

Accreditation Report

Teaching University Geomedi in Tbilisi Georgia

“One Step Undergraduate Educational Program for MD”

I Procedure

Date of contract: 16 August 2021

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Attendance by ACQUIN office: Dr. Jasmine Rudolph, Yuliya Balakshiy

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The **Assessment Report** of the peer-review experts is **based on** the self-assessment report of the Higher Education Institution (HEI) and extensive discussions with the HEI management, deans and/or heads of the departments, heads of the study programme(s), lecturers, staff representatives, students, and alumni.

The basis of the **Assessment Criteria** is part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) in the current official version. At the same time the national context, particularly the national regulations regarding the establishment of study programmes, are taken into account.

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II Introduction

The experts would like to thank the representatives of the HEI as well as its students for taking part in the discussions and willingly sharing information and their views during the on-site visit. The discussions are valuable not only for the assessment of the institution but also for a better understanding of the legal and sociocultural context of the local higher education system.

The evaluation basis for the peer-review experts is the self-assessment report of the HEI as well as intensive discussions during the on-site visit with the HEI management, deans and/or heads of the departments, head(s) of the study programme(s), study programme(s) coordinators, teachers, lecturers, administrative staff, students, and graduates.

The main objective of the accreditation procedure is to assess the quality of the study programme(s) and compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The ESG standards are applied as the main assessment criteria in the international accreditation procedure. In addition, the respective country-specific criteria and standards are taken into account.

A group of experts is set up to ensure that all areas relevant to the accreditation procedure (e.g., legal, structural, social, etc. aspects) as well as the ESG and national criteria are considered. The peer-review experts include professors, a representative of the professional practice, and a student representative. A certificate with the ACQUIN seal is awarded upon accreditation of the study programme(s).

1 Short profile of HEI

The university has been operating since 1998. Teaching University Geomedi is an accredited higher education institution founded and headed by its Rector Professor Marina Pirtskhalava.

The university consists of several departments, including the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Dentistry, the Faculty of Healthcare Economics and Management, and the Faculty of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Organisational structure of the university provides effective implementation of HEI goals and activities defined by the strategic development plan.

To ensure smooth operation, the university currently employs 97 administrative and assistant staff, 65 academic staff, and 127 visiting staff. There are currently 844 students studying at the university, including 286 Georgian students and 609 international students. The programme undergoing accreditation, One Step Educational Program for Medicine (taught in English), has 609 students enrolled.

There are 601 graduates of the university, with the majority of them (62 per cent) currently working according to the qualification they obtained and pursuing successful career paths in Georgian and foreign hospitals. Half of the university graduates continued their studies at a further academic level.

The objective of the Teaching University Geomedi is to integrate into the global educational arena. The institution ensures that scientific research and educational processes are in sync, with a focus on the intellectual and creative growth of students in the fields of medicine, dentistry, healthcare economics, and management, as well as physical medicine and rehabilitation. The institution provides students with an environment that prioritises research, critical thinking, sharing of experiences, tolerance, professional growth, ethics, and social responsibility, assuring the formation of competitive, high-qualified professionals. The university main goals include instilling national and international humanistic principles in the educational system, as well as promoting scientific research and the creation of higher and continuous professional education that meets international standards. One of the university major purposes is to provide specialists with the knowledge and skills necessary to meet current global requirements and to conduct medical activity in accordance with nationally recognised professional and ethical standards.

2 General information on the study programme: One Step Undergraduate Educational Program for MD

Location	4 King Solomon II Street, Tbilisi 0114, Georgia
Date of introduction	30 August 2013
Faculty/department	Medicine
Standard period of study (semesters)	12
Number of ECTS credits	360
Number of study places	60 (yearly matriculation capacity)
Number of students currently enrolled	609
Average number of graduates per year	53-55
Target group(s)	High school graduates
Admission requirements	Recognised certificate of completed general education and Unified National Examinations
Form of study	full-time
Tuition fee	\$5,000 per year

III Implementation and assessment of the criteria

1 ESG Standard 1.1: Policy for quality assurance

Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

1.1 Implementation

The quality assurance policy at Geomedi University and the formation of a quality culture are based on internal and external quality assurance mechanisms aimed at the continuous development of academic quality, monitoring, improvement, and efficient use of academic and material resources, which requires regular monitoring of the educational process, study programmes, and all components, including those that are part of the programmes. The implementation of quality improvement mechanisms allows the university to define the current academic quality and plan the next step in quality improvement. In order to implement the internal quality assurance measures within the university, the quality assurance department employs the so-called PDCA cycle, composed of the following steps: P (Plan) - D (Do) - C (Check) - A (Act/React).

The university plans to develop its strategy, structured by the involvement of multiple departments within the university and led by the quality assurance department. The current strategic development plan implemented a SWOT analysis which highlighted some of the strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats.

The university uses a student quota planning mechanism, which is implemented according to the defined methodology. The student quota planning approach takes into account all respective university resources, university-determined target metrics, and benchmarks, allowing each student to gain access to quality education.

The quality assurance department of the university developed an assessment system for sectoral competencies for all students (portfolios) in collaboration with the heads of all study programmes, which provides an objective and clear assessment of the students' achievements, according to the specific sectoral competencies, which will help both the students as well as future employers to define the abilities and skills of the graduates.

The electronic system of academic process management ensures the automatic generation of data on educational outcomes at the university. Furthermore, all surveys are filled out and

submitted anonymously and electronically, as this data is then exported to electronic tables and processed accordingly in order to carry out statistical analyses.

The quality assurance process involves several different organisational units as well as individual staff, faculty, and students who are constantly involved in monitoring, evaluating, and improving the programme. This applies to the development of the programme, implementation of the programme, as well as to programme content, programme components, syllabi, teaching methods, the teaching of practical skills, and the achievement of programme outcomes.

Graduates, companies, and international consultants are constantly involved in the programme external quality review. This is accomplished by routine inquiries using questionnaires tailored to each identified group and analysis of the results. Additionally, during the programme development process, alumni and employers attend working sessions and faculty board meetings as needed to flag any programme issues that need to be addressed from their perspective. Their considerations and offers are taken into account and used to further develop the programme.

1.2 Assessment

The university is subject to state supervision by the Ministry of Education and (for some aspects) by the Ministry of Health of Georgia. The ethics committees engaged by the university (otherwise assigned to the clinics) are also located at these state agencies which conduct case-by-case reviews.

The university is located in a building complex in the city centre of Tbilisi. The majority of courses are held there. The clinical rotations take place in hospitals in Tbilisi, and the corresponding lecturers are contractually bound to the university.

The teaching staff is made up of permanent faculty (contract duration 4-7 years) and lecturers employed on a temporary basis as needed. The aim is to have a ratio of 1 full-time lecturer to 35 students. Currently, >90% of the students (of approximately 60 students per academic year) come from India. The degree is the Magister degree after 6 years of study. The drop-out rate is 1-2%.

The curriculum and the study evaluation are regularly monitored by the students, the teaching staff, and external stakeholders with the help of questionnaires. The major topics are examined in monthly conferences (QA, university management, and assigned lecturers). Consequently, a recommendation can be made to the programme managers or individual university lecturers, or even to the university management. For example, resolved interpersonal conflicts (resulting from intercultural misunderstandings) and renovations on campus (student cafeteria from scratch) have been mentioned. General evaluation information about individual lecturers is not

reported back which could be a good idea. The university attaches importance to the methodology of evaluating the free-running text of the questionnaires.

The examination system for the individual performance certificates is largely established electronically. A representative of the university is responsible for the technical part; this employee explained the implementation of the electronic questioning system. With approximately 500 questions in a pool, it is assumed that there is about 1% of inadequate questions. No further electronic evaluation, e.g., distractor analysis, takes place. This practice could be recommended. Another part of the examinations is OSCE-based (supervised and assessed by the clinical lecturers, among others). A progress test analogue monitoring of the study progress is established, but this is done remotely, through internal evaluations. Feedback to the university management on study progress is regular.

An alumni programme is an integral part of the QA: here it is ensured that – in addition to a social and cultural programme – the graduates' employability (in their home countries, if applicable) is continuously ensured. In an online interview with alumni from India, the expert group was able to establish both the connectivity to international graduations (USMLE and Ph.D.) and the ability to practise medicine in the Indian healthcare system.

The university states that on the one hand, it itself is an opportunity for foreign students to study abroad. However, it is also interested and active in many ways in cooperation with foreign universities in Bamberg, from the Steinbeis Group, in Turkey (geographically close), and Northern Macedonia. Participation in the Erasmus+ programme (and corresponding scholarships) is possible, but due to visa requirements rather impractical or not the primary goal of the students.

The university is mainly financed by the students' contributions and generates additional income from dental care in the course of the study programme, from an affiliated rehabilitation centre, and a cafeteria. No explicit donations have been received, but the university is able to acquire grants from the state and parastatal sectors, which is quite beneficial. In this respect, fixed rules on the use of third-party funds, including evidence, are not necessary as such, but it is pointed out that the university is obliged to present its funds and their use within the framework of the above-mentioned supervision of the ministries.

The university management is predominantly female, and the management levels (dean, QA officer) ensure that aspects of gender equality are not disregarded. Female and male students are not admitted or accepted to study based on gender selection. The current distribution appears balanced to the expert group, namely when the predominant country of origin (India) is taken into account. In the clinical subjects (with the exception of paediatrics and infectious

diseases), there is a predominance of male lecturers (e.g., acute surgery, neurosurgery, urology), but this is hardly a deviation from the state of affairs in Europe.

1.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

2 ESG Standard 1.2: Design and approval of programmes

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

2.1 Implementation

The Faculty of Medicine at Teaching University Geomedi provides its students with solid opportunities to gain academic and practical knowledge in compliance with international standards. Its academic team is focused on developing clinical thinking and abilities in students from the first day of class. Geomedi has memorandums of understanding with renowned European institutions, allowing students to participate in foreign exchange programmes. The National Center for Education Quality Enhancement (ENQA) has accredited the one-step MD programme, which indicates it satisfies ENQA and WFME (World Federation of Medical Education) criteria. The faculty's pleasant, student-centred environment encourages students to maximise their potential and develop as well-trained doctors with strong professional and social commitments.

The programme objectives include the development of competencies relevant to international standards that are required for graduates to practice; this includes the acquisition of theoretical knowledge as well as the development of scientific and clinical skills, ethical values, and professional responsibilities integral to the medical profession. Furthermore, the programme prepares graduates for further professional careers in residency, at the doctorate level, or in alternative postgraduate study courses; the programme encourages scientific activity in theoretical fields of medicine and other healthcare areas that do not imply independent medical activity. The duration of the one-step undergraduate educational programme for MD is six years. The academic course consists of 360 credits, of which 330 are compulsory. Per academic year, the students' academic load averages 60 credits. The annual load of the students may be higher or lower than 60 credits depending on the specifics of the higher education programme and/or the individual academic plan of the students.

Basic compulsory courses of specialty with 17 credits include the sciences studying the normal development, structure, and function of the human body – cell biology and genetics, medical

chemistry, medical physics/biophysics, general biochemistry, cytology, and embryology – which are united into the Life Sciences block.

Basic compulsory integrated courses of specialty amount to 62 credits which thematically integrate biomedical sciences and structure/function of the human body, including normal organ system modules, human normal anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, histology, and clinical skills components.

Preclinical compulsory integrated courses of specialty make up 51 credits including organ system pathology modules – integrating pathology (pathoanatomy and pathophysiology), pharmacology, and propaedeutics components – as well as general pathology, and general pharmacology, general surgery, microbiology, virology, and immunology subjects.

Clinical mandatory courses of speciality account for 157 credits, specialised compulsory courses include 30 credits, and research skills required courses contribute 13 credits. The elective courses make up 30 credits, from these the student may select practice in a clinic (10 credits) and/or scientific research (10 credits) and fulfil the remaining credits by offering elective courses.

MD programme has an international co-supervisor (Wolf Christopher J. A. MD PhD) and two international programme consultants (William A. Toscano PhD and Frank Scorgie Rhame MD PhD from the University of Minnesota), who have been actively involved in the development and elaboration of MD programme curriculum, with all its components. All educational programmes approved by the academic board of the university go through the national accreditation process.

2.2 Assessment

The curriculum overview for each of the semesters and the credits is as follows: Life Sciences (17), Introduction to normal organ system modules (4), Introduction to clinical skills (communication skills) (2), Modern Informational Technologies I (3) in the 1st semester; Musculoskeletal system norm module (9), Gastrointestinal system norm module (5), Respiratory system norm module (4), Academic writing (5), Georgian I in the 2nd semester; Urinary system norm module (3); Reproductive system norm module (3), Endocrine system and skin norm module (5), Cardiovascular system norm module (8), Bioethics (3); Georgian II in the 3rd semester; Nervous system norm module (16); Scientific Research Methods (5), Health psychology (3), Healthcare organization and management (2), Georgian III in 4th semester; General Pathology (7), General Pharmacology (4), Microbiology, Virology, Immunology I (4), General Surgery (6), Preventive Medicine (2), Evidence-Based Medicine (3), Georgian IV in the 5th semester; Special Pathology (26): Musculoskeletal, Gastrointestinal, Respiratory, Urinary, Reproductive, Endocrine,

Cardiovascular, Nervous, Blood, Lymph and Immune system in the 6th semester; Internal Diseases I (12), Special Surgery (6), Epidemiology (4), Dermatovenereology (4), Clinical Allergology (4) in the 7th semester; Internal Diseases II (15), Urgent Surgery (6), Nephrology, Urology (5), Systemic Diseases, Rheumatology (4) in the 8th semester; Obstetrics (8), Endocrinology (4), Ophthalmology (5), Otorhinolaryngology (4), Infectious Diseases (6) in the 9th semester; Neurology (7), Emergency (3), Gynecology (7), Clinical Radiology (5), Pediatrics (8) in the 10th semester; Hematology (4), Oncology (7), Geriatrics (4), Neurosurgery (4), Traumatology - Orthopedics (5) in the 11th semester; as well as Psychiatry (4), Clinical Pharmacology (3), Anesthesiology, Reanimatology (5), Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (3), Clinical Critical Reasoning (Professionalism) in the last semester.

Additional elective topics include Sociology, Philosophy, General Psychology, Latin Medical Terminology (4), History of Medicine, Forensic Medicine (6) and Medical Law (6), Clinical Toxicology, Narcology, Child Neurology, Science Internship (10), Clinical Internship (10), Nutritional disorders.

The course of study is modelled around a traditional medical curriculum from Europe. There are no obvious glaring deficiencies, and the key areas are comprehensible. The curriculum relativization of forensic medicine and medical law reflects the respective standing of these fields in the various states, particularly at Geomedi, where >90% of the students are from outside Georgia. Not only is there no discernible, but also no intention, for the educational programme to have a unique slant.

In the fourth year of studies, patient-centred instruction begins. Georgia only permits patient-oriented education as a demonstration, not with individual exercise of skills (diagnostic or therapeutic), as has been made evident in the interviews with the clinical lecturers (diagnostic or therapeutic). In this regard, it was previously suggested to the curriculum designers to avoid obligatory clinical rotations and a final year of clinical internship (the latter has to be completed in India and thus extends the curricular studies for the Indian students by one year).

The National Center for Education Quality Enhancement in Georgia grants national accreditation. MD is the intended outcome of the studying. The curriculum makes it possible to achieve the higher education ESG goals. Through the QA loop, stakeholders and students are linked to the curriculum.

The longitudinal scientific curriculum and the connection (at least in India) to PhD programmes are significant foundations of academicisation or academic education in the curriculum. This is particularly true for the recognised potential and supported PhD programmes and degrees that were discussed with the clinical lecturers. At this point, more opportunities to get involved in international research activities for students should be sought after.

In the context of the long-term further development of the programme, the expert group suggests giving a consideration to some topics. State recognition of graduates in Europe in the future will require specific examination, e.g., the licensing legislation in Germany (the so-called Approbationsrecht). The current requirements call for a maximum of 6 students per group and 476 hours of bedside instruction. The other point to consider when broadening the focus of the target countries for further studies and employment is the Z-shaped curriculum model which, for instance, will be implemented in Germany in 2025. This would result in overcoming the rigid division between pre-clinical (basic science-oriented) and clinical (patient-oriented). Even though a longitudinal science curriculum currently exists, it should be expanded in order to maintain the university competitive edge going forward. Pre-clinical courses, physiological examinations, and other activities at the university should be practiced honing students' clinical abilities early in the curriculum. Students get hands-on experience practicing not just on dummies, but where appropriate, on each other. Students should also be introduced to a chosen canon of diseases and make presentations of them in order to foster their ability to solve problems while analysing clinical situations.

Having said this, this is not the explicit goal of the university at this point in time, it should be therefore treated as food for thought in the direction of further integration into the European higher education area and offering graduates opportunities to be accepted into the German and European medical systems with more ease.

2.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

3 ESG Standard 1.3: Student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

3.1 Implementation

The university has a number of different mechanisms in place to help socially vulnerable students; it provides an adaptable environment for disabled people and addresses their needs, whether they are health-related or family-related; and it offers flexible fee payment models for students who require financial assistance.

The needs of students are typically identified by dean offices, deans, or their assistants on a case-by-case basis, with group leaders and/or students' self-government serving as communicators; moreover, any student has direct open access to approach the dean personally if they have any issues.

The academic requirements of students are determined by the dean and programme supervisor, who collaborate to establish specific study programmes for students experiencing educational delays in order to ensure their smooth progression. Additional consultation hours are available for students in all educational programmes as needed and are preliminarily organised by a special consultations schedule at the start of the academic year.

Individual exam dates, in case of emergency, an appeal procedure for exam results, open access to direct feedback with the dean, programme supervisor, and quality assurance department, and immediate response to students' requests and/or appeals regarding the academic process or the lecturer, or any other related issue are among the support mechanisms created for students.

The university regulations mandate active student participation in all faculty and academic board meetings, as well as a close engagement of students' self-government in all university processes.

An individual student's curriculum within the programme undergoing accreditation may establish an annual workload of more than 60 ECTS credits, taking into consideration the duration, volume, and structure of the educational programme, but the total number of credits added over 60 within the course of the programme should not exceed 15 credits in total.

The MD programme employs a variety of pedagogical methods that are flexibly applied to different educational courses based on their specifics and in order to achieve the best possible academic outcome. PBL, CBL, bedside teaching, case study, role play of doctor and patient and situation plays, induction/deduction/analysis/synthesis, action-oriented education, and so on are some of the approaches used to develop practical skills and critical thinking abilities. Each approach is used in different fields, depending on the demands of certain educational requirements.

The efficacy and proper use of pedagogical approaches are evaluated on a regular basis to guarantee that they deliver the desired educational output for each educational course. The assessment is done through input from students and academic staff, as well as frequent meetings with the dean and programme supervisor, when any current issue relating to this topic is brought to light, addressed, and a particular remedy plan is established and implemented. The educational course outcomes are also evaluated on a regular basis using a portfolio and final grade analysis system for each subject, where any shortcomings and their causes are identified and remedied.

There are several systems and procedures in place to handle student complaints, which vary depending on the sort of complaint and its nature.

3.2 Assessment

The expert group was able to ascertain that the university actively encourages all members to create a supportive learning environment. Over the course of the on-site visit, it became evident that changes to the programme are integrated based on the feedback provided by the students. The university students have a variety of options for submitting proposals at various institutional levels.

Assessment regulations are clearly documented and transparent. The strong communication culture and the tight supervisory relationships between instructors and students, in addition to the official assessments, are used to evaluate the examination load and acquiescence of the examination forms.

The students also attested to a balanced distribution of exam forms, and they also considered the examination workload to be manageable. Students' official appeals process is likewise properly regulated. Upon receiving their assessment results, students have the opportunity to ask for explanations and appeal against their exam results if necessary. Consultation hours regularly provided by the lecturers can be used to discuss course content.

The experts are convinced that the university supports its vulnerable students. This includes, for instance, flexible payment schemes for tuition fees as well as a living stipend for students

with good grades. Specific arrangements are made for students with special needs. Furthermore, students are able to participate in the governance of the medical programme, e.g., through the faculty board meetings.

Student-centred approach as the basis for the day-to-day running of the programme has been further confirmed over the course of the discussion round with the students. They stated that their feedback is taken into account in terms of the changes deemed necessary and they really feel heard and supported by the faculty, programme leaders, and other university members.

3.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

4 ESG Standard 1.4: Student admission, progression, recognition, and certification

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student “life cycle”, e.g., student admission, progression, recognition, and certification.

4.1 Implementation

The educational process at the Teaching University Geomedi is governed by Georgian legislation, academic process regulations, and other legal acts. The regulations for admission, suspension, expulsion, readmission, mobility, administrative and academic registration, remote learning, and other matters linked to academic process organisation and management are well established.

Compliance with these standards is required of all administrative personnel participating in the organisation and supervision of the educational process, as well as academic/invited personnel and students. Admission requires a certification verifying full general education and the results of the Unified National Examinations.

Georgia joined Bologna Process in 2005, and its National Qualifications Framework considers the requirements of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF LLL) and European Higher Education Area Qualifications Framework (QF-EHEA). The document unites all the qualifications existing in Georgia and reflects the learning outcomes of different levels of general, vocational, and higher education. The National Qualification Framework establishes what knowledge, skills, and responsibilities a person should have for obtaining the document verifying the completion of the relevant cycle.

The Center evaluates the validity of an educational document issued by a foreign institution and determines the compatibility of the qualification included in this document or the learning outcomes acquired during the time of study with the qualifications that exist in Georgia.

Upon completion of a specific stage of academic higher education, the graduate shall be awarded an appropriate academic degree with standard attachment (in accordance with the procedure established by the relevant university faculty: doctor of dental medicine, doctor of medicine, bachelor's and master's degrees).

4.2 Assessment

The admission requirements and process at the Teaching University Geomedi are clearly defined and transparent. The information is publicly available in Georgian and English. International students must be able to communicate in English at a B2 level in addition to providing a certificate of complete general education. Each candidate is also subjected to an interview. The Students Service Center functions at the university to fully inform students and help first-semester students get acquainted with the institution, curriculum, and learning environment.

The Teaching University Geomedi administration constantly collects and analyses students' progression in order to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Each student's academic achievements are assessed and monitored at all stages of the curriculum, making it possible to evaluate the extent of their educational progress. The electronic system of academic process management ensures the automatic generation of educational outcomes data at the university.

The Teaching University Geomedi ensures proper procedures for the recognition of higher education qualifications in accordance with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. It collaborates with other institutions, quality assurance, and the National ENIC/NARIC Center aimed at ensuring coherent recognition of education across the country. Upon successful completion of their studies, students are issued with graduation certificates confirming the qualifications obtained as well as the context and status of the education completed, a certificate of completion, and further information about the university degree.

4.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

5 ESG Standard 1.5: Teaching staff

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff

5.1 Implementation

The faculty of medicine employs 131 people (including academic, scientific, invited, administrative, and support staff), including 19 professors, 19 associate professors, three assistant professors, two assistants, and five scientists.

Academic and affiliated employees must submit a report on scientific work at the conclusion of each academic year. There is a financial incentive to perform well in this area. The university's scientific research foundation covers affiliated staff members' participation in an internationally approved conference (as a speaker) and publication of an article, the printing of a handbook, and training once a year.

Regular pieces of training/workshops/informative seminars on current ways of teaching and applying new technologies in the learning process of students are offered to lecturers by programme supervisors and external trainers in order to attain improved academic achievements. The Department of Life-Long Learning sets up and follows a regular training plan for both academic and administrative personnel throughout the academic year. Furthermore, the programme supervisor has working sessions with the dean and academic staff as needed to review the efficacy of teaching techniques and new technologies in the educational process, identify flaws, and develop an improvement plan. As a result, the programme and each educational course curriculum are constantly and regularly improved, which is a dynamic process that is sensitive to students' needs.

The medical education standards framework developed and approved by the National Center of Education Quality Enhancement clearly defines the qualifications that academic staff involved in medical teaching must have, as well as the regulations in clinical settings that are used in teaching clinical rotations.

The recruiting is done on a need or pre-planning basis, focusing on the candidates' qualifications and experience, laws and regulations, and university procedures. An academic job may only be filled through a public contest that adheres to the norms of transparency, equality, and fair competition. The date and conditions of the competition must be advertised one month before the documents are due, in accordance with Georgian law and the university statute. The staff is offered a fixed-term employment contract for a period ranging from 3 to 7 years

depending on the position. Academic titles include professor, associate professor, and assistant professor, as well as affiliation status.

5.2 Assessment

During the visit, the expert group met a team of competent, dedicated, and cooperative teachers, obviously satisfied with the university employment policy and their working conditions. In total, the team consists of 42 (full, affiliated, and guest) professors as well as affiliated academic persons. The experts met with approximately half of the teachers. The teaching staff is mostly recruited from the Georgian state universities, the National Academy of Sciences of Georgia, and the state-supported as well as private clinics. According to the teachers, Geomedi has a good On-Boarding Programme, helping new staff to integrate. Several teaching staff of the university that participated in the on-site visit has been trained in prestigious Western universities (e.g., the University of Pennsylvania, USA, or the University of Bonn, Germany) and have obtained support from renowned granting agencies (e.g., Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Germany). Besides, Geomedi also has close ties with some German and Italian universities (e.g., Sapienza University of Rome). Professors from these universities are actively teaching courses at Geomedi.

All teaching staff is fluent in English and knowledgeable about the recent developments in the didactics of medical training (e.g., the importance of competence-based teaching and practical training of students) as well as modern teaching concepts (e.g., blended learning or inverted/flipped classroom concept). As in Western medical schools, many assessments at the university are delivered in the form of an objective structured clinical examination (OSCE), a modern approach for the assessment of medical competence. Theoretical examinations are computer-based, conducted in a structured and independent way, and consist of 4-item single-choice questions.

The teachers reported about the compulsory training under the Teaching the teacher programme, operating on a regular basis. This programme is led by professionals from Leeds University. Importantly, additional classes dedicated to the didactics of online teaching were organized for the teaching staff during the pandemics and the expert group received positive feedback about this course from teachers as well as the acknowledgment of the online teaching skill of the faculty from students. When asked about the new and important insights obtained, the teachers reported the suggestion to actively engage the students in group work or encourage them to ask each other questions, thus supporting interactive learning formats, etc.

In summary, the experts are convinced that regarding (i) expertise, (ii) didactic training, and (iii) technical and methodological skills, the teaching staff of Geomedi is capable of carrying out the study programme. Collegiality, team spirit, dedication, and professional knowledge

were perceived extremely positively. It should be noticed, however, that Geomedi does not offer PhD level training and therefore is bound to recruit the trained personnel elsewhere. Although this is apparently predefined by the national accreditation system of Georgia, which mostly supports the PhD training programmes at state universities, the expert group perceived such a recruitment policy as not fully sustainable in the long run and would like to encourage Geomedi to consider the development of its own PhD training programme.

5.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

6 ESG Standard 1.6: Learning resources and student support

Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

6.1 Implementation

The university possesses material resources in the form of assets and liabilities, which are utilised to achieve the university mission's aims. The former consists of four buildings where lecture halls, the simulation clinic of medicine, the university clinic of dentistry, and the university clinic of sports medicine and rehabilitation are located. Teaching laboratories and practical training centers include the anatomy department, histology practical lab, medical chemistry lab, biochemistry lab, medical physics lab, pathology lab, and microbiology lab. There is sufficient equipment in research labs (microscopes, equipment for chemistry and physics, etc.).

The allocation of financial resources entailed by the university budget is realistic and economically feasible. Tuition fees, university assets leased, income from the university dental clinic, income from the university rehabilitation clinic, and grants are the university's primary and secondary financial sources. The university financial standing is improving, allowing for the implementation of the activities envisioned in strategic development and action plans and focusing on the effective completion of the main tasks.

To achieve the university objective, information technologies must be well-organised for both academic processes and scientific research. An electronic system for managing academic processes has been established at the university (Ini.ge), which provides effective academic process management, good exam process organisation in electronic mode, and well-organised and safe communication, including corporative e-mails between structural units, students, and academic staff. The university has an electronic registration and file system set up.

During specified time periods, the library has been updated or refurbished. Currently, the library has premises that correspond to the required standards, providing an analog and digital environment. The library operates on a typical workload of 60 hours per week, six days a week, excluding Sunday. In all, 18,697 printed and digital resources can be used. To meet the demands of the transition to online education, the library has digital materials included in syllabi and made available to students. Users can access electronic books and electronic catalogues, as well as the electronic textbooks database supplied in the syllabus (emis.geomedi.edu.ge), which is accessible to students both locally from the library and from any other external site

and location. In addition, EBSCO electronic databases (11 databases in total) are fully accessible for students as well as three electronic databases of Elsevier.

Furniture and technical equipment for 69 lecture auditoria (desks, chairs, tables, boards, computer technologies) that can accommodate 1,753 students at the same time. All classrooms, study areas, and other university locations are provided with transportation and service for students with impairments.

6.2 Assessment

The experts praise Geomedi University for its wide network of cooperating partners and clinics. Some of the teaching hospitals were visited during the on-site visit and clinical educators described their teaching. In preparation for their clinical rotations, the students can develop clinical skills at the university own simulation centre which is particularly noteworthy.

The ratio of teachers to students is above average, allowing for student-centred learning and individualised teaching. The provision of learning materials and support services is appropriate and sufficient. The teaching staff has the option to participate in pieces of training and workshops to further improve their teaching methods.

During the campus visit, the resources in terms of lecture/seminar halls, laboratories, library, and IT equipment have been shown. Through the electronic services of the university library, students are able to access a range of scientific journals and publications. In the long run, for the future direction of the medical programme, it would be beneficial to further strive for new instrumentation and increase efforts to expand laboratory equipment.

The material resources of the university meet the needs and requirements of the educational programmes and research activities. Lecture rooms, classrooms, study labs equipment, and materials are equipped with the latest technology and materials to achieve the qualification objectives. The Teaching University Geomedi actively and safely uses information technology to optimise the academic process. Any kind of information and basic data are protected from cyberattacks. The use of information technology allows for effective management of training processes in real-time, and good organisation of the examination process electronically. The university provides fair functioning of the website in Georgian and English languages. The library environment, resources, and services facilitate the effective implementation of educational and research activities. In addition to printed publications, students have access to information in electronic form, EBSCO's electronic databases (11 databases in total), as well as three Elsevier electronic databases. This is relevant at a time of pandemics and developing online education. The university constantly carries out internal quality control with regard to the suitability and availability of all equipment for students. Information on available equipment,

including scientific equipment, used in the academic process is constantly updated and communicated to students.

The educational programme uses a variety of pedagogical methods that are used flexibly depending on the specifics of each course. Each method is applied in different disciplines depending on the needs of the particular course. The educational programme encourages the use of modern teaching methods, and blended learning models, which are student-centred.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, the training format has been fully planned and implemented with the involvement of all learning participants, taking into account WHO and WFME recommendations for providing medical education during a pandemic period. The planning of the training process is done comprehensively according to the recommendations of the quality assurance department and the students' needs based on the analysis of questionnaires.

The Simulation Medicine Clinic at Teaching University Geomedi is equipped with appropriate teaching materials (simulation models, medical instruments, and computer technology). This provides students with the opportunity to develop clinical skills and a sense of responsibility specific to the clinical scenarios, to discuss anatomico-physiological cases, and to perform basic medical manipulations using modern medical technologies.

Information for students on the rules, deadlines, and conditions of academic mobility are clearly defined. All programmes are designed to be as adaptable and coherent as possible with other international programmes to ensure free and flexible international mobility without major obstacles. The right of mobility is provided for a student after one year of study at a relevant level of higher education.

6.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

7 ESG Standard 1.7: Information management

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

7.1 Implementation

The following areas are prioritised by the quality assurance operation: quality assurance of educational programmes (teaching/learning, assessment, development, etc.), research (integration of the research into the teaching process), third mission quality assurance (society development contribution), effectiveness evaluation of ongoing processes at the university, taking care of the continuous staff development, active involvement of all interested parties in the processes, student contingency planning mechanisms, according to the university resources, established indicators and targets, publicity (reports, analysis results, recommendations, etc.).

Internal and external stakeholders are both involved in the implementation of the quality assurance policy and in continuous quality assurance activities, which contribute to the formation and ongoing development of a quality culture at the institution. Internal quality assurance methods provide a constant evaluation of the university resources and operations, analysis of received findings, production of reports/recommendations based on the analysis, submission to the academic board, and relevant decisions for the university development. Systematic (planned) and unplanned (depending on the situation/task) studies are used to implement these processes, using qualitative and quantitative methods. The Quality Assurance Service uses the PDCA cycle.

Internal surveys are entered into the learning process management information system anonymously. External surveys are also available. Reports and suggestions are communicated to all relevant faculties and interested parties. The faculties are responsible for implementing the suggestions, which are adopted during faculty board meetings and recorded in meeting minutes. The faculty board also holds particular personnel accountable for the implementation of any procedure connected to modifications based on recommendations supplied by the quality assurance department.

The quality assurance department serves as a vital link between the study process (dean office), programme quality (programme supervisor), academic staff, and students, revealing

flaws and outlining possible paths for further programme improvement; the department prepares detailed reports and recommendations for each part and sends them to the dean and programme supervisor for consideration, which is then discussed at faculty board meetings with participation of academic and visiting staff, as well as students. The action plan for all of the above is approved by the faculty board and referred to the academic board for further discussion and approval; the approved action plan with specific deadlines and terms is implemented by the dean and programme supervisor; the quality assurance department monitors the implementation of the action plan through reports submitted by the dean and programme supervisor.

7.2 Assessment

During the meeting with the quality management (QM) department the expert groups discussed the QM concept at the Teaching University Geomedi. The main QM assessment is based on semi-annual anonymous online surveys with standard questions and free-field text options, which are mandatory for all status groups of the university. The requested information about the study programmes addresses such topics as student satisfaction, resources available for the students at the university and in the partner clinics, access to the relevant literature, and the possibility to do research work. Besides, the overall performance of the study cohort (i.e., students' performance in OSCE as well as summative examinations) is also assessed. Based on these data, the QM department is preparing evaluation reports, which are sent to the dean but also feedbacked to all status groups of the university. The quality assurance instruments include (i) monthly Faculty Board Meetings, used to discuss the students' performance/feedback and to plan the follow-up activities aiming to improve the quality of the academic programme, if needed; (ii) individualized feedback to each teacher, helping them to improve the revealed weaknesses; (iii) meetings with student representatives to discuss the issues revealed and to agree upon the measures to be taken. The implementation of the measures as well as the recurrence of the problem are monitored closely to assure timely interventions if needed. In rare cases the university takes the freedom not to prolong a contract with a teacher, not responding to the requests of the QM department. The semi-annual reports of the QM department also provide the basis for the further development of the study curriculum. The feedback obtained is divided into different topics and each topic is discussed during one of the monthly online Faculty Meetings, involving preclinical teaching staff and clinicians. Student representatives are regularly invited to such meetings.

Overall, the expert group finds the internal quality assurance system complete, timely, and highly efficient. The students and employees are directly involved in the quality assessment, evaluation of the data obtained, and the planning of the follow-up measures. The representatives of students and alumni have ensured that all problems revealed are addressed in a timely

and efficient manner and are solved in a short time. It has to be mentioned, however, that this reach and adequate QM portfolio is mainly driven by the internal quality assurance process, controlled by the QM department. The expert group did not identify an external body, responsible for the operational quality assurance. Apparently, the external bodies, for example, the Ministry of Education of Georgia, are involved in the re-accreditation only. Moreover, it appeared that only negative feedback is forwarded to the teachers. The experts would like to strongly encourage the QM department to inform the teachers not only about the negative but also about the positive results of course evaluation. Furthermore, systematic methodology (e.g., grounded theory approach) should be used to evaluate the free-text fields of the evaluation questionnaires and the results of the course evaluations should be statistically processed in a broader and more differentiated manner in order to be more effective. Finally, the expert group would like to encourage the university to establish a mechanism for providing the students not only with summative but also with formative feedback. Optimally, such formative feedback would be provided in the middle of each semester.

7.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

8 ESG Standard 1.8: Public information

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which are clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date, and readily accessible.

8.1 Implementation

Teaching University Geomedi information is open to the public and available to stakeholders such as academic staff, students, prospective students, and so forth. The university employs a variety of techniques for public relations, including the official website www.geomedi.edu.ge, an official Facebook page, promotional brochures or leaflets, and educational exhibitions. All of these provide the general public with information about the institution and its operations.

The website contains contact information, the university mission, structure, legal guide, educational programme catalogue, faculties, student guidelines, job announcements, academic calendar, and other required fields in Georgian and English. It is simple to use and navigate. The website is routinely revised to give the most up-to-date information to students, academic staff, and other stakeholders. Entrants can find admission requirements and study programmes there. The educational programme catalogue lists all Geomedi study programmes, as well as their structure, aims, evaluation standards, programme results, and conferred certification. Information regarding foreign partners, as well as links to partner institutions, may be found here. Students and academic staff can use the website to access the Educational Process Management System. Graduate statistics for the Teaching University Geomedi may be found on the Student Relations office website. The International Relations and Public Relations office is in charge of the information on the website, Facebook, and brochures, while IT and Computer Support Services provide technical assistance.

Social media presence is beneficial to students and newcomers since they can track activities and connect with the management. Promotional brochures and flyers are geared toward both domestic and foreign audiences. In addition, the university participates in international exhibitions and contact seminars conducted by other organisations.

8.2 Assessment

The essential information for prospective and enrolled students is made available on the homepage. Everything is well-described in English to ensure that international students can access it. The first important point for a prospective student is checking the criteria for suc-

successful application to the Teaching University Geomedi to become enrolled as a regular student (admission process). The selection criteria are stated as a document certifying the knowledge of English (not less than B2 level) or taking an English Language proficiency test at the university. Specified information about this procedure could provide a more comprehensive picture for potential students. The discussion during the on-site visit also revealed an interview is also conducted with prospective students. The conditions and selection criteria of this interview are not stated online. Tuition fees might also be added to the homepage for prospective students.

The educational programme is outlined. However, the access to get detailed information concerning the syllabus is protected by a password and not accessible from outside. This could be improved since the composition of the syllabus is often a criterium for incoming students for a selection of the university. The attendance rules might also be interesting points for the students. Some data and timelines are provided under the academic calendar section. All the partner clinics of Geomedi are listed.

A university should be a dynamic room of interactive learning and teaching and hence, should change continuously with time following novel educational principles and challenges. From the discussion, it became evident that teachers at Geomedi are motivated to improve their didactic skills by further training. An action plan for the future development of the faculty is also available on the homepage. Student-centred teaching and learning might also comprise a contribution of students to shaping the future version of the Geomedi teaching university.

Facts about quality assurance should be openly available. Quality assurance comprises manifold aspects. The accreditations are listed on the homepage as a result of the quality monitoring process from external independent reviewers. The discussion during the on-site visit showed the structure and work of the quality assurance office indicating that the department collects, analyses, and uses relevant information, particularly from evaluations. The mode of analysing the data and generating novel data could be improved as outlined before. To educate on the basic principles of quality assurance in research e.g., to avoid plagiarism, a detailed description is provided on the library side of the homepage.

Coming in as an international student into a completely different foreign culture is challenging for young people. For this reason, the information provided around the student's guide, service center, self-organization, etc. is of high importance and might be one of the most important links on the homepage for the beginning of academic studies. Hence, the information about student life as a tool to get in contact with fellow students might be very helpful. This is easy to find on the homepage; the diverse social media links available contribute to getting more familiar with university's life. Under the outlined publishing activities there is also information

describing the Geomedi Life for each year by depicting some crucial events. In addition, announcements of general interest concerning upcoming events, conferences, staff exchanges, novel opportunities for the library, etc. are presented on the homepage.

Learning resources are depicted on the homepage e.g., the human anatomy block. Compared with the impressions from the on-site visit, they are correctly reflected on the homepage. The library allows access to many databases (Scopus, Elsevier, etc.), possibly more than at many other universities. This is a great basis for scientific writing, as well as also for evidence-based approaches to learning about novel therapeutic strategies in medicine. Publishing activities are outlined e.g., proceeding of scientific conferences every year are published on the homepage. A more internationally oriented publication activity recognizable in Pubmed/medline etc should be further supported for the future. Scientific cooperation and a foundation for science have recently been established to enhance research activities as an important step. It is a good practice that publication fees are fully supported by the university.

Exams are an important issue and students need and want optimal information for the best preparation for the exams. Digital exams are organised in the examination center at Geomedi. On the homepage under for students' section, there is an examination center link that provides information on it. The rules of the center are clearly outlined.

Information about research activities can also be found on the homepage. The syllabus educates students in research as well. From the discussion with students, it became clear that students are indeed involved in research to some degree if they choose to and some of them highly enjoyed it. There is a vertical educational line embedded in the syllabus presenting basic principles of medical science/research integrated into the curriculum. From the discussion with alumni, it became evident that some of them are indeed interested to get a PhD abroad after graduating from Geomedi.

It is encouraging for students that a high number of them is rewarded with a scholarship for good performance at Geomedi university. A small criticism of the students was that the scholarships were rather small, however, it is understandable that it could not be changed since the university has to be financed mostly based on the enrolment fees.

The structure of the university is shown on the homepage. The legal guide provides all important documents. A code of ethics is provided on the homepage visible to all. This is very important since most students of the programme taught in English are international students derived from a differing cultural environment for whom it might be helpful for orientation. Participation in the Erasmus programme is also listed under the point strategic goals as a future aim.

Information for graduates is not easy to extract from the homepage. Career paths are depicted by a simplified flow chart. Evident activities of an alumni network would be helpful at this point. An alumni database exists as mentioned on the homepage and is organised by the student relation office. More information concerning an alumni network would be helpful – it allows a better exchange between students for preparing for the final part of the academic studies at Geomedi and for planning their future after Geomedi. The first graduates of the programme completed their studies in 2021, so it might take time.

Geomedi provides a strategic development plan for the running three years, shown on the homepage, which is probably partly based on the recommendations showing the wish for continuous improvement. E.g., the recommendation for providing a Latin language terminology course (national accreditation) was followed.

Geomedi describes a convincing process of designing and approval of their international faculty programme. The alumni have confirmed that the outcome which was outlined by Geomedi was valuable to start a career as a medical doctor after finishing the final exams and they are able to go in different directions (some are also continuing with PhD abroad) as expected. The process from admission to certification after final exams is clearly outlined. The students stated during the on-site visit that they are actively involved in the learning process and satisfied. The mostly transparent recruitment process and affirmation of qualification of the teaching staff is described in the self-report and was further explained during the on-site visit. The homepage reports staff exchange for further training and educational development. Necessary resources for learning are provided by the university for all students enrolled. Student support is provided. The students and alumni participating in discussion rounds with the expert group seemed to be satisfied with the programme. The essential information about the programme and activities can be found on the homepage.

8.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

9 ESG Standard 1.9: On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

9.1 Implementation

The university has a mechanism in place to monitor and evaluate the educational programme implementation. The findings are utilised to improve the instructional process. To ensure the quality of the learning process, uncover discrepancies, and enhance quality, the consistency of the outcomes attained with the desired learning outcome at each step of the programme is determined.

The evaluation of the study programme learning outcomes occurs in two stages: during the programme and after its completion. The following criteria are used to evaluate the study programme learning outcomes in the course of the duration of the programme: evaluation of the lecturer and the course by students; evaluation of the programme and services by academic and invited staff; evaluation of the intermediate results of students' academic attendance; evaluation of the final results of students' academic attendance; assessment of the performance of practical skills by the student; evaluation of administrative services by the student; evaluation of students' scientific activity (number of participants in conferences, number of published theses, articles, participation in research).

The evaluation of the learning outcomes of the educational programme after the completion of the programme is carried out according to the following criteria: evaluation of the programme and services by academic and invited staff; assessment of the student's performance of general (disciplinary) competencies; assessment of the performance of practical skills by the student; evaluation of the practical application of the programme of employed students and graduates and the acquired competencies; analysis and evaluation of the employer questionnaire; evaluation of the statistics of graduates who have continued their studies at next step; graduates, continuing to study in the residency of the educational programmes at the faculty of dentistry and medicine; evaluation of employed graduates according to profile; graduate statistics.

The staff training questionnaire can serve as an example of a survey and how the university plans any activity based on its results; the latter has revealed the necessity of specific pieces of training needed for the professional development of the staff, in order to implement their

functions more effectively, which was also discussed and approved at the faculty board meeting. Based on the aforesaid, a new yearly plan (schedule) for staff-oriented training was created, and the corresponding department was tasked with carrying it out. The quality assurance department is in charge of following up and monitoring it.

9.2 Assessment

Multiple mechanisms have been implemented to review the medical programme to ensure that it achieves its goals. The quality of teaching is monitored and helps to improve the delivery of future courses. The evaluation reports include the feedback of students with no influence from the lecturers. In addition, during the on-site visit students described how they regularly participate in faculty meetings to raise any issues they deem necessary to address.

The expert group identified some room for improvements in terms of further development of the programme undergoing accreditation. First, it became apparent that lecturers only receive negative comments of the students' evaluations. The experts recommend making sure teachers receive both negative and positive results from course evaluations. In this way, lecturers can maintain teaching motivation and know which aspects of their course are appreciated by the students.

Second, the results of the course evaluation provide an optimal ground for extended statistical analysis which can depict comparative trends. This applies to both free-text and graded feedback. Therefore, the experts recommend ensuring that the results of the course evaluations are statistically processed in a broader and more differentiated manner in order to be more effective. The experts further recommend applying special measurement methods to evaluate the free-text fields in the evaluation questionnaires.

9.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

10 ESG Standard 1.10: Cyclical external quality assurance

Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

10.1 Implementation

The university quality assurance policy is based on the ESG standards and guidelines in Higher Education, as well as the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement's authorisation and accreditation criteria. The Centre is currently the only entity authorised to grant accreditation and authorisation to higher education institutions operating in Georgia as well as their educational programmes, and it is the most essential link in external quality assurance.

The university evaluates and implements recommendations (if any) made by experts and authorisation/accreditation agencies for further improving and developing university services and programmes. The English-taught programme undergoing accreditation has received national accreditation in 2013, 2018, and 2020.

Taking into consideration the legislative requirements, the university engages in external quality assurance procedures, including authorisation and accreditation, on a regular basis, within the timeframe provisions stipulated by the National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement. The Standards and Guidelines in the Higher European Area (ESG) are also factored into the equation.

10.2 Assessment

External quality assurance at Geomedi University covers different organizational levels and includes all status groups of the institution. The experts commend continuing the university efforts to further align the medical programme with the ESG standards and guidelines, making it more accessible in the European Higher Education Area. Additionally, the medical program has already undergone regular national accreditation assessments. Information on the quality of the university activities is transparently provided by the relevant department.

The university is pursuing the goal of gaining insights for further development and realignment in terms of correspondence to the current global state of the requirements in medical training. Students returning to their home countries have to take the local examinations to be able to practice medicine, which serves as indirect evidence of that. Many also take the USMLE exams to qualify for the US market and/or continue their studies abroad. These are second-hand indicators considered by the university.

According to the national law, the university is subject to regular auditing procedures that can be reinforced or supplemented with non-compulsory ones, e.g., international ones. The results of both types of procedures are regarded as an impulse for further development of a specific programme and the higher education institution as a whole.

The accreditation procedure underway here is a further step for the university in the direction of further integration into the European education area and a tool for those responsible for the programme to get feedback from experts in the field and continue the ongoing efforts to improve the quality of the education offered by the university.

10.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

IV Recommendation to the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN

1 **Assessment of compliance with the Standards and Guidelines in the Higher European Area (ESG) in the current official version**

The One Step Undergraduate Educational Program for MD (Medical doctor - Magister degree) was assessed on the basis of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the national or other relevant regulations.

The expert group concludes that the **ESG standards 1.1** (Policy for quality assurance), **1.2** (Design and approval of programmes), **1.3** (Student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment), **1.4** (Student admission, progression, recognition, and certification), **1.5** (Teaching staff), **1.6** (Learning resources and student support), **1.7** (Information management), **1.8** (Public information), **1.9** (On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes) and **1.10** (Cyclical external quality assurance) are fulfilled.

The assessment criteria are as follows:

Standard 1.1 Policy for quality assurance: Universities have a publicly accessible quality assurance strategy, which is part of their strategic management. This strategy is developed and implemented by internal stakeholder representatives through appropriate structures and processes, involving external stakeholders.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

Standard 1.2 Design and approval of programmes: Universities have procedures for the design and approval of their courses. The courses are designed in such a way that their objectives, including the desired learning outcomes, can be achieved. The qualification obtained during a degree program is clearly defined and communicated; it refers to the corresponding level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, the qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

Standard 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment: Universities ensure that the courses offered are carried out in such a way as to encourage students to play an active role in the design of the learning process and that this approach is also taken into account when assessing students/examinations.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

Standard 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition, and certification: Universities ensure that the courses offered are carried out in such a way as to encourage students to play an active role in the design of the learning process and that this approach is also taken into account when assessing students/examinations.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

Standard 1.5 Teaching staff: Universities ensure the competence of their teachers. They use fair and transparent procedures for the recruitment and further training of their employees.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

Standard 1.6 Learning resources and student support: The university has adequate funding to finance study and teaching and ensure that there is always a sufficient and readily available range of learning and support available for their studies.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

Standard 1.7 Information management: Universities ensure that they collect, analyse and use the relevant data relevant to the successful conduct of studies and other activities.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

Standard 1.8 Public information: Universities publish easily understandable, correct, objective, up-to-date, and well-accessible information about their activities and courses of study.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

Standard 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes: Universities are constantly monitoring their courses and regularly reviewing them to ensure that they achieve the goals set and meet the needs of students and society. The tests lead to a continuous improvement of the courses. All affected parties will be informed about any measures planned or resulting from this.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance: Universities regularly undergo external quality assurance procedures in accordance with the ESG.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

National criteria are integrated into the ESG standards.

The peer-review experts note that the recommendations from the previous accreditation procedure have been adequately taken into account.

2 Accreditation Recommendation

The peer-review experts recommend *unconditional accreditation* of the One Step Undergraduate Educational Program for MD (Medical doctor - Magister degree).

The peer group **proposes the following accreditation:**

- Accreditation without conditions

The peer-review experts propose the following **recommendations for the One Step Undergraduate Educational Program for MD (Medical Doctor - Magister degree):**

- In view of the current developments in the European Higher Education Area with regard to medical training and the efforts made by the university to align its curriculum with international standards for medical training, it is recommended that, whenever possible, the curriculum be further developed in the next few years so that students' practical skills should be practised through pre-clinical courses, physiological examinations, etc. starting from first semesters. Within the framework of reaccreditation, the qualification goals and the curriculum should be assessed in terms of achieving these goals.
- To promote students' problem-solving skills in the analysis of clinical cases, students should be introduced to a selected canon of diseases and present them in a presentation.
- For the further development of the study programme, curricular parts in medical law should be offered on a compulsory basis to prepare students for the legal realities in the field.
- The possibilities for research projects should be strengthened through international cooperation.
- The evaluation of examination forms should also be carried out through progress tests as well as a distractor analysis.
- Teachers should receive not only the negative but also the positive results of course evaluations.
- The results of the course evaluations should be statistically processed in a broader and more differentiated manner in order to be more effective.
- Special measurement methods should be used to evaluate the free-text fields of the evaluation questionnaires.
- The qualification level of the teachers should be increased for the further development of the study programme and the training of young academics.
- The website content should be expanded to provide external stakeholders and potential applicants with a more thorough idea of what to anticipate, e.g., an interview requirement

for prospective students and a detailed syllabus that could also indirectly contribute toward international mobility.

- In the sense of the internationalisation strategy of the university and thus opening up further opportunities for graduates in the European Higher Education Area and the European labour market, it is recommended that the anticipated modification of the European standards (e.g. law on licensing of medical practitioners, aptitude test, Z-Model, etc.) in medical education be successively implemented in the curriculum. Within the framework of the reaccreditation procedure, the implementation of this recommendation should be examined in particular. Non-implementation of this recommendation should be justified.

V Decisions of the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN

Based on the evaluation report of the expert group and the statement of the Higher Education Institution, the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN made on the 22 July 2022 the following decision unanimously:

The study programme “One Step Undergraduate Educational Program for MD” is accredited without any conditions.

The accreditation is valid until 30 September 2028.

The following recommendations are given for the further development of the study programme:

- In view of the current developments in the European Higher Education Area with regard to medical training and the efforts made by the university to align its curriculum with international standards for medical training, it is recommended that, whenever possible, the curriculum be further developed in the next few years so that students' practical skills should be practised through pre-clinical courses, physiological examinations, etc. starting from first semesters. Within the framework of reaccreditation, the qualification goals and the curriculum should be assessed in terms of achieving these goals.
- To promote students' problem-solving skills in the analysis of clinical cases, students should be introduced to a selected canon of diseases and present them in a presentation.
- For the further development of the study programme, curricular parts in medical law should be offered on a compulsory basis to prepare students for the legal realities in the field.
- The possibilities for research projects should be strengthened through international cooperation.
- The evaluation of examination forms should also be carried out through progress tests as well as a distractor analysis.
- Teachers should receive not only the negative but also the positive results of course evaluations.
- The results of the course evaluations should be statistically processed in a broader and more differentiated manner in order to be more effective.
- Special measurement methods should be used to evaluate the free-text fields of the evaluation questionnaires.
- The qualification level of the teachers should be increased for the further development of the study programme and the training of young academics.

- The website content should be expanded to provide external stakeholders and potential applicants with a more thorough idea of what to anticipate, e.g., an interview requirement for prospective students and a detailed syllabus that could also indirectly contribute toward international mobility.
- In the sense of the internationalisation strategy of the university and thus opening up further opportunities for graduates in the European Higher Education Area and the European labour market, it is recommended that the anticipated modification of the European standards (e.g. law on licensing of medical practitioners, aptitude test, Z-Model, etc.) in medical education be successively implemented in the curriculum. Within the framework of the reaccreditation procedure, the implementation of this recommendation should be examined in particular. Non-implementation of this recommendation should be justified.