the improvement process.

It is also significant that the Memorandum reflects the use of both American and European approaches to quality assurance for joint programs. In particular, CU undertakes to follow the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programs, while NJCU ensures alignment with Standard V of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education Standards for Accreditation and Requirements for Affiliation. This combination of quality assurance frameworks strengthens the international dimension of the program and supports its credibility in both local and international contexts. During the site visit interviews, we were assured of coordination around quality assurance. ~

Interviews conducted during the accreditation process show that issues related to internal quality assurance at the university are coordinated by the Academic Director of the program, presented by the Caucasus University School of Public

Administration and the Quality Assurance Department. They monitor and are involved in all stages of the process: planning, implementation, verification, and development. Their main task is to improve the quality of teaching and research at the university and promote integration into the Common European Higher Education Area.

It should be noted that the relevant procedures, assessment tools, and mechanisms are described in the concept of internal quality assurance of the universities and the rules for evaluating program implementation. According to the heads of the Quality Assurance Department, the Quality Service, in cooperation with academic and administrative personnel, participates in the process of university authorization and accreditation. This involves evaluating educational and scientific research activities, the professional development of academic staff, and the development of appropriate recommendations. This also includes preparing self-assessments, identifying strengths and weaknesses in relation to standards, and developing recommendations to eliminate any identified weaknesses. To ensure the above, the Quality Assurance Service relies on the regulatory provisions governing its activities. The procedures are well-planned and implemented, providing a basis for the assessment of ongoing processes. Based on these assessment results, further development and improvement are carried out following the "Plan, Do, Check, Act" principle. It is important to note that stakeholder participation in surveys ensures not only the receipt of vital feedback but also a shared responsibility for improving the program.

According to representatives of the Quality Assurance Department, the evaluation of the educational program is a regular process involving both direct and indirect methods, as well as quantitative and qualitative data. This is confirmed by the submitted documentation and the information provided during the interviews.

The interviews also indicate that the University systematically conducts stakeholder surveys to measure satisfaction with the quality of student and staff services, the material and technical base, and the use of library resources. These questionnaires are periodically updated. During the survey process, the school utilizes both university-level recommended forms and additional questionnaires tailored to the specific requirements of the field.

According to the interviewees, the research utilizes various types of surveys, including those for students, graduates, and employers, alongside detailed questionnaire analysis. Representatives noted that specialists from the Quality Assurance Department, together with program leaders, are actively involved in the internal quality assessment process, which helps foster a culture of cooperation.

The interviews also revealed a significant emphasis on evaluating the scientific activities of academic personnel, a process managed within the framework of the research center. The Quality Assurance Department provides ongoing consultations to academic, scientific, invited, administrative, and support staff regarding internal and external quality assurance, authorization, and accreditation.

As part of this process, systematic student surveys are conducted to evaluate the organization and effectiveness of the educational process. It is also noteworthy that the program director and involved personnel cooperate closely with the Quality Assurance Department. Their active participation in meetings organized by the Quality Service ensures the smooth operation of educational and scientific activities, program development, syllabus preparation, and the continuous modification of courses based on feedback and training.

To stay informed of new regulations or to create and update internal policies, it is essential to reflect the information received from assessment tools and updated regulations within the program. Consequently, the internal quality

mechanism operates as a cycle of interconnected components –planning, implementation, evaluation, and development—all aimed at improving the quality of the educational program. Based on documentation and interviews, it is evident that these internal quality assessment mechanisms are fully functional.

According to the program director, the self-assessment process is a critical component, primarily informed by student and graduate surveys, as well as focus group reports. Representatives of the Quality Assurance Department further noted that student questionnaires are administered periodically to gather consistent data.

In addition to these quantitative surveys, academic staff are required to submit scientific and research-related reports. These are reviewed by Quality Service representatives as a key part of the formal staff evaluation process. According to representatives of the Quality Assurance Department, the annual report form completed by staff for each academic year integrates various types of scientific and educational activities. Once submitted, this data is processed by the heads of the Quality Assurance Department, who then provide staff with proposals for areas requiring improvement. Following this, individual activities are planned with the academic staff based on their specifically identified needs.

Furthermore, the agreements concluded with staff detail the specific scientific and practical hours required of them. Interviews indicate that both academic and invited personnel are familiar with these mechanisms and consider them effective for both program enhancement and personal professional development.

Any shortcomings identified through these internal quality mechanisms are actively discussed by the self-assessment working group and at school council meetings. These discussions result in the development of valuable recommendations, which serve as the basis for relevant changes. Finally, these

improvements are formally approved by the Academic Council of HEI.

The educational program utilizes internal quality assessment mechanisms implemented in accordance with the university's established quality policy. These mechanisms are based on core principles of quality planning, assessment, monitoring, and continuous improvement.

A review of the documentation and interview results demonstrates that the program's internal quality assurance—including rules for program development, scientific personnel evaluation, student performance monitoring, and tools for tracking graduate employment and labor market trends—is specifically oriented toward enhancing the educational program, the learning process, and academic staff.

The Quality Assurance Department is responsible for improving the educational process by developing necessary assessment tools and methods, planning the frequency of evaluations, and providing formal recommendations based on the resulting data. Academic and visiting staff actively incorporate these quality assessment results into their decision-making. They are familiar with and utilize findings from systematic surveys of students, graduates, and employers to improve program learning outcomes, update the curriculum, and better plan faculty workloads.

Labor market requirements were carefully considered during the program's preparation, and a comprehensive study of the current market was conducted.

Interviews revealed that the bachelor's program was developed based on a thorough analysis of all pertinent documentation and recommendations from program leaders, the self-assessment working group, involved personnel, and employers. It also integrated feedback from external evaluators and the school and university quality assurance departments. By processing these documents and incorporating various stakeholder recommendations, the program aligns with modern visions and contemporary educational approaches.

## Evidences/Indicators

- Internal quality assurance mechanisms
- Regulations of the Quality Assurance Department
- Rules for the implementation of educational programs
- Student survey forms
- Program-related statistical data
- Site visit

## Recommendations:

No recommendations

## Suggestions for the Programme Development

## Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Evaluation
<b>5.1 Internal quality evaluation</b>	<b>Complies</b>

## 5.2 External Quality Evaluation

**Programme utilises the results of external quality assurance on a regular basis.**

Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

Based on the documentation provided and active interviews, it was revealed that the program utilizes various tools for external quality assessment,

including external expert evaluations and surveys of employers, graduates, and students.

According to the program director, the curriculum includes interdisciplinary courses informed by market research, with a strong emphasis on political science, public policy, and international economics. The program's creators—from both the Georgian and American sides—noted that external assessments are integrated as much as possible, with significant involvement from international evaluators.

The educational program was evaluated by highly qualified international experts, including:

1. The Dean of the Scottish Graduate School of Social Sciences, University of St. Andrews, School of International Relations.
2. An Associate Professor of International Relations and European Studies at Babeş-Bolyai University.

The program director confirmed that recommendations from these external evaluations were fully incorporated. For example, the program now prioritizes the development of writing, research, and foreign language skills for its graduates. Additionally, the school administration and academic staff conducted a study of best practices from leading global universities.

According to the program directors, five prominent European university programs were selected for a formal comparative analysis. This benchmarking process confirmed that the presented program aligns with international standards regarding program titles, awarded qualifications, study levels, and general educational goals. These universities include: 1. London School of Economics (LSE), 2. SOAS University of London. 3. Queen's University Belfast. 4. University of Birmingham. 5. Forward College

It is also noteworthy that the presented program and those of the benchmarked universities demonstrate significant similarities in their interdisciplinary approaches. Both prioritize core areas such as International Relations, Political Science, International Law, and Economics.

Furthermore, according to evaluations by program managers, an analysis of all five comparable programs confirmed that the presented curriculum—much like its international counterparts—integrates key subjects from Political Science and Public Policy alongside traditional International Relations coursework. This integration ensures a more inclusive level of political analysis and broadens the range of issues covered.

As an illustration of this alignment, the list of common courses between the presented program and the benchmarked international programs is as follows:

1. Introduction to International Relations
2. Introduction to Politics/ Introduction to Political Science
3. Introduction to Comparative Politics
4. International Relations: Theories, Concepts and Debates
5. Foreign Policy Analysis
6. International Organizations.

In conclusion, it is important to note that, according to employers, this integrated joint program in International Relations and Politics is a pioneering initiative offering significant incentives. The three-year duration, the dedicated year of study in the United States, and the curriculum's balanced combination of international relations and politics make graduates highly attractive and competitive in the global labor market.

These findings are consistently supported by the submitted documentation and were further confirmed through interviews with the program director, the self-assessment working group, representatives of the Quality Assurance Department, and various employers.

#### **Evidences/Indicators:**

- Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms
- Charter of the Quality Assurance Department
- Program Benchmarking Analysis and Comparative Study
- External Expert Assessment Reports

#### **Evidences/Indicators**

- o Component evidences/indicators, including the relevant documents and interview results

#### **Recommendations:**

- o No recommendations

#### **Suggestions for the Programme Development**

- o NA

## Evaluation

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

Component	Evaluation
<b><u>5.2. External Quality Evaluation</u></b>	<b>Complies</b>

### 5.3 Programme Monitoring and Periodic Review

Programme monitoring and periodic evaluation is conducted with the involvement of academic, scientific, invited, administrative, supporting staff, students, graduates, employers and other stakeholders through systematic data collection, study and analysis. Evaluation results are applied for the programme improvement.

#### Summary and Analysis of the Education Programme's Compliance with the Requirements of the Component of the Standard

Describe, analyse and evaluate the compliance of the education programme with the requirements of the component of the standard, based on the information collected through the self-evaluation report (SER), the enclosed documents and site-visit.

Based on the interviews and an analysis of the submitted documentation, it is evident that a comprehensive internal self-evaluation report is being prepared. This report, presented by Caucasus University, identifies both strengths and areas for improvement. Following the processing and analysis of the gathered data, targeted interventions are planned to ensure continuous program enhancement.

According to representatives of the Quality Assurance Department, the following studies are conducted periodically: Analysis of student academic performance, Semester-based student surveys regarding specific courses, Graduate surveys, Evaluations of academic and invited personnel based on student feedback.

The heads of the Quality Assurance Department further noted that the program's target indicators are constantly monitored and analyzed. This

oversight is based on the semester-to-semester processing of student academic performance, as well as formal assessments provided by employers and external experts. This section clearly outlines the iterative nature of the program's quality management and the professional development of the staff involved. I have refined the grammar and replaced some repetitive phrasing with more formal academic terminology.

During the interviews, it was noted that the program director and implementing personnel actively monitor the achievement of goals and learning outcomes based on established target indicators. Students also evaluate both training courses and lecturers every semester. Based on these results, the further development of the educational program and its specific courses is planned.

To effectively monitor the dynamics of program development, each subsequent self-evaluation report provides a comparative analysis of results against data from the previous reporting period. According to representatives of the Quality Assurance Department, the internal evaluation mechanisms for program implementation are undergoing continuous improvement. This includes the development of additional tools and the expansion of the quality assurance system's overall capabilities.

Furthermore, intensive working meetings are held regularly between the school dean and representatives of the Quality Assurance Service. To support these efforts, a series of training sessions for Quality Assurance employees is being provided. These sessions focus on refining internal mechanisms, mastering self-assessment tools, and ensuring effective use of data analysis. According to quality assurance representatives, program evaluation is an ongoing process focused on identifying strengths and weaknesses to ensure continuous improvement. To address identified weaknesses, the university implements targeted corrective measures.

Regarding staff encouragement and professional development, Quality Service representatives noted several incentive programs. These include supporting personnel in attending specialized trainings and international conferences, as well as facilitating the publication of articles in international peer-reviewed journals and other scholarly outlets.

Academic and invited personnel confirmed that the university frequently announces various grant and internal projects tailored for those employed within the program. The institution actively promotes staff involvement in international grant initiatives, with many faculty members participating in a

diverse range of Erasmus+ projects. Furthermore, personnel highlighted the availability of travel grants for international conference participation. As one professor noted: “I recently traveled to Italy to participate in an international conference, and the university fully covered my expenses.”

In conclusion, an analysis of the submitted documentation and the findings from various interviews demonstrate that the mechanisms for the monitoring and periodic evaluation of the program have been thoroughly developed and are well-integrated into the university's operations. This systematic approach ensures the continuous development and enhancement of the program, aligning it with both internal quality standards and international best practices.

#### **Evidences/Indicators:**

- ☒ Rules for the Implementation of Educational Programs
- ☒ Student Survey Forms and Analysis of Results
- ☒ Graduate Survey Forms and Analysis of Results
- ☒ Employer Survey Forms and Analysis of Results
- ☒ Minutes of the Self-Assessment Working Group Meetings

#### **Recommendations:**

- o Proposal (s), which should be considered by the HEI, the programme to meet the requirements of the standard

#### **Suggestions for the Programme Development**

- o Non-binding suggestions for programme development

#### **Evaluation**

Please, evaluate the compliance of the programme with the component

<b>Component</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b><u>5.3. Programme monitoring and periodic review</u></b>	<b>Complies</b>

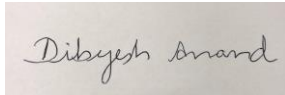
Attached documentation (if applicable):

Signatures:

Chair of Accreditation Expert Panel

Full name, signature

Dibyesh Anand

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dibyesh Anand".

Accreditation Expert Panel Members

Full name, signature

Sandro Tabatadze

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Tabatadze".

Salome Alania

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "S. Alania".

Irma Kurdadze

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "I. Kurdadze".

Natia Gegelashvili

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "N. Gegelashvili".