



N 61/36

Assurance of Acceptable Quality Education for Students at the Higher Education Institutions



Performance Audit Report

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High quality higher education is one of the preconditions for the development of human capital. Higher education institutions should ensure the transformation of their students into a qualified and competitive workforce.

An effective system of higher education should facilitate the formation of necessary preconditions which will enable students to receive quality education. This will require the systematic improvement of study process and the constant enhancement of study program quality.

Present performance audit report examines the activities carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and higher education institutions, reveals shortcomings and issues relevant recommendations.



State Audit Office of Georgia

Assurance of Acceptable Quality Education for Students at the Higher Education Institutions

Performance Audit Report

31.10.2016

Audit Number: 61/36

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Glossary

ACT - Analysis and Consulting Team, public opinion research and strategic consulting company

ENQA - European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Faculty Commission - Faculty Commissions for Study Program Evaluation at the LEPL - Georgian Technical University

GEL - Georgian Lari

GPA - Grade Point Average

GTU - LEPL - Georgian Technical University

HEI - Higher Education Institution

Iliauni - LEPL - Ilia State University

LEPL - Legal Entity under Public Law

MoES - The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia

NCEQE - LEPL - National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement

Stakeholders - Students, graduates, employers, academic personnel, etc.

TSU - LEPL - Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

Executive Summary

Development of human capital is one of the main preconditions for country's economic, social and technological progress. According to the Socio-Economic Development Strategy of Georgia (Georgia 2020)¹ developing sound higher education system is one of the priorities of Georgian government.

The audit team examined the academic performance of graduates from three following higher education institutions - Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Ilia State University and Georgian Technical University, who completed bachelors program. The analysis revealed that **64% of selected graduates completed their studies with below average academic performance indicator**. It is particularly noteworthy that **on average 40% of graduates who received high scores on national entrance examination, also completed bachelor's program with below average academic performance indicator**.

Additionally, **67% of scores received by selected students with active status are also below average²**. Further, the observation carried out by the audit team revealed that for the survey period **the attendance rate** for the selected lectures/seminars was **as low as 15%**.

In light of this, the State Audit Office studied the preconditions for ensuring the **students' motivation to achieve** high academic performance and **learning outcomes** envisaged by study programs. Particularly, the main objective of the present audit was to examine **the system of state tuition aid, student services** offered by higher education institutions and **study program quality assurance activities**.

Once student is eligible for the state tuition aid, the existing scheme does not require him/her to meet any additional preconditions, such as predetermined academic performance indicator, to maintain the grant for the whole study period. As a result, **students lack motivation to maintain high academic performance**.

Student motivation is of particular importance considering the fact that none of the 3 selected higher education institutions have implemented **a systematic and effective mechanism** which will enable them to identify students' needs and requirements on an early stage, and offer relevant student services with an aim to improve their academic performance.

In the given circumstances students, based on their needs, are expected to address relevant services at the higher education institutions on their own initiative. In this context, the results of the survey of graduates conducted by the State Audit Office are of particular importance. The survey revealed that **40% of respondents were not informed about the service of individual academic consultations** offered by lecturers during the study courses, while **88% of them have either never addressed the career services or were not aware of the existence of the latter in the relevant higher education institution**.

Absence of the mechanisms necessary for raising the awareness of student services offered by the higher education institutions results in the lack of their availability. Hence, students are not able to

¹ Socio-Economic Development Strategy of Georgia - Georgia 2020.

² The number also includes scores below the minimum margin required to pass a study course.

use the aforementioned tools in order **to improve their academic performance and fully achieve learning outcomes.**

Formation of the learning environment that is oriented on student progress also includes high quality study programs and challenging study process which is another important component that builds up the student motivation. Therefore, higher education institutions should ensure that they receive comprehensive feedback on the needs and requirements of students and other stakeholders on a regular basis, and carry out corresponding and appropriate interventions.

The audit revealed shortcomings on both stages of this process: collecting feedback as well as identifying and implementing necessary changes.

Particularly, the audit revealed that Georgian Technical University **has not implemented mechanisms to engage graduates in the study program development process in a comprehensive and regular manner.** The feedback received from students is oriented only on the performance of lecturers and does not give the higher education institution information on the needs and requirements of the students in respect to the other important elements of study programs, including: teaching methods, learning materials, etc. Because of the shortcomings on the stage of receiving feedback, the Georgian Technical University **fails to ensure the identification of changes necessary for study program and its development in an effective and systematic manner.**

Due to the absence of appropriate mechanisms, the **Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University** also fails to ensure collection of a systematic and comprehensive feedback from graduates. Such feedback is essential for the assessment of learning outcomes envisaged by study programs as well as the competitiveness of graduates.

Despite of the fact that Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University shows more effort in order to ensure the involvement of students in the process of study program development, the surveys carried out by the respective higher education institution from 2012 show that the trends revealed are not altered.

Same shortcomings were outlined in the Ilia State University. The respective higher education institution **failed to ensure the effective respond to the feedback received from the stakeholders and failed to fully eliminate the deficiencies.**

Based on the conducted research and evaluation by the State Audit Office, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and selected higher education institutions have potential to improve student motivation to achieve learning outcomes envisaged by the study programs and high academic performance, as well as to improve the quality of education they provide.

1. Introduction

Audit Motivation

Development of human capital is one of the main preconditions for country's economic, social and technological progress. In this context, higher education institutions (the "HEIs") bare the central responsibility in equipping the students with necessary skills and education, and in preparing them for future career.

According to the latest data³, there are more than 132,000 students⁴ with active status enrolled in Georgian HEIs and more than half of those students get state funding. In 2015 the state funding amounted to 74 million GEL⁵.

In 2005, Georgia joined the Bologna Process which covers the approximation and harmonization of education systems among European countries and aims to create the unified European space for higher education, employment of citizens, empowerment of mobility and enhancement of the international competitiveness of European higher education.

Consequently, 3 level education and quality assurance system have been implemented in Georgian HEIs. Existing system of state funding has been replaced by State tuition aid and national entrance examination system. Despite the aforementioned comprehensive set of reforms yet many shortcomings remain with respect to the quality assurance of education.

According to the study⁶ prepared by ACT⁷ for the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, one of the largest HEIs in Georgia, academic personnel denotes the existence of the following shortcomings at the aforementioned HEI:

- › shortcomings associated with the administration of study processes;
- › irrelevant practical components;
- › passive collaboration with employers.

In order to assess the higher education quality assurance system, the State Audit Office (the "SAO") conducted the audit of the activities carried out by the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (the "NCEQE") in respect of program accreditation⁸. The aforementioned audit revealed several shortcomings in the process of external quality assurance of the higher education study

³ Data provided by the Registry Department of the LEPL – National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, as of the date November 1, 2015.

⁴ The number does not include PHD students as the funding is provided by the LEPL Shota Rustaveli National Science Fund, in the form of research grant which, structurally as well as by content and amount, is different from state tuition aid.

⁵ Data provided by the Registry Department of the LEPL – National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement for 2015, as of the date November 1, 2015.

⁶ ACT - Analysis and Consulting Team, Research of the Branding and Experience of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, 2012.

⁷ Analysis and Consulting Team, public opinion research and strategic consulting company in Caucasus Region, <http://act-global.com/>

⁸ The State Audit Office of Georgia, External Quality Assurance of Higher Education: Measures Taken by the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, Performance Audit Report, 18.02.2016.

programs. The evaluation of external quality assurance processes also revealed the deficiencies that, pursuant to the accreditation standards, should be assured by the HEIs. Hence, the deep analysis of the quality assurance activities carried out by the HEIs is of utmost importance.

Audit Problem and Questions

The main objective of the audit is to assess the effort of HEIs and the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia to achieve acceptable quality of education through analyzing student academic performance results and study program development process, reveal shortcomings and facilitate their elimination by issuing relevant recommendations.

For this purpose the audit answered the following questions:

- › Are the activities carried out by the HEIs appropriate in order to motivate students to achieve high academic performance?
- › To what extent does the higher education funding scheme motivate students to achieve high academic performance?
- › To what extent does the quality assurance mechanisms implemented by the HEIs ensure the regular and effective process of study program development?

Audit Scope and Methodology

For the audit purposes, the SAO studied the activities of higher education institutions and the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (the “MoES”) carried out from 2011 to the first half of 2016. Some information from the previous years and period prior to the finishing the audit has been used for analytical purposes.

In order to ensure representative selection, the SAO examined the following 3 largest HEIs established in the capital city: **Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University** (the “TSU”), **Ilia State University** (the “Iliauni”), and the **Georgian Technical University** (the “GTU”).

The SAO collected the data from selected HEIs with respect to the following two topics:

1. Activities carried out by the responsible bodies in an educational sector in order to improve students’ academic performance;
2. Internal quality assurance mechanisms implemented by HEIs in order to ensure study program development.

Information has been gathered as a result of intensive research, documentary analysis and conducted interviews. The SAO carried out 19 interviews in 3 HEIs. Eventually, 35 respondents have been interviewed, including: representatives of the HEIs’ councils, management, central administration and personnel. Additionally, the audit team has carried out the observation on students’ attendance during the spring term 2015-2016.

The audit team carried out **the survey of students and graduates at the selected HEIs and analyzed their academic performance**. Results of the aforementioned procedures are presented in the third and fourth chapters of this audit report.

Analysis of the performance of graduates

The audit team studied academic performance of all 6,885 graduates who completed bachelor's programs in 2014 at the selected HEIs. For further analysis, selected graduates were segregated based on the scores received at the national entrance examination in 2012.

Analysis of the academic performance of students

The audit team studied the scores of all students registered on the courses of Law and Business Administration bachelors programs during the 2015-2016 fall semester. Total number of scores amounted to 61, 138.

Survey of Graduates

For graduated student survey, audit team selected 123 graduates (7%) out of the whole population of 1,677 who, based on the national entrance examination scores, received 50% or more state tuition aid in 2010 and graduated from one of the selected HEIs in 2014 with bachelor's degree. Out of the selected 167 respondents, 148 (89%) participated in survey.

Survey of Students

For the fall semester of 2015-2016 372 study courses were offered by bachelor's programs of Business Administration and Law at the selected HEIs. The audit team selected 18 out of 372 study courses with comparatively low scores. 3,027 students were registered on 18 study courses. 362 students were selected with random selection method and 284 respondents (78%) participated in survey.

The fifth chapter of the report analyses the quality assurance mechanisms developed in 3 selected HEIs in order to ensure study program development. For this purpose, the audit team selected 2 most demanded bachelors programs with the highest numbers of enrolled students: Business Administration and Law. In order to assess the mechanisms implemented for ensuring the development of the aforementioned programs, the audit team examined the relevant process through various documentary and comparative analysis.

Particularly, the audit team studied all records of the academic and faculty council meetings that served as a basis for further amendments in selected study programs. Also, documentary analysis was carried out in respect of all documents provided by the HEIs comprising the amendments made in study programs or served as a basis for implementing such amendment, including:

- › Program curriculum;
- › Syllabi;
- › Early reports;
- › Minutes of the committee and council meetings;
- › Results of stakeholders' surveys;
- › Questionnaires used by the HEIs;

- › Decisions of academic and faculty councils;

In the process of analysis, internal regulations of the HEIs, as well as the orders and other documentation were examined.

Audit Criteria

As for the main criterion the SAO used the accreditation standards established with an aim to develop education quality. These standards set the requirements with respect to several dimensions of study programs. Among other requirements, it is particularly noteworthy that the standards require individual work with students, engaging stakeholders in the process of study program implementation and development as well as the introduction of mechanisms needed for the education quality enhancement. Those requirements are discussed in further details in the following chapters.

For the forth chapter, in order to evaluate student services offered by the respective HEIs the audit team used the international practice developed with respect to the student services.

For determining an acceptable level of student service availability and student awareness, the audit team used the results of graduates' and students' surveys.

With respect to the state tuition aid the audit team examined the international practice existing in this field.

In the last chapter of the report, the audit team used the international practice developed with respect to internal mechanisms for quality assurance in order to assess the activities carried out by the selected HEIs for the **study program development**.

Following are the sources for the criteria used in the present report:

- › Law of Georgia on Higher Education;
- › Law of Georgia on Education Quality Enhancement;
- › Education Quality Assurance Manual⁹;
- › Internal regulations of the selected HEIs;
- › Order N3 of the Ministry and Education of Georgia¹⁰;
- › Documents of the Bologna Process¹¹;
- › Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) developed by the European Association of the Higher Education Institutions (ENQA).

⁹ LEPL - National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement; Educational Quality Enhancement Manual, 2011.

¹⁰ Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia №3 of January 5, 2007 on Approval of the Procedures for Calculating Higher Education Programs with Credits.

¹¹ Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education, Bologna, June 19, 1999; Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education, Prague, May 19, 2001; Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Berlin, September 19, 2003; ; Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Bergen, May 19-20, 2005; Towards the European Higher Education Area: responding to challenges in a globalised world, London Communiqué, May 18, 2007; Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, April 28-29, 2009.

2. General Information

2.1 Higher Education System of Georgia

Higher academic education in Georgia consists of three levels:

- › First level - **Bachelor's Degree** (240 credits);
- › Second level - **Master's Degree** (120 credits);
- › Third level - **Doctoral Degree** (180 credits).

In order to be admitted to the Bachelor's or Master's degree programs, applicants are required to pass the respective national entrance examinations under the procedures approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia.¹² The scores received by students in the aforementioned examinations also determine if state will cover their tuition fee.¹³

The aforementioned state tuition aid is awarded only to the students enrolled in the higher education programs accredited by the State.¹⁴ It provides full (100%) or partial (70%, 50%, 30%) financial assistance¹⁵ and is guaranteed for the whole term of an education program¹⁶, unless the student's active status is suspended. It is noteworthy that the tuition aid is not, at any point, affected by the academic performance of an individual student. Therefore, once received based on the entrance exam scores, it can be neither cancelled nor reduced if students underperform in their academic studies.

2.2 Higher Education Institutions

The following are the types of the HEIs in Georgia:

- › **College** - higher education institution implementing only first level study programs¹⁷;
- › **Teaching University** - higher education institution implementing higher education program/programs (except for doctoral programs). It is required to provide the second level - Master educational program/programs;
- › **University** - higher education institution implementing education programs of second and third or all three levels of higher academic education, as well as scientific researches.

¹² Law of Georgian on Higher Education, Article 52, paragraph 1.

¹³ Law of Georgian on Higher Education, Article 51, paragraph 4.

¹⁴ Law of Georgian on Higher Education, Article 63, paragraph 3.

¹⁵ The Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia N154/n of the September 15, 2011 on the Approval of the Procedures and Conditions for Allocating and Transferring State Tuition Aid and State Tuition Aid for Master's Programmes among the Accredited Higher Education Programmes of Higher Education Institutions, Article 3, paragraph 1.

¹⁶ The Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia N154/n of the September 15, 2011 on the Approval of the Procedures and Conditions for Allocating and Transferring State Tuition Aid and State Tuition Aid for Master's Programmes among the Accredited Higher Education Programmes of Higher Education Institutions, Article 3.

¹⁷ Law of Georgian on Higher Education, Article 9, paragraph 1.

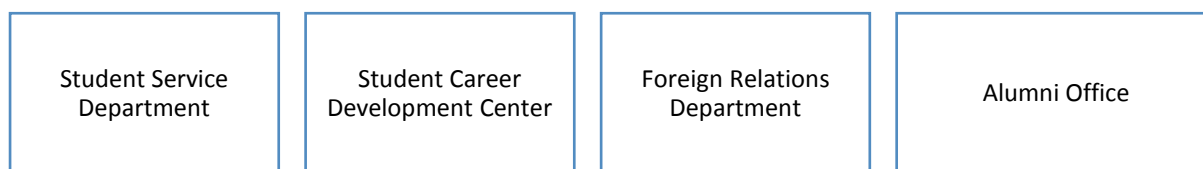
There are **31 authorized Universities**, 12 of which are State owned LEPLs; **29 Teaching Universities**, 7 of which are state owned LEPLs; and **15 Colleges**, 1 of which is state owned LEPL¹⁸.

2.3 Student Services

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

There are several structural units that deal with student services at the TSU. Function of the **Student Service Department**¹⁹ is to issue diplomas, transcripts, official notices and certificates within its competence. Primary function of the **Student Career Development Center** is to support students in exploring employment opportunities. **The Foreign Relations Department** is responsible for providing necessary guidance to the students willing to continue their studies abroad, while the **Alumni Office** informs already graduated students about the upcoming events planned at the HEI.

Scheme 2.3.1: Departments responsible for providing student services at the TSU



Learning process at the TSU is also assisted by the **Student Management System** which enables students to undergo academic registration independently: select courses and keep track of their academic performance. Existing system also enables them to communicate certain administrative issues.

Ilia State University

Larger part of student services offered by the Iliauni are provided by **Student Service Department** which consists of three units: **Career Center, Housing and Exchange Programs; Student Clubs, Student life/Sports; Foreign Students Office**. The goal of the department is to deepen the relationship between students, instructors, administrative and research staff. The staff of the department helps students to acquire information about job openings, internships, local and foreign grants and scholarships, based on their interests and specialization.

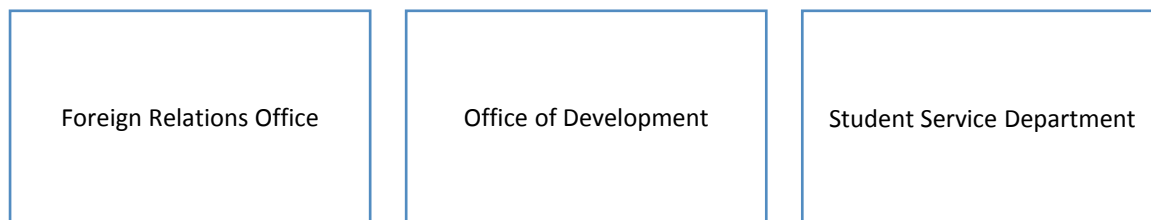
Other departments providing student services at the Iliauni are: the **Foreign Relations Office** which facilitates the participation of students in international exchange programs and projects, and

¹⁸ <http://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=1855&lang=geo>

¹⁹ Department operates within the Learning Process Management unit.

the Office of Development which supports students in securing external funding for institutional and research development.

Scheme 2.3.2: Departments responsible for providing student services at the Iliuni



At Iliuni study process is assisted by an electronic system – **Argus**. The aforementioned system tracks students’ academic progress: all study courses taken and the scores received therein. Apart from the study course registration service, Argus also gives students access to study process related information including study materials foreseen by study courses.

Curriculum experts and coordinators consult students with respect to the study courses and timetables. In the context of student services, academic writing center and MyEnglishLab – electronic platform used in English courses (general module) are also noteworthy. Iliuni has also instilled plagiarism prevention mechanism and aims to systematize and implement it through the whole HEI.

Georgian Technical University

As for the GTU, main functions of the **Department of Social Affairs, Sport and Culture** include: career services, student and alumni relations. The process of issuing transcripts, notices is coordinated by the **Department of Study Process Methodical Assurance**, while **the International Relations and Standards Office** deals with student exchange programs.

Scheme 2.3.3: Departments responsible for providing student services at the GTU



At the GTU students’ scores are registered in the student academic performance monitoring system which enables students to track their academic performance and receive information related to study courses.

All three selected HEIs provide library services, and faculty administrative staff is actively involved in consulting students on administrative issues.

2.4 Student Academic Performance Indicators

Attendance and grades are consistently viewed as the meaningful indicators of student performance. Hence, academic performance of students and their success towards graduation should be continually monitored by the HEIs.

One of the means of assessing student performance is Grade Point Average (GPA). It is a commonly used way of measuring academic achievement in Georgia and widely accepted international tool. Student's GPA can play a meaningful role in the process of employment and transition to the next level of education. This is particularly true when the students pursue their studies abroad.

Despite minimal differences in calculations, the concept of GPA stays the same worldwide, including U.S. and countries of Europe. The TSU and the GTU, two out of three HEIs selected for this audit have also implemented the concept of GPA in their study process²⁰. Iliauni evaluates students' academic performance based on their final average score²².

2.5 Study Program Development in Selected HEIs

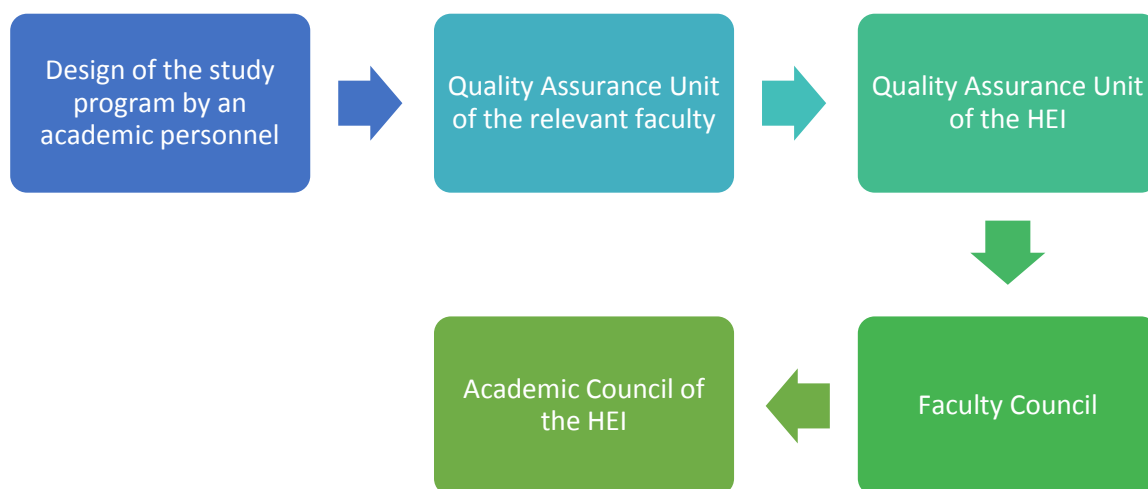
Selected HEIs follow the same basic procedure to implement study programs. Study programs are designed by academic personnel from the relevant faculty. This process may involve multiple other parties: students, graduates, employers and administrative staff (faculty dean, head of the quality assurance unit, etc.).

The study program then goes through internal quality assurance review (in relevant faculty) and is sent to HEI quality assurance unit in order to review the program. The programs revised by the quality assurance unit are sent for approval to the faculty board, followed by the academic board (see the scheme below).

²⁰ Resolution of the Academic Council of the LEPL - Georgian Technical University №1126 of April 17, 2014 on Amendement of Instructions for the Student Contigent Formation and Mobility at the GTU.

²¹ Order of the Rector of the LEPL - Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University №01/01-01 of January 23 on Approval of Procedures for Calculation of Grade Point Average of Students/Graduates of the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Annex №1.

²² Resolution of the Meeting of the Academic Council of the LEPL – Ilia State University №7 of June 16, 2015 on Approval of the Procedures for Evaluating Students/Vocational Students of the Ilia State Universtity, Granting Credits, Rating, and the Payment for Additional/Retaken Cources/Components.

Scheme 2.5.1: Study program implementation mechanism at the selected HEIs

After the study programs are launched, they should be assessed and developed on a regular basis. The study programs are amended under the same procedure discussed above. For this purpose, diverse data is collected by the HEIs through stakeholder surveys.

Student surveys appear to be the most frequently used tool enabling HEIs to collect course evaluation feedback. Meanwhile, graduate surveys are oriented on determining the overall impact of the study program in the professional development of graduates.

No less beneficial is the feedback received from various other stakeholders (employers, partner organizations, international or local experts of the relevant field). Cooperation with the aforementioned stakeholders may take different forms: memorandums, surveys, involving them in the review of study programs, engaging them with the status of invited lecturers, etc.

Involving those stakeholders in study program designing and development process is particularly important when determining the skills and competences required on the relevant segment of labor market, and is vital to ensure that learning outcomes envisaged by the study program are not left impracticable.

Audit Findings

3. Academic Performance of Students and Graduates

The audit team collected and analyzed the data regarding the academic performance of students and graduates in 3 selected HEIs. Results of the aforementioned analysis are presented in detail in the following chapters.

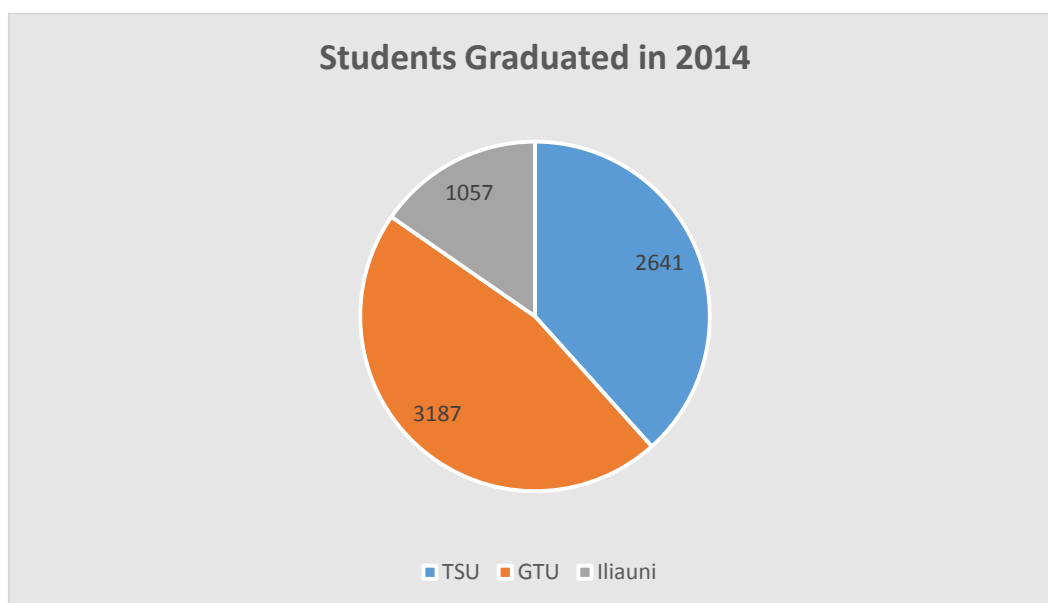
3.1 Results of Graduates' Academic Performance Analysis

In order to ensure representative study, the audit team first analyzed the academic performance of all students who enrolled the selected HEIs in 2010 and graduated in 2014. For more detailed analysis, the audit team examined academic performance of those students who received 50% or more state tuition aid based on the score of the national entrance examination. Also, in order to see the overall results of the analysis, academic performance of the students with lower national entrance examination scores were also studied.

The study revealed that the majority of graduates completed one of the 3 selected HEIs in 2014 with below average academic performance indicator. Selection of the students with higher national entrance examination scores in 2010 revealed that those students also graduated in 2014 with below average academic performance indicator.

The aforementioned results validates the finding that even those students who have shown more effort in the beginning of their studies and consequently received state tuition aid based on higher scores in national entrance examination failed to maintain average academic performance throughout their studies.

According to the information received, 6,885 students graduated from bachelor's programs of the TSU, the GTU and the ILIAUNI in 2014. Number of graduates was distributed by HEIs as illustrated in the diagram below:

Diagram 3.1.1: Number of Graduates of 2014 by HEIs

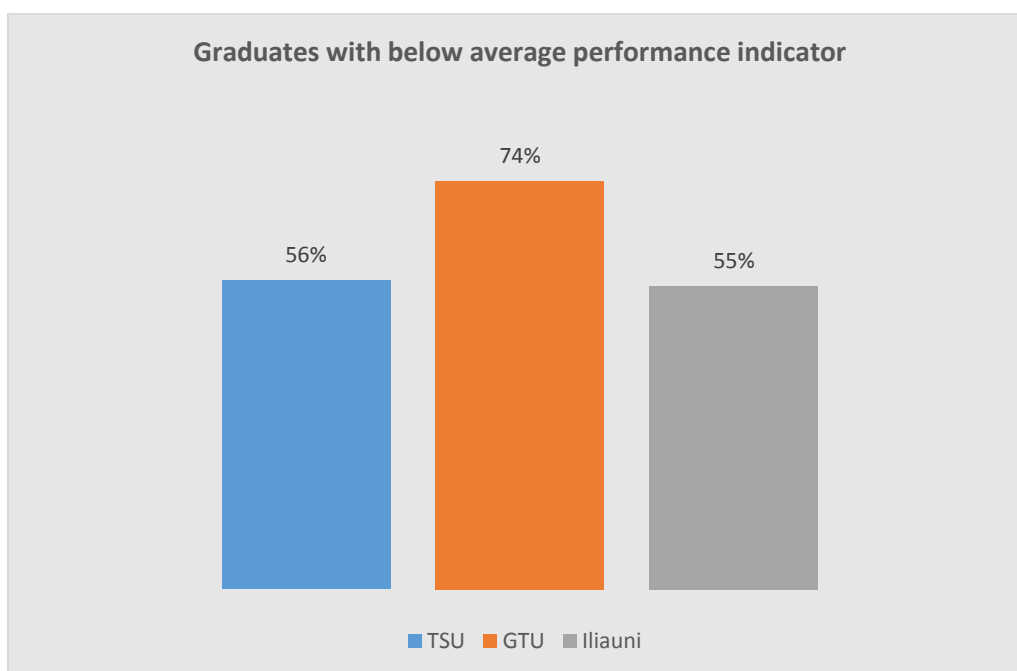
The study carried out by the audit team revealed that **64% out of 6,885 students graduated with below average** academic performance indicator. Aforementioned results are dispersed by HEIs in the following diagram.

For this study the audit team considered 2.5 GPA as an average academic performance indicator at the TSU and GTU. In case of the Iliuni the audit team recongnized an approximate equivalent overall score - 75. Additionally, 75 is an average indicator in evaluating the performance of students with active status. Considering the fact, that under Georgian legislation 51 is a minimum score for getting credit for the study course²³, 75 was acknowledged as an average indicator.

The aforementioned indicator was appointed because of 2 criteria:

- 1. After acquiring bachelor's diploma, in case of desire to pursue studies abroad, 2.5 grade point average appears to be the minimum requirement of the majority of HEIs which, considering the Georgia's strive to internationalization, is an important criterion.*
- 2. After the completion of studies, on the first stage of employment GPA is the main indicator of graduates' achievement and is regarded as an important criterion by the employers.*

²³ Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia №3 of January 5, 2007 on Approval of the Procedures for Calculating Higher Education Programs with Credits, Article 4, paragraph 9.

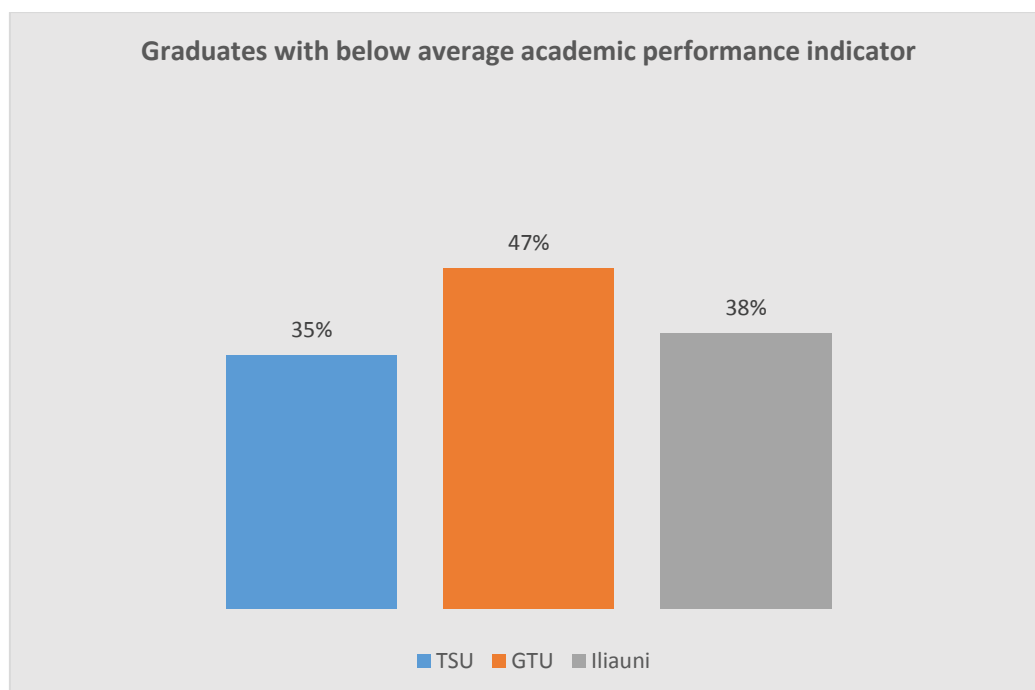
Diagram 3.1.2: Percentage of 2014 graduates with below average academic performance indicator by the HEIs

As the diagram above illustrates, out of 6,685 graduates in 2014 **56%- in the TSU, 74% - in the GTU and 55% - in the Iliauni** completed bachelor's programs with below average academic performance indicator.

For the diagram below, the audit team selected the graduates who received 50% or more state tuition aid **based on the high scored received on national entrance examination** in 2010 and completed their studies in the relevant HEI in 2014. There are 1,677 such graduates in 3 selected HEIs.

Analysis of the aforementioned data revealed that **on average 40% of those graduates completed their studies with below average academic performance indicator**. Results were distributed among HEIs according to the following diagram.

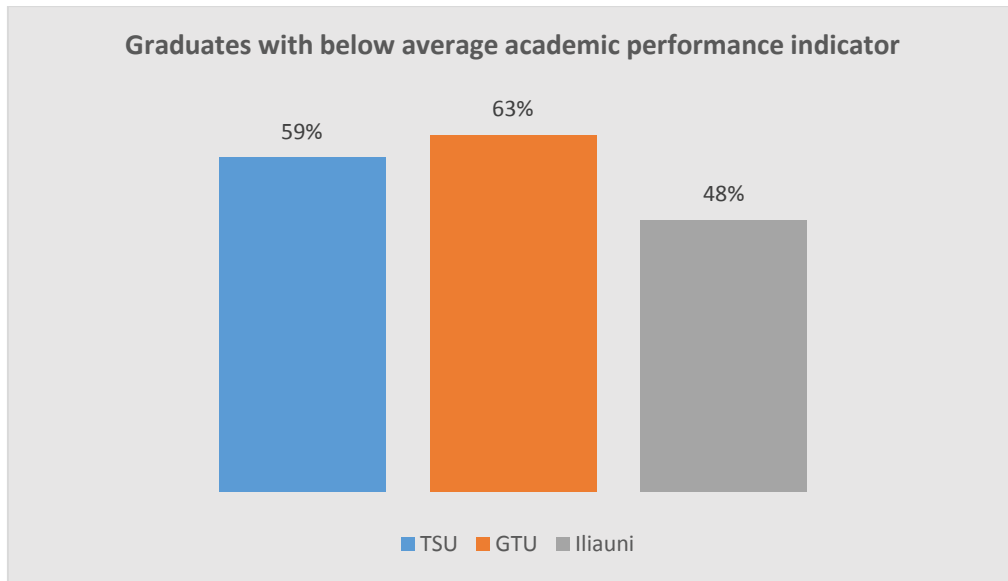
Diagram 3.1.3: Percentage of graduates with below average academic performance indicator out of the graduates who received 50% or more state tuition aid in 2010



The diagram above illustrates that out of those students who received 50% or more state tuition aid in 2010: **35% - in the TSU, 47% - in the GTU and 38% in the Iliuni** completed bachelor's degree with **below average academic performance**.

In order to present the full picture, the audit team also analyzed the academic performance of those students who received 30% state tuition aid or didn't receive the aid at all based on the scores of national entrance examinations in 2010. There were 2,174 such students in the selected HEIs. **61% of those students completed studies with below average academic performance indicator**. The diagram below illustrates that the numbers among HEIs were distributed as follows: TSU - 59%, GTU - 63%, Iliuni - 48%.

Diagram 3.1.4: Percentage of graduates with below average academic performance indicator out of the graduates who received 30% state tuition aid or did not receive the aid at all by HEIs



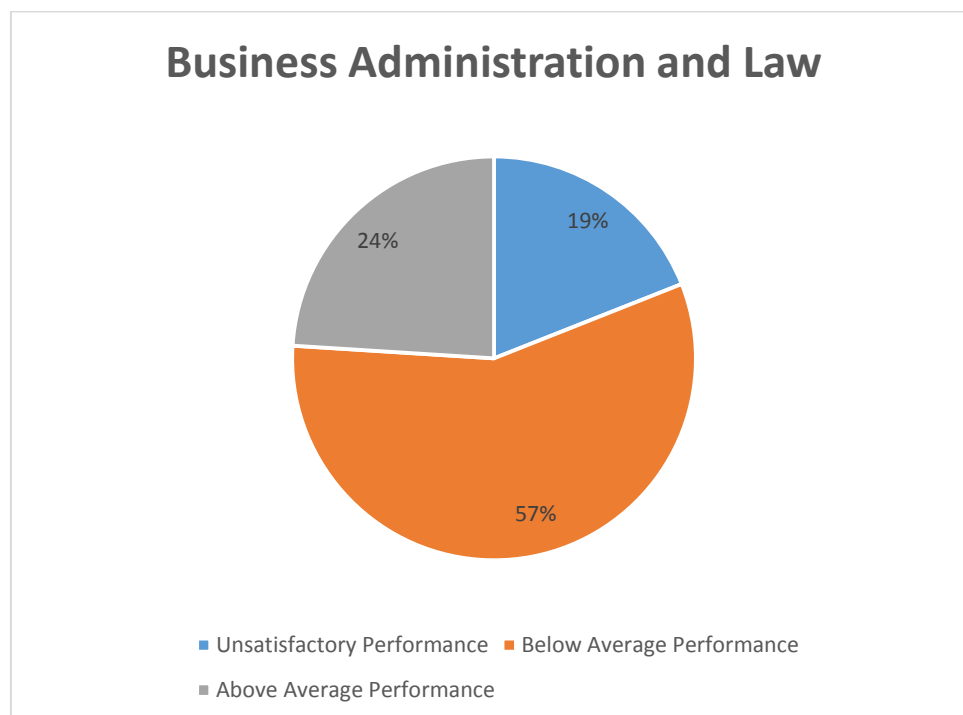
3.2 Analysis of Academic Performance of Students with Active Status

The audit team analyzed the current condition of students' academic performance. The following diagrams illustrate the analysis of scores of students with active status enrolled in the programs of Law or Business Administration of the selected HEIs in the fall semester 2015-2016.

Analysis of academic performance of GTU-s students with active status

As presented on the diagram below, out of the full amount of scores received in the period of analysis for 82 study courses offered by **Business Administration and Law bachelor's programs 57% was below average, 24% was above average and 19% was unsatisfactory** which means that student did not get the credit for class.

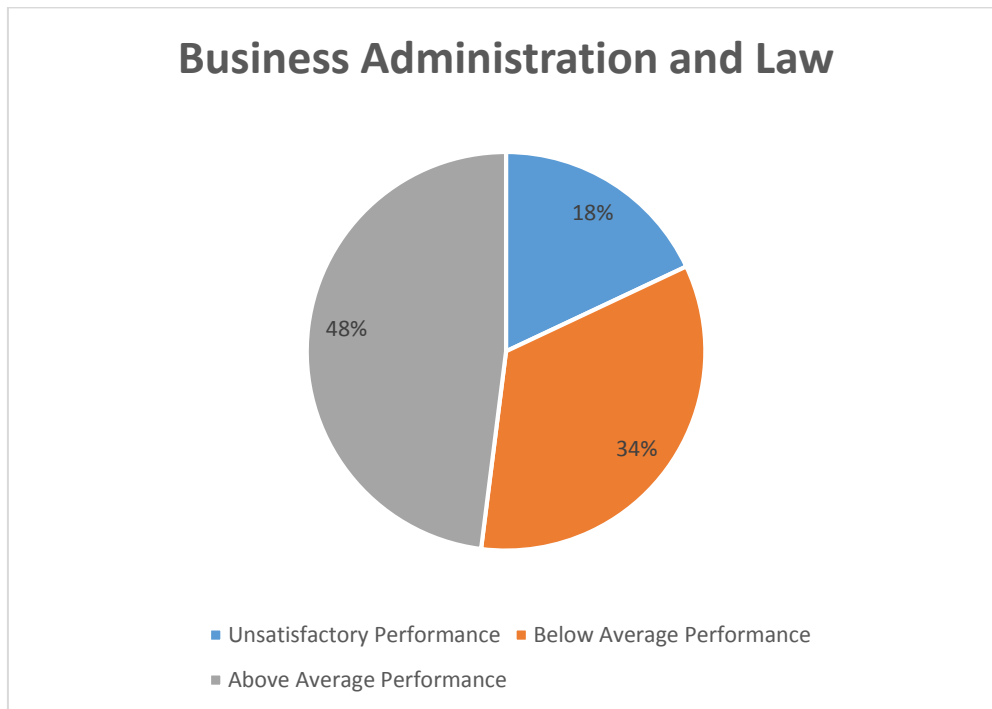
Diagram 3.2.1: Scores of the students registered on study courses of bachelor's programs of Business Administration and Law for the 2015-2016 fall semester in the GTU



Analysis of academic performance of TSU-s students with active status

As presented on the diagram below, out of the full amount of scores received for 179 courses of **Business Administration and Law bachelor's program** – **34% was below average, and 18% - non satisfactory.**

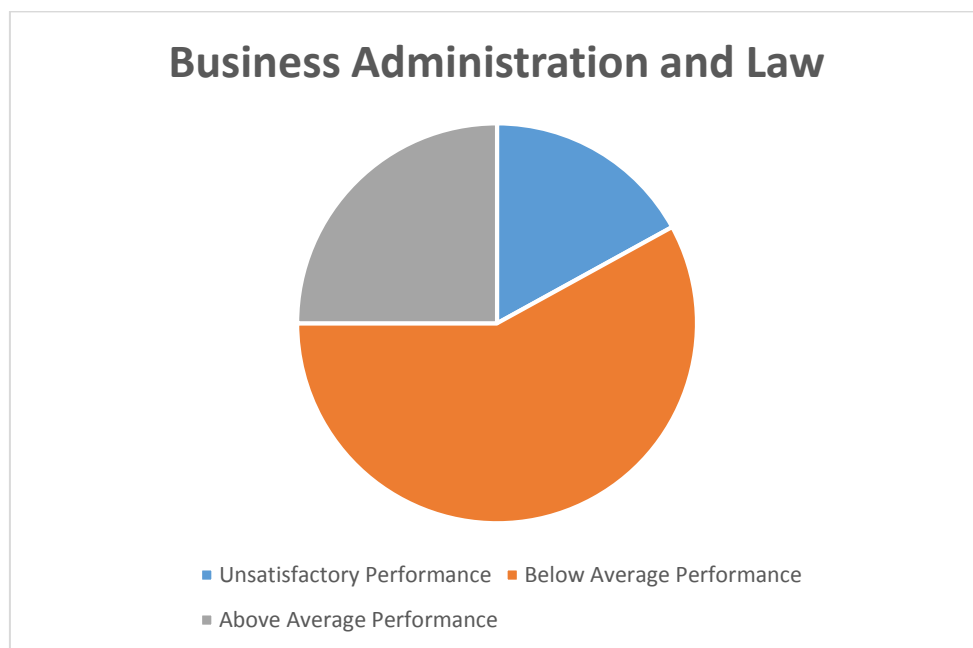
Diagram 3.2.2: Scores of the students registered on study courses of bachelor's programs of Business Administration and Law for the 2015-2016 fall semester in the TSU



Analysis of Academic Performance of Iliauni-s students with active status

As presented in the diagram below, out of the full amount of scores received for 111 study courses offered by **Business Administration and Law bachelor's programs** during the period of analysis – **58% were below average, 25% - above average and 17% - non-satisfactory**.

Diagram 3.2.3: Scores of the students registered on study courses of bachelor's programs of Business Administration and Law for the 2015-2016 fall semester in the Iliauni

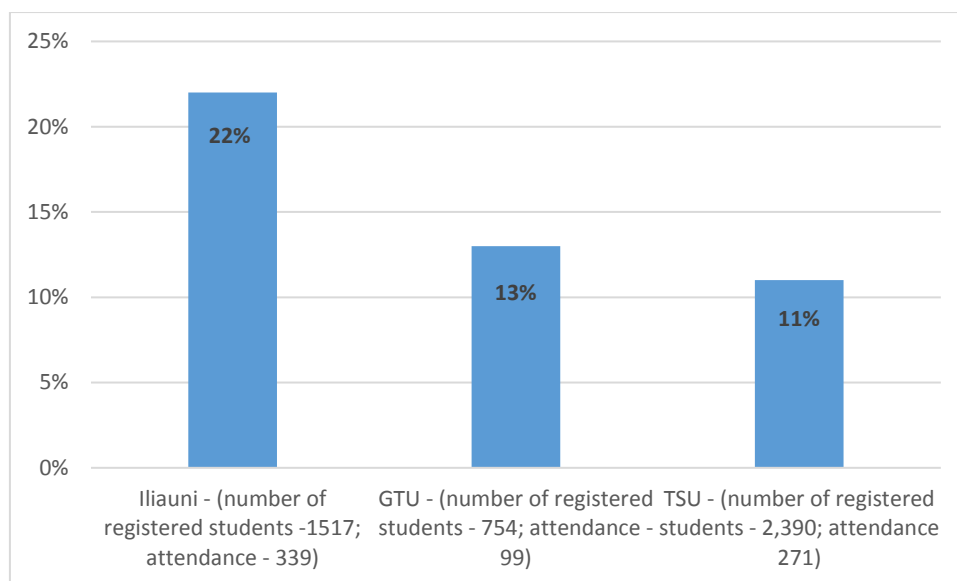


3.3 Analysis of student attendance on lectures/seminars

Under Georgian legislation student attendance on lectures/seminars does not constitute a mandatory component of student evaluation. Although, because of the absence of distance learning technologies at the selected HEIs attendance still serves as a necessary pre-requisite to achieve learning outcomes.

In order to illustrate full picture with respect to student attendance on lectures/seminars, the audit team carried out single time observation in 3 selected HEIs. Visits were conducted in the spring term 2015-2016, within the period of June 6-13, during study process. The audit team observed student attendance on lectures/seminars according to the schedule. In sum 4,661 students were registered for the selected lectures/seminars on observation days.

Diagram 3.3.1: Percentage of students' attendance at the selected lectures/seminars compared to the number of registered students



Analysis of student attendance on lectures/seminars revealed that on the day of observation **overall attendance rate for the selected lectures/seminars was as low as 15%**. As the diagram above illustrates, the rate of attendance was distributed among the HEIs in the following manner: **TSU – 11%, Iliauni – 22% and GTU – 13%**.

4. Mechanisms Necessary to Increase Students' Motivation

Results of the analysis discussed in previous chapters reveal that overall indicators of student attendance and performance in 3 selected HEIs are below average. Several external factors are also to be considered in this respect. However, in order to improve the situation the functions of the education system representatives need to be determined in an appropriate manner.

It is important to develop and use teaching strategies which will promote more active and student-oriented teaching process based on students' experiences and interests and will encourage students' involvement in study process.

Teaching and learning related approaches which promote students' involvement and their better academic performance include:

- › Availability of student services;
- › Students' academic performance evaluation methods;
- › Offering a tuition aid which promotes better academic performance results for students.²⁴

4.1 Lack of the availability of student services at the HEIs

According to accreditation standards, student services at HEIs help students successfully achieve their academic goals.²⁵ Such services include mechanisms implemented in academic as well as administrative dimension that are systemic and individually available for each student. It is important for such services to assist students in selecting their major, planning study process, receiving information necessary to improve their academic performance, as well as to provide relevant consultations. According to the standard mentioned above, HEI also should implement an effective and systematic mechanism for individual work with students in the workload scheme of the personnel.²⁶

4.1.1 HEIs fail to improve the academic performance of individual students using student services

In order for student services in HEIs to be effective, HEIs should have implemented mechanism which will enable them to identify students' academic needs on an early stage. HEIs' relevant and on time intervention might improve student's academic performance. Potential risk indicators include: students' low attendance rate, low exam grades, etc.

²⁴ Glenda Crosling, Margaret Heagney, Liz Thomas, Improving Student Retention in Higher Education, Improving Teaching and Learning, Australian University Review, vol. 51, no. 2, 2009.

²⁵ Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia №65/n of May 4, 2011 on Approval of the Accreditation Statute of Study Programs of Education Institutions and Accreditation Fees, Article 15.

²⁶ Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia №65/n of May 4, 2011 on Approval of the Accreditation Statute of Study Programs of Education Institutions and Accreditation Fees, Article 15, paragraph "b".

HEIs can intervene in the academic process an individual student by offering relevant student services, including:

- › Tutoring
- › Proactive advising for at-risk students;
- › Counselling on career and degree/major selection;
- › Defining students' goals and expectations, etc.

Study of the current situation revealed that in case of necessity HEIs provide relevant assistance to students. Such cases include the situations:

- › When a student identifies an academic or administrative problem within a study process on his/her own and seeks assistance at relevant student service departments or any other departments within faculty;
- › When HEI organizes massive events and offers student services at HEIs, etc.

As noted in the second chapter, all 3 selected HEIs have implemented an online system, where students' grades are being accounted. Although, none of the selected HEIs have implemented a systematic mechanism which enables HEIs to identify problematic cases based on the observation on students' academic performance and attendance rate, determine priority groups and offer individual relevant student services. This approach allows HEI to make a problem-oriented intervention on an early stage in order to assist students in achieving better academic performance and the learning outcomes envisaged by study courses and/or study program.

The audit revealed that in 3 selected HEIs, **student services are not being offered to individuals and student groups at early stages of studies based on their needs**. Such approach will facilitate the improvement of student's academic performance. This shortcoming is caused by the absence of the systematic and effective mechanism which enables HEIs to identify individual problems students are facing during study process.

4.1.2 Lack of awareness on student services

Consultation hours of lecturers

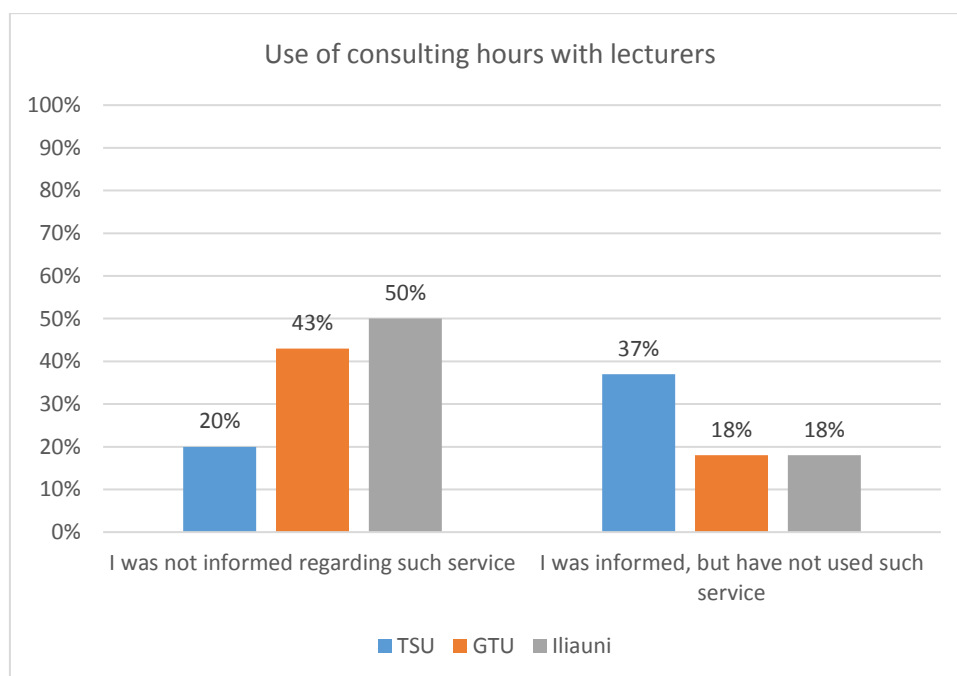
According to the standard mentioned above, in order to improve students' learning outcomes and meet students' different needs, it is necessary to include lecturers' individual working hours with students in a study program.²⁷ Pursuant to this standard, lecturers should offer individual working hours to students within their study courses as agreed upon with the administration. Also, it is important for students to have an easy access to information on consulting hours (day, time and location). Students get all the necessary information regarding study course from syllabus, where the details about consulting hours are often included.

²⁷ Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia №65/n of May 4, 2011 on Approval of the Accreditation Statute of Study Programs of Education Institutions and Accreditation Fees, Article 15, paragraph "b".

Based on information received from the representatives of HEIs, individual working hours with students are included within the every course of a study program and related information (day, time, location) is available at a desk located on faculty's office territory. Although, as a result of the analysis of all syllabi from selected two programs, it was revealed, that only 8% of syllabi at the TSU contain information about consulting hours. At Iliuni, 18% of syllabi inform students that they will get information about consulting hours on the first lecture of the course. As for the GTU, none of the syllabi contain information related to consulting hours.

Student survey revealed, that in all 3 HEIs, 40% of students were not aware of the existence of consulting hours. Furthermore, even though other 23% of students was informed about consulting hours, they haven't tried to approach lecturers. Students' responses by HEIs are presented on a diagram below.

Diagram 4.1.2.1: Results of the survey of students registered on the programs of business administration or law in fall semester 2015-2016



Student survey carried out by the audit team, revealed, that during the one semester **60%** of students have exposed the need for additional academic assistance regarding study course. As illustrated on the diagram above, **40% of students were not informed that HEI offered individual academic consulting service to students.**

As students are not well aware of the existence of consulting hours, they don't get an adequate help in times of need. Hence, students have hard time coping study material fully.

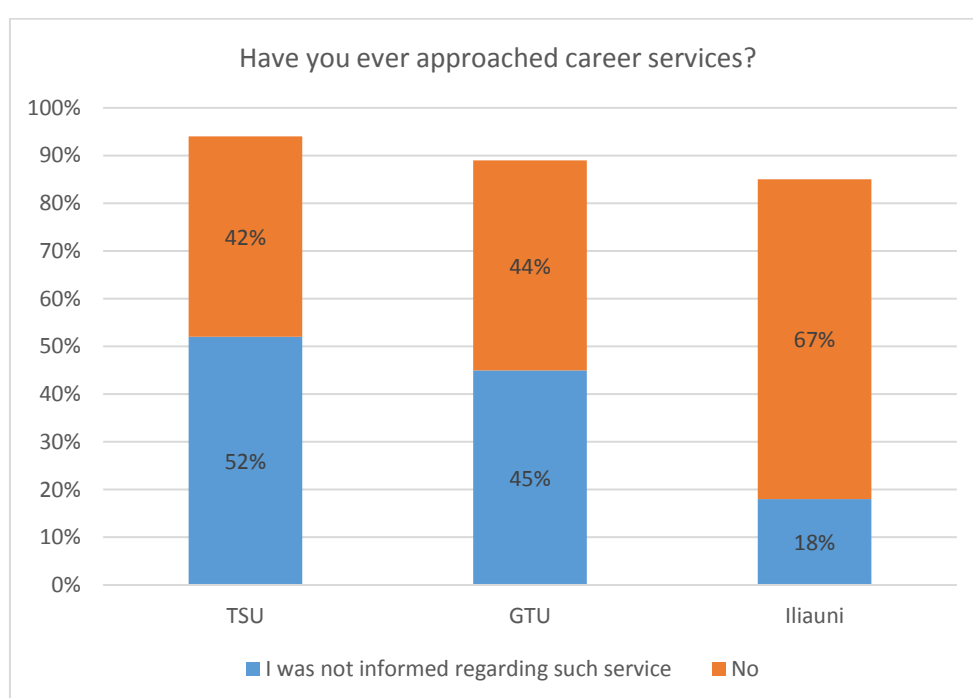
Due to the lack of the availability of consulting hours in the HEIs, students do not receive an adequate assistance in case of necessity. Consequently, students experience hardship in coping study material fully.

Career services

Career services offered by HEIs aim to assist students in choosing their major, selecting study courses and forming career vision. This service plays a huge role for students in gaining all the necessary skills to assist them in orientation on a labour market.

Survey of the graduates from selected HEIs revealed that **45% of respondents are not informed about career services** at the respective HEI and **42% of respondents have never approached such services**. Regarding career services, the audit team also surveyed students registered for the fall semester 2015-2016. As a result, it was revealed, that **88% of respondents have never approached career services or are not informed about such services**. Diagram below illustrates the results of students' survey at the selected HEIs.

Diagram 4.1.2.2: Results of the survey of students with active status registered on the programs of Business Administration or Law in fall semester 2015-2016



Students are not well informed about additional academic consulting hours and career services. Hence, students do not use the aforementioned services in a proper manner. It is particularly noteworthy considering that HEIs have not implemented mechanism which would enable them to identify the academic needs of individual students and offer relevant student services accordingly.

Conclusion:

None of the 3 selected HEIs have implemented systematic and effective mechanism which would enabled them, through observing students' academic performance and attendance rates, to identify students' needs and requirements at an early stage of study process and offer relevant student services in order to improve students' academic performance.

As selected HEIs have not implemented the mechanism which would raise awareness of student services, these services are not available to students. Hence, students are not enabled to use aforementioned services in order to improve their academic performance and fully achieve respective learning outcomes.

4.2 Evaluation methods implemented by the Iliuni do not encourage students to achieve better academic performance

According to the accreditation standards, student evaluation methods with respect to the each component of a study programs ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes envisaged by the respective component which is attested by the evaluation results.²⁸

Student evaluation system forms an important part of the study process. During course every type of evaluation carries important weigh. The HEIs use examination as a tool for evaluating students' academic performance. Examination motivates students to comprehend study program fully and evaluate their own skills and abilities.

At the Iliuni, taking final exam is voluntary for students and at the same time it is one of the components of evaluating their final grade. During a course, students' academic performance is evaluated by two or more components (midterm examination or other examination methods).

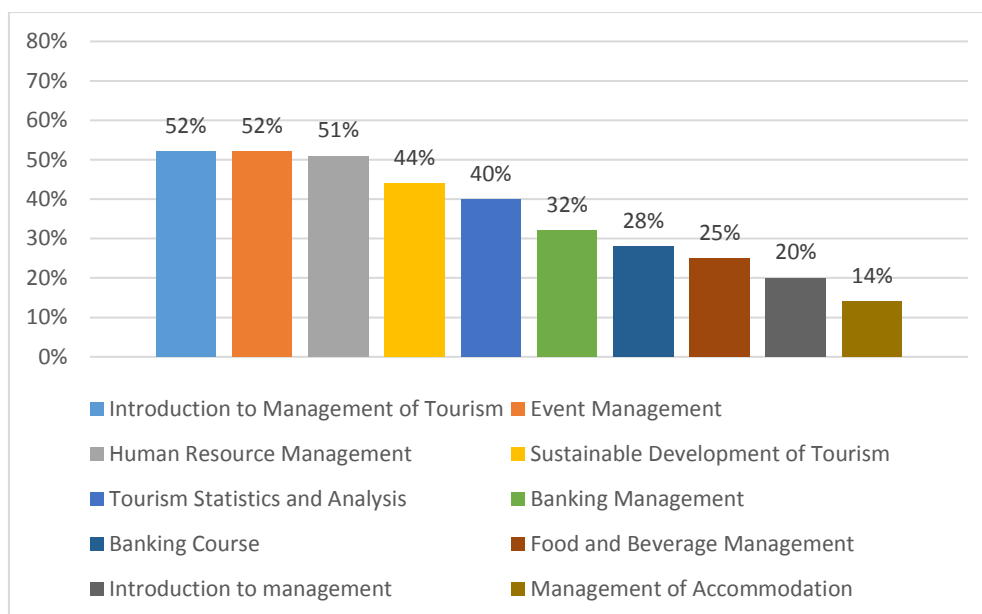
In 2015-2016 fall semester at the Iliuni **final exam** was 30% of the whole grade for the Business Administration and Law faculty courses. Taking the final exam was not mandatory. It is important to note that final exams take place approximately 4 weeks before the end of the course. As a result of the study of syllabi for all abovementioned courses carried out by the audit team, it was revealed that after second midterm courses contain a substantial part of the study materials.

Audit team analysed students' grades during the abovementioned period for 10 mandatory courses of the Business Administration bachelor program. In total, 3268 students were registered for these courses. As a result, it was revealed, that 36% of students passed and gained credits for courses without passing final exam. It is crucial, that **80% of the final grades of these students were below 61 points**. Other **20%** of students had a chance to get highest grade if they took final exam.

The diagram below illustrates the percentage of students registered for 10 mandatory courses who passed a course without taking final exams.

²⁸ Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia №65/n of May 4, 2011 on Approval of the Accreditation Statute of Study Programs of Education Institutions and Accreditation Fees, Article 15, paragraph "b".

Diagram 4.2.1: The percentage of students registered for 10 mandatory courses of Business Administration program who passed a course without taking final exams



The conducted analysis revealed that students at Iliauni who do not take final exams **pass courses with low grades**. This is caused by voluntary final examination mechanism. As a result, it is evident that **students lack motivation to achieve better outcomes and fully comprehend the study material envisaged by the study courses**.

On February 29, 2016 an amendment to the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia №3 has been made. It entered into force on September 1st, 2016. Pursuant to the amendment, taking final exam became a mandatory precondition to gain credits for a course. From September 1st, 2016 taking final exam became mandatory at Iliauni.

Also, Iliauni has not implemented a mechanism for calculating student's grade point average (GPA). Although there is no standardized rule for calculating GPA, majority of HEIs, on a local and international level, calculate GPA which enables the measurement of student's academic performance by an internationally recognized method.

It is noteworthy that the majority of HEIs have a predetermined GPA requirement for students who want to pursue their studies. Hence, it is important for students to be informed at early stages of studies how their academic performance will be reflected on their GPA. This will allow students, if needed, improve their academic performance so they are not hindered from pursuing their studies.

As the internationalization of the education system is one of the country's top priorities, it is important that HEIs support students to continue their studies within the borders of Georgia as well as abroad.

Conclusion:

Grades of 80% of students, selected for audit analysis, who received credits for a course without taking a final exam, were below 61. This is caused by the student evaluation mechanism

implemented by the Iliauni which allows for the voluntary character of final exams. Hence, part of students lose their motivation to fully comprehend study materials in the remaining period and take a final exam, after gaining minimal satisfactory grade.

4.3 Current State Tuition Aid Scheme does not Enhance Student Motivation

According to a common practice, a student who receives state tuition aid is required, in order to maintain the aid, to be a full time student and meet the predetermined academic performance threshold set by a state.

The aforementioned scheme of state tuition aid not only encourages students to make more effort and maintain high academic performance indicator but considers the interests of financial donor – a state in this case.

Current state tuition aid was introduced in Georgia in 2005.²⁹ As mentioned above, state tuition aid is awarded to those students who perform better in the national entrance examinations.

National entrance examinations are considered to be quite competitive and getting high scores is associated with a lot of effort. Hence, those students who perform well in the examinations are expected to maintain high academic performance throughout their studies.

Results of the analysis discussed in chapter 3 of the audit report reveals that **40% of graduates who received 50% or more state tuition aid based on the national entrance examination failed to maintain an average academic performance indicator at 3 selected HEIs**. As existing scheme does not require students to meet any additional preconditions, such as determined academic performance indicator to maintain the tuition aid, students lack motivation to improve and/or maintain their academic performance. As a result, students financed yearly by government include those who do not fully achieve learning outcomes envisaged by study programs.

Conclusion:

As in accordance with the current state tuition aid scheme students maintain state tuition aid regardless of low academic performance indicator, on average 40% of students who received high scores on national entrance examinations in 2010, graduated from HEI with below average academic performance indicator. Current State tuition aid scheme does not motivate students to maintain high academic performance which means that students do not achieve learning outcomes envisaged by study programs fully.

²⁹ Law of Georgia on Higher Education, №688, LHG 2, 10/01/2005, Article 79, paragraph 2.a; Order of the Government of Georgia №13 of January 25, 2005 on the Approval of the Amount of State Tuition Aid.

Recommendations:

To LEPL - Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, LEPL – Georgian Technical University and LEPL - Ilia State University:

- › Selected higher education institutions should implement such effective and systematic mechanisms that will enable them to identify problems hindering students in their study process through monitoring students' academic performance and attendance. This mechanism will assist higher education institutions in providing necessary services to students on an early stage in order to support their academic progress.
- › In order to ensure the availability of student services offered by higher education institutions, selected higher education institutions should implement such mechanisms to raise the awareness of student services among students. Establishment of such mechanisms will increase the usage of student services (individual academic consultations, career services) which will assist students in receiving necessary academic support and forming career vision.

To the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, LEPL - Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, LEPL – Georgian Technical University and LEPL - Ilia State University:

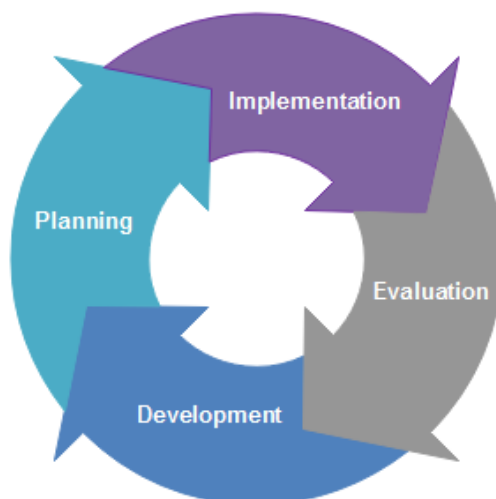
- › The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia should, in collaboration with higher education institutions, develop such state tuition aid scheme that will motivate students financed based on the scores of national entrance examinations to achieve high academic performance and learning outcomes envisaged by study programs. Such approach will assist the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia **to increase the number of motivate students.**

5. Study Program Development

The HEIs should be able to meet the challenges of rapidly changing and competitive labor markets and adapt accordingly. This implies **constant development** of study programs.³⁰

Therefore, it is crucial for HEIs to safeguard that study programs and teaching processes are assessed and **necessary changes are made on a regular basis**. This process can be illustrated as a permanent cycle:

Diagram 5.1: Study program development cycle



In order to assess the effectiveness of study program development mechanisms implemented by the selected HEIs, the audit team analyzed the relevant practice in respect of two highly demanded bachelor's programs:

- › Business administration;
- › Law.

³⁰ IMHE- Institutional Management of Higher Education – Fostering Quality Teaching in Higher Education: Policies and Practices, 2012.

5.1 HEIs do not collect comprehensive feedback from stakeholders

Accreditation standards require using internal and external evaluation³¹ to facilitate the achievement of learning outcomes, and the involvement of stakeholders (employers, academic personnel, students, graduates) in the aforementioned process³². The feedback received from stakeholders is of crucial importance for determining the changes necessary for study program development.

Also, it is important for HEIs to ensure the collection of information with respect to the needs and requirements of stakeholders in a form that will enable HEIs to receive the most comprehensive and objective feedback.

With this perspective, the audit team studied the mechanisms implemented to ensure the involvement of primary customers (beneficiaries) of study programs - students and graduates.

HEIs engage students in the study program development process through surveying them. According to a commonly accepted practice, in order to fully evaluate the study process and the learning outcomes envisaged by study courses, surveys should be carried out at the end of the term.

Evaluation of an ongoing study process by the students with active status enables timely and effective intervention. It is also noteworthy that collection of feedback from students is associated with less effort as students are engaged in the study process on a daily basis and are primarily interested in the improvement of study programs.

Accreditation standards set the minimum requirements in respect of several aspects of study process and study programs, in relation to which collection of feedback from students is of utmost importance:

- › Compatibility of study materials, evaluation and teaching methods with the learning outcomes;
- › Qualified academic personnel.

It is important for HEIs to evaluate the compatibility of study programs with the aforementioned requirements in a comprehensive way. For this purpose, the feedback received from students should cover all of the aspects listed above in a maximum possible manner.

Meanwhile, the feedback received from graduates has an utmost importance for quality assurance processes. It is also important that HEIs receive feedback from graduates in respect of the achieved learning outcomes and employment rates on a systematic basis. Such analysis will enable HEIs to

³¹ Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia №65/n of May 4, 2011 on Approval of the Accreditation Statute of Study Programs of Education Institutions and Accreditation Fees, Article 13, paragraph "e".

³² Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia №65/n of May 4, 2011 on Approval of the Accreditation Statute of Study Programs of Education Institutions and Accreditation Fees, Article 17, paragraph "b".

evaluate the competitiveness of their graduates. This appears to be an essential criterion for assessing the quality of learning outcomes.³³

The audit team studied the mechanisms implemented in order to ensure the collection of feedback from students and graduates for two selected study programs. Iliauni ensures the engagement of the aforementioned stakeholders in study program development process through periodic surveys. Activities carried out by the TSU and the GTU in this respect are oriented only on students.

Observation of the aforementioned processes revealed the shortcomings in the mechanisms implemented at the GTU and the TSU that will be discussed in detail in the following sub-chapters.

The GTU fails to ensure the involvement of stakeholders in the study program development process in a systematic and comprehensive manner

With respect to 2 selected study programs the GTU has not carried out the survey of **graduates** or ensured their involvement in any other manner.

The GTU involves **students** in the study process evaluation by surveying them with respect to the study courses. The questionnaire used for the survey is oriented on the performance of lecturers and **does not enable students to evaluate other elements of study courses**, including: topics covered by study courses, study materials, teaching methods, student evaluation mechanisms, etc. The questionnaire does not ensure that HEI gets comprehensive feedback from students with respect to study program and study process.

Under the Order of the Rector of the GTU³⁴, in 2011 the GTU formed the Commissions, the aim of which is the systematic evaluation of the compliance of study program structure, content, human and material resources with the set standards.

The Commission serves as one of the tools for engaging stakeholders in the study program development process. The Commission evaluates the lectures, seminars, lab works and practical studies using a questionnaire. Like the questionnaire used for student surveys, this questionnaire is also **oriented on evaluating the performance of lecturers**.

It is noteworthy, that since its formation the aforementioned Commission has evaluated the performance of 21 lecturers on selected 2 study programs. All these evaluations took place in 2011-2012, before the accreditation of study programs. Out of the members of the Commission no students and only two lecturers actually participated in the evaluation process.

This indicates that the activities carried out in previous 5 years were not systematic. Students and lecturers who were the members of the Commission did not participate in the evaluation process.

³³ Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia №65/n of May 4, 2011 on Approval of the Accreditation Statute of Study Programs of Education Institutions and Accreditation Fees, Article 13, paragraph "d".

³⁴ Order of the Rector of the LEPL – Georgian Technical University №25 of April 1, 2011 on the Formation of Faculty Commissions and their Approval.

Hence, Commission does not ensure the involvement of stakeholders in study program development process. The evaluation is carried out through questionnaires which do not cover essential components of study courses, assessment of which is crucial for the further development of study courses and is the main objective of this Commission.

The audit revealed that the GTU fails to ensure the systematic engagement of stakeholders in study program development process, **which implies the implementation of the relevant mechanisms in the system for gathering the comprehensive feedback in respect of the study process and all components of the study programs.**

The TSU fails to ensure the involvement of graduates in the study program development process in a systematic and comprehensive manner

In 2012 the ACT carried out the research of branding and experience for the TSU which covered the qualitative component of graduates.³⁵ In the same year, with respect to the law program the TSU surveyed 39 graduates who completed their studies in different years.

Since 2012 the TSU has not carried out any surveys of graduates with respect to selected 2 study programs.

There is no mechanism implemented in the quality assurance system of the TSU which would have enabled the HEI **to carry out the systematic and comprehensive survey of graduates**. Consequently, TSU does not identify the necessary changes required for the further development of the essential components of study programs.

Conclusion:

The feedback received from student by the GTU for study program development is oriented on the performance of lecturers and fails to include other requirements imposed by the accreditation standards, including: teaching methods, study materials, assessment methods, etc.

Considering that the students and the lecturers who are members of the Commission initiated by the GTU do not participate in evaluation processes, the Commission fails to ensure the attainment of its basic objective - to engage stakeholders in the study program evaluation process.

Additionally, due to the lack of the appropriate mechanisms in GTU, graduates are not involved in the study program development process.

Aforementioned deficiencies are caused by the lack of appropriate mechanisms which hinders the identification of necessary changes for the improvement of learning outcomes.

³⁵ ACT - ACT - Analysis and Consulting Team, Research of the Branding and Experience of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, 2012.

Due to the absence of appropriate mechanisms in the quality assurance system of the TSU, the HEI fails to ensure the systematic and comprehensive involvement of graduates in the study program development process which is crucial for evaluating the learning outcomes envisaged by the study programs and the competitiveness of graduates.

5.2 HEIs do not respond to feedback in an effective manner

Accreditation standards call for the implementation of an effective quality assurance system which implies the constant development of study programs.³⁶ This is also enshrined in the respective regulations of the HEIs.³⁷

It is important that HEIs analyze and use the feedback received from the stakeholders. HEIs should respond to the revealed deficiencies in an effective manner and improve the study quality.

This requires the regular amendment of programs which can take different forms:

- › Amendment of teaching methods, study materials or the main topics of the study courses;
- › Amendment of the study program structure through adding, cancelling, modifying a study module;
- › Replacement of lecturers or the issuance of relevant recommendations, etc.

In order to ensure the steady study program development, the changes implemented by the HEIs should be responsive to the feedback received from the stakeholders, as well as appropriate and effective.

It is also important that the changes are documented in a way that enables stakeholders (external evaluators, etc.) to identify each amendment and assess its outcomes.

Georgian Technical University

GTU's **business administration program** received the accreditation in 2012.³⁸ Since then only two amendments has been made in the program: the study course "Basics of Engineering Management" has been added to the elective courses³⁹ and hour load of the program has been altered.⁴⁰

³⁶ Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia №65/n of May 4, 2011 on Approval of the Accreditation Statute of Study Programs of Education Institutions and Accreditation Fees, Article 2, paragraph 1.

³⁷ Resolution of the Academic Council of the LEPL - Georgian Technical University №1125 of March 28, 2014 on the Procedures for Examination of Study Programs and their Submission for Approval, paragraph 12; Statute of the Quality Assurance Unit of the LEPL - Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University, Article 2; The Procedures for Evaluating Study Programs approved by the Order of the Rector of the LEPL - Ilia State University of March 11, 2016.

³⁸ Resolution of the Study Program Accreditation Council №460 of September 28, 2012.

³⁹ Resolution of the Academic Council of the LEPL - Georgian Technical University №943 of June 28, 2013.

⁴⁰ Resolution of the Academic Council of the LEPL - Georgian Technical University №2028 of June 21, 2016.

In 2012 GTU's law program also received accreditation.⁴¹ Since then only two changes have been made in the program: hour load of the program has been altered⁴² and the program chairman has been replaced.⁴³

The aforementioned data indicates that from 2012 to the first half of 2016 **only 3 changes** were made in the selected 2 study programs. **Neither of them had a significant impact on the study program development.**

Out of 3 changes discussed above, the amendment of hour load in the business administration and law programs in 2016 is particularly noteworthy. This change reduced the contact hours and increased the individual working hours of students for all courses.

Under Order №3 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, such allocation should be based on the realistic assessment of the workload of an average student, the accuracy of which should be reexamined by the information received from the students.⁴⁴ Hence, the change of student's individual working hours should be carried out based on their survey which will indicate the necessity of decreasing or increase of individual working hours.

In the case at hand, the **GTU carried out the change without the necessary feedback from students.** This creates the risk that as a result of the change in study program students will have inadequate workload compared with the credits assigned. This can adversely affect their academic performance.

Shortage of the amendments made since the accreditation indicates that study programs are not amended in a systematical manner which is partially caused by the fact that the GTU does not receive comprehensive feedback from the stakeholders.

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

The research carried out by the ACT for the TSU in 2012 identified **the lack of practical knowledge and unsatisfactory quality of study materials** as main problems.⁴⁵ The survey has also indicated the necessity of improvement in several dimensions, including studies of foreign languages, teaching methods and etc.

Same problems were identified in the results of the survey carried out by the TSU in the fall semester of 2014 - 2015. The aforementioned survey revealed that with respect to the faculty of Economics and Business students underline the existence of the following deficiencies:

- › *According to the majority of comments, there is a **necessity to improve study materials** which implies the preparation of new processed text-books enriched with the latest materials;*

⁴¹ Resolution of the Study Program Accreditation Council №450 of September 24, 2012.

⁴² Resolution of the Academic Council of the LEPL - Georgian Technical University №2028 of June 21, 2016.

⁴³ Resolution of the Academic Council of the LEPL - Georgian Technical University №1349 of December 8, 2014.

⁴⁴ Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia №3 of January 5, 2007 on Approval of the Procedures for Calculating Higher Education Programs with Credits, Article 2, paragraph 4.

⁴⁵ ACT - ACT - Analysis and Consulting Team, Research of the Branding and Experience of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, 2012.

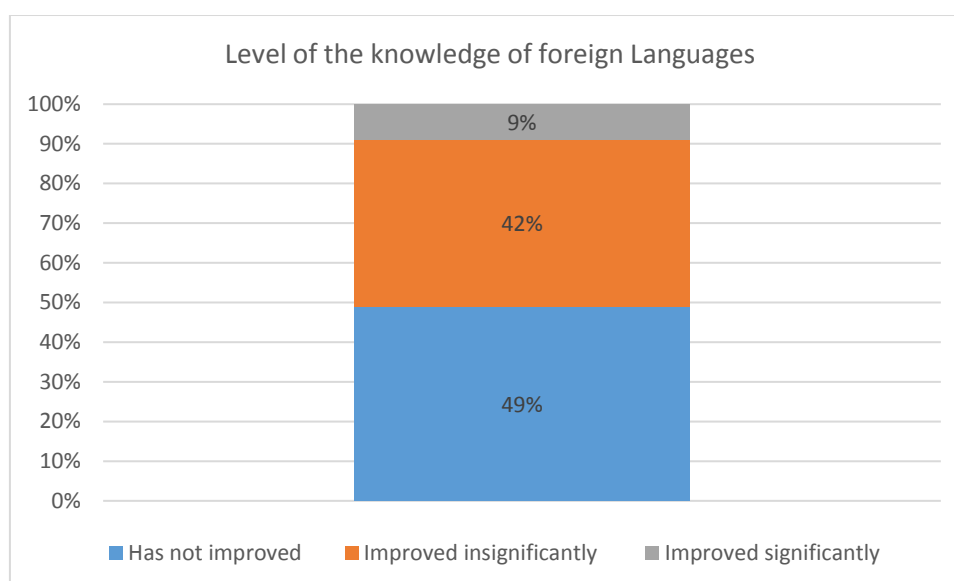
- › According to the comments, teaching methods should be improved in various different study courses. Particularly, students wish for the enrichment of seminars and practical studies with practical problems and exercises, case studies and the discussion of economic or business cases;
- › According to the majority of comments, **practical component needs to be more organized, diverse, adequate, interesting and corresponding to the profile.**⁴⁶

Similar results were revealed by the survey of fall semester students carried out in **2015-2016**⁴⁷ which indicates that **since 2012 the TSU failed to respond** to the identified shortcomings in an effective manner.

Survey of employers carried out by the TSU in 2012 with respect to the law program has revealed that **90% of the respondents** note that better knowledge of professional foreign language among graduates is desirable.

As illustrated by the diagram below, the survey carried out by the audit team has revealed that **91%** of graduates noted that during their studies at the TSU their knowledge of foreign languages **was not improved or was improved insignificantly**.

Diagram 5.2.1: Evaluation of studies of foreign language by the TSU Graduates



The aforementioned analysis proves that the problematic tendency of surveys carried out by TSU through years has not been altered. Hence, it is obvious that the TSU failed to take effective measures to improve existing situation.

⁴⁶ Order of the Head of the Quality Assurance Unit of the LEPL – Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University №01/03 of April 27, 2015 on the Approval of the Report of the Quality Assurance Unit of the LEPL – Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University regarding the Results of the Student Surveys of Fall Semester 2014-2015.

⁴⁷ Order of the Head of the Quality Assurance Unit of the LEPL – Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University №01/03 of March 10, 2016 on the Approval of the Report of the Quality Assurance Unit of the LEPL – Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University regarding the Results of the Student Surveys of Fall Semester 2015-2016.

Ilia State University

The audit team studied the results of the surveys of graduates carried out in 2012-2014 with respect to the selected study programs.⁴⁸ The stakeholder survey carried out by the Iliauni in 2012 revealed the need to improve practical component. The survey carried out in 2014 revealed that more than half of respondents contend that studies at the HEI did not equip them with practical experience. This rate was equal to **52%** - for business faculty, and **56%** - for law.

Additionally, according to the survey carried out by the audit team **60%** of respondents note that they would have better academic performance in case the Iliauni had offered **more interactive and practical teaching methods**.

Research carried out by the audit team in 2016 indicates that **the deficiencies revealed by the survey of graduates in 2012 are still urgent**. Hence, **Iliauni failed to respond to the received feedback in an effective manner**.

Analysis of the study program development processes in the selected HEIs revealed that they fail to ensure the comprehensive use of the feedback received from the stakeholders and do not respond to the revealed shortcomings in an effective manner. Consequently, study program development is not systematic and effective.

Conclusion:

Considering that the GTU does not receive comprehensive feedback, identification of the necessary changes in the study program is hindered and the study program development is not systematic and effective, which forms one of the basic criteria of the accreditation standards.

In the surveys carried out by the TSU and the Iliauni from 2012 the stakeholders systematically note the existence of particular deficiencies. This indicates that the TSU and the Iliauni failed to respond to the shortcomings revealed through the stakeholder surveys in an effective manner.

⁴⁸ LEPL - Ilia State University, Survey of Graduates of Bachelor's Programs of the Ilia State University, 2012; LEPL - Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University.

Recommendations:**To the LEPL - Georgian Technical University:**

- › LEPL - Georgian Technical University should implement the mechanism which will enable the HEI, based on the requirements and necessities of the students and graduates, to assess study programs and study process in a regular and comprehensive manner. This mechanism should ensure the collection of the feedback in respect to all relevant requirements established by the study program accreditation standards. Such feedback will assist LEPL - Georgian Technical University in planning the interventions necessary for study program development.
- › In order to ensure the effectiveness of the activities carried out by the faculty commissions for the study program assessment, the LEPL - Georgian Technical University should implement the mechanisms necessary for the involvement of stakeholders in the Commissions and ensure the engagement of the students and lecturers, already members of the Commissions, in the process of evaluation carried out by the Commissions. In order to ensure the attainment of the aims of the faculty Commissions, the activities carried out by them should cover all relevant requirements established by the higher education program accreditation standards. This will assist the LEPL – Georgian Technical University in identifying the changes necessary for the study program development through the evaluation process carried out by the faculty Commissions.

To LEPL - Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University:

- › LEPL – Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University should implement the mechanisms which will enable graduates to assess study programs in a comprehensive and regular manner. This feedback will enable the Tbilisi State University to identify the changes necessary for the study program development.

To LEPL - Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, LEPL – Georgian Technical University and LEPL - Ilia State University:

- › The Higher Education Institutions should implement mechanisms which will enable them to respond in a timely and effective manner to the shortcomings revealed as a result of the analysis of the feedback collected from the stakeholders (students, graduates, academic personnel, etc). Effective measures taken by the Higher Education Institutions in this dimension are of crucial importance for the study program development and study process quality enhancement.

Summarizing Conclusions and Recommendations

The audit revealed that **64% of graduates of the selected higher education institutions completed their studies in 2014 with below average academic performance indicator**. It is also noteworthy that **on average 40% of graduates who received high national entrance examination scores also completed bachelor's program with below average academic performance indicator**. Additionally, the observation of the attendance on lectures/seminars at the selected higher education institutions revealed that the **attendance rate was as low as 15%**.

The State Audit Office considers that the higher education institutions and the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia have the potential to create better preconditions to motivate students to achieve the learning outcomes envisaged by the study programs and high academic performance for the full term of the program.

Proactive approach of higher education institutions in respect of the student services will assist students in achieving the learning outcomes envisaged by study courses and improving academic performance. For this purposes the higher education institutions should implement the mechanisms necessary to raise the awareness of students about student services.

Nevertheless, in order to exploit the maximum potential of the aforementioned services, the HEIs should implement mechanisms that will enable them, through observing the attendance and academic performance of students, to identify the requirements of an individual student on an early stage and offer appropriate service.

The State Audit Office considers that the state funding scheme that motivates students to improve academic performance will encourage students to complete their studies in a successful manner.

In order to achieve an acceptable quality of education, higher education institutions should constantly develop their study programs. Involvement of the stakeholders in this process will assist higher education institutions in collecting comprehensive information with respect to the needs and requirements of the stakeholders, and in identifying necessary changes. Also, it is important for higher education institutions to address the shortcomings revealed therein in a timely and effective manner. This will significantly improve study program and study process quality.

Recommendations:

To the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, LEPL - Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, LEPL – Georgian Technical University and LEPL - Ilia State University:

- › The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia should, in collaboration with higher education institutions, develop such state tuition aid scheme that will motivate students financed based on the scores of national entrance examinations to achieve high academic performance and learning

outcomes envisaged by study programs. Such approach will assist the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia **to increase the number of motivate students.**

To the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, LEPL - Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, LEPL – Georgian Technical University and LEPL - Ilia State University:

- › Selected higher education institutions should implement such effective and systematic mechanisms that will enable them to identify problems hindering students in their study process through monitoring students' academic performance and attendance. This mechanism will assist higher education institutions in providing necessary services to students on an early stage in order to support their academic progress.
- › In order to ensure the availability of student services offered by higher education institutions, selected higher education institutions should impleement such mechanisms to raise the awareness of student services among students. Establishment of such mechanisms will increase the usage of student services (individual academic consultations, career services) which will assist students in receiving necessary academic support and forming career vision.
- › The Higher Education Institutions should implement mechanisms which will enable them to respond in a timely and effective manner to the shortcomings revealed as a result of the analysis of the feedback collected from the stakeholders (students, graduates, academic personnel, etc). Effective measures taken by the Higher Education Institutions in this dimension are of crucial importance for the study program development and study process quality enhancement.

To the LEPL - Georgian Technical University:

- › LEPL - Georgian Technical University should implement the mechanism which will enable the HEI, based on the requirements and necessities of the students and graduates, to assess study programs and study process in a regular and comprehensive manner. This mechanism should ensure the collection of the feedback in respect to all relevant requirements established by the study program accreditation standards. Such feedback will assist LEPL - Georgian Technical University in planning the interventions necessaty for study program development.
- › In order to ensure the effectiveness of the activities carried out by the faculty commissions for the study program assessment, the LEPL - Georgian Technical University should implement the mechanisms necessary for the involvement of stakeholders in the Commissions and ensure the engagement of the students and lecturers, already members of the Commissions, in the process of evaluation carried out by the Commissions. In order to ensure the attainment of the aims of the faculty Commissions, the activities carried out by them should cover all relevant requirements established by the higher education program accreditation standards. This will assist the LEPL – Georgian Technical University in identifying the changes necessary for the study program development through the evaluation process carried out by the faculty Commissions.

To LEPL - Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University:

- › LEPL – Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University should implement the mechanisms which will enable graduates to assess study programs in a comprehensive and regular manner. This feedback will enable the Tbilisi State University to identify the changes necessary for the study program development.

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