განათლების ხარისხის განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Higher Education Program Accreditation Standards Guide

National Center for Education Quality Enhancement

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Introduction

The goal of the Higher Education Programs Accreditation Guide is to help higher education institutions better understand accreditation standards requirements. This guide will assist both academic and administrative staff in creating and / or developing higher education programs. However, it should be noted that the information provided in this guide is not exhaustive and is of a recommendatory nature.

1. The purpose of the educational program, the learning outcomes and the relevance of the program to them.

1.1. The goals of the program.

The program should have clearly defined goals that will reflect what knowledge, skills and competencies the graduate will obtain after completing the program. The goals of the program should be in line with the mission, goals and strategic plan of the university, as well as the specifics of the field and the requirements of the labor market.

Program Goals	PLO 1	PLO 2	PLO 3	PLO 4	PLO 5
a	✓		✓		✓
b				✓	
c	✓				
d			✓		✓
e	✓				✓

Each learning outcome of the program should be evaluated at the end of the program to enable HEIs to demonstrate that students have achieved the learning outcomes at the end of the education program. The latter will also be an indication that the program goals have been achieved, as each program goal is related to the learning outcome (s) of the program.

Evaluating the learning outcomes of the program consists of four stages:

• Formulation of program learning outcomes;

• Curriculum analysis to ensure that students have the opportunity to achieve these learning outcomes;

• Evaluate the learning outcomes of the program;

• Using assessment results for program improvement

1) Formulation of program learning outcomes

The learning outcomes of the program describe the knowledge, skills and responsibilities, autonomy that the student acquires upon completion of the program. The learning outcomes of the program should be commensurate with the qualifications to be awarded and the level of instruction. Undergraduate, graduate and doctoral program learning outcomes should vary in difficulty. It is also

important that the learning outcomes of the program reflect the knowledge and skills that a person with a program qualification should have. If the program is adjustable, then sectoral characteristics should also be taken into account when formulating learning outcomes. In addition, learning outcomes should be achievable, realistic and measurable (which means evaluating them).

Learning outcomes should preferably reflect market demands, which will be based on an analysis of the labor market and the needs of employers.

In order to reflect the learning outcomes, to the specifics of the field and the requirements of the labor market, the process of compiling the learning outcomes should involve academic and visiting staff, students and alumni, employers in the relevant field, etc. It will also be good to take into account the best practices in the world and to review / consider the learning outcomes of similar programs and / or industry characteristics. Analysis of the labor market and the requirements of employers involves determining what the needs are in the field, what knowledge and skills employers need. As a result of the analysis, the relevant knowledge and skills should be reflected in the learning outcomes.

This information can be obtained by HEIs through employer surveys, focus groups, use of existing data (if any), etc.

In order to be able to evaluate the learning outcomes of the program, in formulating them, HEIs should be guided by the following formula: After completing the program, students will be able to + action verb + what they know, what skills they will have, what emotional change will take place in them.

For example, after completing the program, students will be able to assess the impact of monetary policy on the economy.

It should also be noted that the number of learning outcomes of the program should not be too much. The golden rule is to form the result of up to ten program learning outcomes. An updated Bloom taxonomy is usually used to formulate learning outcomes. This taxonomy includes six progressive levels of knowledge and intellectual skills.

Corresponding verbs are defined for each level. These verbs will make it easier to determine the complexity of the learning outcome (s) and also to evaluate them.

2) Curriculum analysis

Once the learning outcomes of the program are defined, a curriculum should be built (curriculum should be revised in the case of an existing program) to ensure that students have the opportunity to achieve relevant learning outcomes. The best way to do this is to map out the curriculum.

The latter reflects which training courses, activities or research components develop the program learning outcomes in students.

The curriculum map can be represented in the table below.

Study course	PLO 1	PLO 2	PLO 3	PLO 4	PLO 5
a	✓		✓		✓

b					✓
c	✓				✓
d			✓		✓
e	✓				✓

However, of course, the learning outcomes of each course should show a link to the learning outcome (s) of the program if we are to say that this or that course develops the learning outcomes of the program. It is also possible, instead of just mentioning, to indicate the level of development of this or that course of study of the program

Results. E.g..

Study course	PLO 1	PLO 2	PLO 3	PLO 4	PLO 5
a	1		1		1
b					
c	2				2
d			2		2
e	3				3

1 - Introduction; 2 - deepening; 3 - Reinforcement

Once the curriculum map has been developed, it should be analyzed to determine whether the curriculum ensures the development of program learning outcomes in students. On the map we should pay attention to how many courses develop the outcome of each study of the program and determine how adequate this number is;

Do too many courses develop the same learning outcome or vice versa; Do we have a compulsory training course in the program that does not develop the results of any of the program (E.g.., training course "B"); Is there a learning outcome in the program that no training course and / or other activity is developing (E.g.., learning outcome of the program 2). The outcome of each learning program must be developed at all three levels.

A target benchmark should be set for each learning outcome of the program that reflects the expectations that students will achieve at each learning outcome.

For example, 60% of students will receive a score of 15 to 20 on the first learning outcome of the program (if they assess the outcome of that learning through an essay with a maximum score of 20). In order to determine the target scores, it is first advisable to determine how the learning outcomes will be assessed.

Program learning outcomes assessment

Once we make sure that the curriculum structure ensures that students achieve the learning outcomes of the program, the program learning outcomes assessment plan should be developed.

The learning outcomes assessment plan should reflect how the learning outcomes of the program will be assessed at the end of the program.

It is essential that the learning outcomes of the program are assessed in those study course(s), where the learning outcome(s) of the program is consolidated according to the curriculum map. It is possible to assess the results of several studies of the program in one course of study. Furthermore, if masters and doctoral programs are evaluated, it is good practice to assess the learning outcomes of the program in masters and dissertation papers. In the case of a bachelor's degree program, capstone courses are often used to assess the learning outcomes of the program. The periodicity of assessment of learning outcomes should also be defined. In case, if the number of students involved in the program is too large, a part of them can be evaluated by random sampling. It is essential that the carried-out assessment is valid, reliable and transparent.

Program learning outcomes should be assessed using both direct and indirect methods. The direct assessment method is one in which it is verified, whether a student has achieved the learning outcome of a program through an assignment completed by him/her. It can be a test, exam, essay, portfolio, simulation, licensure test, student assessment by field supervisor during a field experience, etc. As for the indirect method of assessment, this is an assessment of the student by the employer, self-assessment by the student, etc. However, this assessment mustn't be confused with student assessment of the course or satisfaction survey results. To evaluate the learning outcomes of the program, a questionnaire can be prepared, where the learning outcomes of the program will be listed and students will express their opinion on the level of achievement regarding various learning outcomes. The same questionnaire can be sent to employers as well.

The mechanism for evaluating the learning outcomes of the program should be described in the learning outcomes assessment plan, which should indicate by which assignment, when, and by whom, how many students will be evaluated for each learning outcome of the program. In case if the rubric/rubrics are used to evaluate the assignment (which is considered as the best practice) it should be attached to the assessment plan. It is noteworthy that the final assessment obtained in the study course cannot be considered as an assessment of the learning outcomes of the programs, as the study course grade includes and evaluates many other skills and knowledge beyond the learning outcomes of the program. Program learning outcomes assessment should use the outcome of a specific assignment that directly measures the learning outcomes of the program.

4) Using Assessment Results for Program Improvement

The most important step in assessing the learning outcomes of the program is the fourth stage when the obtained results are analyzed and the program is improved accordingly. At this stage, the results are compared with the target benchmarks, and analysis are made of how well the students achieved their learning outcomes at the level we expected. It also determines whether there are one or more learning outcomes that most students are weak at or fail to achieve. If such exists, the curriculum map is revisited, and the study courses that are developed as a result of the mentioned learning (s) are reviewed. Feedback from students is important as well, regarding how they achieved the learning outcomes of the program, what are their strengths and weaknesses. However, unlike student

assessment, the primary purpose of assessing the learning outcomes of the program is the assessment and improvement of the program.

As a result of the assessment, changes may be made to the content of the course (E.g..), its prerequisites, the course sequences, study course (s) may be added or removed as well. Changes may be implemented into student counseling services, program learning outcomes, assessment mechanisms, etc.

The analysis carried out in the fourth stage and the alternations obtained as the result of the analysis are reflected in the learning outcomes assessment report.

Assessing the learning outcomes of the program requires close collaboration and involvement of the heads of the academic program (s) (if any), academics, invited staff, and administrative staff. Assessment will vary by field, and in order to create a curriculum map, define a program for assessing the learning outcomes of the program, and analyze the evaluation results, the direct involvement of the academic staff implementing the program is essential. Correspondingly, appropriate conditions must be created in the HEI to ensure all this.

2. Teaching methodology and organization, adequacy of program acquisition assessment.

To achieve the goal / objectives and learning outcomes of the educational program, as well as to ensure the assessment of the learning outcomes, it is important to select a teaching methodology relevant to the goal / objectives and learning outcomes, to use adequate methods to assess learning outcomes and to organize the program consistently.

2.1 Admission & Program Requirements

When planning the implementation of the program, first of all, we should thoughtfully consider knowledge, skills, and experience requirements that should be possessed by the persons we would like to admit to the academic program. The pre-defined requirements for enrollment in the program should be derived from the requirements for successful learning of the program, and they should closely be linked to the program content.

When determining the precondition/preconditions for admission to the program, the requirements defined by the legislation of the relevant level (bachelor, master, and doctorate) and the specifics of the program should be taken into account.

According to the current legislation, the preconditions for admission to the bachelor's degree program are full general education and passing the Unified National Examinations. The University is authorized to determine the coefficient to be assigned to the entrant's result in each examination subject for its educational programs. Based on the Unified National Examinations, entrants will be admitted to educational programs according to the coefficients assigned to the examination subjects. The University is also authorized to determine the fourth subject of examination. The coefficients of the examination subjects set by the university and the fourth examination subject must be following the content and specifics of the program.

An Example

The aim of the program

The Bachelor program in history aims to introduce the student to the past and development history of world civilizations; to provide them with extensive knowledge regarding the history of Georgia and the world history; to develop the ability to analyze and critically evaluate historical sources, to discuss and comment on them in a cultural and historical context; precondition for admission to the program is successful passing of the Unified National Examinations. It is obligatory for the entrant to pass the history as the fourth subject.

The precondition for admission to the master's degree program is the successful passing of the general master's exams. University is authorized to decide whether or not to award a coefficient for the general master's exam. In case of assigning a coefficient, university approves the coefficient for a separate part of the general master's exam test. In case of not assigning a coefficient, the person wishing to enroll in the master's program will be admitted to the internal university exam in case of exceeding the minimum competency threshold following the rules established by the legislation of Georgia.

The university is obliged to determine the form, content, and procedure of the internal university examination/examinations. Candidates who have successfully passed the general master's exams and have met other requirements set by the university following the law will be admitted to the internal university exam.

The University is independent in selecting the form, content, and procedure of the internal university examination. At the in-university examination stage, it autonomously determines the requirements and criteria for admission to the program, based on which it will select a person with the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary for successful learning of the program.

The internal university exam can be conducted both in the written way (test, writing essays on pre-selected issues, on-site analytical essays, etc.) and in an oral way and/or include the selection of applications.

There is also a possibility that the internal university master's exam can have three-stages and include both the application selection stage and the written and/or oral exam.

An example

The Master of Education Administration program aims to prepare leaders (higher and secondary) in the education sector who will be sufficient to ensure the effectiveness of education policy in managing the education system, improving its transformation, and managing and funding educational institutions.

The precondition for the student admission to the master's program is:

A) A bachelor's degree;

B) Successfully passing the general master's exam;

C) Successfully passing the internal university exam;

The internal university examination consists of an application package, language proficiency testing, and an interview.

The application package should include:

1. CV (autobiography) of the applicant, which will be confirmed by the applicant

At least two years of experience working in the field of education;

2. Cover letter (essay) in which the applicant describes the program

Motivation to continue learning;

3. Previous paper/project/article that best reflects the applicant's academic writing competencies

Applicants must have English language proficiency at the B2 level. The level of language proficiency will be checked and determined through testing. Applicants will be exempted from testing if they present an internationally recognized certificate proving English language proficiency at the B2 level.

A person with a master's degree or an equivalent academic degree will be admitted to the doctoral degree program, while other prerequisites and admission procedures will be determined by the higher education institution.

The higher education institution is authorized to determine the form, content, and procedure of the internal university examination/examinations for enrollment in the doctoral program. Those who wish to enroll in the doctoral program and have met the requirements set by the university in accordance with the law will be admitted to the internal university examination.

Either at the doctoral level or the master's level, the internal university examination is conducted both in the written way (test, writing essays on pre-selected issues, on-site analytical essays, etc.) and in an oral way and/or include the selection stage of applications. An internal doctoral university examination can cover several-stages and include two or three of the above stages - both the application selection stage and the written and/or oral examination.

At the doctoral level, the applicant must have an understanding of the specifics of the research activity and research interests, which must be confirmed by a research project application.

An example

The goal of the Ph.D. program in education is:

- To prepare competitive education researchers who can study the challenges in the field of education by synthesizing knowledge in the field of education science and its related disciplines; Build knowledge based on new interdisciplinary approaches to challenges in education;

- Promoting doctoral students as researchers for integration into the international scientific space.

Preconditions for student admission to the doctoral program are:

- Master's degree or equivalent academic degree, either in the field of education, or in the field of social sciences, or related field;
- Has successfully passed internal university exam in English to prove knowledge at least at B2 level, has an English proficiency certificate; or a certificate issued by the National Center for Assessment and Examinations - Certus; Diploma / Appendix or Certificate of Completion of an English Language Undergraduate or Graduate Program;
- Doctoral research application;
- Oral exam/interview.

Recommendation: Preferably the program should be accompanied by an acceptance document, which will provide detailed information regarding the conditions of admission to the program and the evaluation system. All necessary information for applicants should be posted on the website of the higher education institution. According to the current legislation of Georgia, the relevant previous level education is not a mandatory requirement for those wishing to continue their studies at the masters and doctoral levels. However, an educational institution may require prior education and/or work experience in the relevant field as a prerequisite for enrollment in the masters and doctoral programs. In case of this limitation, prior knowledge and/or experience necessary for successful learning and research in specific master's and doctoral programs should be analyzed; If necessary, the relevant undergraduate/graduate educational programs or directions should be identified and defined as a prerequisite for enrollment in the program.

To ensure the preconditions and procedural fairness for admission to the program, the university will develop an acceptance document for a specific educational unit, which must accompany the educational program. The admission document should describe in detail the prerequisites for admission to the program, the admission procedures, and the system for evaluating applicants for the internal university examination (evaluation criteria and relevant rubrics).

The educational institution can use several means of information dissemination to ensure publicity and access to the preconditions, procedures, and evaluation rules for enrollment in the program. For example, post information on the university website, social network page, as well as use other news or media outlets (TV/radio shows, advertisements, etc.), organize information/orientation meetings, distribute information booklets, etc.

2.2 The structure and content of the educational program

The educational institution, under the current legislation, should have established the methodology of planning, elaboration, and development of the educational program, which will be based on the implementation of the existing programs in the educational institution and the development of the initiated program, including the definition of the program content.

The above mentioned methodology should describe:

- Which data collection methods were used to develop or **elaborate** the program (ex. labor market research, survey results of the interested parties - students, graduates, persons involved in the implementation of the program, etc.);
- How the functions, and responsibilities, are distributed among the parties involved in the program development process;
- What are the stages and sequence of the program development?
- Instructions for the activities to be undertaken at each stage should be defined in advance, etc.

The program development process is organized/is carried out by the head(s) of the academic program. Head of the academic program ensures maximum involvement of interested parties in the program planning and development process in a variety of ways. Head of the academic program may also be the initiator of a new program.

The students and graduates of the program (in case of re-accreditation of the accredited program), academic and invited staff involved in the program, university administrative units and their representatives, potential employers, experts in the field, practitioner specialists, partner organizations, etc. are interested in the successful functioning of the program. The involvement of these parties should have a direct impact on the content of the program.

Program Content is one of the main determinants of achievement of program learning outcomes, which should be based on the following data:

- A description of the qualifications of the relevant level of the national qualifications framework;
- Relevant sectoral characteristics (if any);
- Labor market research results;
- The results from the research conducted with students, alumni, potential employers, field experts, and practitioners;
- Desk research results to share modern achievements and best practices in the field, etc.

All changes to the program content or the initiation of a new program must be substantiated by the empirical data listed above or by other methods. The minimum scope of the study program is determined to match the description of the relevant level of the national qualifications framework. Depending on the specifics of the program, university is authorized to set the scope of the program beyond the minimum volume of the description of the relevant level of the national qualification framework.

A precondition for access to the program must be taken into account during the process of developing the content of the program. It conveys that the program content should include such issues that will assist deepen pre-required knowledge, fill it with the new knowledge and skills, and not its repetition.

The content and structure of the program should be aimed at achieving the learning outcomes of the program. To ensure the relevance of the program content with the learning outcomes, the program should be accompanied by a map of the learning outcomes, which will provide a detailed description regarding which course and/or the learning and research component of the program leads to which learning outcomes. Learning outcomes map, on the one hand, helps the program development team to

shape the program content and, on the other hand, it is the best way to see how all the learning outcomes of the program content are covered.

In the form of a sample, we would like to present the map of the learning outcomes of the research block/component from the integrated teachers training program. It is noteworthy that the learning outcomes of the block component are related to the learning outcomes of one or more programs. For instance, one broad learning outcome of a program may be divided into several narrow learning outcomes.

	Learning outcome	Introduction to education studies	Research by qualitative methods	Research by quantitative methods	Pedagogic research practice	Master's thesis
1	Is acquainted with the current trends in educational sciences and with the existing positions in scientific discussions;	X				
2	Can analyze and critically evaluate trends and scientific discussions in education science;	X				X
3	Knows the latest research methods in education science;		X	X	X	
4	Depending on the specifics of the research topic, can select the appropriate research method, create/find/adapt a relevant tool, carry out fieldwork, analyze the results and develop recommendations;		X	X	X	X
5	Knows the basic approaches to planning, conducting, and analyzing pedagogic				X	X

	research practice and recognizes the need to use research results to improve one's professional development, and quality of teaching and learning;					
6	Based on the analysis of pedagogical practice, one can identify the research topic, he/she can plan and conduct research, evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and develop relevant recommendations;				X	X
7	Can write a paper in compliance with academic and ethical standards.					X

Admission to the teaching and research components in the program, including each study course, must be conducted with a pre-defined adequate precondition (s). Such an approach ensures the consistent accumulation of knowledge and its gradation from general to specific / from simple to complex / from basic to broad.

An example

A precondition for admission to the research component for students of the master's in educational administration program is to pass all the compulsory courses included in the professional block. Passing these courses will assist the student to identify research interests and formulate a research topic. Before choosing a master's thesis, the student must have completed the courses included in the research component in the following order and in compliance with the following prerequisites:

N	Course Title	Credit	Prerequisite	Semester
Research block *Before passing the courses included in the mentioned block, the student should have passed all the obligatory courses of the professional block (18 credits)*				
	Introduction to educational research	6	1.Administrative ethics and organizational leadership;	2nd semester

			2. Teachers' professional development policy in the context of international experience; 3. Finance and Law in the education field.	
	Statistics	3	1. Introductory course in education research;	3rd semester
	Quantitative and qualitative research methods	6	1. Introductory course 2. Statistics in education research;	3rd semester
	Master's thesis	30	1. Introductory course in education research; 2. Statistics 3. Quantitative and qualitative research methods	4th semester

The number of courses offered within the components of the program must be presented under The European credit transfer system (ECTS), according to which one credit is equal to 25-30 hours. The number of credits provided for the course should be adequate for the topics planned for the course, theoretical, practical, or research assignments to be performed. The specifics of the course/component content, according to the mentioned characteristic, should also be taken into account when determining the contact and non-contact hours.

One of the main components defining the content of the program is the mandatory and supporting study literature. During the study period, the student should get the opportunity to get acquainted with the latest achievements in the field and research results. The reading material provided under the program should be constantly reviewed during the implementation of the program and, if necessary, updated and/or improved.

In addition to the study literature, the content of the program, the consistency of the structure, the curriculum, or any other component of the program should be based on successful experiences in the field. To ensure this, it is recommended that the content of the program be preceded by desk research, which will analyze the content of similar and/or neighboring programs at the local and/or international level and models for its implementation.

Depending on the goals of the educational program, at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels, the program should include electives within the free component. The purpose of offering this component is to allow students to deepen the knowledge gained within the compulsory courses or the ability to choose the appropriate study courses for the degree, depending on their teaching or research interests. Detailed information regarding the program should be available to any interested party. Therefore, we can use the university website, E-learning Management Systems (if any), the university's official page on social networks. To spread the information regarding the program, it is also possible to arrange various informational or orientation meetings with both entrants and newly enrolled students. At the same time, information booklets, etc. should be distributed at the above-mentioned meetings.

2.3 Study course

The combination of learning outcomes of the individual study courses offered under the program should ensure the achievement of the learning outcomes of the program. Therefore, based on the learning outcomes of the program, study courses are identified as the combination of the learning outcomes of which covers the learning outcomes of the program, and the course content covers the learning outcomes of the same course. To determine the relevance of the curriculum to the learning outcomes, we can use a learning outcomes map, which will describe in detail which learning outcomes of the program will be achieved through this or that course (Check out the sample learning outcomes map above). To ensure the compliance of the learning outcomes with the defined level of higher education, a description of the qualifications of the relevant level of the national qualifications framework should be considered, and in the case of regulated professions, additional competencies defined by the relevant field characteristics. The volume of each course should be defined in credits. Both contact and non-contact hours should be taken into account when planning the study course and awarding credits to it. The volume of contact and non-contact hours and the ratio between them should be relevant to the student's workload, the volume, and complexity of the assignments to be performed within the course, and the teaching-learning methods used within the course.

All learning outcomes defined by the course must be measurable, which means that all learning outcomes must be assessed. To provide an assessment of the achievement of the learning outcomes defined by the study course, the course syllabus should determine the relevant components and criteria for assessing student knowledge, which should be described in detail in the assessment rubric.

Compulsory and additional study materials should be indicated in the syllabus of the study course. Study materials can be textbooks, monographs, articles, guides, authentic sources, scientific periodicals, reading materials prepared by the lecturer based on the latest and varied literature, etc.

If the required material is literature that is only available in any foreign language, then the prerequisite for admission to the course must be the knowledge of the relevant foreign language at the level required for the assimilating of the study material. In such a case, a foreign language proficiency should also be a prerequisite for admission to the program

In the case of a doctoral degree, it is recommended that the primary focus should be on the use of monographs, scholarly articles, authentic sources, and not on the guidelines and textbooks as study material in the courses. Such an approach will ensure the readiness to develop new ideas or processes in the process of learning activities, including research.

Example of a study course

The course is offered as part of an elementary school teacher training program. The program aims to prepare a primary school teacher of Georgian language and literature, mathematics, natural sciences and social sciences, who has obtained the appropriate theoretical knowledge, practical skills and values for a successful professional activity and can meet the modern requirements set for the teacher.

Course Title: Modern approaches to teaching and learning

Academic credit: 6 credits (150 hours in total)

Note: The course provides practical assignments with 2 credits (50 hours) in school

Distribution of hours: Contact Hours - 32 hours; Non-contact hours -118 hours;

Course Objectives: As a result of the course, students will be able to define long-term and short-term goals of the learning process and plan according to the objectives, taking into account all the components and the connections between them;

Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of the course the student possesses the following general and professional competencies:

- Able to plan the learning process taking into account national education goals, national curriculum, school priorities, and student needs;
- Able to plan a lesson considering all the components and the connections between them;
- Takes into account the taxonomy of educational goals and Gardner's theory of multidimensional intelligence when planning the learning process;
- Can select the appropriate form of teaching for the learning objective, activity, and strategy;
- Acknowledges the effective teaching and learning strategies, recognizes the need to use them for the effective learning and advancement of each student and is able to use these strategies adequately in the learning process;
- Able to analyze, evaluate and develop relevant recommendations by observing the lesson process;
- Recognizes the need for acquired knowledge to enter the teaching profession.

The student will be assessed on the basis of the results obtained during the whole semester and according to the knowledge of the subject, which will be expressed in the following components of the assessment:

- **Activity - 10 points**

The student is required to actively participate in seminars. Individual or group work performed during the seminars, creative, critical thinking, and reasoning skills, will be assessed. Great attention will be paid to the discussion culture during the participation in discussions - the ability to express and defend one's own alternative opinion, to listen to and take into account the opinions of others.

- **An electronic portfolio – 20 points**

The student will be required to produce a portfolio that will include all the material collected around the various topics, a variety of assignments, including homework, assignments done during the seminars and school internships, records, questions, notes, and more. The portfolio should be the result of work done independently and permanently by the student

- **I midterm assessment / test - 20 points**

Each closed test assignment will be graded with one point, and the share and criteria for the evaluation of the open test assignment will be determined for each assignment, which will be known to the student in advance.

- **II midterm assessment - 30 points (School internship report - 20 points, presentation 10 points)**

The student is required to prepare a report on the internship implemented during the course and present it based on pre-designed criteria.

Note: Based on the above criteria, assessment rubrics should be developed within the course that will be known in advance to the student.

2.4 Development of the practical, scientific / research, and transferable skills

Professional practice is an essential component of the program. It aims to facilitate students' development of the necessary practical skills through the transfer of theoretical knowledge of university education, which, in turn, is a prerequisite for successful professional activity.

Based on international experience, there are several practice models, of which we will consider only three models. The practical component is widespread in Georgia, which is presented in the program as an independent course/courses (first model). The practical course (s) are frequently offered - in the final semester/semesters at the final stage of the program.

This practical model mainly involves active practices (independent student on-site practical activities under the supervision of a practical supervisor); the aim of which is to summarize the knowledge, skills, experience gained in theoretical courses and their implementation in practice. This model has several restrictions: it may be difficult for the student to relate the theoretical knowledge gained within the program to practice at once, which calls into question the full effectiveness of this practical model. The 2nd model, the so-called built-in practice in theoretical courses, focuses on the topics covered in the relevant course content. This practical model aims to instantaneously transfer theoretical knowledge and experience into practice. It is true that the above mentioned practical model runs through the program and may even be intense, but it also has several risks. The student may not be given the opportunity to summarize, analyze, self-evaluate and reflect on the theoretical-practical knowledge and skills acquired at different stages of learning the program. The third model, the so-called mixed model of practical component implies built-in practice in theoretical courses and the consistent implementation of an independent practical course. By using this practical model, it is possible to avoid the risks that may be identified in the case of the first and second models, as both complement each other.

Within the practical component built into the courses, the student is involved in practical activities from the very first stage of the learning process, while the opportunity of choosing a summary course

/ courses is given at the final stage, where he/she summarizes the theoretical and practical knowledge and skills gained at different stages of the program. The practical component should be planned and organized in a consistent and structured manner. It should be closely related to the learning outcomes of the program. The practical component provided within the educational program should ensure a consistent transition from passive to active practices.

During the passive practical work, the student is mostly in the role of observer of the on-site practice processes or assists the practical supervisor. During the active practical work, he / she plans and implements practical activities in agreement with the supervisor under his / her supervision.

It is desirable that the course syllabus, which covers the practical component, describes in detail the practice plan, which includes the purpose of the activities to be performed during each visit, content, homework instructions, student assessment mechanisms for the practical work, etc. Such an approach to planning and describing a practical component will help make this process clear and consistently perceptible to both students and on-site practical supervisors. To guarantee the efficiency of the practical component process, it is important to plan orientation meetings at the beginning between the course supervisor (lecturer) and the practical component supervisor (representative of the partner organization in the field of the practice) to get acquainted with the practical component plans and objectives. As well as to plan periodic face-to-face or online workshops during the practical component, monitoring the process or mid-term analysis, and summarizing discussions at the end of the course.

When planning a practical component, first of all, partner organizations should be identified that will be relevant to the objectives of the program and the relevant field. The terms of cooperation with partner organizations should be defined in the cooperation document (memorandum, agreement). The memorandum of cooperation should describe in detail the rights and responsibilities of both parties, including the estimated number of students, the purpose and duration of the practical component.

Within the framework of the program, a university should develop a mechanism for redistributing students in partner organizations, which takes into account the format of the practical work, the number of student groups according to the format, practical topics, and specifics of the practical assignment.

It also takes into consideration the human and material resources of the partner organizations. It is essential for the university to monitor and assess the implementation of the practical component, which aims to identify its strengths and weaknesses, gaps in planning and implementation, identify other alternative means and strategies to achieve the goal, which will contribute to further development and refinement of the process.

During the practical activities, the student is supervised by the head of the study course - lecturer on behalf of the university - and head of the practical course- representative of the organization.

Both the lecturer and the representative of the organization should participate in the student assessment of the practical component through mutually agreed assessment tools. The teaching methodology at the master's and doctoral levels should be research-oriented, which should be preceded by research competency development courses. The research component, as well as the practice, should permeate the program. Its consistent implementation should ensure the development of research and

scientific skills in students, which will be confirmed by a research project and paper at the final stage of the program. The final master's / doctoral research paper is a summary of practical skills based on the theoretical knowledge, research, and relevant research design acquired by the student during the program. It can be said that the research results of the research component of the program are accumulated in the research master's / doctoral thesis. Therefore, the results of the research paper assessment and their analysis can also be used to assess the learning outcomes of the research component.

The research component in the program should be structured in such a way to ensure that the student is prepared to plan and conduct the final research paper. The preparation of the master's / doctoral thesis should be preceded by theoretical and practical courses of research skills development, which will assist students to study relevant research methods in the field and to develop research interests.

2.5 Teaching and learning methods

The concept of "method" is perceived differently in different circumstances, but always implies ways to achieve the goal. The teaching method is the purposeful action of the lecturer to develop the relevant competence in the learners. The modern educational paradigm is based on the principles of student-centered teaching, which is achieved through interactive teaching.

Interactive teaching is a modern educational system based on the search for new roles of teacher and student and the principles of humanism. It aims to replace the teacher-centered authoritarian learning process with a student-centered learning process that takes into account the interests and needs of the latter. Interactive teaching introduces new strategies for teaching and knowledge assessment in pedagogy.

As a result, the purpose of teaching changes. It focuses not only on acquiring ready-made knowledge but also on developing skills. . The student is a subject of interactive teaching and is its active participant. The basis of teaching is the student's personal experience, his / her qualities, and knowledge. This new approach to the teaching process is based on an important educational process - constructivism. The basic idea of constructivism is to assist students to gather new information by comparing old and new knowledge, to draw conclusions independently, to think independently, and to construct knowledge.

According to constructivism, the student is an active participant in the learning process. Constructivist teaching methodology means taking into account the interests and needs of students in the teaching process, encouraging them to analyze and interpret facts, events, and concepts. . Followers of constructivist theory prefer teaching plans that are built on the interests of students and to their prior knowledge, and experience.

When choosing teaching methods, the purpose of the course and the expected outcome should be determined - what the student should know and be able to do. Considering this, a student-centered teaching-learning method should be selected. You will encounter different classifications of teaching methods in the educational literature. According to one of the classifications, they are divided into two groups: methods that facilitate the assimilation of specific material and methods that develop general/transferable skills. However, this division is conditional, as most methods help students develop general competence along with knowledge.

When choosing a method we should consider:

- Whether the method we have chosen will help us to achieve the set result;
- Whether the method we have chosen is appropriate for the activity;
- Whether the method we choose fits the interests and experiences of the students;
- Is it technically possible to implement it (are resources available; do we allocate time, is it possible to implement the method effectively with this number of students).

When choosing teaching-learning methods, the level of teaching should also be taken into account. With the transition from undergraduate to graduate and doctoral level, the use of problem-based and research-based teaching approaches should become more intensive, which will help students develop the ability to independently plan and implement research. The individual needs and interests of students should be taken into account when selecting teaching-learning methods, including those with special educational needs and international students.

When developing an individual curriculum for students with special educational needs, the possibility of implementing the learning process in an adapted environment should be taken into account and, if necessary, appropriate human resources should be provided in the process of developing an individual curriculum based on student assessment and evaluation. An individual curriculum can also be created in case of change or cancellation of the educational program initiated by the university. If there are international students, the program should be capable to provide them with additional services - by strengthening or supplementing a specific component of the program, by assigning them assignments and, consequently, by adapting the assessment rules, and so on.

Preferably the university should develop a mechanism for monitoring students' academic performance, which provides for the detection of a low student achievement rate.

Relevant academic support activities should be planned according to this indicator (Tutoring, increasing the volume of seminar work, strengthening the components of developing specific writing or quantitative skills, etc.)

2.6 Student Assessment

An assessment is the determination/relevance of an object, event, process, or person to predetermined attributes (criteria). It aims to determine the result achieved by the curriculum and each study course. The assessment notes the results that the whole learning process gives, and the analysis of these results is necessary to correct and better manage the same learning process. I.e. assessment is the foundation on which should be based on a logical decision to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Therefore, assessment of the learning process is a continuous process of collecting, recording and analyzing quality data that achieves the learning objectives, a consistent study of student success and progress.

A Multi-Component model should be used for the student assessment. It should provide an assessment of the objectives and learning outcomes of each course, which is achievable by using specific and measurable criteria and rubrics. Student assessment should be based on four basic assessment principles: objectivity, reliability, validity, and transparency, which we will discuss in detail.

According to the established procedures, the assessment should be carried out on a 100-point scale. Points are distributed and defined as follows:

(A) Excellent - 91-100 points of the assessment;

(B) Very good - 81-90 points from maximum assessment;

(C) Good - 71-80 points from maximum assessment;

(D) Satisfactory - 61-70 points from maximum assessment;

(E) Sufficient - 51-60 points from maximum assessment;

(FX) Did not pass - 41-50 points from maximum assessment, which means that a student needs to work harder to pass and is granted with the right to take an additional exam in terms of independent work;

(F) Fail- 40 points and less out of maximum assessment, which means the student performance is not sufficient, and he/she has to learn the subject from the beginning.

Two types of forms of assessment are used in student assessment process: **developmental** and **determinant.**

The purpose of the determinant assessment is to accurately assess student achievement. It controls the quality of learning, determines the level of student achievement in relation to the goals set in the study course.

Developmental assessment, as the term indicates, is aimed at student development; this assessment monitors the development dynamics of each student and it helps to improve the quality of learning. Developmental assessment/feedback assists the lecturer in planning the learning process, whereas it assists the student in receiving feedback regarding the achievements. Developmental assessment is an integral part of teaching, and it is process-focused. Therefore, when a determinant assessment is always "formal", and the grades are written, the developmental assessment may be "informal". In turn, the determinant assessment can be current/intermediate and summary / final.

The study course should be assessed in several components (mid-term assessments and one final assessment). Intermediate assessment is the assessment of a student's knowledge over semester lecture-and-or-practical time.

The final assessment includes the student's assessment at the end of the semester, during the examination period. The threshold of minimum competencies should be defined for intermediate and final evaluations. Depending on the specifics of the course and the regulations developed by the University, it is possible to determine the share of current and final assessments.

As mentioned above, assessment should be based on four basic principles: **reliability, validity, objectivity, and transparency**. Assessment is credible if the assessment results do not change, regardless

of who and when assesses the student's knowledge and skills. For example, an assessment is credible if different teachers evaluated the same student's answer the same way or if one teacher evaluated the same answer the same way at different times.

Thus, to ensure the reliability of the assessment, more than one assessor must be involved in the student assessment process. Assessment reliability can be ensured by using specifically formulated evaluation criteria.

Strategies that increase the reliability of the assessment:

- The assessment assignment should be formulated clearly and comprehensibly;
- The assignment must be accompanied by precise instructions;
- Different complementary tools should be used in the assessment process;
- The assessment scheme should be clearly and understandably formulated;
- Students should be assessed in similar conditions and situations;
- The assessor/ assessors must be qualified and impartial. To achieve reliability, it is advisable to repeat the assessment over a while. The data are reliable if the result is repetitive.

To achieve reliability, it is advisable to repeat the evaluation over a while. The data are reliable if the result is reproducible.

The validity of the assessment is otherwise called compliance with the purpose of the assessment. If the lecturer evaluates exactly what he/she intends to assess in this particular case, then the validity of the assessment is ensured.

Strategies that increase the validity of the assessment:

- The lecturer should select the form of the most adequate assessment of the student's knowledge and skills;
- The teacher should select assignments that the student has learned within the subject.

Assessment is objective if its result does not depend on the lecturer's personal opinion and attitudes.

Protecting the objectivity of the assessment should be maintained based on pre-designed and agreed criteria. The student needs to know what criteria will be used to evaluate his / her learning activities. This, on the one hand, ensures the objectivity of the assessment, and, on the other hand, assists students with identifying their strengths and weaknesses and developing self-assessment skills

Strategies that increase the objectivity of assessment:

- The lecturer should formulate the assessment criteria according to the results provided by the curriculum and study course.

Assessment is transparent and open when the assessment mechanisms and criteria are known in advance not only to the students but to all other interested persons.

Strategies that increase the transparency-openness of the assessment process:

When teaching the subject, the lecturer should introduce the assessment criteria to the students and they need to analyze it together.

For the lecturer to follow the basic principles of assessment, in the process he/she should rely on pre-defined teaching objectives and task-oriented, precise, clear criteria and assessment schemes/rubrics developed based on it.

Criteria allow the lecturer to measure the learning outcome and the degree of its achievement.

The assessment scheme/rubric is a set of strictly defined criteria and a set of rules for their use, according to which the student's achievement in this or that activity or subject is assessed. For example knowledge of the issue, analysis, quality of performance, etc.

The difference is made between analytical, holistic, general, and specific evaluation schemes/rubrics.

Let us consider them separately.

When we evaluate each criterion separately, then we are dealing with an analytical scheme/rubric of evaluation.

There are cases when it is not necessary or simply not possible to divide the assessment scheme into two or more independent characteristics. In this case, the assessor creates or uses a holistic evaluation scheme/rubric. The columns of the holistic assessment scheme combine all the criteria and characteristics, according to which the lecturer wants to assess the student's work. The quality of a student's response is assessed in terms of general rather than specific characteristics.

The holistic section reflects the change in performance quality from satisfactory performance to unsatisfactory performance. Which type of assessment rubric (analytical or holistic) allows for a more reliable and objective assessment? It will be difficult to give preference to any type of rubric unequivocally. It is easier for a lecturer to use a holistic rubric, but using this type of rubric requires correctional experience and high qualification. There is a danger that the appraiser will not pay attention to the student's results in any of the categories when assessing under a holistic rubric, and he/she will assess a student with only partial characteristics, which will lead to bias in the assessment. When the assessment rubric is divided into separate criteria (analytical rubric) and each criterion is assessed separately, we are insured against these dangers.

An Assessment scheme can be created by the lecturer for several purposes. Depending on the purpose for which the assessment is implemented, there are the following assessment schemes:

- General Assessment Scheme - Used to assess a set of skills;
- Specific Assessment Scheme - Used to assess one specific issue/task;
- General-Specific Assessment Scheme- Its purpose is to assess both general skills and a specific issue/task.

Despite the variety of assessment schemes, the requirements are the same:

- The rubrics/criteria should be clearly defined (i.e., should be credible);
- The assessment scheme should check what it is intended to check, and nothing else (i.e., it should be valid);
- Students should be familiar with the assessment scheme in advance; by which their knowledge is assessed (i.e., should be transparent).

When compiling a new assessment scheme, the teacher should consider the following:

1. He / She should determine the purpose of the assessment scheme;
2. He / She should compile the basic assessment criteria;
3. He / She should compile the characteristics of maximum and minimum points;
4. Determine the number of levels; levels should be qualitatively different from each other; the characteristics of the levels must be specific.

5. Pilot the assessment scheme with colleagues; i.e. they simultaneously, but independently from each other assess the same activity according to the assessment scheme, and compare the obtained results.

   We offer a sample scheme/rubric of project analytical assessment.

Criteria	A fully consistent 5 points	consistent 4-3 points	Less consistent 2-1 points	not consistent 0 point
The Problem and Purpose A specific, achievable, clear and measurable goal. A relevant project topic. The urgency is clearly and convincingly substantiated.				
Tasks Each task corresponds to the goal of the project. The possible risks during the implementation of each task and the appropriate measures for risk prevention are calculated.				
Result Achieving this result is realistic since it meets the goal. The impact of the achieved result is substantiated.				
Resources The material and human resources required for the project activities are precisely defined				
Design The project is built consistently and logically.				

We offer a holistic assessment scheme/rubric sample of the case (so-called case).

- The problem given in the current situation is precisely identified. The analysis is perfectly presented. Precise knowledge of the theoretical material related to the problem is seen, which is adequate for a particular situation. The analysis shows adverse outcomes due to the problem. The recommendations fully serve to solve the problem.

The desired results that are achieved as a result of solving the problem are presented (5 points).

- The problem given in the situation has been identified. The analysis is presented, though not complete. Problem-related theoretical materials are present, but it has little to do with the current situation. The analysis shows the undesirable results due to the problem. Recommendations are given that serve to solve the problem, but the desired results are not given or given incompletely, which will lead to problem-solving (4 points).
- The problem presented in the situation is more or less accurately identified. The theoretical material related to the problem is scarce and less relevant to the specific situation. The analysis do not show any adverse effects due to the problem. Incomplete recommendations are given that serve to solve the problem. The desired results that will be followed to solve the problem are not or incompletely given, which will lead to problem-solving (3 points).
- The problem presented in the situation is more or less accurately identified. The analysis are not present, only the periphrasis of the case (so-called case) are present. Knowledge of theoretical material related to the problem is unseen. The analysis does not show any adverse effects due to the problem. Recommendations that serve to solve the problem are very sparse, general, and worthless. The desired results are not given or given incompletely, which should lead to problem-solving. (1-2 points)
- The problem given in the situation is identified incorrectly. The analysis is incorrect or not present. Knowledge of theoretical material related to the problem and relevance to the specific situation is not perceived. The analysis does not show any adverse effects due to the problem. There are no or incorrect recommendations that serve to solve the problem. The desired results that serve to solve the problem are not perceived (0 point).

There should be an equal and fair system of assessment in the HEI, as well as an assessment appeal mechanism, which will enable the student, in case of reasonable doubt, to apply to the faculty/school with a request to establish a claim commission and initiate appropriate procedures.

It should be noted that the systematic assessment of the study courses should include receiving feedback from students regarding the efficacy of the course-defined assessment system. Feedback results should be available to lecturers as well as faculty/school administration and should be used to improve the course assessment system.

Academic and visiting staff involved in the program should have appropriate knowledge of modern assessment methods.

Besides, staff involved in the process of designing, updating and improving study courses should receive advice and support from the university administration on a variety of issues, including assessment mechanisms and approaches. In order to ensure a high standard of a dissertation, a dissertation document (bachelor's, master's, doctoral dissertation) should be developed within the program which should describe in detail the procedures and assessment criteria for the defense and assessment of the dissertation.

The qualification document should include gradational and consistent processes, which assumes systematization of research processes, submission of interim research reports, and providing periodic feedback from the supervisor to the academic degree-seeking students.

Any interested person should have the opportunity to attend the dissertation defense and engage in a discussion.

Thesis committee should preferably include both academic and invited staff involved in the implementation of the program, as well as external experts.

3. Student Achievement, individual work of students

3.1 Student counseling services

Higher Education Institutions (HEI) should offer counseling services to students, which will help them to develop and achieve learning outcomes.

The needs and characteristics of students should be taken into account when providing counseling services (especially in the case of international students).

It is also particularly significant that students were informed regarding the counseling services offered to them by HEIs.

Academic and/or administrative staff should provide the student with access to a consultation that will assist them in course selection, sequence determination, proper selection of internships and practical course, and similar academic matters.

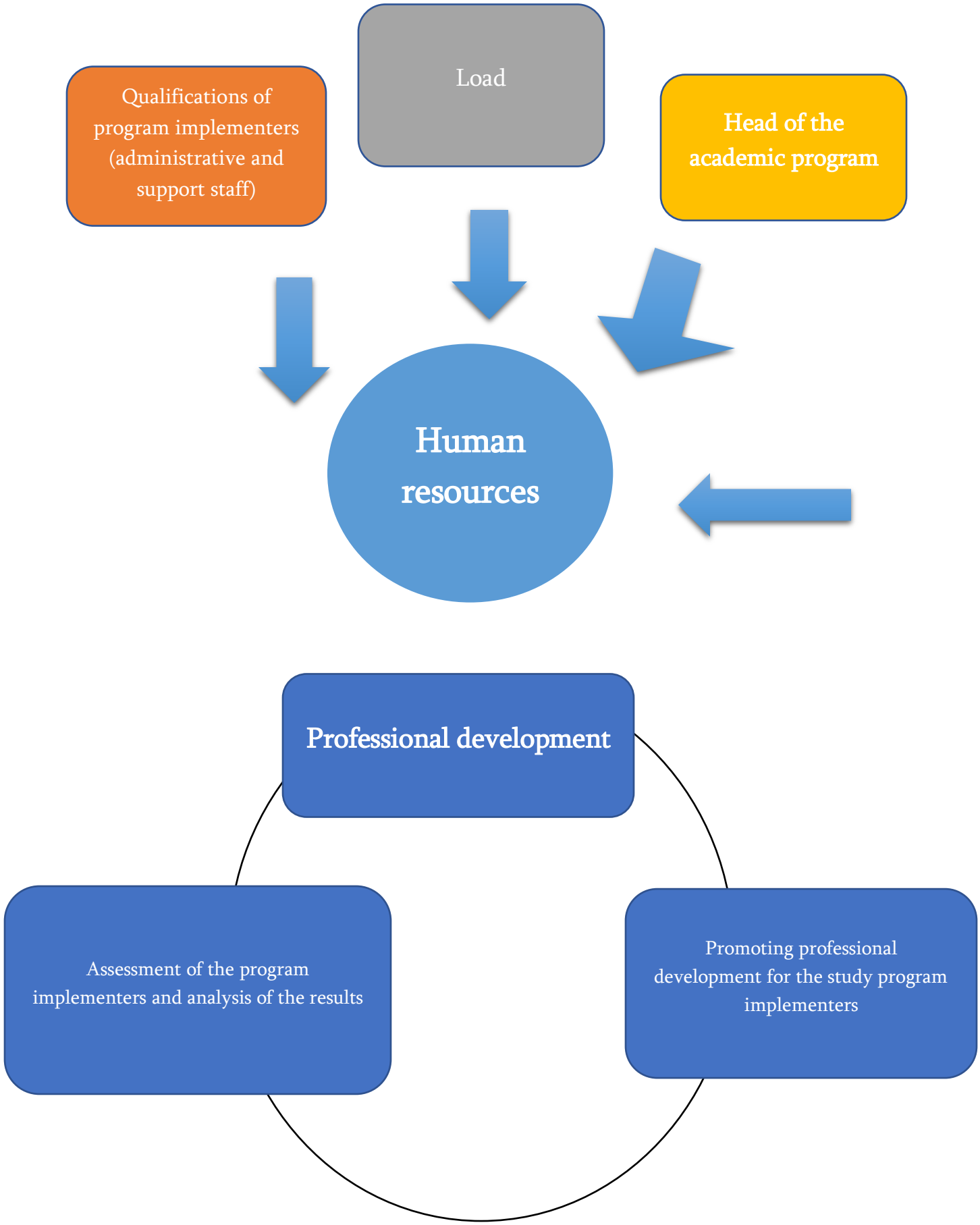
3.2 Guidance for the masters and doctoral students

Each master's and a doctoral student must have a qualified supervisor appointed to them and, if necessary, one or more co-supervisors who have relevant research experience relevant to the research topic.
Preferably Higher Education Institutions (HEI) should determine how many master's and/or doctoral students can be supervised by one professor at a time.
It is also desirable to specify what qualifications the academic staff must meet for them to be authorized to supervise the student while working on a master's thesis/dissertation. It is important to get feedback from students about how satisfied they are with working with the supervisor.

3. Providing Learning Resources

4.1 Human resources

According to the accreditation standard, human resources must ensure the sustainable, stable, efficient operation of the program and the achievement of defined goals. Part of the human resource management in this standard can be represented graphically as follows.


Load
Qualifications of program implementers (administrative and support staff)
Head of the academic program
Human resources
Professional development
Promoting professional development for the study program implementers
Assessment of the program implementers and analysis of the results

Human Resources - Qualifications of program implementers

The strategic priority of the university is to attract high-quality academic staff. To implement the program, it must involve an appropriate number of qualified staff, who will provide students with the opportunity to generate program learning outcomes.

The accreditation standard describes that persons implementing an educational program must have appropriate qualifications. To this end, the university should have the policy to obtain and reflect information on the selection, appointment, and academic development of academic staff.

The policy should describe the stages and procedures for the selection of an academic staff, which should set out general rules for certifying the qualifications of academic / research staff, qualification confirmation of invited staff or teachers, and the essential requirements for a master's or doctoral dissertation.

Depending on the specifics of all fields, job descriptions and qualification requirements should be determined on the level of department or program, which later should be placed in a unified human resource management database.

The selection procedure for program implementers should be based on the principles of transparency and fairness.

The human-resources department (HR department) maintains the vacancy materials and the data regarding the announced vacancies.

The human resources department should have a mechanism to ensure the academic development of the program implementers, which provides information regarding the new works and publications, and is constantly updated in their databases. The compliance of the staff with the qualification requirements should also be constantly monitored. All of this allows creating the rating amongst the program implementers.

A human-resources department must have its web page (section) on the university website, where the human resources service policies, procedures, proposed training sessions, staff support services, will be public and accessible to all interested parties. (For example, The University of Sheffield).

Human resources - Number and workload of academic / scientific, invited / administrative, and support staff.

A human resources department preferably should develop a guideline for the heads of academic programs (in collaboration with them), that outlines general principles, recommendations, and methodology for drawing up a staff workload scheme. The guideline should provide for the redistribution of human resources to each program to maintain program sustainability. The guideline should include the characteristics of each program and should include the following:

- Methodology and procedures for compiling the workload of program implementers, which considers their workload and obligations towards to other institutions. Here it is important to separate the requirements to regulate the maximum number of students per supervisor / doctoral student.
- Best practices and recommended rates which regulates the ratio of academic, administrative and support staff to the number of students (https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/5566/An-analysis-of-studentstaff-ratios-and-academics-use-of-time-and-potential-links-with-student-satisfaction-Dec-12/pdf/ucu_ssranalysis_dec12.pdf https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=EAG_PERS_RATIO)
- The workload of the program implementers (academic, invited, hourly paid) must include student counseling. Higher Education Institution (HEI) should ensure the development of a culture of student academic consultation between academically invited staff and students. The student consultation mechanism should not be limited to the advice and feedback received from the lecturer before the exam.

  It is important to have a faculty academic advisor at each faculty who will provide students with information. He/she will assist them during the course selection, in the curriculum planning process, in the development of the individual curriculum, development of curriculum for traveling abroad, and clarifying the content of each course.

  An academic advisor is one of the most important components of the European educational space in higher education institutions (University of Groningen, Stockholm University, University of Amsterdam, University of Glasgow.) It is recommended that higher education institutions have an academic counseling guide for each faculty, which will include the responsibilities of the academic advisor, student relations, contact procedures and forms, student responsibilities, and academic advisor self-assessment sheet (so-called checklist) to help him/her in self-reflection, etc.

  (http://www.pdc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Faculty_Advising_Handbook_March_2017.pdf)

The head of the academic program

The head of the academic program is one of the most important figure in the academic process ensuring that the program is developed in accordance with the university's mission, vision and strategy. Head of the academic program ensures program development, participates in potential student recruitment activities, facilitates student integration with the career center, and the student academic advisory services.

He/she also requests/exchanges information with faculty, students, external agencies, and partners within the program, collaborates with the quality assurance service, participates in program assessment, and makes changes based on the feedback received in collaboration with the faculty.

Given the above, a university needs to have regulations that describe the mechanisms for selecting, evaluating, and certifying the head of an academic program. The job description should provide a detailed list of activities and functions that this position includes.

4.2 Professional development of the academic and scientific personnel

The foundation of the university's success is its staff. A strategic, professional approach to staff development facilitates the university to attract and retain staff with the skills and competencies needed to achieve its goals.

The university should aim to create an environment where staff can demonstrate their full potential in research or teaching.

The institution should have a staff development plan (E.g.. University of Georgia, University of Bristol) which should determine the following:

- ✓ **Employees 'and employers' expectations for continuous professional development;**

Due to changes in job descriptions, individual goals, or the regulations of the faculty/department / scientific unit, the staff development plan should also be updated. Appropriate changes must be undertaken in the above-mentioned plan and both parties - the employee and the employer - must come to terms with it.

- ✓ **Staff development facilities;**

Necessary conditions (material, financial resources, etc.) for the implementation of scientific / research activities by academic, scientific, and invited staff.

- ✓ **The link between continuing professional development and institutional incentives;**

The university should offer incentives to academic, scientific, and visiting staff for continuous and professional development, ensuring increased staff motivation and labor productivity as a result.

- ✓ **Transparent funding procedures;**

The university should provide funding for staff participation in various cognitive activities through an open, transparent, and objective process. It should create equal opportunities for all employees.

- ✓ **List of activities necessary for staff development based on the needs of academic, research, and visiting staff**.

Training courses, business trips, qualification development courses, conferences, exchange programs, international and/or local projects/studies/conferences, which serve to develop professional and/or teaching skills and/or to share and introduce international experience at the local level.

Program implementers' assessment and the analysis of the results

University should regularly assess academic, research, and visiting staff and further analyze this assessment. Results will be used for further staff development and promotion/incentives.

The university should assess not only the teaching activities of its personnel but assessment should be given in the direction of research as well. It is recommended that the higher education institution developed a staff performance assessment policy that will fully describe the procedures to be implemented, their goals, and results. (E.g.. Technical University of Munich, Aalto University).
According to the relevant documents of the listed universities, the ***assessment*** criteria should be based on the principles of transparency, predictability, and compliance with international standards. Staff assessment can be implemented in three directions:

- ✓ **Research and/or creative and performing activities;**

Number of articles published in peer-reviewed journals with significant staff participation and participation in conferences; International reputation (invitations to international conferences; prizes; awards; research scholarships; grants; interdisciplinary joint research projects; promotion of young scientists; patent applications, patents granted, commercialized patents, etc.)

- ✓ **Teaching**

Quality of teaching (students' semester assessment reports, assessment of the dean/program manager); Introduction/development of the new teaching concepts; Use of modern teaching methods; Bachelor thesis supervision, Master Thesis Supervision; Participation in international mobility; Participation in professional development activities (For example, teaching methods in training courses/conferences), etc.

- ✓ **Academic involvement (activities in the scientific community, academic leadership, social involvement).**

Dissemination of information regarding the results of its activities by the staff, Mentoring junior colleagues; Scientific/creative and community development services; Active involvement in the management of the university; Membership/chairmanship of university committees or councils, etc.

Assessment of academic, research, and visiting staff can be done using several tools:

- ✓ **Polls;**

Surveys of academic, scientific, and invited staff, students, graduates, head of the academic program, dean of faculty, head of the scientific unit, representatives of various structural units.

- ✓ Analyzing *personnel records*
- ✓ Interviewing personnel by a special commission.

4.3 Material resources

Depending on the specifics of the educational programs at the university, there should be a well-equipped learning area, including educational / scientific-research laboratories, inventory required for the practical component, information technology (IT) equipment, or agreements signed with relevant institutions, appropriate conditions for proper use of the institution's resources. (Study materials, etc.) All this ensures the achievement of the goals of the educational program and the learning outcomes taking into account the relevant number of students. Legal ownership of real estate required for the implementation of the program arises through a written form and registration in the public registry. Legitimate possession of real estate is confirmed by an extract from public registry.

Based on the measurement drawing of the building in the facility, learning and support area required for the implementation of the program should be dissociated. A learning area is a space used for teaching-learning purposes, in particular: Learning auditorium, conference hall, professor's room, where students are consulted by professors, educational / scientific-research laboratories, library (except bookstore), and other space, depending on the specifics of the educational program.

To acquire legal ownership of the movable thing, required for the implementation of the program, a deal must be concluded between the parties, and the item must become the property of the purchaser. In this case, the ownership is confirmed by the relevant deal and with the actual possession and use of the item.

The institution is obliged to prove the right of ownership/ownership of movable things with appropriate written evidence. (A written agreement, certificate of delivery and acceptance, invoice, proof of long-term existence on the balance sheet (inventory results, etc.) (Written confirmation of the donor during oral gifts, etc.)

It is essential to ensure security in the educational/scientific-research laboratories and the building/buildings required for the implementation of the program confirmed by the relevant documentation. (Safety rules must be followed in educational / scientific-research laboratories which include: Existence of the ventilation, possession of the fire safety equipment and specialized clothing, etc.)

The material resources (movable and immovable property) owned or legally owned by the institution must serve the realization of the educational goals of the institution and correspond to the requirements of the educational program, research activities, and the number of existing and/or planned students. The institution must have the necessary book fund for the implementation of the program and documents proving the ownership of this fund. The library fund on printed and electronic resources required for the implementation of the program should be diverse and renewable to ensure the achievement of the learning outcomes of the educational program and the implementation of research / scientific research activities. It is essential that students have access to the latest scientific periodicals,

international electronic library databases, which allow them to read the latest scientific data in the relevant field/area to achieve the learning outcomes of the program.

The university must have documents proving its involvement in the international electronic library network (an agreement, memorandum, agreement, etc.), as well as the university, must monitor and analyze the statistics of the use of electronic library databases.

4.4 Program / Faculty / School Budget and Program Financial Sustainability

Allocation of financial resources provided by the HEI budget for the program must be economically achievable. It is desirable to obtain diversified sources of funding that ensures the adequacy and efficiency of the risk management. The university should have documented information regarding the availability of funding sources. Given documentation should include information regarding the remuneration and other expenses of the academic, invited, and/or administrative staff involved, as well as relevant sources of income. The costs should also include the provision of activities envisaged by the program (E.g.. participation in the conferences; publication of an article in international journals; book fund renewal; professional development for staff, etc.).

5. Initiatives to improve the quality of teaching

The internal quality assurance system (processes and procedures) is one of the main responsibilities of the HEI. Its purpose is to ensure the implementation of an academic program of appropriate quality. In each case, the internal quality assurance system depends on the context and scale of the HEI. For an internal quality assurance system to be effective, it must be implemented with broad involvement, communication must be conducted with various interested parties, and essentially, resources must be used efficiently. The internal quality assurance system is an integral part of the day-to-day operation of the HEI.

5.1 An internal quality assessment

HEIs should establish such internal quality assurance systems and processes for their academic programs, which will allow receiving feedback from different interested parties. (E.g.. students, graduates, academic staff, industry, etc.).
Such a system would allow HEIs to evaluate the program from different perspectives and identify both strengths and weaknesses. Based on internal quality assurance processes and procedures, the HEI should implement the following:

- Evaluate its program using both direct and indirect methods. HEIs should collect data that reflect student achievement in outcome-oriented assignments, activities, etc. Compare the evaluation results with the corresponding target benchmarks. It also accumulates other data to evaluate the program indirectly. (E.g.. student satisfaction rate, student/graduate employment rate, etc.)
- Use different methods (E.g.. in social sciences, education, etc.) to collect data describing the teaching and learning processes used within the academic program.
- Collect both quantitative and qualitative data for program evaluation. (For instance, Student Outcomes/*Graduation Rates, s*tatus suspension and termination rate, the *graduate employment rate, f*eedback from students/employers, etc.)

- Establish and develop valid and reliable data collection tools (For instance, questionnaires, records, etc.).
- Evaluate the program with interested parties' involvement both inside and outside the university.

HEIs must maintain academic integrity in the program assessment process. Any case of data falsification or manipulation will cause irreparable damage and jeopardize internal quality assurance processes and procedures. The quality assurance processes and procedures implemented by the HEI should fulfill its purpose.

Quality assurance processes and procedures need to be effectively planned and implemented in terms of both the resources used and the time spent. To ensure the efficiency of program assessment, preferably HEIs should be guided by resources such as, for instance: Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation - JCSEE.

Staff involved in the program should analyze and interpret the assessment data/results and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the academic program. They have to decide on how to overcome the identified shortcomings. The HEI should have a clear information exchange system between university structures, staff, and decision-making bodies to inform interested parties regarding the academic program improvements and/or develop an appropriate plan(s) to improve the program.

The program self-assessment report prepared by the HEI should be created with the involvement of both academic and administrative staff. As a rule, each academic staff member and representatives of relevant administrative bodies should be involved in this process. Their involvement may include a variety of activities:

- Participate in focus groups and interviews related to a specific standard/component/requirement;
- Direct participation in the creation and/or revision of the self-assessment report;
- Evidence / data, etc. Delivery as described in or attached to the self-assessment report.

Program self-assessment preparation is a systematic process that takes place at regular intervals and aims at both evaluating the academic program against established standards as well as receiving formal feedback from external evaluators. (Compare with the monitoring below). The self-assessment process focuses on HEIs (its quality assurance service and program staff):

- The main strengths and weaknesses identified concerning the standards
- The processes and procedures used to effectively evaluate the academic program;
- Makes informed decisions based on program evaluation results; which includes appropriate interventions, improvement plan, etc.

The self-assessment process is a good way for the university to receive and collect feedback regarding the program from internal and external interested parties. (For instance: industry, partners, external experts, etc.)The university should reflect on how it eliminates (or plans to eliminate) shortcomings identified in the self-assessment process. Quality assurance is based on this principle - "Plan, implement, test, develop", thus manifesting that it is persistently concerned with developing the quality of the program.

5.2 External quality assessment

External quality assurance processes include a formal assessment of the program by external experts (This can be a local or international professional with relevant knowledge) based on the program self-assessment report. Such assessment shall be made following the standards set by the relevant national or international agency. The external self-assessment process can be finalized by making recommendations for the future development of the academic program. It is essential to consider recommendations for the future development within the HEI, as well as to outline improvements or develop an action plan. Such an action plan may include specific interventions, responsible bodies/staff/faculty, time frame, etc.

5.3. Program monitoring and periodic assessment

Academic program monitoring is an ongoing process that is an integral part of internal quality assurance processes and procedures. It assists HEI in identifying trends and their needs in academic programs; it also assists with implementing appropriate interventions and/or drawing up an intervention plan.
In general, monitoring helps the university to maintain an appropriate level of education and create a supportive, educational environment. The monitoring system allows HEIs to:

- Focus on specific criteria to evaluate the academic program effectively; (For instance: ***Students' Satisfaction and Expectations, enrollment,*** progress ***and completion rates,*** employment rates, etc.);
- ***Valid*** and ***Reliable Data Collection (***both quantitative and qualitative); Evaluate the program and report on findings (E.g.., trends identified, strengths and improvements);
- Be data-driven and, when necessary, make informed decisions regarding the software improvements; which includes the development of appropriate interventions and/or an action plan aimed at addressing identified challenges.

It is advisable for the HEI to establish program monitoring processes that will support its external assessment. HEIs may consider it appropriate to conduct a peer review of the academic program as part of internal quality assurance processes and procedures. The HEI decides itself the scale of the assessment, which can range from a full assessment of the academic program to feedback on its specific aspect, component, procedure and etc. The peer-review process is successful when it is followed by constructive feedback. Based on the feedback, HEIs improve or plan program improvements.

HEIs may decide to use lecture monitoring as an internal quality assurance strategy. The university itself decides which lectures to attend and how often. To ensure efficient monitoring, the HEI should plan the process well in advance of the lecture. It is advisable for the university to develop a lecture monitoring form to capture observer feedback. It is considered good practice to inform academic staff in advance that they will be observed. Monitoring is effective when observer feedback is constructive and timely.

The internal quality assurance system allows students to assess the compulsory course at the end of the semester. The main purpose of such an assessment is to provide student feedback to course instructors to assist him/her in the future development of the course. The university decides itself which methods and tools will be used for student assessment of courses. When evaluating the study course, the HEI should take into account the matter of confidentiality.

Students' assessment of courses is more effective when it is complex and timely (E.g.., allows students to focus on different aspects of the course, such as course administration, workload, resources, etc.). HEIs should periodically analyze the academic program according to the best international practices in the field. Using this approach is recommended in understanding the current trends in teaching-learning in a given field to make the program modern. The university decides itself how to implement the program. It may take into account the learning outcomes, structure, content, and/or other aspects of the program.