



LEPL - Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State  
University

# Annual Report

# 2019

Quality Assurance Service

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

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The Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (hereinafter referred to as the University) Quality Assurance Service (hereinafter referred to as the Service) is one of the governing bodies of the University. The aim of its activities is the continuous improvement of the quality of the University services. The Service operates in accordance with Articles 25 and 31 of the Law of Georgia on Higher Education, the TSU Charter and the Statutes of the Quality Assurance Service. In its activities, the Service is guided by the document "Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines in the European Higher Education Area" developed by the European Quality Assurance Network and the National Authorization and Accreditation Standards.

The main areas of activity of the service are:

- A) Promoting high-quality teaching-learning and research at the University;
- B) Evaluating the educational and scientific-research activities of the University;
- C) Developing recommendations for the improvement of educational and scientific-research activities of the University;
- D) Organizing the self-assessment process for authorization and accreditation;
- E) Promoting the introduction of modern teaching, learning and assessment methods;
- F) Promoting international cooperation and the integration of the University into the common European educational space.

The Quality Assurance Service operates in collaboration with the Quality Assurance Services available within the faculties, and which are part of the University's Quality Assurance System. Based on the multi-profile expertise of the University, the Service actively cooperates with various structural units of the University for their further development.

The report presents the activities carried out by the Service in 2019.

In contrast to the previous reporting period, the tasks set for the University have changed little, although approaches to the issues have been modified. In particular, the action of the university community has been more effective, based on the collegial cooperation of individual university structural units and faculties, as well as the institutions. This was unequivocally stated in the University report submitted to the Board of Higher Education Institutions in September 2019, and after public discussion was clearly assessed as a highly business-oriented, challenging and results-oriented activity of the entire university community. At the meeting of September 11, 2019 (Protocol N14), the Authorization Board of the Higher Education Institutions of the LEPL National Center for Quality Enhancement in Education (LEPL) positively evaluated and acknowledged the report submitted by the University concerning the implementation of the recommendations of the authorization experts.

In addition to planned activities such as promoting the quality of teaching-learning and research at the university; organizing external evaluation, including authorization and accreditation processes, international cooperation and promoting the integration of the University in the international educational space, during the reporting period, the institution had to carry out activities due to certain circumstances and mandatory conditions. For example, in November-December 2019, when the university was planning the new contingent of students for the next academic year, the institution decided to submit an application to increase the maximum number of students.

## 2. QUALITY ASSURANCE OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

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- ✚ Preparing Preparation of educational programs for the (re-)accreditation process;
- ✚ Adaptation Adapting normative documents;
- ✚ Introducing an internal evaluation system;
- ✚ The External Peer Assessment Cycle at the University;
- ✚ Support for the professional development of academic staff;
- ✚ Organizing surveys in the university and analyzing results;

### 2.1 PREPARATION OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR THE (RE-) ACCREDITATION PROCESS

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One of the priority tasks of the Quality Assurance Service is to ensure the external quality of educational programs and, consequently, to manage the separate processes and procedures. To this end, the structural unit of the University Quality Assurance Service includes an Accreditation, Evaluation and Analysis Department that plans and manages all phases of (re-) accreditation throughout the year in cooperation with the respective Faculty Quality Assurance Services.

In 2018, the Service developed a database of the internal consumption of educational programs. The further improvement of this database was planned as public electronic databases. The internal consumption database provided the mandatory details of each educational program (title, level, language of implementation, qualification, supervisor/contact person, contact details (e-mail, telephone), date and deadline of accreditation, decision of the Accreditation Board and experts' conclusions. This allowed the academic staff implementing the educational programs properly to plan the re-accreditation process. To improve the database, the Quality Assurance Service applied to the LEPL-National Center for Quality Enhancement in Education and requested the protocols of the decision of the Accreditation Council for Educational Programs and the conclusions of the experts from the archives.

Since 2019, the Quality Assurance Service has been developing the following topics:

- With the involvement of the Faculty Quality Assurance Services and support from the University Public Relations Department, a catalog of 217 Georgian language educational programs was prepared for the University website. It presents a brief history and field achievements of the main university educational units, followed by substantial statistics on the number of faculty educational programs according to their respective educational levels. Those interested in educational programs are also provided with important details of the program structure (goals, results, areas of employment, structure, distribution of credits according to the training components of the program).
- At the initiative of the Quality Assurance Service of the University and the participation of the Quality Assurance Service of Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, the idea to create software emerged. The TSU Department of Information Technologies was also involved in the process, and during the reporting period several meetings were held at three universities, where Batumi colleagues gradually presented separate sections of the software. In the first stage the meetings were attended by representatives of the quality assurance services of the university and faculties. A number of specific recommendations were made, including for a final working meeting to be held at Batumi University. Based on this software, it is now possible to make a number of activities automatic, to collect information and analytical data, as well as to carry out research.

With the enactment of the new accreditation standards in the Georgian educational arena, a new understanding of the accreditation process for higher education institutions has been put on the agenda, including:

- In-depth knowledge of the new standards and their institutional implementation;
- Prescribing preparatory processes and procedures;
- Preparing pre-accreditation and accompanying accreditation procedures.

These procedures each combine several phases, namely:

- ✓ Preparing an educational program for (re-)accreditation (managed by the Faculty Quality Assurance Service with program implementers and program committee participation);
- ✓ The internal evaluation process of the educational program (organized by the University Quality Assurance Service with maximum involvement of the faculty administration and academic staff);

- ✓ Procedures for submitting an educational program;
- ✓ Preparation of the educational program accreditation package for submission to the LEPL-National Center for Quality Enhancement in Education for further consideration (led by the University and Faculty Quality Assurance Services and program implementers);
- ✓ Written communication between the Accreditation Division for Higher Education Institutions of the LEPL - National Center for Quality Enhancement in Education and the Accreditation, Analysis and the Evaluation Department of the University Quality Assurance Service, to plan the accreditation process;
- ✓ Organizing a visit from accreditation experts (by the Faculty and University Quality Assurance Services);
- ✓ Managing the follow-up processes after the accreditation experts' visits (University Quality Assurance Service).

Thus, the University Quality Assurance Service took into account these innovations. To carry them out the Service first prepared new normative documents in force at the University. Following this, internal evaluations and quality assurance became priorities of the Quality Assurance Service, which has led to meeting external quality assurance standards.

During the reporting period, 15 new and modified (re-) accredited educational programs were added to the University's Catalog of Educational Programs, including:

- ✓ 2 Bachelor's Degrees: Computer Science (English), Chemistry (English);
- ✓ 7 Master's Degrees: Business Administration; Tourism (TSU and Lumiere University – Lyon); 2 Dual Degree Joint Master's Programs); Migration Management; Media Psychology and Communications (English); Post-Soviet Transformation: Politics, Economics, Society (English); Education Sciences, Demographics and Population Geography.
- ✓ 1 Integrated Primary level multilingual teacher training;
- ✓ 4 Doctoral education programs: Business Administration, European Studies, Paleontology - Paleoanthropology, Archeology;
- ✓ 60 credits - Georgian language training program.



8 Educational programs are presented in the accreditation mode:

- ✓ 4 One-step (integrated): Medicine, Medicine (English), Dentistry, Dentistry (English);
- ✓ 4 One-step (integrated): Medicine, Medicine (English), Dentistry, Dentistry (English);
- ✓ 2 Master's: Public Health, Teacher Education;
- ✓ 2 PhDs: Public Health and Epidemiology; Clinical and Transmission Medicine.

3 Educational programs are going through the process of preparation and discussion:

- ✓ 2 Master's: Vocational Education and Human Resource Management (supported by the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) in collaboration with the University of Otto von Guericke in Magdeburg); Computational Mathematics and Modeling (TSU and RENNES 1 joint Master's program).
- ✓ 1 PhD: Applied Social Psychology.

Accredited programs include a foreign language (with a foreign language component) educational program:

- ✓ 2 Bachelor's: Computer Science (English), Chemistry (English);
- ✓ 3 Master's: Tourism (TSU and Lumiere University – Lyon, 2 Dual Degree Joint Master's Program); Media Psychology and Communications (English); Post-Soviet Transformation: Politics, Economics, Society (English).
- ✓ 1 PhD: European Studies.

2 Undergraduate educational programs were subject to international accreditation: Electrical and Electronic Engineering and Computer Science (ABET). 1 Undergraduate educational program in Chemistry (ACS) is currently being prepared for foreign accreditation.

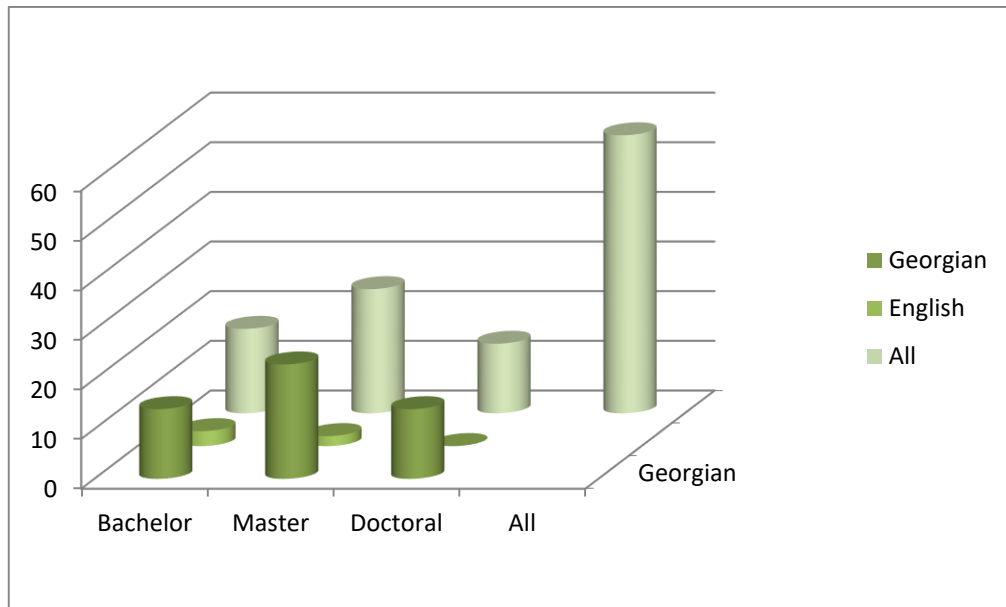
The University is constantly striving to expand international cooperation and to implement educational programs through inter-institutional partnerships. At present, individual faculties are working on joint foreign language programs, including:

- ✓ 5 Bachelor's (Psychology (English); Economics at l'Université de Rennes 1, Business Administration - in English at l'Université de Rennes 1, Business Law (TEMPLE University, in English) and new joint education programs with the University of San Diego ;

- ✓ 3 Master's Educational: International Management, Enterprise Management and Entrepreneurship with Rennes 1; Alternative Dispute Resolution Methods (jointly with one of the American University in English);
- ✓ 1 PhD - (Transmission Medicine, in English).

The development of these programs is planned for the 2020-2021 academic year.

In 2020, 35 educational programs of the Faculty of Exact and Natural Sciences are being re-accredited, including 9 Bachelor's, 18 Master's (1 in English) and 8 Doctoral.



**Figure 1:** Statistics of the current process of re-accreditation in 2020 (Faculty of Exact and Natural *Sciences*).

According to the general data, there are 47 active educational programs at the Faculty of Exact and Natural Sciences, 36 of which are being re-accredited: 7 Educational programs in medicine, 5 in law, 3 in social and political sciences, 4 in psychology and education.

We present the given data as a matrix.

N	Faculty	BA/one-		Total BA	MA		Total MA	PhD		Total PhD	Total	Note
		G	For.		G	For		G	For			
1	Exact and Natural Sciences	9	1	10	17	1	18	8	0	8	36	Reaccreditation
2	Medicine	2	2	4	1	0	1	2	0	2	7	(Re)accreditation process
3	Law	2	0	2	2	0	2	1	0	1	5	Reaccreditation
4	Psychology and Education Sciences	1	0	1	1	1	2	2	0	2	5	(Re)accreditation
5	Social and Political Sciences	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	0	1	3	Reaccreditation
6	Total	14	3	17	23	2	25	14	0	14	56	
7	Total			17			25			14	56	

## 2.2. ADAPTING NORMATIVE DOCUMENTS

The reporting year was included many accreditation and re-accreditation processes. Enacting the new standards led to a new understanding of many issues, and to revising a separate normative document. This led to the modification of certain processes and procedures according to the new requirements. In particular, there was long and intensive work done on the **Procedures to plan, develop, evaluate and improve educational programs**, work which was approved by the Academic Council on July 22, 2019 (Resolution N100).

This normative document includes "Instructions for planning, developing and improving Bachelor's, Master's, Medical Doctor/Dentist and Teacher Training Integrated Bachelor's - Master's degree programs" ascertained by **Resolution №153** of the Academic Council of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University; "Instructions for the Development of the Doctoral Program" approved by **Resolution №250**; "Approved Rule for Educational Program Implementation Indicators and Evaluation" approved by **Resolution №67**; "Mathematics Course Syllabus Forms" approved by **Resolution №55** on June 13, 2011; and "Rules for Production of a Portfolio of Higher Education Program/Programs" approved by the **Order №06/03** of the Head of the Quality Assurance Service. The normative document complied with the National Qualifications

Framework and the Classification of Fields of Study approved by the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports Order №69/N in 2019 and has undergone the following structural and substantive changes:

- Defines the procedural issues of compiling and preparing an educational program;
- Modifies, according to the new accreditation standards, the structure and syllabi of the educational programs (e.g., the alternative form of the syllabus of the mathematics course), then reflected in the content of the educational program and attached documents. The following appendices were added: program budget form, curriculum map, program objectives and learning outcomes alignment map; form of direct and indirect evaluation of the learning outcomes of the program, recommended form of the letter of consent for implementation of the joint (international) educational program; recommended forms of student semestrial surveys, student service satisfaction, employer satisfaction, and graduate survey questionnaires; format for information to be presented about the academic and invited staff of the program, format for information to be presented about the equipment and form of the report of the educational program.
- The procedure for planning and developing educational programs was clarified;
- The rule for *approving* the educational program committee was changed;
- Taking into account the need for reasonable time limits, deadlines for the gradual submission of the educational program and changes made were determined;
- The functions and responsibilities of the head of the educational program were specified;
- The composition of the committee of an educational program, its functions and the procedures for its operation were defined;
- E-learning was defined as a teaching method, as well as the conditions of its use were explained;
- A note on the procedures and deadlines required for inclusion in the Unified National Examinations Questionnaire was added;
- Learning outcomes were determined in accordance with the National Qualifications Framework approved by Order 2019 №69 / N of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia;
- An entry was added to the syllabus of the training course to reflect student responsibility towards the University's good faith policy;

- A principles of the implementation of the educational program became student-centered teaching, taking into account the student needs and inclusiveness;
- A record was added on the learning outcomes of the educational program and/or the procedure required in case of a change in its structure and deadlines;
- As of September 30, 2019, the resolutions of the Academic Council on the establishment of committees for educational programs were repealed. Accordingly, the faculty councils approved the educational program committees in an updated manner retroactively.

This Decree, upon entry into force, is a key document that provides a detailed overview of the process of updating and shaping educational programs.

### **2.3. THE INTRODUCTION OF AN INTERNAL EVALUATION SYSTEM**

Intensive collaboration between the University Quality Assurance and Faculty Quality Assurance Services, which is one of the important foundations for improving the quality culture, plays a crucial role in the (re-)accreditation process, where the involvement of academic and administrative staff is also essential. The present processes are largely seamless with the involvement of additional program committees and field experts employed in the structural units of the University.

Within Service's scope of work, the principles of cooperation between the upper and lower levels of the university quality services were reviewed. Processes and procedures for (re-)accreditation were renewed. Until the present time, evaluations of the educational program were "closed" processes, based on issues in various spheres of services, international expertise (e.g. Karl-Ruprecht University of Heidelberg, Germany), faculty quality assurance services and the opinions or desires of program implementing staff to learn and share their colleagues' best practices. A modified internal evaluation system was first amended and established at the University, which was not only new for TSU but for the whole Georgian educational system. Thus,

Initially, a methodology for selecting a program for internal evaluation was developed, specifying which educational program was to be selected for evaluation. Criteria for selection included:

- No changes had been made since the date of its last accreditation;
- It had been frequently changed since the last accreditation;

- It had been selected by the Faculty Quality Assurance Service in agreement and at the initiative of the staff implementing it for a complex (undergraduate and graduate - if any) cluster assessment, the selection of which was made by the Faculty Quality Assurance Service in agreement and initiation with the staff implementing the relevant program.

Curriculum development evaluation was a kind of simulation of the accreditation process, evaluated by external evaluation experts as a best practice implemented by the University Quality Assurance Service (see Authorization Expert Opinion Report 2020: 3 on the application of increasing students' marginal number). The new approach to internal evaluation has facilitated inter-faculty collaboration and sharing best practices.

The purpose of the internal evaluation is to

- Expand the culture of quality within the university;
- Increase student involvement in program evaluation and development;
- Strengthen the role of internal quality assessment and a culture of support.

The processes were transparent, collegial and supported by the faculties, and the recommendations received during the assessment will be reflected in the educational programs.

The internal evaluation process was divided into several phases:

- ✓ Selection of an educational program and preparation of a complete package (responsible: Faculty Quality Assurance Service);
- ✓ Establishment of a group of experts for internal evaluation (responsible: University Quality Assurance Service), including a program accreditation expert (may be invited from other HEIs), representatives of the faculty, and other faculty and University Quality Assurance Service, as well as a student;
- ✓ Pre-visit meeting with a group of experts (responsible: University Quality Assurance Service);
- ✓ Visit to the faculty with the educational program implementers (responsible: Faculty Quality Assurance Service);
- ✓ Submission of expert opinion (responsible: head of the expert group);
- ✓ the analysis of the experts' opinions with a feedback process that analyses and transfers the findings , showing the strengths and improvements to be made to the program, to the Faculty Quality Assurance Service (responsible: University Quality Assurance Service);

- ✓ Public discussion of the results, in which the target, as well as representatives of other faculties and stakeholders of the University participate (responsible: University Quality Assurance Service);
- ✓ Preparation of a package of relevant changes based on the findings (Responsible: Program Committee and Faculty Quality Assurance Service), with submission to the University Quality Assurance Service for further consideration by the University Academic Council (responsible: University Quality Assurance Service).

Education programs participating in the pilot internal evaluation during the reporting period:

- May-July 2019: 14 educational programs (including 5 undergraduate educational programs, 6 Master's education program, 2 one-level education programs and 1 integrated Bachelor-Master education program for primary school teacher training);
- November - December 2019: 18 education programs (including 6 Bachelor's education programs, 8 Master's education programs, 2 Doctoral education programs and 2 one-level education programs)

About 500 people took part in the work groups. During the visit, meetings were held with representatives from various levels of the Faculty Administration, program managers, academic and visiting staff, students and alumni, employers, and internship/practice implementers. During their visits the experts inspected materials and equipment, libraries, auditoriums, computer and research laboratories.

#### **2.4 THE EXTERNAL PEER ASSESSMENT CYCLE**

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During the reporting period, a cycle of external peer assessments was carried out, with the participation of foreign experts in education who made a cluster evaluation of TSU's educational programs. Education programs were selected that had been planned for accreditation in 2020.

Within the framework of the joint project "Strengthening Quality Culture at Tbilisi State University" of the LEPL -Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University and the Central and Francophonie Eastern European University Agency (AUF) (Director: Mr. Mohamed Ketata, Coordinator Claudia Wiesan), external evaluations of all three levels of the Faculty of Law (undergraduate, graduate and doctoral), as well as the

one-level dental education programs of the Faculty of Medicine of the University were carried out. In the framework of this project, on October 12-13, 2019, an international expert, Professor of the University of Strasbourg, former Vice-Rector Anne-Marie Klebe Pelissier was invited to evaluate the educational programs of all three levels of the Law Faculty (undergraduate, graduate and doctoral) and held workshops with the administrative and academic staff, and then presented recommendations. At the end of the assessment, Professor Klebe Pelissier expressed that the university visit was a highly well-organized meeting in which all stakeholders in the educational program were considered and involved. She benchmarked Georgian law school to a number of high-level law schools in Europe.

The one-step educational program of the Faculty of Medicine "Dentistry" was evaluated separately. The external evaluation was attended by an expert, Jean-Louis Sixus, a professor at the University of Rennes, whose recommendations were sent to the Faculty of Medicine. His recommendations were shared by the program implementing staff, which was further reflected in detail in the package submitted for the accreditation of the educational program.

## **2.5 SUPPORT FOR THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACADEMIC STAFF**

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In order to support professional development of the academic staff, a number of events were planned and implemented at the university as well as at the national and international levels. These promoted sharing knowledge and good practice, the creation of a strong quality assurance system, and developing a uniform vision for specific topics, while considering faculty peculiarities and diversity. Active work was carried out with the staff implementing educational programs (both individually and in the format of working groups) to increase their level of involvement in quality assurance issues (academic staff participated in collegial evaluation of educational programs, simulation of accreditation processes), to increase responsibility and autonomy.

Professional development events were implemented in 2019 by the TSU Quality Assurance Service, including regular trainings sessions, workshops and seminars for academic program implementers and stakeholders to carry out the academic program accreditation process. Seminars were led by the University



Quality Assurance Service staff, experts from the LEPL- National Center for Quality Enhancement in Education, as well as by foreign higher education institutions. Results of these activities included:

- A New National Qualifications Framework and Classifier came into force;
- A number of educational programs went through the re-accreditation process;
- New educational programs in both Georgian and foreign languages were prepared for accreditation;

17 meetings were held with the participation of more than 100 individuals. The topics of the workshops were diverse and included the following issues:

- Developing learning outcomes for the educational program and training courses;
- New qualification frameworks and requirements for educational programs;
- Methodology and techniques for mapping educational programs;
- Development of self-assessment reports for educational programs;

Among the targeted workshops held in 2019 within the mandate of the Service were:

- 07/02/2019 - Topic: "How to write a self-assessment report for the accreditation of higher education programs", attended by representatives of the faculty quality assurance services as well as managers and implementing staff of those programs whose submission was scheduled for 2019. The form and standards of the accreditation self-assessment report of higher education programs were discussed in detail and participants had the opportunity to receive information on their concerns.
- 22/02/2019 - Topic: "How to evaluate the learning outcomes of higher education programs", in which managers and implementing staff participated from English-language programs that were undergoing accreditation: "Media Psychology and Communications", "Post-Soviet Transformation: Politics, Economics, Society" and "Dentistry".

At the initiative of the Service, international experts in the field of education supported the professional development of the academic staff of the University throughout the reporting year, including with the following seminars:

- 15/03/2019 - Topic: "Teaching and evaluating learning outcomes related to the descriptor of autonomy and responsibility". The seminar, intended for the academic staff of the University, was led by the Danish expert Alexander Sibon;
- 8-12.04.2019 - Topic: "Didactics of vocational education, theories of vocational education, research methods in vocational education, organizational and professional development". The target group of

the meeting were academic staff from the educational sciences (TSU, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, Akaki Tsereteli State University), and was initiated by the University Quality Assurance Service and organized by the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ, Germany, Trainer: Prof. Dr. Marcus Boehner);

- 16/05/2019 – Workshop Topic: "Quality Assurance of Master's and Doctoral Programs". The workshop was carried out at TSU with the support of the Francophonie University Agency, and organized by the University Quality Assurance Service. Issues discussed were cooperation with the Francophone space; doctorate and co-leadership - international doctoral networks; and the evaluation of Master's and Doctoral programs.

The workshop was chaired by a professor from the University of Craiova, Romania, with participating expert Cristina Teoderescu. The audience consisted of students, academic and administrative staff.

A second session of the workshop on 16/05/10 was dedicated to the topic:

- "European experience in doctoral study", organized by the Association of European Universities (EUA) and the Quality Assurance Service and chaired by Alexander Hasgall, Chairman of the Doctoral Education Council of the Association of European Universities. Issues discussed were: European best practices in doctoral student leadership; a review of studies by the Association of European Universities; and the discussion of issues related to TSU doctoral studies.

Good practices in inter-university cooperation were established at the initiative of the University Quality Assurance Service during the reporting period, and an important field workshop was planned for a Summer School project, hosted by Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University:

- 7-13/07/2019 - Topic: "Modern research approaches in the field of education". This meeting with doctoral students was led by Roy Jefferson George, PhD in Educational Leadership, Professor at the University of North Texas. The Summer School project was initiated by a group of PhD students in educational sciences to support improvements in research skills for Doctor's and Master's degree students in education, attended by MA, PhD students from TSU, BSU and ATSU. The aim of this project was to disseminate the acquired knowledge.

## **2.6 ORGANIZING SURVEYS AND ANALYZING DATA IN THE UNIVERSITY SPACE**

During 2019 the academic staff of the University Quality Assurance Service and the Faculty of Psychology and Education participated in six workshops with a total of six students' semestrial questionnaires from the Student Satisfaction and Doctoral Survey, which they processed and updated. Changes in the questionnaires related tolated to the structure (optimization of the questionnaires) and the content (various content questions were added), including:

- ▶ Clarification and correct formulation of the questions;
- ▶ Reduction of the number of questions;
- ▶ Adding reverse questions;
- ▶ More focus on priority topics;
- ▶ Changes in the structure and form of questionnaires.

Substantial changes in this area were also related to student satisfaction with the service (e.g., doctoral student questionnaires raised a number of questions about the importance/need for training, practical and research components of the curriculum, about the quality of teaching and material resources. Questions were clarified regarding consultations provided by the research supervisor/co-supervisor and satisfaction with their collaboration in general).

As a result of the changes, the revised questionnaires became more thematically sorted, accurate, easy to understand, and focused on obtaining correct/accurate information. In addition, they are now compiled in terms/language that students can understand with clear instructions. Incorrect formulations of questions were eliminated.

Five surveys were planned and conducted, which were preceded by verification of the questionnaires. This resulted in the identification of changes to be made in the questionnaires. The studies were then conducted with revised questionnaires:

- Student semester survey;
- Survey of 2018 university alumni;
- Survey of academic/scientific and invited staff of the university;
- Survey of doctoral students;
- Student satisfaction survey.

The overhaul of the questionnaires more accurately revealed the positive aspects of the university services and the ongoing processes compared to previous years, as well as issues for improvement (see Appendix 1). This will allow better planning for university activities, as well as updating and adapting teaching regulations and procedures.

### **3. PROMOTING INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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The position of the University in the educational sphere is strongly based on the strategic development of its separate institutional units, which was supported by the Quality Assurance Service during the entire reporting period, during the process of self-reflection by the administrative and academic units. Their communication was important to successfully perform the key tasks for the university (learning-teaching, research, management and services). Modeled on European methods and the systemic experience of quality assurance, this structural unit coordinated the separate processes taking place at TSU, focused on important topics, collected various types of information and analyzed them. Regular institutional assessments will continue to play an important role, sometimes supplemented by the results of general surveys on key issues. During the reporting period the Service paid special attention to, within the institutional development of the Service, special attention was paid to issues such as:

- ✚ The report on the recommendations presented in the conclusion of the authorization experts;
- ✚ The statement on the increase of the maximum number of students;
- ✚ Changes in the strategic development plan;
- ✚ Changes in the organizational structure of the institution;
- ✚ Activities implemented within the project "Academic Integrity";
- ✚ Support for student projects;
- ✚ Doctoral education;
- ✚ Methodologies to determine institutional effectiveness;
- ✚ Participation in international rankings and analyzing results;
- ✚ International projects and their preparation process;
- ✚ Application to the European University Association (EUA) and participation in thematic groups;
- ✚ Recognition of credits within the framework of mobility;

- ✚ Cooperation with faculty quality assurance services;
- ✚ Updating the university website;
- ✚ Support for vocational education.

### **3.1 REPORT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS PRESENTED IN THE CONCLUSIONS BY THE AUTHORIZATION EXPERTS**

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LEPL - Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University was authorized on August 27, 2018 (# 53). The Board of Authorization of Higher Education Institutions outlined points of expert evaluation that were changed, namely: The five components in the report fully complied with the expert opinions, 7 – mostly, and 7 – partially, and the data given by the decision of the Authorization Board were changed as follows: 7 components are fully compliant with the standard, 11 – complied mostly, and 1 is partially compliant. The changes affected the following components: 1.1; 2.1; 2.2; 3.2; 4.1; 6.1 and 7.1.

Following the conclusions of the authorization experts by the University Society and the introduction of the decision of the Board, a working group was selected. In the first stage of the work process, in order to orient it correctly within the current processes and context, several directions for efforts to be made were defined. Groups were formed to work towards a unified vision:

- Updated University Strategic Plan and modernization of monitoring processes;
- Modified structure of the university by reducing bureaucracy and increasing management efficiency;
- Activation of quality assurance processes towards continuous improvement of educational programs reflecting modern requirements, purposeful refinement and improvement of certain regulations, processes and procedures;
- Thoughtful and effective management of university resources, including the revision of human resource management processes, activation of student services, and improved material resources and equipment.

The work performed was analyzed, evaluated periodically and the results of the analysis were presented to the academic and representative councils. Representatives of the University Central and Faculty

Administration, Academic and Representative Councils, students and external stakeholders were actively involved in these processes and worked within their competence on the shared report document. The document was sent via email of google drive to the heads of all structural units, Deans of faculties and top management representatives. Data were collected and processed for two weeks, and then the final document was prepared, reviewed and shared by the university community.

All ongoing processes at the University are based on the Continuous Quality Improvement (PDCA) cycle and focus on the development of teaching-learning, research, management, university services and resources. Management decisions are made only on the basis of relevant studies and evidence from the results of internal quality assessment. A continuous cycle of quality improvement was maintained during the reporting period and during the implementation of experts' recommendations. The recommendations received during the authorization process were analyzed and the results of internal quality assessments to outline ways to implement the recommendations were also used.

Based on the results of the internal and external quality assessments, and in accordance with the continuous improvement cycle, changes were implemented and described in detail in the report. The report on the activities in the main document was submitted to the LEPL National Center for Quality Enhancement in Education (41 folders) and reviewed by the Authorization Board. Their observations were publicly discussed at the meeting of the Authorization Board on September 11, 2019 (N14).

A number of issues were highlighted and considered good practices during the review:

- ✓ The report preparation was highly commended for its presentation of both the main text and the attached documents, within a detailed, complete and well-argued package;
- ✓ The standards for solving current issues and processes in the university based on cooperation were highly commendable;
- ✓ There was a rapid automation of university processes;
- ✓ The university website's active undertakings to update the current university website;
- ✓ Knowledge transfer, the innovation center and a fab-lab created at the University to share and publicize innovation will promote dialogue between science and industry;
- ✓ The increased accent on quality and relevance of ongoing fundamental research at the university according to the format of international research;

- ✓ The efforts to instill a culture of quality in the university supported by the newly conceived format of internal quality mechanisms.

Following the review of the report by experts, board members and representatives of the University's central management, the Board decided:

*In accordance with Article 25, Paragraph 6<sup>1</sup> of the "Regulation on Authorization of Educational Institutions" approved by the Order N99n of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia on October 1, 2010, the report submitted by LEPL Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (S/K: 204864548) was adopted.*

### 3.2 STATEMENT ON INCREASING THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF STUDENTS

Beginning in the academic years of 2019-2020 TSU has actively discussed increasing the student contingent. Predicting student contingent change is important for the proper distribution of physical, material and human resources, thus it is imperative to study the dynamics of the learning processes to adapt them to student contingents. In order to study this issue a working group was set up, which identified two essential areas of work:

- The need to increase the number of students and determine their maximum number;
- Provide an greater number of students with adequate resources and services.

First, all available data<sup>1</sup> related to the increase in student effectives were collected and analyzed by the university administration, including:

- Number of *students* enrolled on the basis of the results of the Unified National Examinations (including Azerbaijani, Armenian, Abkhazian and Ossetian-language students enrolled in the Georgian language education programs within the quota defined by the “Law of Georgia on Higher Education”);
- Number of students enrolled as a result of general Master's exams;
- Number of *students* enrolled in Doctoral programs;
- Number of *students* enrolled without the Unified National Examinations;
- Number of *students* enrolled without general Master's exams;

- Number of *persons* enrolled in the teacher training educational program;
- Number of *students* transferred by mobility;
- Number of *suspended* students in the last 3 years;
- Number of *students* who have regained status;
- Number of students terminated from status;
- Number of graduates;
- *Graduate* employment rate.

In addition to this, ascertain the following resources and goals:

- The ratio of material and information resources of the University in terms of the existing/planned number of students;
- The ratio of *human* resources to the existing/planned number of students;
- University *financial* opportunities;
- Strategic goals *and* priorities of the University.

To predict the student contingent, the working group used both quantitative and qualitative research methods, combined with the existing planning methodology, and expert evaluation of results. Based on the final analysis of the data, the University Management decided:

*“Given the reasons for these trends, as well as the prospects and maintenance of the existing funding model, the University plans to increase the maximum number of students in the higher education institution by 4920 units (including enrollment of an additional 2850 students over four years -- to maintain a balance between graduates-enrollment, up to 500 additional applicants from the Occupied Territories, approximately 400 additional vacancies for foreign nationals, 164 vacancies for mobility migrants and 1000 vacancies for readmitting students). This permits the university to take into account the improvement of existing services in parallel with the growth of the student contingent.*

In case the opportunity arises for increasing a marginal number of students, the University also defined its own capacity to allow the admission of more students, in particular if:

1. Full-fledged teaching of the increased contingent of students will be possible considering the permeability of the university’s study space;



2. Full-fledged training of the increased contingent of students will be possible considering the human resources of the University;
3. Full-fledged teaching of the increased contingent of students will be provided with *resources* appropriate to the specifics of the faculties/programs;
4. The increased contingent of students will be involved in the learning process in stages - according to the planned number of vacancies announced for each academic year.

Forty-one Annexes on activities (total: 41 folders) described in the main document were submitted to the LEPL National Center for Quality Enhancement in Education together with the main document. The visit of the authorization experts to the University took place on December 27-28, 2019. During their visit, they met in stages with the university administration, representatives of structural units, academic and visiting staff, representatives of research institutes, as well as Georgian and foreign students of all levels. The visit by the experts was carried out in an official style with a constructive and collegial attitude by the experts towards those in TSU. The experts' approach showed a high degree of responsibility, clearly reflected in their recommendations and advice. They also generalized best university practice topics according to the individual components of the HEI authorization standards.

The experts pointed out in their report the important processes taking place in the university after the authorization, which were generally shared as best practices in the Georgian educational sphere, in particular,

- Development of institutional effectiveness indicators;
- An efficient program committee whose work involves students and employers along with the program implementers;
- New approaches to quality assurance mechanisms, namely the introduction of a new methodology for internal evaluation in the university context;
- Participation in the Association of European Universities thematic group for teaching and learning.

Recommendations made by the group of authorization experts were included in a new development phase to increase institutional effectiveness. The recommendations focused on:

- Expanding the functions of faculty quality assurance services to address separate issues (such as planning the number of students);

- Creating an effective mechanism to deliver individual peer assessments of student outcomes in the university;
- All academic staff should use electronic journals for direct and timely feedback to students;
- Actively involve students, and specifically foreign students, in the university processes;
- Improving and adapting the university infrastructure for all types of users;
- Reflecting fully on the academic good faith mechanism in students' academic papers, and actively implement other prevention mechanisms.

A public hearing before the Authorization Board took place on February 14, 2020, on the basis of which the Authorization Board unanimously decided to increase the maximum number of students by 4920 students.

### **3.3 CHANGES IN THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Modern educational reforms consider universities as educational institutions based on the principles of autonomy and academic freedom. According to the demands placed on them, the scope of universities offers boundless possibilities, and if enacted harmoniously they can solve complex and multidimensional tasks. This implies a well-calculated strategic development plan.

The gradual changes in the educational sphere are the bases for renewal of University strategic change. This must be backed by the appropriate methodology. To improve the University's strategic development and action plan, during the reporting period activities were carried out in two main directions, in coordination with the University Quality Assurance Service:

1. Improving the methodology for monitoring strategic and action plans;
2. Prioritizing activities defined in the action plan.

To develop a strong system for monitoring the methodology of the implementation of the Strategic and Action Plan, the following activities were carried out

- Based on the order of the Rector (№46/01-01; 15.02.2019) a monitoring group consisting of the members of the Academic and Representative Councils was established to evaluate the implementation of the strategic development and action plans of Tbilisi State University. The goal of the group was to monitor the implementation of the University 2018-2024 Strategic Development

Plan and the 2018-2020 Action Plan, and to submit recommendations to the Academic and Representative Councils;

- The monitoring group held four working meetings this year in cooperation with the Quality Assurance Service to analyze the TSU Strategic Development Plan; the TSU Action Plan; the one-year and three-year action plans of administrative structural units for 2018; Recommendations and advice from the authorization experts; Recommendation forms developed as a result of the evaluation of the 2018 Annual Reports of the administrative structural units, to compare them with the University Action Plan, the “Logical Framework for the Implementation of the Strategy and Action Plans” and the “Strategy and Action Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Framework”;
- Based on the above, the Monitoring Group for Strategic Development and Action Plans developed an action plan outlined within the specific deadlines of the monitoring group; a methodology for monitoring strategic development and action plans; recommendation forms for the action plan and reports of structural units; recommendations to improve strategic and action plans. Materials were submitted to the members of the Academic Council;
- Following the recommendations developed by the monitoring group and the submission of the Quality Assurance Service, on July 22, 2019, by the order of the Rector №184/01-01, a new composition of the working group for the strategy (2018-2024) of LEPL - Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University was approved. The purpose of the Strategy Working Group was to amend and improve the Strategic Development Plan, based on the recommendations of the Authorization Experts, the recommendations and advice developed by the University Strategic Development and the Action Plan Monitoring Group;
- The Strategy Working Group submitted an amendment to the University's Strategic Plan to the Academic Council for approval, namely, in the Strategy Monitoring Methodology, which was approved by the Academic Council by Resolution №101 on July 22.

**Prioritize activities in the action plan.** Efforts are now underway to determine the priorities of the action plan activities envisaged by the recommendation of the authorization experts, and to improve the strategic planning methodology. One of the strategy priorities in particular was to develop an established strategic planning methodology, although this does not preclude working in different priority areas as well. The reporting period was marked by the strengthening of the internationalization component in all directions.

For example, seven foreign language education programs (English and French-language) were developed, including two joint programs in collaboration with partner universities. The number of foreign language programs developed during the last year is more than 1/3 of the existing programs; within the framework of the program funded by the Erasmus + project (Credit Mobility ICM), Tbilisi State University showed the highest rate. The number of English language courses in the Georgian-language educational program curriculum for foreign exchange students has increased over the past year: after authorization, two new courses in Ethnology were added in 2018, and five foreign language courses in Cultural Studies and Arts were prepared for the 2019-2020 academic year.

### 3.4 CHANGES IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF TSU

To increase efficiency in the administrative and management services and ensure higher efficacy overall, the central management of the University decided to carry out the renewal of a number of domains. This was coordinated by the Quality Assurance Service in three main directions: reorganization of the institution; distinct structural changes; reduction of administrative resources followed by increased staff qualification and strengthening e-governance.

**Reorganization of the institution.** The implementation of this activity first required an in-depth analysis by the University and the development of a specific action plan, which was planned in stages:

- The Quality Assurance Service prepared an analysis of the 2018 authorization as well as the external and internal evaluations of 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017 to identify the trends to be considered by the Academic Council. The conclusions based on the analysis were submitted for consideration to the Academic Council of the University by the University Quality Assurance Service;
- Based on the materials reviewed, the University engaged academics, research staff and doctoral students to study the existing model of the structure and its relevance to the University's mission and strategic goals;
- On March 14, 2019, by order of the Rector №67/01-01, a working group was set up to develop the structure and management processes of the University, which included authorized persons from the administrative structural units of the University, members of the Academic Council, representatives of trade unions and student self-government, and external education experts.

The working group presented target landmarks in a document to “Develop an action plan by April 5, 2019, indicating specific measures and deadlines for the development of the University structure and management processes”.

The bases for the document were recommendations described in the report as a result of the University Authorization Process in 2018, and the recommendations reflected in the conclusion of the Higher Education Authorization Expert Group and within the University's "Administrative Management Optimization Project Implementation” with the company “Price Waterhouse Cooper Central Asia & Caucasus P.W.C Affiliate in Georgia”.

In preparing the issue, the recommendations were further discussed that were developed in the third and fourth quarters of 2018 within the framework of the Organizational Assessment Project of the Personnel Management Department with the involvement of the academic staff of the Faculty of Psychology and Education (Prof. I. Kutaladze). The project was initiated by the Personnel Management Department, supported by the University Administration, including the Quality Assurance Service. At the end of the project, the recommendations developed by the working group were presented to the Academic and Representative Councils for further response.

The working group held eight meetings, when the members presented specific conclusions based on in-depth analysis of individual issues, each within their competence. The recommendations were sent by the group to the administration and the Academic and Representative Councils of the University for further comment. The Academic and Representative Councils took note of the issues related to the reorganization and optimization processes at the University and expressed their views on implementation in stages and according to a specific plan.

**Separate structural changes.** As a result of the above-mentioned in-depth analyzes and plans, separate structural changes have been implemented at the University, which serve to simplify the structure, reduce bureaucracy and, in some cases, advance important functions. The main processes taking place at the university in teaching and research were carried out without any delay. The following changes were made in the structure:

- The updated structure includes Deputy Rectors in the educational and scientific fields, which serves for the effective delegation and distribution of rights and responsibilities;

- In order to achieve the mission and strategic goals of the University, concrete changes have been made in the auxiliary educational and scientific structural units in two main directions. In one case, changes were made relating the status, and in another, the reporting system came into operation. These changes affected about 50% of the auxiliary educational and auxiliary scientific units, namely:
  - Some structural units were abolished - School of Leaders, Medical Institute of Polymeric Materials, Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Religions;
  - Some structural units have been integrated into the composition of the faculties - Multimedia Center, Laboratory of Geoinformation Systems, Georgian Neighborhood Research Institute, Institute of Conflict Studies, Student Counseling Center, Gender *Research* Institute, Center for Development of Interdisciplinary Programs and Studies, Research Center for Persons with Disabilities;
  - The functions of the Industrial Innovation Laboratory and Business Incubator have been expanded and changed, in particular, the Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Center has been established;
  - A new - Tbilisi Regional Educational-Research Center (HUB) of the Pan-European Academy of Sciences was established to support the research and educational processes at the University;
  - The Center for Christian Oriental Studies has been established, which is a priority auxiliary-scientific unit of the University for the development of ongoing research in the humanities;
  - A Vocational Education Center has been set up to administer all vocational education programs at the University.

The heads of the structural units, in turn, evaluated and analyzed the structure, work organization, functions and efficiency of the services subordinated to them. In this regard, the draft regulations have already been submitted by: TSU Quality Assurance Service, Personnel Management, External Relations, Public Relations, Information Technology Departments and the Museum.

**Reduction of administrative resources.** In 2018-2019, administrative and support staff were reduced by approximately 9%.

### 3.5 ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE ACADEMIC INTEGRITY PROJECT

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Since 2018, the University Quality Assurance Service has been coordinating one of the projects of the Erasmus Institutional Development Program, namely, "Academic Integrity for Quality Teaching and Learning in Georgian Higher Education Institutions" (INTEGRITY). The project will be completed in 2020 and 4 foreign and 11 Georgian universities participate in it. The project aims to develop teaching and research processes in universities by promoting a culture of academic integrity, including the development and/or improvement of policies, mechanisms and tools needed to prevent or detect plagiarism.

From the beginning of 2019, the Service has actively resumed work on the implementation of the project and the execution of its key components. During the reporting period, by coordination and initiative of the Service and in cooperation with other university units, the following activities were carried out:

- With the active involvement of the University Public Relations Department, a PR *campaign* was planned and implemented to raise awareness of both the academic staff and the students' on academic integrity;
- Information on current and planned news for the target groups and stakeholders was *systematically* provided through the university's communication channels: the website and the social network 'facebook'. Additional information was emailed to registered participants in particular activities under the project;
- Advertising posters, banners and flyers were created in collaboration with the University Public Relations *Department*, which were placed in all eleven campuses of the University and in the building of the Central Library, where exam sessions are held. Flyers were provided to faculty administration and student services, in reading rooms of university libraries;
- During the reporting period, the academic writing training courses planned according to the course designed to improve students' academic writing competencies, which were carried out on the basis of the University National Scientific Library, were continued. From May-July 2019, the given project is institutionalized, which means that in order to support the culture of academic writing and academic integrity at the University, in coordination with the Quality Assurance Service of the University during a total of 8 weeks, 384 students of the University did the training course within

the four modules, which is almost four times the number of participants of the training in the pilot mode;

- On the initiative of the University Student Self-Government and by the support of the Quality Assurance, an orientation week was held for undergraduate freshmen in the fall semester of the 2019 academic year, during which representatives of the University National Science Library provided students with the information on library resources and services, among them about the issues of academic integrity;
- On October 17, 2019, on the initiative of the Service, an informational meeting of the University Administration with the first semester doctoral students was held at the National Scientific Library, during which the representative of the University Scientific Library *presented* comprehensive information to the doctoral students and other attendants about the important topics of academic goodwill in detail and the support activities of the library in this direction;
- In October-November 2019, through the anti-plagiarism program "Turnitin", 1061 papers defended within the framework of the doctoral program in law (6 dissertations in total) and the master's degree programs of all seven faculties of the university were reviewed. The *results* of the analysis were handed over to the relevant faculties for the program managers to get acquainted with and to plan further policies;
- At the end of 2019, after analyzing the data obtained as a result of software-assisted qualification dissertation analysis, the master's thesis composition guide was modified, which is under review by the relevant university units;
- During the reporting period, after recommendations were made by Miles Berry, a professor at the University of Ruehampton, for the development of academic writing syllabi, *existing* academic writing syllabi across all seven faculties were modified, and in some cases new syllabi were developed. The updated and newly developed syllabi were approved at the April 4, 2019 meeting of the Academic Council (N43);
- University policy and appropriate tools have been developed to improve the quality of teaching and learning in accordance with the principles of academic good faith. For this purpose, in February 2019, by the order of the Rector N58/01-01, a working group was set up at *Ivane* Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University to modify the regulatory documents related to the promotion of academic



integrity culture, which includes representatives of the academic staff and the Legal Department, Quality Assurance Service, Library, Scientific Research and Development Department. The group analyzed the university's policies and tools in terms of academic good faith and developed recommendations.

- In 2019, taking into account the recommendations, implemented measures and experience gained within the project, the relevant regulations of the University were updated and a policy document was developed - "The Rule for Ensuring Academic Integrity of Undergraduate and Graduate Students of LEPL- Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University", which was submitted to foreign experts for consideration. This document has been reviewed and approved by Miles Berry, a professor at the University of Ruehampton, and representatives from partner universities, who have developed several recommendations to improve the document, after which the paper will be submitted to the Academic Council for approval;
- Emphasis on academic conscientiousness has become an integral part of the values and learning outcomes of educational programs and courses. In addition, in the reporting period, all courses developed and/or updated at the University were supplemented with a mandatory *record* on adhering to the principles of academic good faith, which has recently been recognized by accreditation experts as one of the best practices in the field of preserving academic good faith;
- During the reporting period in cooperation with the Public Relations Department a new, seven-point PR campaign plan has been developed, which include activities such *as*: spreading positive messages to students through graffiti, spreading anti-plagiarism messages through the LMS platform, student action within the framework of the project "Anti-plagiarism Campaign", preparation of a video ad by students, modification of entrants' brochures and first semesters' guide, etc.
- In the framework of the PR-campaign plan, a video ad was prepared, the presentation of which is planned for the spring semester of 2020;

At this stage, separate academic integrity policy documents are being prepared and updated within the framework of this project.

### 3.6 SUPPORT FOR STUDENT PROJECTS

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Ensuring the quality of teaching and learning is the main mission and responsibility of the university community, and students are important actors in this process. Their involvement in the university processes actually creates a quality culture at the university and their responses to important issues lead to the introduction of many innovations and changes in academic or administrative activities.

During the reporting period, the cooperation of students in numerous activities of the Quality Assurance Service became even more pertinent:

- Regular weekly meetings with various groups of students continue where students' requests are discussed and their ideas are supported.
- Students continued to cooperate with the Committee on Educational Programs;
- Since spring, 2018, the University Quality Assurance Service established cooperation with intern students as part of its mandate. This was developed further as a permanent component of the learning process of the educational programs; more than 25 Master's Degree students underwent internships in the University Quality Assurance Service.
- In order to gain additional experience, eight Master's Degree students who carried out internships in the QAS were involved in the newly established internal evaluation processes at the University with the status of "student experts" by the Service. The number of participating students in educational programs also increased significantly, with up to 88 students taking part in the internal evaluation process in 2019. Their suggestions are now being taken into consideration by both the upper and lower administrative circles of the University.
- Involving students in external assessment processes is also important. In 2019 approximately 152 students participated in the accreditation process for educational programs;
- In 2019, 5309 students participated.
- With the support of the Quality Assurance Service and the involvement of the university Student Council, university meetings were prepared such as the important orientation week for first-semester undergraduates. For the first semester, all seven faculties and the University administration held a meeting in the historic building of the University, where they introduced the University's history, mission, values and vision. The bachelor students became acquainted with educational programs and various student support services. An orientation meeting was also held

with representatives of the University Library to provide information on library resources and services, including issues on academic good faith.

The University Quality Assurance Service, in collaboration with student groups, constantly strives to support the interesting ideas initiated by students. Among those selected during the reporting period were procedures started to join the European Student Union (ESU) in 2018, which continues in stages (initially there were online consultations with the representatives of the organization, and then the organization planned to involve the Student Council in international conferences and seminars organized by the European Student Union) during the reporting period. The European Students' Union unanimously supported Georgia's accession at their December 2019 Council meeting. A small grant program from the Alumni Association of the International Education Center, was planned in 2019, and from 2020 the student project "Increasing the capacity of student involvement in quality assurance at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University" will be launched to increase student involvement in teaching-learning and research.

### **3.7 DOCTORAL STUDIES**

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Since 2018 a number of important events have been planned and implemented as part of the transition to high-quality doctoral teaching at Tbilisi State University. These are part of a preparatory stage to establish doctoral schools in the future. The University Doctoral Council came into operation at the University after public discussion during a meeting of the Academic Council on December 27, 2018 after approval of the Statutes of the University Doctoral Council (N244). By resolution of the same Academic Council (N245), the Academic Council of the University also decided to approve the minimum doctoral standards. The University Quality Assurance Service was involved in the development and initiation of key issues, and accordingly faculty regulations were subject to renewal.

Based on the results of surveys of the doctoral students, the university administration decided to provide doctoral students with spaces for work and meetings, in collaboration with the University Scientific Library. At the beginning of the academic year on October 17, 2019, a meeting between the University Central and Subordinate Administration and the first-semester doctoral students, the latter were informed about issues such as:

- ✓ Doctoral degree exchange programs and grants;

- ✓ Scientific foundations;
- ✓ University electronic and printed journals;
- ✓ Scientific conferences;
- ✓ The path of the doctoral student from enrollment to public debate;
- ✓ Use of library resources, scientific databases and academic writing resources;
- ✓ Academic good faith;
- ✓ Funding for student projects.

At the initiative of the UQAS and Dr. G. Royle, Head of the Tbilisi Bureau of the German Academic Exchange Service, doctoral students received their first lecture "Good scientific practice - a perspective from Germany" on 24 December, 2019, as part of the academic cycle "Academic Conscientiousness in Georgian Higher Education Institutions".

The change in the university minimum doctoral standards required a new approach to the updated doctoral education programs. In 2019, doctoral studies programs were subject to re-accreditation and are in the preparation phase. Program implementers took all the new requirements and minimum standards into account for doctoral teaching. Already (re) accredited programs underwent accreditation within the framework of the project "Study in Georgia" at the request of the LEPL National Center for Quality Enhancement in Education and with the involvement of international experts.

Due to the complexity of the issue, the QAS carried out numerous meetings, trainings and seminars during the reporting year with the support of faculty administrations and partner universities, as well as foreign professors with international expertise with experience in evaluating educational programs. Three trainings were conducted during the reporting period (16.05.2019 – Prof. Kristina Teodorescu, conducted two sessions; 16.05.2019 - Al Hasgall, Chairman of the Doctoral Education Council of the European University Association conducted one).

Changes in the educational program were the basis for the summer school initiated by doctoral students of the Faculty of Education and supported by the University Quality Assurance Service, in which doctoral students of the partner Faculties of Batumi and Kutaisi Educational Sciences took part. The summer school seminars were led by Professor R.J. George of the University of Texas, who introduced the latest approaches in research in the field of education. The idea arose to prepare a doctoral educational program in education

sciences through the joint efforts of partner universities, currently being developed by four Georgian universities--in Tbilisi, Batumi, Telavi and Kutaisi.

### **3.8 METHODOLOGY FOR DETERMINING INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

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The main tasks of the Quality Assurance Service are to promote the quality of teaching and research at the University, to develop relevant recommendations, to improve teaching and research activities, and to organize authorization and accreditation self-assessments. Solving these tasks would be impossible without easy access to reliable and complete information. In the autumn of 2019, the Quality Assurance Service located data on faculty databases, and in various services or departments, and compiled a registry of information available within the university. A list of indicators was developed to permit the evaluation of the quality of individual programs, faculties, teaching and research, as well as the third mission of the university. Quality assessment tools (Student Satisfaction Questionnaire, PhD Student Questionnaire, Academic Staff Questionnaire, etc.) were developed to provide additional information about the situation at the University.

The Quality Assurance Service, launched a pilot process, supported by the University Administration, to evaluate institutional effectiveness using updated, holistic approaches to systematic data collection, development of indicators and analysis of results. This will permit:

- Systematic data collection, analysis, observation and systematization of dynamics, which will further save time and human resources when managing processes in the university;
- Overall evaluations through a system that includes every area of activity - teaching, learning, research, services, resources (including financial, material, human, library), contribution to community development, and monitoring the results;
- The creation of a platform for information collection and analysis to gather data and calculate indicators.

The Quality Assurance Service used the analysis of world university rankings to evaluate its own activities and to observe the dynamics of development. Later an internal system of efficiency was developed. The first stage included listing the data needed to assess effectiveness of all areas of the University. This data list was sent to the relevant administrative units of the University for feedback, then units responsible for data

collection, periodicity and means of data collection were identified. An updated data list was then sent to all 11 relevant structural units, 11 separate meetings were held, which proved to be effective. Finally the data list was compiled with the involvement of all the University community.

These data are used in instances such as program accreditation, institutional authorization and world rankings of universities. They are grouped in different directions, although there are so-called "permeable" areas such as internationalization whose components are found in all issues. After defining the final data list, the Quality Assurance Service began work with the University Information Technology Service to develop the project software. With the support of the Administration, the Information Technology Service will update the University Databases within one year in such a way that it will be possible to obtain the data needed for the assessment automatically without spending extra time and human resources.

In parallel, evaluation indicators have been developed, which include quantitative and qualitative data, they are given appropriate importance in the evaluation and, most importantly, allow us to evaluate the effectiveness of the activity at three levels: educational program, faculty/institute and university. The project is innovative in the field of higher education in Georgia and we hope it will be successful.

### **3.9 PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL RANKINGS AND RESULTS ANALYSIS**

In addition to facilitating the University's participation in the World Rankings, data collection and analysis, the Quality Assurance Service has taken an important step to improve ranking positions not only of Tbilisi State University but for other leading Georgian higher education institutions as well, to improve the reputation of the Georgian higher education system in the international education market.

As a result of negotiations with the Times representatives, on October 28, 2019, the University organized a meeting with Michael Lubage, Brand and General Manager of the Times World University Rankings (attended by 28 representatives from 6 universities), who introduced the Times World University Rankings Methodology to the audience. The event was attended by representatives of various Georgian universities, as well as the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports and the National Center for Education Quality Enhancement. During the meeting, the representatives of the Times World University Rankings reviewed the opportunities of Georgian universities in the ranking, ways to improve their world reputation and internationalization. The session focused on branding and reputation management, or how Georgian

universities could successfully present their brand and increase awareness of their achievements. This is one of the prerequisites for success for universities in a given competitive environment.

This session was one of the services offered by the Times to the University on a negotiated basis and was held free of charge. The University also reached agreements on important offers for Georgian universities through the Times World University Rankings. In particular, the Times will serve higher education institutions for three times less than the market value of world universities, with the support of the University Administration and the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports. This project will last for three years and includes the following services:

- Counseling sessions to help participating universities improve aspects of their activities to achieve strategic goals;
- Access to the Times database and target benchmark platform for the University during three years, which will enable the TSU to track its own progress and share its experiences with other interested universities;
- A branding campaign to ensure Georgian universities are positioned well on the world market to attract foreign students, enhance their reputation and other activities.

A report was prepared by the Quality Assurance Service to evaluate the activities of the University and develop relevant recommendations, and based on the analysis of the results of the Times Higher Education World University Rankings. TSU has been participating in the Times World University Rankings since 2017 and it is the fourth year it has been the only university in this ranking from the whole region. TSU is in the 1001+ position in the 2020 TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS (“THE”), with about 1400 other universities. We will present the University ranking results in the form of matrices by years and indicators.

## 2020

Rank	Name	Overall	Teaching	Research	Citations	Industry Income	International Outlook
1001+	Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University Georgia	10.7– 22.1	14.7	9.4	4.6	34.8	45.9

**2019**

Rank	Name	Overall	Teaching	Research	Citations	Industry Income	International Outlook
1001+	Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University <a href="#">Georgia</a>	9.8–18.9	15.2	9.0	2.9	34.4	44.6

**2018**

Rank	Name	Overall	Teaching	Research	Citations	Industry Income	International Outlook
1001+	Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University <a href="#">Georgia</a>	9.2–15.5	16.2	8.7	2.7	32.2	40.9

**2017**

Rank	Name	Overall	Teaching	Research	Citations	Industry Income	International Outlook
> 800	Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University <a href="#">Georgia</a>	8.3–18.5	12.1	9.0	2.1	32.9	37.8

Matrix 1: University position in the ranking by years and indicators

The World University Rankings list universities according to five main areas: teaching, research, citation, international opportunities, and industry revenue. See Figure 1 - Ranking Evaluation Indicators (see Appendix 1 for details):



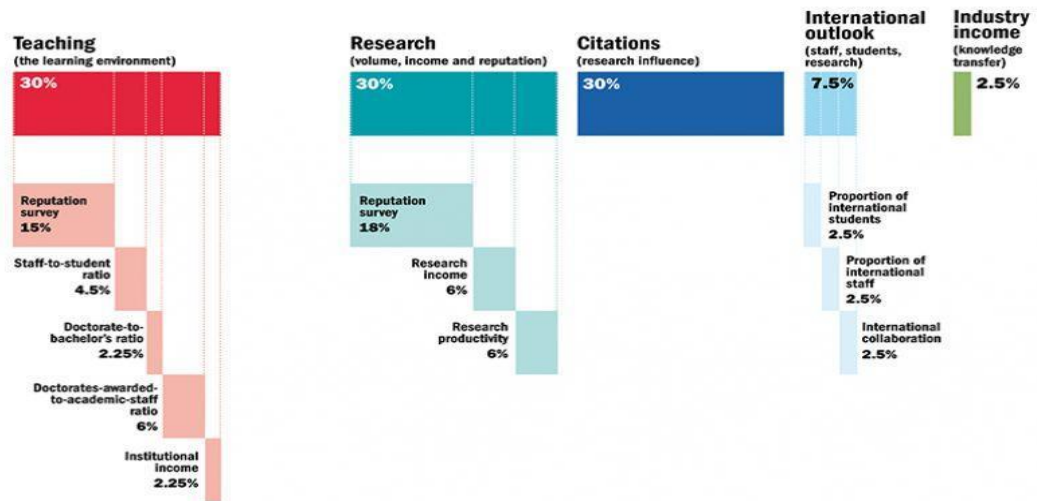


Figure 1 - The Ranking Evaluation Indicators

To analyze the results of the University in depth, the Quality Assurance Service conducted an analysis in three areas:

- Comparing results of university activities according to the data of different years;
- Analysis of university activity results in relation to the exact position of the previous year in the ranking;
- Comparing information provided for the ranking with the final result of the ranking.

Following analytical work, the materials were handed over to the University administration for further response. The main recommendations presented as a result of the analysis were to:

- ✓ Develop a policy in collaboration with the faculties and academic staff to facilitate the completion of the learning and research process by doctoral students within a reasonable time;
- ✓ Decrease the admission of doctoral students to doctoral programs before increasing the completion rate of doctoral programs;
- ✓ For the University, develop/implement university policies and regulations, with the involvement of relevant structural units, which will promote the scientific productivity of the academic staff in high-ranking international journals and increase the citation index;
- ✓ Increase both research and industry income by means of joint efforts and collaboration;
- ✓ Attract more foreign students and academic staff to maintain internationalization results and ranking position; strengthen the responsible administrative units in this direction.

### 3.10 INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS AND THEIR PREPARATION

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It is very important to evaluate the third mission of the University along with the evaluation of the teaching-learning, research and effectiveness. However, since the evaluation of a third mission is a novelty for higher education institutions in Georgia, most universities, including Tbilisi State, need professional development and the example of international best practices. Accordingly, the University prepared and submitted a project to the Competition Commission of the "Erasmus +" grant competition designed to strengthen quality and relevance for the third mission of Georgian universities. A consortium of eight Georgian universities was established with the involvement of three European universities (Turku University, New University of Lisbon, and National Conservatory of Arts) and one European organization (European Network for Management Development). The Georgian Government participating partners are the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports and the LEPL National Center for Quality Enhancement in Education. Activities financed will include:

- ✓ Professional development of the universities involved in the consortium regarding the third mission;
- ✓ Inventory of universities and identifying strengths in relation to third mission activities;
- ✓ Modifying the strategic plans of the universities to include priority areas of the third mission;
- ✓ Piloting one of the activities of the third mission;
- ✓ Developing guidelines to evaluate and carry out the third mission.

The University Quality Assurance Service, along with Caucasus University and European partners, have prepared a project application for Improving the Performance of Georgian HEIs through advancement of development-oriented human resource management practices for the IHRM Erasmus + CBHE competition. The aim is to develop personnel management policies and practices in higher education institutions by sharing the experience of European partners. The need for the project is based on the challenges facing Georgian universities due to the updated authorization standards (namely, the fourth standard, which refers to the management of human resources, necessary for Georgian higher education institutions) and the need for successful personnel management policies.

While preparing the project application concept, the Quality Assurance Service analyzed the findings of the authorization experts. These included human resource management standards; needs of partner universities; international practices and research; and (in the framework of the 'Erasmus +' project) a study by higher education reform experts on the problems of implementation of renewed authorization standards

in Georgian higher education institutions. This was co-authored by the head of the TSU Quality Assurance Service. The project consortium consists of nine Georgian and three European universities and includes all types of higher education institutions in Georgia: public, private, regional, art, and specialized. This will greatly impact project results for the Georgian higher education system. The Ministry and the Center fully support the project and are ready to disseminate its results. The project foresees the renewal of human resource management policies and processes so that universities will start functioning in accordance with the European best practices. Training modules will be developed, staff will be trained, and the units responsible for staff development in universities will be strengthened. The LEPL National Center for Education Quality Enhancement will participate in the development of trainings to train certification experts and representatives of other higher education institutions. In case it is funded, the project will have a huge impact on the development of Georgian higher education institutions.

Since the University has had a leading position in recent years with the grant competition announced by Erasmus +, the QAS and the relevant administrative structures submitted the international grant application for "Erasmus +" (Key Action 2; Key Action 3; Jean Monnet) on behalf of LEPL-Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, which was developed and approved (Order: 24.12.2019, 22/04). The purpose of the project is to ensure the high quality, reliability, efficiency, compliance with the priorities and needs of the University; and to provide assistance to the university in systematizing, controlling, and avoiding unproductive costs in applications. The composition of the commission was approved (Order 333/01-01, 30.12.2019), and is composed of the heads of various administrative structural units who evaluate the project within their competence. These include the QAS, the Finance Department, the International Relations Department, the Scientific Research and Development Department, Personnel Management and the Legal Department. The Commission is directed by the Head of TSU Administration. These dispositions define the requirements that an international grant application must meet to be nominated by the University, or for the University to be involved in the project as one of the participants.

A grant applicant/group of individuals planning to participate in an international grant project (ERASMUS + (Key Action 2; Key Action 3; Jean Monnet) on behalf of the University, must submit a project to the Commission in accordance with the approved form within the deadlines for submitting grant applications before submitting the documentation required for the grant application to the Rector for signing. The Commission is authorized to issue recommendations. In the absence of recommendations, or if the

recommendations have been carried out, the Commission will submit the document required for the University to participate in the grant project, for the Rector's signature.

This procedure will ensure both the high quality of projects implemented on behalf of the University or with their involvement and their compliance with the priorities of the University. It will also prevent the University from making commitments that may be problematic, while providing support to applicants. The procedure will support the applicant(s) through the advice and recommendations from Commission members. Thus, by creating a unified support system the process has been clarified, with procedures and evaluation mechanisms in writing. The Commission meetings were scheduled for December 2019 and January 2020, based on the number of applicants and academic and administrative staff were regularly informed by email. In addition, with the support of the Erasmus + National Office of Georgia, an information meeting was held with the staff regarding the preparation of the project application. As a result of the feedback from stakeholders, and the evaluation of the results of the work of the Commission, the rules and procedures will be further refined and additional support mechanisms offered to applicants. On 30.12.2019 the first meeting of the Commission was held to discuss four projects in accordance with the new procedures and requirements.

### **3.11 APPLICATION TO THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION (EUA) AND PARTICIPATION IN THEMATIC GROUPS**

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The Association of European Universities (AEU) has up to 850 higher education member institutions from 48 countries in the European Education Area, and is constantly updated with the latest information on higher education and research policies. In November 2019, the University Quality Assurance Service submitted an application to host three AEU events, namely, the 2021-2022 European Learning Forum, the 2021-2022 Annual Conference and General Assembly of the Association of European Universities, and the 2021-2022 European Quality Assurance Forum.

LEPL-Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University has participated in the work of the thematic group of the Association of European Universities (LEARNING & TEACHING) since 2019, and the results of the first project, Student Assessment, will be announced in 2020. Within this project TSU and its European partners have developed guidelines to develop an inclusive, student-centered, best-practice-based assessment system at universities, and a self-assessment document to help universities assess conformity to the European best

practices. The thematic group held three working meetings, two of which were attended by a representative of the university. They also took part in the work of the thematic group. A report was drawn up by the working group to summarize results and make them publicly accessible. The report appeared in March 2020 and be shared to inform the higher education member institutions.

Teaching Forum on 13-14 February, where focus groups based on the work of the Thematic Peer Groups were organised to obtain feedback on their results.

**Composition of the Thematic Peer Group 'Student assessment'**

University of Birmingham: Carol Evans (chair)

University of Agder: Astrid Birgitte Eggen

University of Oulu: Sari Harmoinen and Hena Määttä

University of Minho: Manuel João Costa and Nuno Reis

University of Exeter: Roni Roberts

Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia - UNED: Ines Gil Jaurena

University of Lausanne: Emmanuel Sylvestre and Loïc Pillard

University of Rijeka: Marta Žuvić, Tihana Švaljek, Matej Berisa and Tea Dimnjasevic

University of Latvia: Agnese Rusakova, Deniss Celuiko and Alise Ziverte

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University: George Sharvashide and Tinatin Gabrichidze Group

coordinator: Luisa Bunescu, Policy & Project Officer, EUA

The Quality Assurance Service has also submitted a new application for participation in the same thematic group of teaching and learning with the European University Association in 2020. The project is called 'Employability', which deals with the compliance of educational programs with labor market and employer requirements, and student employability.

### **3.12 RECOGNITION OF CREDITS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF MOBILITY**

Mobility is one of the most important parts of the internationalization process for Tbilisi State University. The program began several decades ago and continues successfully, supported by a number of foreign foundations, scholarship projects by international organizations or by inter-institutional cooperation projects. This internationalization of higher education institutions is a practical response to current social issues linked to globalization. Mobility is a fundamental component of internationalization and is essential for higher education institutions today. Advantages include:

- ✓ A more transparent teaching and learning process;
- ✓ Access to the latest research;
- ✓ A path to self-development;
- ✓ Involvement in global and current research;
- ✓ Transfer of knowledge and research.

Both internal and external mobility has continued to grow each year. External mobility is an integral part of the internationalization process and, definitely reflects the status and image of a higher education institution. Internal mobility offers academic freedom, a rapport between the relevance of individual educational programs and the labor market, and resolving unforeseen challenges in the learning program. The immediate impact of the mobility process is credit recognition. In 2019 there were 149 applications for external mobility reviewed by the University Faculty Committees that took into account the current principles and procedures for credit recognition.

Credit equivalency takes place in three instances: for external mobility this includes recognizing credits obtained abroad; it includes those obtained in other Georgian higher education institutions; and those recognized from studies carried out within the same institution's 'internal' mobility. During the reporting period, several important issues were identified, such as:

- ✓ The number of credits accumulated abroad didnot match the number of credits recognized (47 cases in total), meaning that the number of credits received abroad was higher than those credited at the TSU (data are highest at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences);
- ✓ The credit recognition process is prolonged at the end of the summer semester especially, due to the long leave period;

During the last reporting period, the number of students who transferred to TSU from abroad was 724, which was 176 fewer than in 2018, when it was 900. An analysis of the equivalency data would be interesting, to detect related issues and facilitate the resolution of such problems for the overall mobility process within the Georgian education system itself. The Service also prepared

- 29 brief annotations and contents of syllabi of training courses taken by the applicants;
- Up to 70 letters of consent for scientific and educational cooperation between a foreign higher education institution and the university.

An in-depth study of these issues would facilitate student contingent planning.

### **3.13 COLLABORATION WITH THE FACULTY QUALITY ASSURANCE SERVICES**

The service mandate includes a unified vision of internal quality development and faculty quality services, aimed at strengthening internal quality. This directly creates a precondition for raising the quality culture in the entire university. The central and subordinate quality assurance services jointly define the current topical tasks between the internal quality assurance actors on the basis of a common platform for communication and information exchange, which took place in the format of regular working meetings during the reporting period (up to 15 meetings during the reporting period, which are recorded in writing in the format of a stationery (protocol) document and at the end of each meeting is shared among the participants of the meeting and those involved in the development of the issue discussed.).

During the reporting period support for developing educational programs was a priority for the Service. Almost all meetings during the year were dedicated to increasing the efficacy of the education program committees by emphasizing:

- ✓ Developing working regulations of the Committee on Educational Programs;
- ✓ Bringing educational programs in line with the qualifications framework;

- ✓ Modification-development of questionnaires for students, staff, employers, graduates, doctoral students;
- ✓ Preparing educational programs for accreditation;
- ✓ Program budgeting and internal program monitoring issues;
- ✓ Developing a framework for educational program optimization and educational program software.

During 2019, issues discussed within the service mandate included:

- ✓ The minimum standard of the newly approved doctoral program and changes made;
- ✓ The program catalog development process;
- ✓ Important topics related to the amendments to Resolutions 153, 250, 67;
- ✓ The process of developing the program manager and program self-assessment report form;
- ✓ The process of creating an employer database and important issues related to it;
- ✓ Topics to update on the website;
- ✓ Defining topics for targeted trainings.

During 2019, the Service devoted meetings to raising the culture of academic integrity and developing a university policy in this regard. Meetings addressed issues connected with the development of a working group; the review of master's theses through software; changes in academic writing syllabi; and training on academic good faith. Discussions included:

- ✓ The need to develop guidelines for undergraduate and graduate theses;
- ✓ Development of university performance indicators;
- ✓ Transition to a new model of 30-credit additional (minor) programs;
- ✓ Establishing statistics of teaching levels and leadership of the educational program at each level;
- ✓ Providing access to the LMS database and Gauss for professors for the purpose of academic achievement analysis;
- ✓ Developing educational programs in the associated quality format;
- ✓ Data processing in international rankings;
- ✓ The low index of citations of university academic staff and identifying causes;
- ✓ The Student Council within the European Students Union (ESU) and increasing their involvement in the quality assurance process;
- ✓ Improving rules for calculating and recognizing credits and setting up a working group for this purpose.



Based on these discussions this Report presents a number of decisions and activities that have led to the introduction of innovations. Each event was planned and prepared in close collaboration with faculty quality services and relevant administration units, based on shared experience and results.

### **3.14 UPDATING THE UNIVERSITY WEBSITE**

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Ongoing reforms in the educational sphere have required higher education institutions to solve tasks such as the introduction of technological innovations in many areas and the need to consume them. The growing information flow that is processed and studied by educational management bodies is directly salient for constant updating of information systems. This latter includes requirements of content such as the large volumes, processing with targeted software, storage and sharing. The University management decided that the process of updating the University website was planned, which involved the administrative units of the university, including the Quality Assurance Service.

In 2019, the Quality Assurance Service prepared an updated and completed package of information in Georgian for the website. The previously updated website was chronologically supplemented with important international and local guidelines and normative materials operating in the Georgian educational space.

Internal and external quality assurance is presented in separate sections on the new website of the Quality Assurance Service. A new subcategory ranking, ratings are also added.

### **3.15 SUPPORT TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION**

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With the support of the University Quality Assurance Service, on June 7, 2019, an auxiliary educational unit "Vocational Education Center" was established with the goal to train on-demand, competitive and qualified specialists for the labor market through long-term vocational education programs and short-term vocational training/retraining programs.

The Center carries out the training process at two locations:

1. Tbilisi, University St. N2, 0186;
  2. Kutaisi, Nikea 2nd Lane N8, 0431.
- ✓ The Center administers 11 authorized vocational education programs;

- ✓ supports up to 400 vocational education students to master their profession effectively;
- ✓ serves up to 80 vocational education teachers to help them carry out their mandates more effectively.

In order to effectively manage the learning process initiated by the Center:

- Changes have been made in the "Rules for regulating the training process of a vocational education program";
- The document, "Methodology for determining the maximum number of professional students in a vocational education program" has been revised;
- The document "Rules for Planning, Drawing up, Approval, Evaluation and Development of a Vocational Education Program" has been amended;
- Forms such as Assessment tool, Calendar plan and Registers have been revised and improved;
- Permanent training is carried out for vocational education teachers to improve teaching/learning methods, planning and assessment tools;

Ways to improve the learning process are created through meetings and feedback mechanisms with vocational students and their teachers; inclusive education specialists and assistants work for a maximum integration of professional students with special educational needs (SSEN) into the learning process. They provide specialized curricula tailored to individual needs, adapt/accommodate assessment tools and use various activities, and assist the teachers.

Interest in the university's vocational education programs is growing every year, evidenced by the number of applicants registered in the Fall semester of 2019, when 1221 contestants registered for 194 vacancies in 11 programs, Five persons had special educational needs. The vocations in greatest demand were Tour Operator, Georgian Cultural Heritage Guide and Kindergarten Teacher.

N	The title of the vocational education program	Place of implementation	
		Tbilisi	Kutaisi
1.	Kindergarten - Kindergarten teacher	✓	
2.	Kindergarten - Kindergarten teacher		✓
3.	Librarian	✓	
4.	Evaluator	✓	
5.	Evaluator		✓
6.	Tour Operator	✓	

7.	Georgian Cultural Heritage Guide	✓	
8.	Freight shipping worker		✓
9.	Office worker		✓
10.	Customs worker	✓	
11.	Customs worker		✓

Matrix 2: *Vocational* education programs by location

The popularity of TSU vocational education programs is due to their focus on labor market demands with good employment rates and the student-centered learning environment. Statistics show that these programs are in demand by people with a full general education as well as those with undergraduate or graduate degrees, and alumni.


With the support of the Quality Assurance Service and the initiative of the Center, cooperation with the Estonian Vocational Education Centers is planned for the internationalization of vocational education programs.

A Memorandum of Cooperation is being prepared with the “Ida-Virumaa Vocational Education Center of Estonia” and an electronic platform (program) is being planned for 2020 with Estonian partners. This should provide full electronic management of the learning process.

#### **4. COMMUNICATION WITH EXTERNAL ACTORS AND INSTITUTIONS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE**

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The scope of action of the Quality Assurance Service goes beyond the university bounds due to the fact that quality assurance processes are managed by taking into account both internal and external factors. Accordingly, within its mandate, the Service communicates with international institutions as well as agencies and higher education institutions operating in the Georgian educational sphere. The University Quality Assurance Service is one of the most important actors in the field of education and the author of a number of interesting initiatives. During the reporting period, several programs were carried out with representatives of higher education partner institution participation. Communications were established with executive and legislative bodies in the field of education, including:

-  A quality thematic group was established;

- ✚ The Quality Assurance Service with the LEPL National Center for Quality enhancement in Education;
- ✚ Cooperation was made with foreign foundations and institutions.

#### **4.1 CREATING A QUALITY THEMATIC GROUP**

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The Thematic Quality Assurance Group of Higher Education Institutions was established in December 2019 at the initiative of the University Quality Assurance Service. This working group was established by the Conference of Rectors and will work in close cooperation with them. The Quality Assurance Thematic Group will facilitate cooperation between higher education institutions and strengthen the quality culture in each institution as well as in the higher education system as a whole. The mission of the Group is to promote the development of quality culture in higher education institutions by sharing accumulated experience and best practices, discussing challenges and creating professional development opportunities.

The objectives of the thematic group are:

- Enhancing cooperation between quality assurance services of higher education institutions;
- Building capacities of higher education institutions in the field of quality assurance;
- Creating a platform to discuss quality assurance topics;
- Facilitating the introduction of the “Standards and Guidelines” of the European Higher Education Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015) in higher education institutions for internal quality assurance;
- Discussing current developments in the European Higher Education Area to share experiences and best practices;
- Cooperating with LEPL National Center for Quality Enhancement in Education;
- Cooperating with the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European Register of Higher Education (EQAR), the European University Association (EUA) and other international organizations and universities;
- Organizing the collegial evaluation of educational programs;
- Collaborating with international experts to evaluate educational programs and plan professional development activities;
- Preparing quarterly reports for the Board of Rectors;

- Publishing an annual scientific-research journal;
- Holding an annual conference on quality assurance issues.

Quality Assurance Thematic Group members can be employees of the quality assurance service, as can any other person working in a higher education institution and interested in quality assurance issues.

#### **4.2 QUALITY ASSURANCE NEWS AND COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE LEPL NATIONAL CENTER FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE**

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The University Quality Assurance Service cooperates with the LEPL National Center for Quality Enhancement in Education to provide suggestions for improving the quality assurance system and its ongoing processes. During the reporting period of 2019, the LEPL-National Center for Education Quality Enhancement was offered the following issues for further consideration:

- ✓ Extension of deadlines for compliance with the field of study classifier of updated National Qualifications Framework of Educational Programs;
- ✓ On the introduction of cluster accreditation of educational programs;
- ✓ On the extension of the accreditation deadlines for the undergraduate and graduate programs in education sciences and teacher training, in particular, the amendment to Government Decree N1881 of September 7, 2017 and the extension of the accreditation period for accredited teacher training programs in 2011-2012 until December 31, 2022;

The UQAS receives regular feedback from the Center on updated accreditation and authorization documents proposed by them in order to update innovations in the Georgian education sphere. This is necessary in order to fully adapt those processes to be implemented in educational institutions for harmonization of innovations within the educational institution.

#### **4.3 COOPERATION WITH FOREIGN FOUNDATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS**

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Any reforms or upgrades, especially in the educational space, are complex and multifaceted and require support from both human and financial resources. Innovations offered by the European Education Space

imply mobilization of these resources in its turn, to which a great contribution is made by the European Foundation for Education, Research and Thematic Studies.

The University Quality Service cooperates with international foundations and institutions such as: German Society for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit - GIZ), German Academic Exchange Service Agency (Deutsche Akademische Austauschdiensr - DAAD), Francophonie University Agency (Agence universitaire de la Francophonie - AUF) and the British Councils. In cooperation with the Quality Assurance Service of international institutions and foundations, issues addressed were:

- Development of educational programs;
- Evaluation of educational programs;
- Professional support of academic staff;
- Sharing updated issues and processes of quality assurance.

In cooperation with the institutions mentioned above, activities carried out focused on the development of internal quality development, modernization of teaching-learning and research processes, exchange of experience and establishment of Western standards in the university sphere. With the support of the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), the Master's Degree Program "Vocational Education and Human Resource Management" is being developed (Otto von Guericke University of Magdeburg is also involved in the development of the curriculum). Working on the educational program was preceded by a one-week training aimed at academic staff in the field of education (expert Dr. Marcus Boehner).

At the university, within the framework of the ongoing project "Academic Integrity for Quality Teaching and Learning at Georgian Higher Education Institutions" (INTEGRITY) of the "Erasmus +" Program of Institutional Development, a series of public lectures was organized with a visiting professor from the University Gebhard Roel, Head of the Tbilisi Bureau of the German Academic Exchange Service, who spoke to the students of the university doctoral education program about the German experience in matters of academic integrity, and introduced different types of software support to them to help doctoral students understand the issues of academic good faith. These lectures will be continued with the involvement of various renowned researchers and university academic staff.

In the report we presented reviewed the visits of experts for the external evaluation of educational programs (expert Jean Lucy Sixus for an educational program in the field of medicine and for all three levels of the educational program in law by expert Ann-Marie Clebe Pelissier). These were supported by the University

Quality Assurance Service and the Francophonie Central and Eastern European University Agency (AUF). In collaboration with the same agency, two sessions were conducted as part of the planned training for doctoral studies (expert: Cristina Teoderescu, Professor at the University of Craiova, Romania).

The University is constantly striving to maintain a high degree of teaching-learning, research, and internationalization and now participates in the project "Higher Education for Employment" proposed by the British Councils in 2019-2020 along with Ilia State University and the State Medical University. The sampling methodology took into account the degree of university recognition among foreign partners and, at the same time, the number of English-language programs currently in operation (26). Participation in such a project will further increase the degree of internationalization of higher education institutions and to support the preparation of English-language educational programs. This will help attract both Georgian and foreign students. With the support of the Faculty Quality Assurance Services, a foreign expert observed the training course of the Bachelor of Chemistry program (Lecturer Dr. George Djibouti). A one-week professional training course in English is also planned for the academic staff. Communication and cooperation with the international institutions will also continue in the new reporting period according to the current topics defined by the Service.

## 5. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF THE SERVICE

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In addition to directly functional topics within the service mandate that are the responsibility of the University Quality Assurance Service as one of the University administrative units, the Service periodically participates in solving specific tasks as needed, for the University Administration. During this period there were several tasks addressed:

- ✚ Study and preparation of external and internal circulation correspondence;
- ✚ Archiving documents and materials of the Service;
- ✚ Preparing resolutions for academic and representative councils.

### **5.1 ON THE STUDY AND PREPARATION OF EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL CIRCULATION CORRESPONDENCE**

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The University Quality Assurance Service officially received up to 1000 pieces of correspondence which were answered, in connection with issues of quality assurance, the accreditation process of educational programs, the organization of the educational process, student mobility and recognition of credits, inter-university cooperation, grants and project topics, etc. In comparison, in 2018 there were 1613 communications officially entered into the University Quality Assurance Service and 782 replied to, which mainly related to topical quality assurance problems, curricula, better organization of the study process, student mobility and credit recognition, international relations, visits of foreign professors, etc.

### **5.2 ARCHIVING DOCUMENTARY MATERIALS OF THE SERVICE**

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In 2017, the administrative service of the university switched to electronic mode. Internal and external written communications are carried out electronically, therefore correspondence is facilitated internally and externally. From the establishment of the Service all copies of incoming and outgoing correspondence have been kept in hard copies. During July-August 2019, these materials were recorded from 2014 and part of 2015 (20 types of correspondence for a total volume of 44,690 pages). was written off by the act on July 8, 2019 and they were utilized. At this stage, the Service is preparing the 2018 authorization documents for the archives in both material and electronic formats.

### **5.3 ON THE PREPARATION OF RESOLUTIONS FOR ACADEMIC AND REPRESENTATIVE COUNCILS**

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Based on the specific tasks initiated during the reporting period within the mandate of the Quality Service the following orders and resolutions were issued:

- 10 Orders of the Rector (including issues related to: setting up regulatory commissions in the university, and working groups to study problematic issues, offering training courses initiated by the service mandate);
- 2 Orders of the Head of Administration (creation of a competition commission within the service and announcement of internship competition);
- 1 Order of the Head of the Quality Assurance Service (approving the survey questionnaires);



- 30 Resolutions of the Academic Council (topics: submission of programs for accreditation, development of university regulations, separate documents, amendments to them; changes in academic programs, committees supporting the planning, drafting and development of academic programs, etc).

These issues were developed by the Service, sometimes in cooperation with and with support from other university structural units (Total: 62 units<sup>2</sup>).

## **6. UQASERVICE SELF-ASSESSMENT AND PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT**

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During the reporting period, the self-assessment of the University Quality Assurance Service was ongoing, covering three main areas: qualifications and competencies, service development and work performed within the service.

The self-assessment process relies on:

- Systematic analysis of personal and service work;
- Analysis of the results of targeted and planned actions;
- Constant verification of the target topic and determination of the reasons in case of non-fulfillment of the goal;
- Analysis, support and encouragement of the quality and effectiveness of involvement of individuals in the implementation of the goals of the Service.

Following the final results of the self-assessment, action goals and objectives of the Service will be created.

### **6.1 UNIVERSITY QUALITY ASSURANCE SERVICE SELF-ASSESSMENT**

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The University Quality Assurance Service, as well as other structural units of the University, gradually analyzed the results of a separate area of its activities and based on the analysis, outlining measures for further improvement of the activities. It should be noted that the target topics of the service tasks are intertwined and the executing staff tries to identify individual issues within their competence and in accordance with the hierarchy of difficulties.

Based on the analysis of the results of the work done in the reporting period 2019, it became clear that there are several new factors:

- Higher degree of coping with the workload distributed among the staff of the Service according to its competence, due to the continuous support of the competencies and professional development of its administrative staff by the Service;
- Expansion of service experience in various fields, which was also mentioned as the best practice in external evaluation processes;
- Constantly growing demand and willingness to share and take into account the good experience of quality assurance in higher education by the subordinate staff;
- Attempts to introduce significant changes of international standards in the activities of the Service;
- Attempts to introduce a unified holistic approach to issues and problems from the perspective of institutional cooperation;
- Intensified introduction of new approaches and current tasks in terms of increasing the quality culture.

Accordingly, in 2019, the Quality Assurance Service fulfilled the main goals and objectives of the Service's strategic plan.

## **6.2 PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM**

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In 2019, activities carried out by the University Quality Assurance Service, defined by the Strategic Plan of the Service, were supplemented and expanded by a number of planned or spontaneous events within which the Service identified a number of important, significant issues with perspectives for development. These include updating specific information documents to the level of modern requirements. During the last reporting period, it was also important to accurately assess the discourse topics accumulated within the QAS and to initiate the formation of a thematic group within which a number of innovations were shared and discussed by Georgian higher education institutions. This further contributed to the development of a clearly defined position on innovations and problems.

Based on the analysis of activities carried out in 2019, external evaluation recommendations and internal university reviews and consultations, the following priority areas have been identified for 2020:

- ✓ Enhancing the quality culture at the university by organizing targeted seminars and workshops for the university community to increase their involvement and awareness about quality assurance processes; Involve students in the evaluation process of individual courses and educational programs, as well as the evaluation of various services and activities of the University;
- ✓ Continuous development / improvement of educational programs and the educational process;
- ✓ Prepare programs for external evaluation to obtain national and international accreditation;
- ✓ Intensify international cooperation to improve quality assurance processes at the University;
- ✓ Implement the project 'Academic Integrity for Quality Learning and Teaching in Georgian Higher Education Institutions' to develop a culture of academic integrity at the University;
- ✓ Develop opportunities for further improvement of teaching and research processes at the University at the doctoral level within the framework of various international projects;
- ✓ Introduce research evaluation mechanisms through the EU-funded Erasmus+ KA2 project HERD "Scientific Research Development Support in Georgian Higher Education Institutions";
- ✓ Find opportunities for professional development of academic/administrative staff including cooperation with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) Tbilisi Bureau and the Tbilisi Office of the Francophonie University of Central and Eastern Europe (AUF), and the British Councils (BC);
- ✓ Develop and implement staff evaluations;
- ✓ Implement international and local projects on quality assurance, at the university taking into account international best practices;
- ✓ Introduce a system for the evaluation of university efficiency.