“NATIONAL CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE” FOUNDATION

EXPERT PANEL REPORT

INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF

GORIS STATE UNIVERSITY

Yerevan – 2026

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of Goris State University (hereinafter GSU or TLI) was conducted in accordance with the institution's application.

The institutional accreditation process is coordinated and implemented by the “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” Foundation (ANQA). Whilst carrying out its operations, ANQA was guided by the regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs” set by the RA Government decree N978 of June 30, 2011, as well as by decree N959-Ա of June 30, 2011, on “Approving the RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation”.

The expert panel, which consisted of four local and one international expert and was formed in accordance with the requirements of the ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel, provided external review.

Institutional accreditation aims to provide an external evaluation of quality assurance and to support the continuous improvement of the quality of the institution's management and academic programs. Hence, there were two important issues for local and international expert panel members:

To conduct an external review in institutional capacities in line with the RA standards for state accreditation,

To evaluate the institution’s quality, compliance with international developments, and integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The report presents the results of the external review on TLI's institutional capacity in accordance with the RA criteria for professional education accreditation, as well as the international expert's peer review from the perspective of integration into the EHEA.

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SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

The external review of Goris State University was evaluated by the expert panel formed in accordance with the requirements of the ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the 10 criteria set by the RA Government under Decree N 959ն of 30 June 2011.

Goris State University offers Bachelor's and Master's programs aligned with Levels 6 and 7 of the Armenian National Qualifications Framework. The University is a higher education institution of regional significance, playing a key role in preparing specialists and providing continuing education. The institution is currently undergoing its third accreditation cycle and has recorded progress in several areas as a result of implementing the follow-up plan from the previous accreditation period.

The expert panel notes that a combined governance model, integrating single-leader and collegial management, has been established at GSU, ensuring stakeholder engagement and participatory decision-making. This governance approach supports the introduction of the planning–implementation–evaluation–improvement cycle, gradually fostering a data-driven management culture.

At the strategic level, the institution still needs to address regional socio-economic and demographic challenges more comprehensively and ensure systematic consideration of labor market demands. The development of risk assessment and risk management mechanisms can significantly enhance the feasibility and effective implementation of the strategic plan.

Since the previous accreditation, considerable progress has been made in the quality assurance system. A dedicated structural unit has been established, various quality assurance tools have been introduced, and stakeholder participation has been ensured. At the same time, integrating data from different sources and developing a unified analytical framework remain key priorities to enable comprehensive improvements.

The academic programs of Goris State University are generally aligned with the University's mission and the Armenian National Qualifications Framework. However, modernising program content requires a more systematic approach that ensures alignment among intended learning outcomes, course content, and labor market requirements.

Within the teaching and learning process, a positive trend is evident in the adoption of student-centred approaches. However, the diversification of teaching methods and the dissemination of best practices

across faculties have not yet been fully achieved. The uniformity of the assessment system does not adequately reflect the specific features of individual courses, necessitating the introduction of clearly defined assessment criteria and rubrics.

In distance learning, enhancing learning effectiveness remains a key issue, requiring the reorganization of the teaching and learning process, the more active use of digital tools, and the strengthening of the practical component. At the same time, the expansion of the practical component should be accompanied by clearer content specifications and an appropriate balance between theoretical and practical elements.

The expert panel positively evaluates the University's efforts in internal auditing of academic programs and emphasises the need to introduce a unified toolkit for assessing and verifying intended learning outcomes. This will enable a clear demonstration of the extent to which students achieve the defined learning outcomes. Such an approach will allow program improvement efforts to be directed towards addressing specific gaps and will enhance the measurability and evidence-based nature of learning outcomes, ensuring the achievement of all intended learning outcomes defined by the academic programs.

At Goris State University, a variety of student support mechanisms have been established to cover the full student lifecycle, from admission to career guidance. The practice of identifying students' educational needs and making decisions based on their analysis contributes to improving the learning environment. The willingness of the academic and administrative staff to provide additional support ensures the establishment of a student-centred environment.

At the same time, strengthening the systematic nature of students' career development processes and the evaluation of student services can further enhance the University's impact on student learning outcomes. Developing graduate-tracking mechanisms can ensure continuous feedback and systematic data collection on awarded qualifications, thereby enabling the evaluation of academic program effectiveness.

In research, the University has defined clear priority directions and performance indicators and has recorded positive results in certain areas. Student engagement in research activities is increasing, particularly through the Student Scientific Society's active involvement. At the same time, the balanced development of research capacity and the promotion of interdisciplinary collaboration require more systematic management approaches and the expansion of financial instruments.

The scarcity of resources remains a key challenge, particularly in developing the laboratory base and modernising research infrastructure. The University is attempting to address resource development challenges through external cooperation, which is a positive step. However, it requires more systematic development and phased, continuous planning for resource modernisation.

During the internationalization process, certain cooperation initiatives have been recorded. However, limited foreign-language proficiency among academic staff continues to hinder international scientific integration and the dissemination of research outputs. Enhancing stakeholders' proficiency in foreign languages is also an important prerequisite for conducting comparative analyses of academic programs, studying professional foreign-language literature, identifying best practices, and localising them within Goris State University.

From the perspective of public relations and external accountability, the University utilises various communication platforms to enhance visibility of its activities and promote public engagement.

The expert panel concludes that Goris State University has demonstrated systemic progress since the previous accreditation in governance, quality assurance, and the development of student-centred approaches. At the same time, the University's further development will depend on the implementation of more targeted and systematic actions in strategic planning, the modernization of academic programs, the implementation of outcome-based education, the expansion of research capacity, and the advancement of internationalizations.

Overall, the University demonstrates a positive trajectory of development and has the potential to ensure the continuous improvement and sustainable development of its activities.

Strengths of the Institution:

1. The integration of single-leader and collegial governance principles within the management system, ensuring the involvement of structural units and stakeholders in decision-making.
2. The established practice of applying the PDCA cycle provides a foundation for the development of a data-driven management culture.
3. The adoption of institutional approaches within the quality assurance system and the engagement of faculty-level coordinators to promote the dissemination of a quality culture.
4. The willingness of the academic and administrative staff to support students and the presence of a student-centred environment at Goris State University.
5. The active functioning of the Student Scientific Society and the presence of mechanisms to engage and motivate students to participate in research activities.
6. The involvement of employer-practitioners in teaching processes and the joint utilisation of resources in cooperation with employers.
7. The availability of mechanisms that ensure transparency and public awareness of the University's activities, as well as the use of tools to establish feedback with society.
8. The establishment of a partnership network with employers to support the organisation of internships and practical training.

9. The development of stakeholder capacity and the modernisation of the University's resource base through participation in international programs.

Weaknesses of the Institution:

1. The limited integration of regional socio-economic and demographic challenges into the processes of strategic planning and the definition of the directions of academic programs at Goris State University.
2. The incomplete alignment between annual and mid-term plans of structural units and the weak analytical component evident in reporting processes.
3. The absence of mechanisms to integrate data collected through different quality assurance tools and the lack of a unified analytical framework within the quality assurance system.
4. The absence of clear and unified tools for the assessment and verification of the achievement of intended learning outcomes within academic programs.
5. The fragmented nature of curriculum and course content modernisation processes and their limited alignment with labor market requirements.
6. The insufficient development of mechanisms to ensure the effectiveness of learning within the distance learning system.
7. The limited diversity and institution-wide application of teaching and assessment methods.
8. The lack of balanced development of research activities and limited capacity in the natural sciences, conditioned by shortages of resources and funding.
9. The absence of systematic mechanisms for graduate feedback and tracer studies results in limited use of data to improve academic programs.

Main recommendations:

Mission and Purposes

1. Define the University's regional role by selecting 2–3 priority challenges (e.g., shortages of schoolteachers, demand for specialists in specific fields) and establish measurable indicators for each (e.g., the number of graduates in relevant specializations, the percentage of graduates employed within the region) at Goris State University.
2. Introduce a system for collecting data on graduate professional employment, ensuring the annual collection of data on at least 70% of graduates, and utilize these data as evidence for decision-making related to the review and improvement of educational programmes.
3. For each objective of the strategic plan, define 3–5 clear outcome-based performance indicators and ensure that annual reports present not only the activities implemented but also the level of achievement of these indicators, including the management decisions adopted based on their analysis.

Governance and Administration

4. Strengthen the alignment between the strategic plan and the plans of faculties and departments to ensure a more systematic implementation of strategic objectives through the activities of structural units at Goris State University.
5. Develop mechanisms for the integrated analysis of data from different sources (surveys, internal audits, academic performance data, stakeholder consultations) to strengthen a data-driven management culture.
6. Ensure the periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of policies, procedures, and structural changes to reinforce the full application of the PDCA cycle within the quality management system.
7. Strengthen the analytical component of reporting processes to transform reports into effective tools for strategic decision-making and for monitoring institutional performance.
8. Develop mechanisms for assessing and managing external and internal risks affecting the University's activities to enhance the predictability and sustainability of institutional development.
9. Align the allocation of financial resources more closely with the development priorities of academic programs to enhance graduate competitiveness through the professional development of academic staff, the advancement of research, and the improvement of the learning environment.

Academic programs

10. Conduct a systematic review of academic programs at Goris State University, ensuring alignment of program aims, intended learning outcomes, course content, and assessment methods, and their relevance to labor market requirements.
11. Review the structure of curricula by:

    - eliminating content duplication between Bachelor's and Master's programs,
    - ensuring that credit allocation and the distribution of theoretical and practical contact hours are justified by the calculation of actual student workload.

12. Ensure the alignment of teaching and assessment methods with intended learning outcomes by:

    - defining clear course objectives and content,
    - applying a diverse range of teaching and learning methods,
    - introducing clearly defined assessment criteria and rubrics for the evaluation of all intended learning outcomes.

13. Ensure the periodic updating of academic program content by incorporating contemporary scientific sources, digital resources, and professional tools, and by developing clear approaches for the integration and responsible use of Artificial Intelligence tools within the teaching and learning process
14. Ensure:

- the systematic use of feedback from employers and graduates to develop and improve educational programs,
- the effective organisation of distance-learning programmes by providing learning materials in advance, interim assignments, and continuous feedback mechanisms.

Students

15. Systematise the mechanisms for identifying students' educational needs and ensure the effective use of their results to improve academic programs and student support services at Goris State University.
16. Introduce clearly defined tools for conducting graduate tracer studies and for the periodic collection of relevant data, with the aim of systematically gathering information on awarded qualifications and their relevance

Faculty and staff

17. Define clear requirements for the professional qualifications of academic staff at the academic program level, ensuring alignment between course content and the professional expertise of faculty at Goris State University.
18. Conduct periodic assessments of academic staff's professional development needs and, based on the results, plan targeted training and capacity-building activities.
19. Promote the engagement and professional development of early-career academic staff through mentoring schemes and other professional development mechanisms.

Research and Development

20. Regulate the research functions of the academic unit by defining clear responsibilities for the research coordinator, thereby ensuring effective interdepartmental cooperation and promoting the development of interdisciplinary projects at Goris State University.
21. Launch the procedure for allocating internal research grants in line with the priorities of the 2025–2029 Strategic Plan, with particular emphasis on interdisciplinary research initiatives.
22. Introduce quality assessment criteria for research activities and integrate them into the academic staff incentive system to promote qualitative growth in research outputs and enhance international visibility.
23. Ensure the consistent integration of the research component across all academic programs to develop students' analytical skills and critical thinking competencies.

Infrastructure and Resources

24. Develop and implement, on a phased basis, a program to modernise the laboratory base in the natural sciences, ensuring the full implementation of the practical components of academic programs at Goris State University.

25. Ensure the targeted and periodic replenishment of the library holdings with contemporary professional literature and expand access to electronic educational resources.
26. Diversify the University's funding sources by developing short-term academic programs, professional training courses, and other fee-paying educational services.
27. Ensure a clearer alignment between financial planning and resource allocation and the priorities defined in the strategic plan.

Societal Responsibility

28. Develop the accountability system by ensuring a more analytical presentation in annual reports, including clear identification of existing challenges, their underlying causes, and directions for improvement, as well as demonstrating alignment with the implementation of the strategic plan objectives.
29. Ensure the completeness and accessibility of information published on the University's website by expanding foreign-language content and providing open access to information of importance to external stakeholders.

External Relations and Internationalization

30. Ensure the periodic monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of external partnerships by linking cooperation agreements to specific outcomes in educational program development, research activities, and academic mobility at Goris State University.
31. Develop academic mobility by promoting the participation of students and academic staff in international educational and research programs.
32. Develop a systematic program to enhance the foreign-language competencies of internal stakeholders by applying a unified toolkit for language proficiency assessment and ensuring continuous professional development opportunities.

Internal Quality Assurance System

33. Review and update the "Quality Assurance Manual of Goris State University" by incorporating quality assurance processes across all key areas of institutional activity (education, research, governance, and administration), thereby ensuring a comprehensive and integrated toolkit for the internal quality assurance system.
34. Enhance the analytical use of data collected through quality assurance processes to ensure their more systematic application in strategic and operational decision-making.
35. Ensure more systematic mechanisms for stakeholder engagement, particularly by strengthening feedback tools and conducting regular surveys of employers and graduates.
36. Strengthen the integration between quality assurance and governance systems by ensuring that the outcomes of quality assurance processes are systematically applied to the University's strategic planning and development.

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Lilit Badalyan

Head of the expert panel

Date: 12.06.2026

PEER-REVIEW FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EDUCATION INSTITUTION'S INTEGRATION INTO EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

Introductory remarks. GSU is a small university operating in the Syunik region and located in the town of Goris (population 17,000). The University occupies a strategically important position in the regional educational ecosystem, offering a broad range of bachelor's and master's degree programmes across various fields, with a dominant focus on pedagogical sciences (28 of the 38 programmes offered). Like many small institutions within the European Higher Education Area, GSU seeks to balance its regional mission with global integration, placing emphasis on improving the quality of education, developing research, advancing digital transformation, and strengthening international cooperation. Its operational framework, academic programmes, and teaching practices are aligned with the Bologna reforms, and its quality assurance system largely corresponds to the ESG'2015 standards. As a small institution operating in a specific regional context, GSU has a unique potential to compete with larger institutions through its agility and ability to respond quickly to emerging challenges. However, the opportunity to leverage this flexibility as a strategic advantage should be more clearly reflected in the University's vision, mission, strategic planning, and operational activities than is currently the case.

Mission and strategic planning. The University's academic values and vision—to become a regional leader with increased international visibility and academic impact—is ambitious and consistent with European policy objectives, including the EHEA and Horizon Europe initiatives. The key difference lies in the level of operationalisation. While European universities often integrate values into performance indicators and reporting mechanisms, GSU is still developing such systems. Moreover, GSU has only recently begun to build its capacity to establish global partnerships.

GSU has also demonstrated a consistent commitment to strategic development and institutional growth. Key documents, including the Strategic Development Plan for 2025–2029, the Self-Evaluation Report, and the Action Plan, which set goals for internationalisation, digital transformation, research strengthening, and teaching quality, provide evidence of this commitment. However, the implementation of these goals will be constrained by limited and poorly diversified financial resources (over 90% of revenues derive from teaching activities) and a small number of research-active staff. These constraints require careful prioritisation and the development of targeted strategies to ensure that the University can realistically achieve its strategic ambitions.

Furthermore, there is an ongoing need to operationalise measurable KPIs and to assess strategic impact more clearly. This aspect is strongly emphasised in EHEA standards, particularly for institutions with limited resources. Currently, KPIs in the action plan are often formulated as activity-based outputs (e.g., "number of staff trained") rather than outcome-based results (e.g., "improved teaching effectiveness"), which limits their effectiveness in monitoring progress.

The University may consider introducing a structured KPI matrix in line with the ESG 2015 standards, covering areas such as graduate employability, student satisfaction, research performance, and internationalisation outcomes. Such a matrix could be supported by a digital dashboard, updated annually by the quality assurance unit, enabling systematic monitoring and transparent reporting.

The dramatic decline in student numbers (from approximately 1135 to 763 over the past five years), difficulties in recruiting new students, and the relatively low employability of graduates all indicate a structural mismatch between GSU's educational offer and labour market needs. Employment in the Syunik region is generated not only in education and culture but also in agriculture (16% of total employment) and industry (over 8% of national production). Employers also point to growing demand for skills in tourism, social work, mental health support services, and non-governmental organisations. Syunik is a geopolitically sensitive region, which creates additional demand for competencies in crisis management. Meanwhile, GSU offers only three engineering programmes, none of which is related to mining or agriculture. Areas such as agribusiness, hospitality and tourism management, national security studies, and regional studies are not currently included in the academic portfolio. This gap underscores the need for a more systematic alignment of academic programmes with regional and national labour market priorities. The University could consider expanding its offer to include programmes such as "security and crisis management", "sustainable tourism and local heritage management", "local development management and public administration", "renewable energy and energy management", and "entrepreneurship and SME management".

It is also essential to carefully monitor and analyse potential risks, such as rapid changes in the labour market, a declining number of students, and potential loss of funding, as small institutions are more vulnerable to these threats. Another risk to consider is staff availability and turnover, which is particularly relevant given that all teachers are employed on annual contracts. In one case, a course fundamental to the programme was not offered due to the unavailability of a lecturer. The development strategy would benefit from a more formalised risk management component and scenario-based planning mechanisms, especially in the context of regional geopolitical uncertainty and post-pandemic recovery.

GSU may consider adopting a recognised institutional effectiveness model, such as the Balanced Scorecard, the EFQM Excellence Model, or a logic model, to systematically and visually link inputs, activities, outputs, and impacts across its mission areas. This requires implementing long-term graduate tracking and assessing the extent to which programmes prepare students for employment or further development—an aspect highly valued within the EHEA. The data currently presented by GSU are partial (e.g. limited to employment immediately after graduation), with no comprehensive information for the two- to five-year period following graduation. It is therefore essential to implement systematic labour market research and expand alumni and employer surveys to gain a more robust understanding of workforce needs and programme relevance.

Governance. The University's governance model—comprising the University Board, Academic Council, Rectorate, and Faculty Boards—reflects the collegial and participatory traditions typical of small universities in the EHEA. While GSU's governance structures are formally aligned with European norms, their operational maturity varies. Compared with small universities in Western Europe and the Nordic countries, the strategic use of data, performance indicators, and evidence-based decision-making remains underdeveloped. A key challenge is the lack of long-term data collection, together with limitations in data validation methods and in integrating data into a centralised database. Moreover, contemporary tools for data analysis and interpretation, widely used in European universities to support governance and strategic planning, are not yet fully utilised at GSU. Strengthening these capacities would enhance the University's ability to make informed, evidence-based decisions and to monitor the impact of its strategic initiatives. By adopting agile strategic management, GSU can transform its strategy into a living, adaptive system that evolves with changing conditions, rather than remaining a fixed plan.

EHEA standards for small universities promote greater flexibility and participation in governance, enabling rapid responses to local needs. GSU has not yet fully implemented these principles. In this micro-university, horizontal linkages—collaboration and information flow across units—remain underdeveloped compared with many European counterparts. At the same time, the number of formal procedures, committees (such as two ethics and integrity committees), and regulations appears disproportionately high.

To address these gaps, priority should be given to developing horizontal communication and coordination channels rather than relying primarily on vertical, hierarchical structures. This would enable units to exchange knowledge, coordinate activities, and align efforts more effectively, avoiding unnecessary delays and bottlenecks. Strengthening the existing feedback system is also crucial. Currently, the survey system—limited to students and academic staff—demonstrates lower effectiveness than is typical in the EHEA, as evidenced by a relatively low response rate of approximately 40%. Increasing participation and broadening stakeholder engagement would improve the University's capacity for informed decision-making and strategic responsiveness.

A new challenge facing European universities is the threat to academic values and the integrity of the system posed by artificial intelligence. GSU leadership is advised to initiate work on this issue at the earliest opportunity.

Academic Programmes and Teaching. The development of academic programmes at GSU is guided by the clearly articulated internal document—the GSU Academic Programme Development Guide—which ensures standardisation, coherence, and alignment with national and European higher education priorities. This structured framework supports an outcome-based education model widely applied across the EHEA. Each programme undergoes a multi-stage design process that includes formulating

programme-level objectives, mapping course-level intended learning outcomes, selecting teaching and learning methods, and aligning with assessment strategies. Programme and course descriptions include both general and subject-specific competencies, as well as essential academic parameters such as ECTS allocation, grading and evaluation mechanisms, contact hours, independent workload, and reading lists, in line with Bologna Process requirements. Teaching strategies emphasise student-centred learning, including group work, problem-solving, peer feedback, and independent study, in accordance with ESG 2015. The recently introduced internal audit system for study programmes deserves recognition and commendation.

Key differences from standard EHEA practices include the extended duration of first-cycle (Bachelor's) programmes (8–10 semesters), limited flexibility in study pathways, and a significant proportion of courses in Armenian language and history. Individualised study paths are not available, and the range of elective courses is very limited. Learning outcomes acquired outside higher education are not formally recognised, even though most students are part-time learners. Although the GSU Academic Programme Development Guide refers to employer involvement, the process lacks standardisation, and regular employer surveys have not been conducted. There is therefore a clear need to strengthen employer engagement in curriculum development and graduate tracking.

In line with best practices at leading institutions, GSU could strengthen its academic offer by introducing interdisciplinary programmes. Instead of offering three economics programmes, including "Theory of Economics," the University could develop programmes better aligned with local needs, such as "regional studies and local development" (with a focus on Syunik and border regions), "sustainable development and environmental management", "energy, environment and regional policy", "tourism, culture and the regional economy", and "security, resilience and crisis management".

As a small institution with a strong emphasis on teacher education, GSU is well placed to further develop its student-centred learning approach. To ensure this development is effective, currently fragmented teaching innovations should be brought together within a unified framework and disseminated via a platform designed for sharing effective pedagogical practices.

The EHEA also emphasises the integration of programs into lifelong learning systems; therefore, systematic recognition of learning outcomes acquired through professional and non-formal experiences is essential. Expanding short reskilling and upskilling courses targeted at alumni and the local workforce could become a valuable and sustainable source of income. EHEA standards for small universities also highlight the need for greater student and staff mobility, which GSU does not yet fully ensure. Another challenge typical of small communities is impartiality: in environments where everyone knows each other, it is difficult to avoid personal relationships influencing evaluations. This can be mitigated by involving external experts in programme assessment and teaching and learning processes, although this is not yet common practice at GSU.

Despite references to "e-learning" in strategic documents, GSU currently lacks a centralised digital education strategy. The Quality Assurance Manual contains only limited references to online teaching, and there is no institutional framework for recognising short-cycle learning or micro-credentials. Developing a formal policy for blended and online learning—including pedagogical standards, staff training, and technical support—would be beneficial. Introducing modular, combined qualifications aligned with the national qualifications framework would increase study flexibility and support lifelong learning. In this regard, GSU could draw on the experience of the University of Barcelona, which offers 208 stackable micro-credentials that can be combined into personalised learning pathways.

Research. GSU is at a developmental stage typical of regional universities in emerging economies. The University has laid the foundations of a research strategy, secured selected grants, and gained regional recognition in Armenian Studies. In recent years, significant progress has been made in systematising research planning and implementation, particularly in publications, internationalisation, and student involvement in research.

Nevertheless, a significant gap remains compared with typical European universities in funding, research diversification, publication output, and internationalisation. Over the past three years, the number of publications in international journals has been fewer than ten. European universities draw on diverse funding sources, including international grants, industry partnerships, foundations, and institutional investment funds. GSU's low internal research expenditure (0.6% of the annual budget), uneven disciplinary development, limited laboratory infrastructure, low level of internationalisation, and immature research monitoring systems place it in a weaker position, particularly for long-term research projects. GSU is only beginning to cultivate a research culture among students, and integrating research with teaching will require significant time. A review of theses and syllabi indicates that references to the most recent literature, especially peer-reviewed journal articles are rare; many theses are descriptive or review-based rather than empirical and do not sufficiently demonstrate the range of skills acquired during studies.

Further progress depends on clearly defining priority research areas and increasing funding, which will require deeper cooperation with industry and international partners. Given the limited number of research-active staff, this will necessitate a focus on three or four priority areas, the establishment of interdisciplinary teams, the development of partnerships with international collaborators, and the active pursuit of external funding. Establishing a research committee involving local entrepreneurs and international experts would be an important step.

Internationalisation. Internationalisation is one of the four strategic priorities, including mobility targets and cooperation through Erasmus+ and similar programmes. GSU has established bilateral agreements with numerous European universities, supporting a core EHEA objective: academic mobility. The University's commitment to international integration is further demonstrated by its

participation in European higher education programmes and prestigious international projects such as Erasmus+. A new interdisciplinary programme is planned in cooperation with international partners, and initial publications in international journals have begun to appear.

GSU's internationalisation goals are ambitious but remain limited in practice. Mobility agreements and partnerships are not comprehensively mapped or linked to joint academic offerings, and most activities remain bilateral. Greater engagement in multilateral initiatives could enhance GSU's integration into global academic communities. Despite existing mobility agreements, the number of students and staff participating in exchanges remains small relative to the total population. The University currently offers no English-taught courses, and English language proficiency among students and staff requires further development. Consequently, the impact of internationalisation on the quality of education and research is minimal. GSU does not participate in international rankings or data consortia (e.g. U-Multirank), resulting in very limited international visibility.

To enhance alignment with international standards, GSU could consider establishing benchmarking partnerships with three to five universities of a similar profile in transition economies. Adopting standardised performance indicators would improve visibility within the EHEA. Embedding global and EU-aligned curricular elements—such as sustainability competencies, digital skills, and entrepreneurship—in line with the EU Skills Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals would further support alignment. The University of Ljubljana offers a relevant example of good practice by integrating national and EU reforms into faculty-level strategies linked to the SDGs. Publishing strategic progress in Armenian and English would enhance transparency and international positioning. However, further progress in internationalisation will be difficult without improving English-language proficiency, introducing foreign-language courses, and enhancing research quality. Improving the English-language web presence and marketing materials is also recommended.

Quality Policy. Goris State University maintains a clearly structured and increasingly advanced internal quality assurance (IQA) system, firmly anchored in institutional policy and aligned with national regulations and European standards. This framework is guided by key internal documents such as the GSU Quality Assurance Manual and the Regulation on the Assessment of Students' Knowledge, which together provide a coherent structure for monitoring and improving academic standards. The IQA system covers all core areas of academic activity and is based on the PDCA model, applied in teaching and administration as well as in new monitoring tools (programme audits, reviews, surveys, and learning environment analyses). It operates through faculty-level QA units working closely with the central QA office. Experience from previous accreditation cycles indicates significant progress in the professionalisation of QA, centralisation of responsibilities, and increased transparency.

The next step should be the full integration of quality processes into institutional life. For the IQA system to support a genuine quality culture, analytical results must be translated into improvement

actions, and leaders must engage in continuous reflection. EHEA standards recommend monitoring long-term impacts on community development and educational quality, whereas current evaluation practices remain more operational than strategic. A reliable system for collecting, validating, and analysing data, and for integrating them into a unified database, is therefore required.

Implementation of the new QA system is uneven across units, and some tools do not perform satisfactorily. Quality policy principles are not yet fully embedded among staff and students, and stakeholder involvement in improvement processes remains incomplete. Given the recent introduction of these changes, assessing long-term effectiveness is difficult. Nevertheless, there are significant opportunities to further develop QA practices. In line with European trends, implementing a uniform PDCA framework across all processes, improving information flow, embedding quality discussions in departmental meetings and staff evaluations, and better aligning staff development with institutional goals would be beneficial. Adopting digital tools—such as centralised evaluation dashboards, real-time feedback systems, and learning analytics—would increase QA efficiency. Greater use of aggregated data, benchmarking, and participation in QA networks (ENQA, EUA-IEP) would strengthen institutional positioning. Broader engagement of employers, alumni, and civic partners would facilitate a shift from quality assurance to quality enhancement.

Final conclusions. GSU exhibits the characteristics of a maturing higher education institution in a transition economy, progressively aligning with international standards while remaining responsive to local socio-economic needs. Its governance and operational model show increasing convergence with European university models, particularly in strategic planning, outcome-based education, and quality assurance. Further progress will require the systematic implementation of an agile approach, more effective consolidation of limited resources, strengthening of quality policy, and greater engagement of the entire academic community in continuous improvement initiatives.

Mieczyslaw Socha

GSU international expert

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

The following expert panel provided an external review of GSU's institutional capabilities[1].

1. **Lilit Badalyan** – Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor, Head of the Department of English Communication at State University after V. Brusov, Head of the Expert Panel, Republic of Armenia.
2. **Nonna Khachatryan** – Candidate of Economic Sciences, Associate Professor, Lecturer at the Department of Management and Business, Yerevan State University, Expert Panel Member, Republic of Armenia.
3. **Gohar Petrosyan** – Doctor of Legal Sciences, Lawyer, Head of the Department of Private Law and Procedure at the European University of Armenia, Expert Panel Member, Republic of Armenia.
4. **Mieczyslaw Socha** – Former Professor at the University of Warsaw and the School of Public Administration, Doctor of Economic Sciences, Member of the Financial Committee of the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA), International Expert Panel Member, Poland.
5. **Vahe Hovhannisyan** – Student of the "Informatics and Applied Mathematics" academic program at Yerevan State University, Student Member of the Expert Panel, Republic of Armenia.

The composition of the expert panel was agreed upon with the University and was appointed by the ANQA director.

Meri Barsegyan, a specialist at the Policy Development and Implementation Division of ANQA, coordinated the expert panel's work. Syuzan Avagyan and Roza Babayan provided the translation. All the members of the expert panel have signed impartiality and confidentiality agreements.

[1] APPENDIX 1.CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

Application for state accreditation

For institutional accreditation, GSU submitted the application form, copies of the license, and the appendices to ANQA. The ANQA secretariat checked the data in the application form and the adjacent appendices.

After deciding to accept the application request, ANQA and TLI signed a bilateral agreement. The timetable of activities was also prepared and approved.

Self-evaluation

The ANQA coordinator reviewed the self-evaluation report to verify its compliance with ANQA requirements. The self-evaluation was returned to the institution due to non-compliance with the established requirements. After the issues were corrected, the institution submitted a revised self-evaluation.

Preparatory phase

After reviewing the university's self-evaluation and the accompanying document package, the expert panel conducted a preliminary evaluation by preparing additional documents for further study, identifying issues and questions, and specifying the relevant departments or target groups. The panel then summarised the preliminary evaluation results and created a schedule for the site visit.

According to the ANQA manual on external review, the planned meetings with all the target groups, including closed-door and open meetings, as well as document observation, were included in the time schedule.

Preliminary visit

On November 27, 2025, a Zoom meeting was held with the TLI's management staff. Throughout the meeting, the plan-schedule was agreed upon, and discussions and mutual decisions were reached on organisational, technical, and informational questions, as well as the conduct and ethical norms of meeting participants. The conditions for the focus group meetings and the expert panel's work were discussed.

Site-visit

The site visit took place from December 15-18, 2025. The visit began with a closed meeting to discuss and agree on the assessment framework with the international expert, the issues to be studied during the visit, the strengths and weaknesses of the TLI per criterion, the procedure for the focus group meetings, and to clarify the next steps. All expert panel members attended, including the ANQA coordinator and the interpreter. The visit began with a meeting with the head of the TLI and ended

with a meeting with the institution's management staff. All scheduled meetings were held. During the planned visit, the expert panel also conducted a review of documents and resources.

During the expert panel's closed meeting at the end of each working day of the visit, the intermediate results of the assessment were presented. At the end of the visit, the main results were summarised in a closed discussion. The evaluation was carried out within the framework of the State Criteria and Standards of Accreditation and ANQA procedures, after which the assessment is divided into two levels: **satisfactory and unsatisfactory.**

Expert panel report

The expert panel prepared the preliminary expert panel report based on the electronic questionnaire completed by the university, the self-evaluation, the documents attached to it, the auditions conducted, and the observations during the site visit, as a result of regularly organised discussions. Based on several findings of the discussions, the expert panel and ANQA coordinator prepared the preliminary expert panel report. The international expert prepared a separate peer review. The documents were translated and handed over to the expert panel. The peer review is fully included in the report. After the expert panel members' approval, the preliminary report was provided to the TLI on 15.04.2026.
On April 28, 2026, the university submitted its observations on the preliminary version of the expert panel report. During the online meeting organized by the ANQA on May 7, the members of the expert panel and the university representatives discussed the observations and agreed on the reformulated acceptable versions. Subsequently, the expert panel finalized the report, and the final version was provided to the university on May 12, 2026.

Meri Barsegyan

Expert panel coordinator

12.06.2026

BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

History.

Goris State University was founded in 1967 as a branch of the Khachatur Abovyan Armenian State Pedagogical Institute, offering programs in Physics and Mathematics. In 1984, the branch was reorganised as a branch of the Yerevan Polytechnic Institute, and in 1991 as a branch of the State Engineering University of Armenia. By Decision No. 2400-N of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, dated October 6, 2005, the Public Non-Commercial Organization (PNCO) "Goris State University" was established as an independent higher education institution with university status.

The University is committed to preparing well-rounded, labour-market-competitive, and highly qualified specialists capable of responding to contemporary challenges across education, economics, industry, and information technologies.

Education.

At Goris State University, 22 Bachelor's and 11 Master's degree programmes are currently offered. Following the previous accreditation, two new Master's programmes have been introduced. In 2024, the Master's program "English Language and Literature" was launched in part-time (distance) mode, and in 2025, the Master's program "Economics and Management of Sustainable Development" was introduced, developed within the Erasmus+ T-GREEN Project.

Research.

Research activity is one of the University's strategic priorities. The institution is committed to strengthening its research capacity, particularly in the fields of the humanities, social sciences, and the natural sciences and mathematics, guided by the principles of promoting research activity, developing the research competencies of internal stakeholders, and expanding international cooperation.

Internationalization.

In recent years, the scope of international cooperation at Goris State University has expanded significantly. This growth has been substantially supported by exchange and capacity-building initiatives implemented under the Erasmus+ Programme, including projects such as the SAH Project, SMARTI Project, ComPIIT Project, T-GREEN Project, and DeSIRe Project. Currently, the University cooperates with more than 20 universities abroad.

Quality Assurance.

One of the key priorities of Goris State University is to promote a culture of continuous quality enhancement and to align it with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area through the application of effective internal and external evaluation

mechanisms. The internal quality assurance system operates in accordance with approved policies and procedures.

The University is currently undergoing the third cycle of institutional accreditation.

Source: sources for the identification of facts in the above-mentioned fields are the documents provided by the Institution (e.g. self-evaluation report, strategic plan, action plan, plans of the departments, concept papers, etc.)

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

1. MISSION AND PURPOSES

CRITERION: The policies and procedures of the institution are in accordance with the institution's mission, which is in line with ANQF.

Findings

1.1 The institution has a clear, well-articulated mission that represents the Institution's purposes and goals and is in accordance with National Qualifications Framework (hereafter NQF).

The 2025–2029 Development Strategic Plan of Goris State University (hereinafter GSU) was developed based on the monitoring committee's reports on the 2019–2023 Development Strategic Plan, the observations recorded in the 2021 institutional accreditation expert report, and discussions with the University's internal and external stakeholders. Following 2023, the University lacked an approved and operational strategic plan for two years. During the interval between the previous and the current strategic plans, the University's activities were organised around the Rector's election concept, entitled "Foundations for the Development and Reform of GSU." This document defined the key directions for organising the University's activities; however, it did not include clearly measurable indicators or time-bound implementation schedules. At the same time, the expert review found that the provisions outlined in the concept were subsequently reflected in the mission and objectives of the 2025–2029 Development Strategic Plan.

According to the mission set out in the 2025–2029 Development Strategic Plan of Goris State University, the University seeks, within an environment of academic freedom and integrity, to provide high-quality, student-centred, and inclusive education, to promote innovative research through the application of modern educational and research methods, and to prepare competitive specialists aligned with labor market demands in the fields of pedagogy, engineering, economics, management, information technologies, and other professional areas. The mission also emphasises the University's engagement with society through the implementation of community-oriented programs and participatory initiatives.

The review of the strategic plan and its comparison with the previous strategy indicate that, alongside the mission, vision, and core values, the University's strategic goals, objectives, implementation actions, and key performance indicators (KPIs) for effectiveness evaluation have been defined annually. This structure generally ensures alignment between the mission and the main directions of Goris State University's activities.

At the same time, the expert panel's analysis indicates that the strategic plan does not comprehensively identify which specific, regionally relevant challenges the University considers integral to its mission. Although Goris State University operates in a region characterised by a range of socio-economic and demographic risks, the strategic plan lacks a systematic approach to addressing

these challenges. Meetings with stakeholders during the site visit revealed that stakeholders have clear perceptions of the University's potential role in the region. However, these perceptions have not yet been translated into documented strategic objectives or measurable indicators.

Within the strategic plan, internationalization is defined as a separate objective, encompassing the development of international cooperation and the attraction of international students and academic staff. However, the expert analysis shows that internationalization, as a strategic direction, is not systematically integrated into the University's mission and is not fully recognised as a core component of institutional development.

At the same time, the actions defined under the internationalization objective are not fully supported by clear, measurable outcome indicators, particularly regarding the recruitment of international students and the effectiveness of international programs. During the site visit, it became clear that internationalization activities are primarily driven by opportunities within the Erasmus+ Programme, indicating a dependence on external initiatives and limiting the institutional sustainability of this strategic direction.

In this context, internationalization processes do not yet ensure comprehensive outcome-based evaluation mechanisms and do not function as a fully effective means of enhancing the University's competitiveness.

Goris State University delivers its educational activities at Levels 6–7 of the Armenian National Qualifications Framework, which aligns with the mission's emphasis on preparing specialists responsive to labor market requirements. [2]The overall graduate employment rate for the 2024–2025 academic year is approximately 67%. However, the lack of employment data disaggregated by individual academic programs limits the ability to conduct a comprehensive, outcome-based evaluation of mission implementation effectiveness.

1.2 The mission statement, goals and objectives of the Institution reflects the needs of the internal and external stakeholders.

The 2025–2029 Strategic Plan of Goris State University includes actions to identify stakeholder needs. The site visit revealed that, during the development of the Strategic Plan, the University sought to involve stakeholders through surveys and focus group discussions. The site visit further demonstrated that stakeholders share a common understanding of Goris State University's main role, viewing it as an important regional higher education institution responsible for preparing teachers.

At the same time, stakeholders emphasised that, within the University's mission, developing other professional fields is also important, as they may contribute to the region's socio-economic development. However, the expert analysis indicates that, during the development phase of the Strategic Plan, an in-depth analysis of regional labor market needs by specific specialisations was not conducted. External stakeholders highlighted the importance of addressing demand for specialists in certain fields within the region (e.g., chemistry), yet these areas are experiencing a declining number of applicants. At the same time, there are specialisations that remain highly sought after among applicants (e.g., Armenian Language and Literature), while the labor market in Goris and surrounding regions is already saturated in this field, resulting in a decrease in graduate employment rates.

In this context, it can be concluded that, although a participatory process for identifying stakeholder needs has been implemented and the University's core mission is broadly shared among

[2] The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions received from the Institution

stakeholders, the mismatches between regional labor market demands and the University's educational provision have not yet been comprehensively analysed or clearly reflected in the Strategic Plan as formulated objectives and actions.

1.3 The Institution has set mechanisms and procedures to evaluate the achievement of its mission and goals and further improve them.

To ensure oversight of the implementation of the 2025–2029 Strategic Development Plan of Goris State University, an action implementation plan–timeline has been developed, defining priority objectives and actions for each year within the respective implementation period. In addition, key performance indicators for institutional performance evaluation have been established to monitor progress towards the Strategic Plan's objectives and actions. During the implementation of the 2025–2029 Strategic Plan, it is planned to conduct an annual evaluation of implemented actions at the end of each academic year, based on monitoring results, and to publish a performance report.

The review of the Rector's annual reports of Goris State University (the most recent covering the 2023–2024 academic year) indicates that, although these reports provide information on all major areas of institutional activity, the direct and targeted alignment with the strategic provisions, objectives, and actions of the Strategic Plan is not clearly demonstrated.

Expert analysis further revealed that, despite the existence of mechanisms for planning, monitoring, and accountability, the 2025–2029 Development Strategic Plan does not include defined mechanisms for risk assessment and risk management.

Considerations:

The expert panel notes that the 2025–2029 Strategic Development Plan of Goris State University was developed based on monitoring of the previous strategy, observations from the accreditation process, and discussions with internal and external stakeholders. This approach ensures continuity in strategic planning and supports the formulation of development directions grounded in prior experience. The definitions in the Strategic Plan for mission, vision, core values, objectives, actions, and KPIs provide a foundation for systematic implementation and periodic evaluation of progress.

At the same time, the analysis indicates that the linkage between the mission, objectives, and expected outcomes within the Strategic Plan has not yet been fully operationalised. In particular, the University's regional role is articulated at a general level and is not fully reflected in clearly defined challenges and measurable outcomes, which limits the ability to assess the impact of activities implemented in this direction. A more precise identification of regional socio-economic and demographic challenges, followed by the formulation of objectives and indicators based on these challenges, may contribute to a more targeted definition of the University's strategic priorities.

Internationalization is presented in the Strategic Plan as a separate strategic direction, encompassing the development of international cooperation and the recruitment of international students and academic staff. However, deeper integration of internationalization into the University's mission and strategic objectives, together with the establishment of clear, outcome-based indicators, would enable a more systematic evaluation of internationalization initiatives and ensure their sustainable development.

The indicators presented on graduate employment provide a general overview. However, a more systematic collection and analysis of professional employment data is required to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of academic programs at Goris State University. Such an approach would enable the University to assess the extent to which academic programs align with labor market requirements and to implement targeted improvements accordingly.

Although stakeholder participation was ensured during the development of the Strategic Plan, more in-depth, quantitative analyses of labor market demand could significantly strengthen the alignment between educational provision and market needs. This would support more evidence-based, data-driven planning of academic programs.

While mechanisms for monitoring and accountability for the implementation of the Strategic Plan have been established, aligning them with strategic objectives and expected outcomes would enable a more systematic evaluation of progress and support data-driven governance processes.

Summary:

Considering that Goris State University operates in accordance with a clearly defined Strategic Plan, which sets out the University's mission and aligns it with strategic development objectives, implementation actions, and performance evaluation indicators, the University's activities are generally directed towards the realisation of its mission. Stakeholders share the University's mission and emphasise its important role in the region, and the University has developed a set of indicators to evaluate the implementation of the Strategic Plan. Based on the above, the expert panel concludes that Goris State University meets the requirements of Criterion 1.

Conclusion*:*

The compliance of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 1 is **satisfactory.**

2. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

CRITERION: The institution's system of governance, administrative structures and their activities are efficient and are aimed at the accomplishment of mission and goals of the institution preserving ethical norms of governance.

Findings

2.1. The Institution's system of governance ensures structured decision-making process, in accordance with defined ethical rules and has efficient provision of human, material and financial resources to accomplish its educational and other purposes.

The governance system at Goris State University combines collegial and single-executive management models. The collegial governing body is the University Governing Board, while executive management responsibility rests with the Rector. The University councils and structural units operate

in accordance with approved regulations that define their authorities and functions, ensuring a regulated decision-making process.

The external members of the Governing Board include representatives from various sectors of education and the labor market. In particular, the Board includes heads of general education institutions (school principals), whose participation is important for ensuring linkages across different levels of the education system and for addressing issues related to applicant flow, prior educational preparation, and educational continuity. Among the external members, there is also a representative from Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Combine, which provides an important opportunity to incorporate the needs of the industrial sector and labor market expectations into the definition of strategic and academic program directions. Nevertheless, the site visit revealed that the University currently has no plans to introduce academic programs in industrial fields, despite the existing regional demand for specialists in these areas. These needs are largely addressed by the National Polytechnic University of Armenia branch in Kapan.

The Academic Council of Goris State University comprises 35 members and operates through several standing committees responsible for coordinating statutory and structural changes, scientific, competitive, and educational-methodological matters, international cooperation, educational quality, and academic programs. Based on observations from the previous expert report, the Academic Council revised and approved the operating procedures of these committees in May 2023.

Responsibility for implementing decisions adopted by the Governing Board and the Academic Council rests with the Rector, who supervises the Vice-Rector for Academic and Scientific Affairs and several administrative units, including the departments of External Relations, Continuing Education and Career Development, Quality Assessment and Assurance, Human Resources Management, and Economic Affairs. The faculties of Humanities, as well as Natural Sciences and Engineering-Economics, report to the Vice-Rector for Academic and Scientific Affairs and the Academic Process Management Division. Each faculty comprises three academic departments. This structure establishes a clear vertical management chain: Rector → Vice-Rector → Dean → Department Head → Academic Staff Member.

Decision-making at Goris State University is carried out across all levels of governance, ensuring a collegial approach based on collective deliberation and joint decision-making. Academic departments play a key role in the recruitment and selection of academic staff, evaluating the professional qualifications of nominated candidates. Candidates proposed by the departments are reviewed by the Rector, who, when necessary, involves the Deans in the process, leading to decisions made through joint discussion.

Departments and faculties also closely collaborate with administrative units in internal audits of academic programs, quality assurance, and human resource development. Specifically, the internal audit of academic programs has been implemented through joint efforts of the departments and the Quality Assessment and Assurance Division, while, in cooperation with the Human Resources Management Division, various professional development activities have been organised, including foreign language training courses.

Based on the site visit and the review of documentation, it became evident that, for the implementation of various strategic and operational processes (such as the development of the Strategic Development Plan, institutional self-evaluation, and internal audits), working groups are established, comprising internal stakeholders—academic staff and students—and, in certain cases, external stakeholders as well. Cooperation among structural units is mainly ensured within specific processes (e.g., internal audit of academic programs, professional development activities); however, collaboration among departments remains limited. As a result, academic program development and improvement are often carried out independently, without systematic cross-departmental interaction, which constrains the coherent development of programs and the establishment of interdisciplinary linkages across fields of study.

At the same time, collaboration among departments, particularly in improving academic programs, remains limited. It is also observed that Deans and Heads of Departments are appointed without competitive selection procedures. Regarding the Ethics Committee's activities, no cases or discussions have been recorded in recent years. Although this is presented as an indication of the absence of violations, this circumstance may also suggest limited use of the mechanism or a lack of trust in its functioning. GSU has approved policies regulating financial management, planning, and monitoring, including the Financial and Accounting Policy adopted in 2019.

During 2022–2024, the financial structure of Goris State University remained largely stable. Most budget revenues continued to come from extra-budgetary sources, primarily student tuition fees, which accounted for approximately 66% of total revenues, while budgetary funding constituted around 22–23%, mainly through state compensation for the education of state-funded students. Additional income was also generated from fee-based training courses, which accounted for approximately 0.64% of total revenues in 2024. At the same time, the University expressed only general intentions regarding the attraction of additional financial resources, without a clearly defined action plan, which limited opportunities for financial diversification.

Within the expenditure structure, salaries continue to account for the largest share, at approximately 47% in 2024. Expenditure on the professional development of academic staff amounts to approximately 0.04% of the total budget, while funding for research has increased from 0.30% to 0.5%. This indicates an imbalance in the University’s development priorities and may affect the quality of education and research activities.

In recent years, expenditure on infrastructure improvement has also increased. Costs for current and capital renovation rose from 0.30% in 2022 to 4.90% in 2024. At the same time, library expenditure decreased to 0.02% in 2024, while office-related expenditure declined from 0.40% to 0.29%. No expenditure was allocated in 2024 for the acquisition of laboratory equipment and materials. As a result of financial savings, the University allocated approximately AMD 55 million to infrastructure improvements, including replacing building windows and renovating several classrooms. In addition, within the framework of Erasmus+ Programme capacity-building projects, several

classrooms were equipped with technical infrastructure, enabling the organisation of online learning activities for students across different academic programs.

At the same time, the University possesses significant infrastructure resources, including classrooms, an assembly hall, a sports hall, laboratories, and other facilities, many of which still require fundamental renovation. Although cooperation agreements and previously developed renovation projects exist, their implementation has been suspended for various reasons.

The University leadership plans to continue infrastructure improvement activities through its limited internal resources and by attracting additional funding, including teacher training programs, certification processes for school principals, and short-term courses. At the same time, the University indicates that the transformation from a state non-commercial organisation into a foundation may create new financial opportunities for entrepreneurial activities; however, no concrete action plan has yet been developed in this direction.

2.2. The Institution's system of governance gives an opportunity to students and the teaching staff to take part in decision making procedures.

At Goris State University, academic staff and students participate in governance processes through representation on the University's collegial governing bodies. The Student Council, as the student self-governance body, has representatives in the University Council, the Academic Council, and the Faculty Councils, with a representation ratio of 25%, and is also involved in the work of mandate commissions. Academic staff are represented in collegial governing bodies through proportional representation.

During the site visit, it became clear that students raise concerns at multiple levels of governance, and in several cases these initiatives have led to concrete decisions. Following a proposal by student representatives at the University Council to recognise students who had won the national "Best Student" competition, the Council Chair, the Governor of Syunik Region, decided to provide monetary awards through the regional administration.

Within the Academic Council and Faculty Councils, students also raised concerns about classroom heating, prompting partial remedial measures. The University leadership also considered student feedback on the organisation of online learning, particularly technical challenges and the lack of fixed schedules. As a result, the organisation of online learning was revised, and online classes are now conducted according to fixed timetables and in appropriately equipped classrooms.

Academic staff also participate in governance processes by submitting proposals related to their professional activities. Academic staff proposed amendments to the Regulation on Incentivising the Research, Teaching, and Organisational Activities of Academic Staff, specifically regarding revisions to the scoring criteria, as well as changes and additional provisions to the Procedure for Professional Development and Attestation of Academic Staff. As a result, the regulations were reviewed and improved. In addition to representation in collegial bodies, internal stakeholders participate in purpose-oriented working groups established to address specific tasks, as well as in surveys and group

discussions. This engagement provides opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to discussions and the improvement of various institutional processes.

2.3. The Institution formulates and carries out short-term, mid-term and long term planning consistent with its mission and goals as well as has appropriate mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of those plans.

At Goris State University, long-term planning is carried out through Strategic Development Plans and their corresponding action plans. Within the framework of the 2019–2023 Strategic Development Plan, mid-term and final monitoring activities were conducted, and reports were compiled in line with the defined goals and objectives. A document review indicates that these reports are predominantly descriptive and do not include quantitative or qualitative analysis; consequently, evidence-based evaluation of strategic decisions based on these reports remains limited.

The 2025–2029 Strategic Development Plan was developed based on an evaluation of the previous strategic plan, the observations and recommendations from the previous external expert report, and stakeholder input from internal and external stakeholders.

Mid-term strategic development plans, derived from the 2019–2023 Strategic Development Plan, were developed across all University structural units and published on the University's official website. However, performance evaluation reports on the implementation of these plans are not available, resulting in incomplete consolidation of mid-term planning outcomes. At the same time, mid-term operational plans for faculties for 2025–2027 have been developed, derived from the 2025–2029 Strategic Development Plan, and are largely similar to one another. Faculty plans outline actions aligned with strategic goals, define expected qualitative and quantitative outcomes, and emphasise improving the effectiveness of departmental activities.

Expert analysis indicates that certain Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) require further clarification. For example, the Strategic Development Plan envisages introducing two platforms in the first year, three in the second year, and five in the third year to implement digital tools and platforms. However, during expert meetings, it became clear that, within the Erasmus+ Programme capacity-building project, the University has acquired a server and intends to establish a single integrated digital platform.

The Strategic Development Plan and faculty mid-term plans define the individual responsible for the planned actions and the expected outcomes. However, document review shows that the necessary material and financial resources are not fully specified or allocated.

Reporting on implemented activities follows a bottom-up principle. Annual departmental reports include information on teaching and methodological activities, research activities, and student work, and conclude with a SWOT analysis and a self-evaluation. However, the reports do not provide information on actions taken based on SWOT analyses and self-evaluations, which results in a predominantly descriptive nature. The linkage between these reports and the University's Strategic Development Plan, as well as faculty mid-term plans, is also weakly articulated.

Reports from structural units also focus mainly on summarising the implementation of activities planned in annual plans. At the same time, reports from the divisions responsible for external relations, cooperation, and public communications, as well as from the Quality Assessment and Assurance Division, demonstrate a degree of alignment with the goals of the University's Strategic Development Plan.

The Rector's annual report primarily presents a quantitative list of completed activities and does not include an evaluation of the implementation of the Strategic Development Plan, a SWOT analysis, or improvement plans based on reports from structural units or analyses of surveys conducted by the Quality Assessment and Assurance Division. This limits the report's effectiveness as a strategic management and continuous monitoring tool. All reports are publicly available on the University's official website.

2.4. The Institution carried out examination of facts affecting its activities and draws on reliable findings during the decision-making process.

At Goris State University, several processes are used to study factors affecting institutional performance, including SWOT analyses, stakeholder surveys, and internal audits of academic programs. Separate procedures have been developed for these processes. However, a unified and integrated system for data collection and analysis is not in place. As a result, data from different sources are not consolidated into a comprehensive analysis and are used only to a limited extent in strategic decision-making.

The results of the site visit indicate that a systematic, documented analysis of labor market needs has not been conducted. Information on labor market requirements is mainly gathered through individual meetings and discussions, resulting in situational responses rather than long-term forecasting and planning. An example is the mismatch between demand for teachers of natural science subjects and the level of applicant interest in these fields, where the measures undertaken have not yielded significant results. At the same time, inconsistencies between labor market demand and applicants' choices are observed across other specialisations as well, indicating that the planning of the educational offer is not based on comprehensive, data-driven analysis.

The University has sought to respond to labor market needs by developing new academic programs. However, these efforts have not been supported by in-depth preliminary demand analysis or by systematic involvement of external stakeholders.

Although some managerial decisions have been data-informed (e.g., structural changes), they remain isolated rather than systemic. Data collection is primarily carried out by the Quality Assurance unit. However, integrated analysis of these data and the development of a unified institutional improvement plan are not systematically implemented.

2.5. The management of the policies and the processes is based on the quality management principle (plan-do-check-act /PDCA/).

At Goris State University, there is a tendency to apply quality management principles in the administration of institutional policies and procedures. Based on the observations and recommendations presented in the previous accreditation expert report, the University has undertaken revisions and refinements to several regulatory documents. The revised regulations and procedures are mainly aimed at improving the organisation of educational processes, human resource management, and the assurance of academic integrity.

Over the past three years, the University has developed and approved several new policies, regulations, and procedures, including the operational procedures for committees affiliated with the Academic Council, the regulations for newly established structural units resulting from structural changes, the Regulation on the Registration, Issuance, and Disposal of Academic Records, the Procedure for Validation of Research Results, the Procedure for the Organization of Academic Mobility, and others. These documents are applied in practice and contribute to the regulation and standardisation of the respective processes, demonstrating progress from the planning phase to implementation. At the same time, document reviews indicate that, for some of these documents, the evaluation and improvement phases have not yet been fully implemented.

During the site visit, it was revealed that the PDCA cycle has been fully applied in certain processes. Structural changes were implemented following an evaluation of the existing organisational structure, with the aim of ensuring more efficient use of human and material resources. As a result, several academic departments were merged, primarily due to low student enrolment in certain programs (for example, in chemistry, biology, and engineering). Within this process, the planning and implementation phases were carried out. However, the effectiveness of the departmental mergers has not yet been evaluated, and consequently, the improvement phase has not been fully completed.

Another example of the PDCA cycle is the revision of procedures for the professional development and attestation of academic and support staff. This process was based on an evaluation of their effectiveness, leading to the development of new approaches and the refinement of the relevant regulations. Professional development activities for support staff were implemented in three main areas: foreign language proficiency, information technology skills, and the application of legal and regulatory documents. Professional development activities for academic staff are planned to be conducted in accordance with the newly revised regulations in the upcoming phase, indicating the staged implementation of improvement processes.

In addition, the Regulation on Incentivising the Research, Teaching, and Organisational Activities of Academic Staff is periodically reviewed and implemented, considering evaluation results and evolving institutional needs.

Expert analysis indicates that quality management principles are evident in the administration of policies and procedures at the University, particularly during the planning and implementation stages. At the same time, the evaluation and improvement phases are not systematically and

comprehensively documented across all processes, and as a result, the PDCA cycle has not yet been fully closed in several cases.

2.6. The Institution has evaluation mechanisms in place ensuring data collection, analyses and application of the data on the effectiveness of the academic programs and other processes.

During the expert site visit, it became clear that several mechanisms are in place at Goris State University to assess the effectiveness of professional academic programs and teaching and learning processes. These mechanisms include student surveys on the quality and effectiveness of teaching, internal audits of academic programs conducted with the participation of internal and external stakeholders, discussions and feedback on educational programmes, the partial application of benchmarking practices, and consideration of observations and recommendations from the chairs of final attestation commissions.

The analysis of collected information is primarily conducted by the Quality Assessment and Assurance Center. The results of student surveys are summarised and communicated to the relevant structural units, including departments, along with specific recommendations. This indicates the presence of functioning mechanisms for data analysis and communication. At the same time, it was observed that surveys conducted among graduates have not yet been summarised, and employer surveys have not been conducted, leaving one of the key sources of feedback for evaluating the effectiveness of academic programs unavailable.

A review of institutional documentation indicates that Goris State University has conducted internal audits of all academic programs, engaging both internal and external stakeholders. As a result of these audits, comprehensive reports have been prepared outlining program strengths and weaknesses, along with recommendations for improvement. This demonstrates a systematic approach to information collection and analysis within this mechanism.

Data on student academic performance is also regularly collected and monitored at the end of each semester and academic year and is disaggregated by year of study and specialisation. These data are used for the ongoing monitoring of the teaching and learning process. In addition, reports from the chairs of final attestation commissions are recorded, including their observations on the specification of thesis topics and the relevance of their content, and are utilised for program improvement.

Certain modifications to academic programs at Goris State University are also implemented based on benchmarking results. However, expert analysis indicates that benchmarking is applied only partially and has not yet become a systematic source for the comprehensive review of academic programs. As a result, certain changes are introduced into educational programmes each year, such as adjustments to the content of individual courses or the number of contact hours. However, these changes are generally incremental and do not lead to substantial structural or content improvements in academic programs, as they are not based on an integrated, comprehensive analysis of data collected across all available mechanisms.

In this context, it is important to note that, for the first time, departments have developed improvement plans based on the shortcomings identified and the recommendations provided in the reports on internal program audits. This step demonstrates qualitative progress in the use of collected information. However, the effectiveness of the developed improvement plans can only be assessed in the future, following the completion of the full implementation cycle of the respective processes.

2.7. There are objective mechanisms in place evaluating the quality of quantitative and qualitative information on the academic programs and qualification awarded.

Quantitative and qualitative information on admissions to academic programs, student enrolment, graduates, student academic performance, and other areas of institutional activity at Goris State University is consolidated in the Rector's annual reports and published on the University's official website. The publication of this information ensures annual data updates and provides stakeholders with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the University's key performance indicators.

A review of the website indicates that a significant portion of the information presented is publicly accessible. At the same time, access to certain materials related to academic programs (e.g., program specifications and descriptions) requires a subscription, resulting in incomplete access to information on program content and awarded qualifications for all external stakeholders.

Expert analysis further revealed that systematic approaches to evaluating the quality, completeness, and stakeholder impact of publicly available information have not yet been fully established at Goris State University.

Considerations:

The expert panel positively evaluates the governance and administrative system at Goris State University, noting that it ensures the organised implementation of key processes and provides a clear institutional basis for decision-making. The presence of governing bodies, structural units, and defined procedures contributes to the stable and predictable organisation of management processes.

At the same time, the analysis indicates that the governance system is predominantly structured around a vertical management logic, which, in certain cases, limits the comprehensive integration of information from lower levels into the decision-making process. Although stakeholder representation is ensured within collegial governing bodies, the impact of participatory governance is not yet fully realised due to limited practices for systematically documenting participation outcomes and monitoring their implementation.

Within the planning system, documents exist at different levels. However, the interlinkages among them are not yet fully established. As a result, the activities of structural units do not always directly align with strategic objectives. Strengthening these linkages would enable planning to function as a more effective management tool and ensure more targeted implementation of strategic goals.

Accountability mechanisms primarily ensure the reporting of completed activities. However, the component focused on analysing results and impact is not yet fully developed. Strengthening results-based accountability would support transforming reports from tools for information sharing into instruments that substantiate management decisions and inform the refinement of planning processes.

Data is collected from various sources within the University (including surveys, internal audits, monitoring of student progress, and other mechanisms). However, their integrated and systematic

analysis remains under development. Strengthening a data-driven management culture would enable the identification of systemic issues and support more evidence-based decision-making.

The study of the external environment and labor market needs is conducted at the level of individual initiatives. However, it requires a more systematic approach. Developing this direction would support more targeted planning of academic programs and enhance alignment between the University's activities and regional needs.

The application of the PDCA cycle in the management of policies and procedures is evident. However, a more systematic approach to the evaluation and improvement phases would enhance the measurability of implemented changes and support continuous improvement.

In financial management, a system for resource planning and allocation is in place. However, closer alignment of financial management processes with strategic priorities could significantly strengthen the University's development capacity and help ensure financial sustainability.

Summary:

Taking into consideration that Goris State University applies a combined system of collegial and single-person governance; operates within a framework of long-term, mid-term, and short-term planning; has, since the previous accreditation, been able to allocate financial resources towards infrastructure improvement, possesses the necessary human and material resources for the implementation of academic programmes, and has established mechanisms for the administration of various policies and procedures, within which a tendency toward the application of the PDCA cycle is observed, the expert panel concludes that GSU meets the requirements of Criterion 2.

Conclusion:

The compliance of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 2 is **satisfactory.**

3. ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

CRITERION: The programmes are in concord with the Institution's mission, form part of institutional planning and promote mobility and internationalization.

Findings

3.1 The academic programs are in line with Institution's mission, they correspond to the state academic standards and are thoroughly described according to the intended learning outcomes of the qualification awarded.

At Goris State University, 22 bachelor's and 11 master's degree programs are offered, and overall, they are aligned with the University's mission to prepare specialists who meet labor market demands in the fields of pedagogy, engineering, economics, management, information technologies, and other areas (Strategic Development Plan 2025–2028). Following the previous accreditation, two new master's programs have been introduced at the University. In 2024, the part-time English Language and Literature program was launched, and in 2025, the Economics and Management of Sustainable Development master's program was introduced, developed within the Erasmus+ Programme's T-GREEN capacity-building project.

The review of program specifications indicates that the intended learning outcomes have been formulated in accordance with the descriptors of Levels 6 and 7 of the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (ANQF), distinguishing among knowledge, professional skills, and generic competences. However, it is noted that in some academic programs, the intended learning outcomes have not been revised following the development of the Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks.

Expert analysis indicates that, within the English Language and Literature academic program, the intended learning outcomes predominantly emphasise philological knowledge and competences, while the pedagogical component is represented to a limited extent. A similar imbalance is observed in the curriculum structure, where linguistic and literary courses constitute the majority.

At the University, program revisions have been carried out in accordance with the Guidelines for the Development of Academic Programs. As a result, 11 bachelor's and 4 master's programs were revised, course descriptions updated, and recommended reading lists modernised. According to the University, these changes were implemented in response to labor market needs, stakeholder feedback, and benchmarking activities. For example, during the revision of engineering programs, technological changes introduced at Contour Global Hydro Cascade were considered, resulting in revisions to certain professional course learning outcomes and descriptions.

At the same time, document review indicates that, in most programs, the implemented changes have been largely confined to modifications to individual courses or the addition of elective subjects. An exception is the Law master's program, whose curriculum has been comprehensively revised and implemented in the new academic year. The review of course descriptions also reveals that, in several programs, the recommended professional literature is significantly outdated, and the use of contemporary scientific articles and open-access electronic resources remains limited. The content of certain courses also requires modernisation. For example, within the Economics program, the Theory of Economics course is presented as three separate modules, whereas in contemporary economics curricula, its content is typically integrated into Microeconomics and Macroeconomics courses. Similarly, the content of courses related to the business field requires revision to strengthen their applied orientation and interlinkages. In addition, the use of specialised software packages is essential for economics education is limited within the curriculum.

The analysis of curricula further indicates that, in several courses, theoretical and practical hours are allocated equally. However, the course descriptions do not clearly specify the tasks and

learning activities for practical sessions. It is also observed that the University has not developed a unified methodology for calculating and allocating course credits. As a result, the credit workload assigned to certain courses is not fully substantiated. For example, the number of credits allocated to certain literature-related courses does not correspond to the expected volume of reading and the independent student workload.

3.2 The Institution has a policy that promotes alignment between teaching and learning approaches and the intended learning outcomes of academic programs, which ensures student-centred learning.

The review of academic programs indicates that, at Goris State University, teaching and learning methods are outlined in program specifications in general terms, primarily through lectures, practical sessions, and independent student work. In 2021, the Regulation on the Organization and Implementation of Students' Independent Work was approved, defining the types, structure, and monitoring mechanisms for independent work. However, course descriptions do not clearly specify the teaching and learning methods used within individual courses.

The mapping of intended learning outcomes and teaching methods indicates that teaching, learning, and assessment methods are largely presented using identical formulations. For example, independent work is predominantly listed as the main learning method, which does not allow for a clear demonstration of alignment between the methods and the program learning outcomes. The review of course descriptions also shows that, in many cases, the brief course content is presented superficially and does not fully reflect the course's main thematic scope. Course aims and objectives are presented in different formats and are not always clearly formulated.

Thematic plans outline the distribution of theoretical and practical hours. However, the content of practical sessions and the types of tasks assigned are not specified in detail. During expert meetings, it was revealed that practical sessions accompanying theoretical courses are often limited to reproducing theoretical material or administering short quizzes. In some course descriptions, assignments for independent work are provided; however, their link to course content and intended learning outcomes is not always clearly demonstrated.

Classroom observations and expert meetings made it clear that certain courses employ teaching methods such as group discussions, pair work, case analysis, and presentations supported by technical tools. However, these methods are not systematically applied across all academic programs. For example, the internal audit report for the English Language and Literature academic program notes that traditional, non-student-centred methods are frequently used in pedagogy-related courses.

Within certain academic programs, more practice-oriented assignments are also used. For example, within the Economics program, case studies, problem-solving tasks, and discussions are used, while in the Law program, situational tasks and mock court hearings are used. Nevertheless, the review of assignments indicates that they do not always ensure achievement of the program's intended

learning outcomes. The Civil Procedure 2 course includes practical tasks related to drafting procedural documents. However, particularly in the part-time study mode, their implementation remains limited.

Within the Law master's program, differentiated teaching and learning methods and support mechanisms are not applied to students without a prior legal education. As a result, the learning process does not ensure effective engagement of students with diverse levels of prior preparation.

The implementation of part-time study programmes is not supported by systematic mechanisms to ensure continuity of the learning process. Maintaining continuous communication with students between semesters and providing learning materials in advance are not regulated at the institutional level. It is also observed that, in several cases, the effectiveness of distance learning activities remains lower than that of face-to-face instruction, particularly in narrowly specialised courses that require a high level of engagement and continuous academic support.

At the same time, to improve teaching methods, professional development activities for academic staff are delivered both internally and within international projects. In recent years, such training activities have been organised within the Erasmus+ Programme SMARTI, DeSIRe, and CompIIT projects. However, the teaching methods introduced through these training activities are not reflected in the course descriptions, and their application is mainly tied to the use of technical tools rather than pedagogical innovation.

3.3 The Institution has policy on students' assessment according to the learning outcomes and promotes academic integrity.

At Goris State University, the Regulation on Student Knowledge Assessment was developed and approved in 2020, and subsequently revised and reapproved in 2022. The current assessment system is multi-component and includes student participation in classes, completion of laboratory, practical, and independent assignments, as well as mid-term assessments and the final examination. The final grade is calculated on a 100-point scale. The approach defined by the Regulation aims to ensure the application of unified assessment principles across courses and to consider various components of the learning process, including independent work.

The review of academic programs indicates that assessment methods are largely uniform across courses and intended learning outcomes. Mid-term examinations are primarily conducted using multiple-choice questions, while final examinations are generally structured around theoretical questions that emphasise knowledge reproduction. The content of examination tickets typically focuses on reproducing facts and provisions, whereas the assessment of skills and competences envisaged by program learning outcomes is largely assigned to independent or individual assignments.

The review of independent assignments shows that they are predominantly essay-based and show weak links to the development of applied or analytical skills. At the same time, the University lacks unified assessment criteria and rubrics for individual assignments, oral presentations, and other

task types, which could ensure clarity of assessment standards and comparability of approaches used by different instructors.

Within course descriptions, assessment components are presented in general terms, including attendance, ongoing assessments, practical sessions, independent work, and examination. However, it is not clearly specified what type of work students must complete to achieve specific course learning outcomes, nor are the criteria for assessing their performance set out. Within the Law program, situational tasks, tests, and mock court hearings are used; however, in certain courses, assessment tasks do not align with the intended program learning outcomes. For example, in the Criminal Procedure course, assessment is largely limited to tests on legislative formulations, despite the program requiring the development of procedural document drafting skills. In the Civil Procedure 2 course, the envisaged practical tasks are not implemented at sufficient volume, particularly in the part-time mode of study, and are therefore not adequately assessed.

In 2025, the Procedure for Appeals of Student Assessment Results was adopted. During the site visit, it was noted that appeals are generally not recorded.

The organisation of internships holds an important place within the academic programs at GSU and is governed by separate procedures, including those that regulate professional and pedagogical internships. Stakeholder discussions indicate that students view internships as an important component for developing practical skills, particularly within teacher education programs. At the same time, the primary responsibility for developing practical competences is largely transferred to the internship component.

The assessment components of internships are generally defined and typically include attendance, completion of practical assignments, and submission of an internship report. The results of internal audits conducted by the University indicate that, particularly in pedagogical internships, monitoring mechanisms, the formats of internship diaries, and the use of electronic supporting materials require revision.

At GSU, the assessment of final qualification papers and master's theses is based on several components, including the justification of relevance and literature review (10 points), the implementation of the research and the results obtained (30 points), the presentation and formatting of the work (20 points), and the public defence (40 points). The processes related to the preparation, defence, and appeal of final qualification papers and master's theses are governed by relevant procedures.

The review of documents and submitted works indicates that, overall, the structure and format of the papers comply with established requirements. However, the analytical component is often limited, particularly in relation to independent data collection, the use of statistical or scientific sources, and the analysis of collected data.

In this context, it should also be noted that existing mechanisms for ensuring academic integrity do not yet fully address emerging challenges posed by the use of artificial intelligence tools. A review of final qualification papers, master's theses, course papers, and independent assignments produced over

the past two years indicates that some contain segments generated using artificial intelligence tools, particularly in the introduction and conclusion sections, which are not accompanied by appropriate referencing, analysis, or independently formulated conclusions by students. Although such works structurally comply with formal requirements, they demonstrate limited analytical input and independent data processing by students.

The University considers the observations of the Chairs of Final Attestation Commissions. For example, within the English Language and Literature academic program, the commission's observations on the topics of final qualification papers were considered when selecting topics for the following academic year. Expert analysis further indicates that the results of testing and analysing teaching methods applied during students' pedagogical internships are not systematically incorporated into or analysed within final qualification papers.

3.4 The programmes of the Institution are contextually coherent with other relevant programs and promote the mobility of students and staff.

The expert panel's site visit revealed that Goris State University considers benchmarking an important tool for improving academic programs. However, the review of the submitted documentation indicates that the benchmarking process is not yet implemented consistently across all study programmes. The majority of the comparative analyses carried out have been conducted within the framework of the Erasmus+ T-Green project and are primarily focused on the study programmes developed under this initiative[3]. During expert meetings, it was also noted that some benchmarking activities carried out have not been formally documented, which complicates the evaluation of their outcomes and impact.

For example, within the English Language and Literature academic program, benchmarking was conducted with the corresponding program at Shirak State University, primarily through comparisons of curricula and intended learning outcomes. The analysis indicates that the intended learning outcomes of the two programs emphasise different areas: in GSU's program, philological knowledge and competences predominate, whereas in the compared program, greater emphasis is placed on pedagogical competences. At the same time, alignment of learning outcomes was assessed across different domains (e.g., comparing professional learning outcomes with generic competences), but this did not provide a clear assessment of content alignment between the programs or support the formulation of evidence-based conclusions. As a result of the benchmarking exercise, it was recommended that the course "Fundamentals of Conducting Research in the Professional Field" be included in the curriculum; however, this change has not yet been implemented.

For the Economics academic program, documented benchmarking was conducted with the corresponding program at Yerevan State University. However, during the site visit, it became clear that

[3] The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions received from the Institution

comparisons had also been made with programs at other higher education institutions. As a result of the 2024 benchmarking, it was recommended that the curriculum be revised by reducing the overall workload, increasing the share of professional courses, and organising internships in a single phase to ensure a stronger linkage with final qualification papers. However, these recommendations were not incorporated into the curriculum approved in 2025.

For the Law specialisation, benchmarking was conducted against the programs of two Armenian higher education institutions. At the bachelor's level, several courses were renamed or merged, while the master's program revision revealed that the existing curriculum predominantly comprised courses with a criminal law orientation and provided limited coverage of civil and administrative law. To address this issue, several courses were incorporated into the master's curriculum, drawing on the program implemented at the Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia and adapting it to the local context. At the same time, it is observed that some of these courses duplicate subjects already delivered within the bachelor's program.

From the perspective of ensuring program comparability and academic mobility, certain positive developments are evident in international cooperation. Following the previous accreditation, for the first time, two University students participated in mobility activities within the Erasmus+ Programme. Document review indicates that mobility was enabled by the alignment of course content. The University leadership also expects to create opportunities for incoming mobility within the framework of cooperation with international partner universities.

3.5 The Institution adopts policies ensuring academic programme monitoring, evaluation of effectiveness and enhancement.

At Goris State University, several mechanisms are used to monitor and evaluate academic programs, including student surveys, benchmarking, classroom observations, meetings with employers, and graduate surveys, launched in 2025. However, the results of graduate surveys have not yet been consolidated, and comprehensive employer surveys have not been conducted. This limits the completeness of feedback necessary to evaluate program effectiveness.

An important new tool for program monitoring is the implementation of internal audits of academic programs, which commenced in 2024–2025 under the Regulation on the Implementation of Internal Audits of Academic Programs, approved by the Academic Council of GSU on March 31, 2025. The internal audit process was completed before the expert panel site visit, and the corresponding reports were provided to the expert panel. Departments conducted program self-evaluations, with particular attention to the alignment of intended learning outcomes with the Armenian National Qualifications Framework level descriptors.

The review of internal audit reports indicates that they identify program strengths and weaknesses and include formulated recommendations for improvement. However, the findings are generally broad and are not always supported by specific data or a detailed analysis of program content-

related issues. The recommendations mainly focus on enhancing teaching methods, adding elective courses, or modernising pedagogical components; however, they are not always clearly linked to actual program challenges, institutional strengths and weaknesses, or the requirements of the external environment. The use of stakeholder feedback is also limited in the reports, particularly feedback from employers and graduates regarding professional knowledge, skills, and the effectiveness of internships.

During the site visit, it became clear that some recommendations from internal audits have already been reflected in academic programmes. For example, within master's degree programs, practical components have been added to professional courses, and in several programs, the focus of internships has been revised to better align with research or professional activities. Changes have also been introduced to the elective course selection process to enhance transparency and increase student engagement.

At the same time, document review indicates that, in certain programs, elective course diversity remains limited. For example, within the Economics academic program, some elective courses are content-wise similar, which limits students' real opportunities for choice.

Within the Law master's academic program, more substantial changes have been implemented following internal audits. In particular, the list of courses has been revised, and the course "Legal Writing and Drafting of Documents" has been introduced into the curriculum to strengthen the program's practical component. Nevertheless, several other issues identified during the internal audit have not yet received systemic solutions.

Following the consolidation of internal audit results, reports were forwarded to the respective academic departments, and based on these reports, improvement plans were developed. This may be considered the first attempt to systematically plan improvements to academic programs. However, document review indicates that monitoring results have not yet been fully translated into data-driven, content-based changes. The recommendations mainly address organisational or methodological aspects and, to a limited extent, focus on program content structure, the achievement of intended learning outcomes, and their alignment with labor market requirements.

Considerations:

The expert panel considers that the effective implementation of academic programs at Goris State University requires all program components, mission-derived objectives, intended learning outcomes, course content, teaching and learning methods, assessment methods, and monitoring results to be developed within a single, coherent framework. Clarifying these interconnections during program design and revision will ensure that each course's objectives, content, and assessment align with the achievement of all intended program learning outcomes and will support the more comprehensive and systematic implementation of academic programs.

Revising program content within the overall program logic, rather than only at the level of individual course modifications, will contribute to a more balanced structure of program specialisation,

course sequencing, and practical components. Regularly updating recommended literature, including contemporary scientific sources and professional digital resources, and expanding the use of specialised tools and software will support program modernisation and enhance students' professional preparedness.

Strengthening the alignment between teaching and learning methods and intended learning outcomes and clearly defining the content of practical sessions and the types of assignments will contribute to a more balanced integration of theoretical knowledge delivery and the development of applied competencies. This will also make the expected learning outcomes and performance requirements more transparent and understandable for students. The more systematic integration of research-based, analytical, and applied assignments within courses will further support the development of students' professional thinking and independent learning skills.

Aligning assessment methods and tasks with intended learning outcomes and developing clear assessment criteria and rubrics will enhance the transparency and comparability of assessment processes. Differentiating and clarifying assessment methods will enable more reliable evaluation of the full range of professional competences envisaged by academic programs and reduce the concentration of practical skills assessment solely within internships or final qualification papers.

Strengthening the interlinkages between internships and the practical components of courses will support the continuous development of practical competencies throughout the learning process, while positioning internships as a stage for consolidating and applying acquired skills. The more systematic inclusion of practical assignments, professional problem-solving tasks, and applied analytical activities within courses will strengthen students' professional preparedness.

The implementation of benchmarking through comparative analysis of programmes at several leading higher education institutions, together with the systematic documentation of its results, will support evidence-based revision of the content and structure of academic programs at Goris State University. The reflection of these results in curricula and the formulation of intended learning outcomes will enhance program comparability and expand opportunities for student and staff mobility.

During the monitoring of academic programs, the more systematic collection of stakeholder feedback from students, graduates, and employers, and its use in program revision processes, will support data-driven evaluation of program effectiveness. The integration of this data with the results of internal audits and benchmarking activities will contribute to more substantiated planning for content-related and structural program changes.

Within programs delivered in the part-time mode of study, the prior provision of learning materials, the staged organisation of interim assignments, and the application of mechanisms to ensure continuous feedback with students will enhance the effectiveness of the learning process and support more reliable achievement of the intended program learning outcomes.

Reflecting on challenges arising from the use of new technological tools within the academic integrity policy, as well as establishing clear requirements for the analytical and research components

of independent assignments, course papers, and final qualification papers, will contribute to improving the quality of students' independent work and enhancing the reliability of assessment outcomes.

Summary:

Considering that, within the academic programs implemented at Goris State University, content-related and structural issues remain evident, that alignment between course-level learning outcomes and program-level intended learning outcomes is weak, that teaching and learning methods are not clearly defined in relation to expected learning outcomes and the nature of assigned tasks, and that assessment methods and tasks are insufficiently aligned with program learning outcomes to ensure and verify the achievement of all intended learning outcomes defined by the academic program, the expert panel concludes that GSU does not meet the requirements of Criterion 3.

Conclusion:

The compliance of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 3 is **unsatisfactory.**

4. STUDENTS

CRITERION: The Institution provides support services to students, ensuring a productive learning environment

Findings

4.1. The Institution has set mechanisms for promoting students' recruitment, selection and admission procedures.

At Goris State University, clear mechanisms and procedures are in place for student recruitment, selection, and admission. Admission to bachelor's degree programs is conducted in accordance with national regulations governing admission to state and non-state higher education institutions of the Republic of Armenia, based on the results of unified entrance examinations. Admission to the Fine Arts academic program within the Professional Pedagogy specialisation is conducted through institution-based entrance examinations. Admission to master's degree programs is conducted through a competitive process in accordance with regulations approved by the Academic Council of GSU.

To support applicant recruitment and career orientation, academic staff conduct outreach visits to general education schools in line with procedures approved by the University's Academic Council. Meetings are held with senior school students, awareness-raising and engagement activities are delivered, and school students are regularly invited to visit the University as part of various events. During these visits, prospective applicants become familiar with the University's structure, educational

environment, and modes of study, and receive relevant counselling. To disseminate information, the University also utilises the "Applicant" section of its official website and its social media platforms, where the admission process and outreach activities are regularly published.

Analysis of admission-related quantitative data indicates that, in recent years, the University has experienced a steady decline in the overall number of enrolled students. Specifically, the total number of students was 818 in the 2022–2023 academic year, 804 in 2023–2024, 767 in 2024–2025, and 712 in 2025–2026. At the same time, student numbers have increased in certain master's degree programs, partly due to the provision of higher scholarship opportunities in specific fields.

Regarding student attrition and reinstatement, the dropout rate rose from 2.3% to 5.2% between 2020 and 2024. However, in the 2024–2025 academic year, this indicator fell sharply to 0.3%, a marked change from previous years. The student reinstatement rate rose to the 2022–2023 academic year, reaching 7.9% (66 students). However, in subsequent years, the rate declined to 0.4%.

During the site visit, it became clear that the University has taken measures to reduce student attrition. In particular, the significant decline in the number of students dismissed for non-payment of tuition fees is linked to the implementation of social support mechanisms. Partial tuition fee compensation schemes for students from border communities, war participants, socially vulnerable groups, and students displaced from Artsakh, together with the University's flexible tuition discount system, help to reduce students' financial burden.

4.2 The Institution has policies and procedures for assessing student educational needs.

At Goris State University, the Quality Assessment and Assurance Division coordinates the identification of students' educational needs. This process is primarily carried out through surveys, the results of which are analysed and discussed. In the 2024–2025 academic year, survey participation reached 50.4%, an increase of approximately 38% compared with previous years. However, in certain academic programs, the small number of enrolled students (in some cases, only one) limits the use of surveys because anonymity cannot be ensured. Based on survey results, certain components of academic programs have been revised, elective courses have been introduced, and issues raised by students have prompted discussions on infrastructure-related matters (e.g., the absence of a cafeteria) and on student social support measures, including scholarship provision.

The identification of students' educational needs is also supported by their participation in the University's governing bodies, including the University Council, Academic Council, Faculty Councils, and thematic committees. Decisions made in response to issues raised within these platforms have primarily focused on improving the student learning environment.

Another way to identify students' needs is through the institution of academic advisers, who identify individual student concerns and provide academic support. However, survey results from 2024–2025 indicate that student awareness of this institute is approximately 50%, while the average

satisfaction rating is 3.81, suggesting limited effectiveness. The same issue has also been identified in internal audit reports.

4.3. The Institution provides opportunities for extra-curricular activities and advising services aimed at supporting effective student learning

At Goris State University, academic advising and consultation activities are organised in accordance with schedules approved at the departmental level, under which each academic staff member provides consultation hours. Students are informed of consultation schedules through course representatives and academic advisers. Through this mechanism, students receive support in preparing course papers, final qualification papers, and master's theses, as well as in organising internships.

Regarding the provision of additional classes addressing students' needs, it should be noted that certain initiatives are in place at the University. Training courses aimed at improving students' proficiency in foreign languages have been organised. However, these courses are not based on a systematic needs assessment and are not conducted regularly; therefore, their impact is not comprehensive across all stakeholder groups.

The University also organises training activities to develop students' transferable skills and enhance communication, teamwork, and other generic competencies.

4.4. There are precise regulations and schedules for students to turn to the administrative staff for additional support and guidance.

At Goris State University, a schedule for addressing administrative staff is established and made available in the "Student" section of the University's official website and is also posted on the University premises.

Mechanisms for providing students with support and guidance are also described in the Student Guide, available on the University's website. This guide provides students with information on procedures for contacting administrative units and on available support opportunities.

Additional communication channels are available for contacting administrative staff, including the feedback section of the University's official website, the official Facebook page, email, and the telephone numbers of structural units, as well as the contact details of responsible staff members. These channels ensure that students can raise issues and receive timely responses.

At the same time, the analysis shows that these communication platforms are mainly utilised by students enrolled in distance learning programmes, whereas full-time students typically receive answers to their questions through direct communication with relevant structural units.

4.5. The Institution has student career support services.

Within the Strategic Development Programme of Goris State University, support for students' career advancement is a priority, and structural changes have been implemented to realise this goal. In 2023, as a result of the reorganisation of the Education Support and Student Career Assistance Division, the Continuing Education and Career Development (CECD) Division was established to carry out functions related to career development and to raise awareness of labor market requirements.

To support students' entry into the labor market, the University organises a "Job Fair". In 2023, 20 organisations participated in the event, while in 2024, 17 organisations participated. As a result, 8 students secured employment, while an additional 12 students reached preliminary agreements with employers. Based on the outcomes of these events, reports and analytical summaries are prepared to improve their effectiveness in subsequent years.

Data on graduate employment indicate that 50.76% of graduates from the 2024–2025 academic year were employed within six months of graduation, with 15.04% demonstrating career progression.

The CECD Division develops and maintains a graduate database using information from graduate questionnaires. However, the database primarily includes graduates from the past three years, while communication with earlier graduates is conducted mainly by telephone, limiting the establishment of systematic, sustainable feedback mechanisms with alumni.

Career guidance for students is also supported by the Career Guide, approved in 2019, which aims to facilitate students' integration into the labor market and to plan their job search processes.

The University also fosters university–employer cooperation by organising meetings with various organisations. Employer representatives are involved in implementing academic programs and participate in Final Attestation Commissions. The purpose of this cooperation mechanism is to ensure that labor market requirements are considered in the educational process and to create employment opportunities for students.

4.6. The Institution promotes student involvement in research activities.

Student involvement in research activities at Goris State University is carried out in accordance with the document "Directions and Mechanisms for Student Involvement in Research Activities," which defines the forms and instruments of engagement. To promote student participation, the University has established incentive mechanisms. Academic staff receive financial incentives for supervising students' research work (3 points for one student report that is presented but not published, 5 points for a paper published at a national conference, and 10 points for a paper published at an international conference), which fosters joint student–faculty research activities. Student achievements are also encouraged by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia and the Syunik Regional Administration.

The Student Scientific Society (SSS) plays an important role in enhancing students' research activity, organising conferences, seminars, and popular science lectures. As a result, student participation in conferences, including those organised outside the University, increased: in 2023, 6 students, in 2024, 29 students, and in 2025, 40 students.

Student engagement in research activities is also ensured through research components integrated into educational programs. Students complete course papers, final qualification papers, and master's theses, and in certain cases conduct research with applied significance (for example, studies on the use of regional medicinal herbs and their effects).

At the same time, during the expert panel visit, it was noted that student involvement in research activities is more pronounced in the humanities, whereas in the natural sciences it remains limited, owing to the small number of students and the scarcity of research resources.

4.7. The Institution has a unique body which is responsible for the protection of students' rights.

At Goris State University, the principles for protecting student rights are set out in the Internal Regulations, the Code of Ethics, and other regulatory documents, which clearly define students' rights and responsibilities.

The primary body responsible for protecting student rights and representing student interests is the Student Council (SC), which has operated since 2002 as a self-governing, elected representative body. During the expert panel visit, it was noted that the election of the Council's Chairperson is conducted competitively, with several candidates participating, thereby ensuring the structure's representativeness and inclusiveness. At the same time, it was revealed that students enrolled in the part-time mode of study are not represented in the SC.

SC representatives serve on the University's main governance bodies and on several committees (including Ethics, Academic Integrity, and others). This involvement enables issues raised by students to be presented to decision-makers and allows students to participate in the University's governance.

To maintain communication with students, the SC maintains a Facebook page through which it disseminates information about events at the University. However, analysis of the page's content indicates that it primarily covers cultural and entertainment events. The expert panel visit revealed that the SC's function of protecting student rights has limited practical implementation. No cases of violations of student rights have been recorded in recent years.

4.8. The Institution has set mechanisms for evaluating and ensuring the quality of educational, consultancy and other student services.

At Goris State University, the evaluation of student services is carried out primarily through surveys organised by the Quality Assessment and Assurance Department. Student agents are also

involved in the survey process, supporting the organisation of surveys and ensuring participation, thereby contributing to the effectiveness of data collection.

Based on the survey results, analyses, and discussions, the findings inform the decision-making process. In particular, changes have been introduced to academic programs in response to issues raised by students (including the introduction of elective courses); certain regulations have been revised (such as procedures for knowledge assessment and appeals); and issues related to the learning environment have been addressed (including the accessibility of resources, social support mechanisms, and scholarships).

Considerations:

The expert panel positively evaluates the establishment of mechanisms for student admissions, support, and service provision at Goris State University, which ensure student engagement in the educational process and support the organisation of learning. At the same time, the declining trend in admission indicators suggests that evaluating the effectiveness of the University's recruitment activities, along with targeted revisions, may increase the number of applicants.

The tools used to identify students' educational needs (surveys, participation in governance bodies, and direct communication) enable the collection of multidimensional information and support the implementation of improvements based on the findings. At the same time, the effectiveness of these mechanisms varies, and ensuring a clear distribution of roles and their systematic application may enhance the comprehensiveness of needs identification, enabling more effective responses to all identified needs.

Academic support for students is mainly provided through consultations, which helps to organise the learning process. At the same time, the systematic introduction of additional support measures tailored to the needs of different student groups (for example, supplementary classes) may improve learning outcomes.

It is positively noted that the University has established various mechanisms for student guidance and administrative support, ensuring communication between students and governance bodies.

Career development initiatives and employer collaboration help students enter the labor market and support their professional orientation. At the same time, expanding feedback mechanisms with graduates and developing services based on such feedback may enhance the impact of career support. The expert panel emphasises the need to introduce periodic and systematic graduate tracer study mechanisms, which would enable the collection of analyzable data on the effectiveness of educational programs, the applicability of acquired competences, and alignment with labor market needs, and to use these data to target improvements to program content and intended learning outcomes.

Mechanisms to promote student research activities have been established at the University, increasing student engagement and strengthening the link between learning and research. However, disciplinary disparities indicate that developing research activities within academic programs requires a more targeted approach.

Appropriate structures and regulations that protect student rights and representation are in place at the University, enabling student participation in governance processes. At the same time, the fuller utilisation of these structures' functions may contribute to more systematic identification and resolution of student-related issues.

Summary:

Considering that clear mechanisms for student recruitment and admission have been established at Goris State University, tools for identifying students' educational needs are applied, and the necessary academic and organizational support during the learning process is ensured, that academic and administrative staff demonstrate readiness to respond to students' needs, that mechanisms for student career support are in place, and that, following the previous accreditation, the University has undertaken steps to involve students in the institution's research activities, the expert panel concludes that the University meets the requirements of Criterion 4.

Conclusion:

The compliance of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 4 is **satisfactory.**

5. FACULTY AND STAFF

CRITERION: The Institution has a highly qualified teaching and support staffs to achieve the set goals for academic programs and institution's mission.

Findings

5.1. The Institution has policies and procedures promoting recruitment of a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff to provide academic programs.

At Goris State University, the recruitment of academic staff and the professional requirements for them are set out in the "Regulation on the Formation of Academic Staff and Filling of Academic Positions," approved in 2019. The Regulation defines the academic positions of professor, associate professor, assistant, and lecturer, as well as the functions and professional requirements for each position.

As of 2025, the University's academic staff comprises 109 members, of whom 57 are full-time and 52 are part-time. The academic staff includes 5 professors, 34 associate professors, 16 assistants, and 54 lecturers.

The Regulation stipulates that academic staff recruitment should be conducted through a competitive selection process for a five-year term. However, in recent years, no competitions have been conducted at the University. During the expert panel visit, it was revealed that the main reason for this is the instability of student enrolment in certain specialities, which leads the University to avoid long-term contracts. As a result, the selection of lecturers is mainly carried out without competition, based on departmental recommendations and the Rector's orders, while contracts with hourly-paid lecturers are concluded for a one-year term. This approach enables the University to manage its human resources more flexibly. However, it also limits the stability of the academic staff and the assurance of competitive selection.

The University also emphasises employers' involvement in the teaching process. According to the University's data, approximately 57% of academic staff are specialists with practical experience in the labor market.

To supplement academic staff, the University also engages lecturers who teach in a distance-learning mode. These lecturers primarily teach online and are physically present at the University primarily during examination periods. This approach enables the engagement of specialists working at other higher education institutions or residing in other cities. However, during expert meetings, it became clear that such a format does not always ensure full academic communication with students or sufficient engagement in the teaching process. Although it is intended that Deans and Heads of Departments may join online classes to monitor their delivery, systematic studies on the effectiveness of these courses are not conducted at the University, and the primary evaluation tool remains student surveys.

Despite the University's measures, recruiting new academic staff remains a challenge. Expert analyses indicate that some lecturers teach, on average, 5–6 courses across different faculties, sometimes including courses that are not fully aligned with their professional specialisation.

5.2 The requirements for qualifications of teaching staff per academic program are comprehensively stated.

The Regulation on the Formation of Academic Staff and Filling of Academic Positions at Goris State University sets out the general professional requirements and functions for the positions of professor, associate professor, assistant, and lecturer. However, it does not clearly specify additional requirements for the professional qualifications of teaching staff for individual academic programs.

5.3 The Institution has well-established policies and procedures for the periodic evaluation of the teaching staff.

At Goris State University, academic staff evaluation is primarily conducted through two instruments: student surveys and peer-class observations. Student surveys are conducted in accordance with the “Regulation on Student Surveys on the Quality and Effectiveness of Teaching,” adopted in 2019 and revised in 2023, and are administered by the Quality Assessment and Assurance Department. As a result of the revision of the Regulation, the procedures for organising surveys, the mechanisms for using the results, and their potential impact on the professional development of academic staff have been clarified.

Students evaluate lecturers' professional, pedagogical, and organisational competencies through surveys. The Quality Assessment and Assurance Department analyses the survey results, discusses them in focus groups, and submits them to the respective departments for discussion of identified issues and improvement of the teaching process. During the expert panel visit, it was found that certain changes have been implemented based on student survey results, including revisions to teaching methods and measures to ensure transparency in the assessment process.

The aggregated analysis of survey data indicates that, over the last three academic years, surveys have been conducted for nearly the entire academic staff, covering approximately 110–120 lecturers annually. Student participation has remained moderate at approximately 40–48%, while the average lecturer rating has ranged from 4.5 to 4.7. The data indicates that overall student evaluations of teaching are generally high, while student participation remains relatively limited.

Another mechanism for evaluating lecturers is classroom observation, conducted by departments and peer lecturers. Departments develop the classroom observation schedule for each semester. The results of classroom observations are recorded and discussed during departmental meetings.

The review of departmental meeting minutes indicates that classroom observations primarily document the positive aspects of teaching, while specific observations or recommendations aimed at improving teaching methods are recorded less frequently. At the same time, no systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of classroom observations or of their impact has been conducted at the University, making it difficult to assess the extent to which this mechanism contributes to improving teaching quality.

Expert analyses indicate that certain mechanisms for evaluating academic staff have been established at the University. However, their implementation and the systematic analysis of results do not yet fully ensure comprehensive monitoring of the process for improving teaching quality.

5.4 The Institution promotes professional development for the teaching staff according to the needs outlined during regular evaluations (both internal and external).

The development of the professional, pedagogical, and research competences of academic staff is outlined in Goris State University's Strategic Plan. Training activities that support the professional development of lecturers are delivered through Erasmus+ and other international grant programmes.

In recent years, training activities have covered a range of themes, including improving English language proficiency and teaching methods, Armenian language and literature, academic writing, tourism, critical thinking, practical legal skills, soft skills development, and topics related to the engineering field. In addition to training organised by the University, members of the academic staff also participate in external professional development activities on their own initiative or through their primary workplaces, particularly when lecturers are also engaged with employer organisations. During the expert panel visit, it became clear that most training activities were delivered free of charge, while in cases requiring financial resources, the University provided partial financial support.

At the same time, the review of documentation and the outcomes of expert meetings indicate that training activities have largely been organised within the framework of individual initiatives or projects and have not always been based on the systematic identification of academic staff professional development needs. The University has not conducted periodic assessments of staff training needs, which limits the targeted planning of thematic areas for professional development.

During the expert panel visit, it became clear that some lecturers recognised the need for specialised professional training and for improving foreign-language proficiency, particularly in English. Although foreign-language training courses have been organised at the University, their implementation has not yet ensured the level of proficiency required for effective communication or for delivering courses in a foreign language.

The systematic evaluation of training outcomes has also not been conducted. There are no consolidated data on the effectiveness of training activities, the application of acquired skills, or their integration into the teaching process. Nevertheless, during the expert panel visit, it was noted that, in certain cases, lecturers who had participated in external training activities organised internal workshops or applied the acquired experience within the teaching process.

5.5 The Institution ensures a permanent staff for the stable provision of the academic programs.

The analysis of academic staff turnover data for the last three years at Goris State University indicates that personnel changes have occurred during the reviewed period, both in the departure of lecturers and in the recruitment of new academic staff, affecting approximately one dozen lecturers.

The age distribution analysis shows that the average age of academic staff is 50. The proportion of lecturers under 35 remains relatively low at approximately 8%. Given the limited human resources available in the region, the University undertakes several measures to replenish academic staff and ensure the implementation of academic programs. Young professionals, including master's degree graduates, are recruited; various incentive mechanisms are implemented; an approximate 10% salary increase is in place; and a mentoring system has been introduced, in which experienced lecturers support the professional development of early-career specialists.

5.6 There are set policies and procedures for the staff promotion.

To promote the professional advancement of academic staff, Goris State University employs a range of mechanisms, the main directions of which include encouraging research activities and providing professional support for early-career lecturers.

The mechanisms for encouraging research, educational-methodological, and organisational activities among academic staff are set out in the "Regulation on the Encouragement of Research, Educational-Methodological, and Organisational Activities of Academic Staff," approved in 2024. Under the Regulation, conditional points are awarded for encouraged activities and may also be used in the University's academic promotion process. Financial incentives are intended for full-time and internally part-time lecturers. To stimulate the activities of young lecturers, points for certain activities are increased by 20%, while the financial equivalent of one point is determined annually by the Rector's decision. However, the criteria for awarding points are not clearly specified.

Information presented during the expert panel visit indicated that, within the framework of the incentive system, certain lecturers have advanced to academic management positions, such as Head of Department or Dean. Other incentive measures are also applied, including differentiated salary scales for academic staff based on academic degree and title, as well as the involvement of lecturers with proficiency in foreign languages in international programs.

In recent years, four lecturers have obtained the Candidate of Sciences degree, and four lecturers have been awarded the academic title of Associate Professor.

The review of documentation also indicates that the University has not evaluated the effectiveness of the incentive policy or analysed the extent to which academic staff professional advancement or research activity is influenced by the applied incentive mechanisms. According to the self-evaluation report, the activities that are encouraged are mainly carried out by the same group of lecturers.

Another instrument for the professional development of academic staff is the mentoring of early-career lecturers. According to the relevant regulations approved in 2025, experienced lecturers, within the framework of mentoring, support young lecturers in applying teaching methods, developing course syllabi, and organising the teaching and learning process.

5.7 The Institution has necessary administrative and support staffs to achieve the strategic goals.

Following the previous accreditation, the functions of the administrative and support staff at Goris State University have been revised. These functions are defined in the job descriptions for administrative and support positions approved in 2020 and 2024, while the main functions of the structural units are set out in the respective regulations.

The recruitment of support staff is governed by the "Procedure for Recruitment and Dismissal of Support Staff," and their responsibilities are set out in job descriptions. The support staff includes

laboratory assistants in departments, computer classroom technicians, faculty clerks, and a career support specialist for students. Recruitment of support staff is carried out without a competitive selection process.

Currently, the University's administrative staff comprises 23 employees, while the support staff includes 11 members. Mandatory attestation applies to support staff in accordance with the "Regulation on Training and Attestation of Support Staff." In recent years, support staff have participated in training in information technology, English, and law.

The performance evaluation of administrative and support staff is conducted through surveys, in accordance with the "Regulation on Surveys of Student and Academic Staff Satisfaction with the Learning and Working Environment." Surveys are conducted annually, and their results are analysed and submitted to university management, along with relevant recommendations.

The results of the most recent surveys indicate that, alongside overall satisfaction with university units' performance, several areas for improvement have been identified. These include strengthening cooperation among structural units, ensuring the continuous professional development of support staff, introducing innovative management methods, and developing mechanisms for providing feedback.

Considerations:

The expert panel notes that at Goris State University, regulatory procedures for the selection and functioning of academic staff have been established, ensuring the involvement of the professional capacity required to implement academic programs. At the same time, given the limited availability of relevant specialists in the region, academic staff recruitment is often carried out through flexible mechanisms, including the engagement of part-time specialists and employers. This approach enables the implementation of academic programs. However, it requires more systematic planning for academic staff development and recruitment. The University also delivers academic programs through invited lecturers from other higher education institutions and through distance teaching. The systematic application of this practice, along with periodic evaluation of lecturers' performance, continuous monitoring of their activities, and balancing of academic workload, may contribute to the sustainable implementation of academic programs.

The structure of the academic staff indicates that specialists with labour market experience play an important role at the University, contributing to the practical orientation of its academic programs.

A more precise definition of the professional requirements for lecturers at the level of academic programs may improve the alignment between taught courses and lecturers' professional qualifications. This is particularly important for master's programmes, where research-oriented teaching is essential.

The existing mechanisms for lecturer evaluation, including student surveys and classroom observations, provide feedback on the teaching process. A more systematic use of these results to

improve teaching methods and plan professional development activities may enhance the evaluation process's impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

Various training activities and international program collaborations are implemented to support lecturers' professional development and enhance their professional competencies. At the same time, planning training topics based on the periodic identification of academic staff's professional development needs may increase the effectiveness of these measures.

The analysis of the age distribution of academic staff indicates that the proportion of young lecturers is relatively small. The ongoing implementation of mechanisms for the recruitment and professional development of young specialists, including through the mentoring system, may contribute to the gradual generational renewal of academic staff and the sustainable development of the University's human resources.

The expert panel positively evaluates that the functions of administrative and support staff are defined by relevant regulations and that processes for evaluating their performance are in place. Expanding opportunities for professional development may enhance the effectiveness of institutional management.

Summary:

Considering that Goris State University promotes the engagement of lecturers with relevant professional competences in the teaching and learning process, that, following the previous accreditation, the University has taken steps to expand the involvement of practitioners with practical experience in teaching, that certain mechanisms for the evaluation and professional development of academic staff are in place; and that the University has an appropriate complement of administrative and support staff to facilitate the implementation of educational programmes, the expert panel concludes that the University meets the requirements of Criterion 5.

Conclusion:

The compliance of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 5 is **satisfactory.**

6. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

CRITERION: The Institution ensures the implementation of research activity and the link of the research with teaching and learning.

Findings

6.1 The Institution has a clear strategy promoting its research interests and ambitions.

The directions for developing research activities at Goris State University are set out in the University's Strategic Plans for 2019–2023 and 2025–2029. A comparative analysis of these two documents indicates that the main priorities in research activities have been maintained, including the promotion of research, strengthening the link between research and the teaching and learning process, and fostering the internationalization of research outputs. At the same time, the final monitoring report on the implementation of the 2019–2023 Strategic Plan provides limited coverage of research-related activities and is largely descriptive. The report lacks quantitative analysis that would enable the assessment of the effectiveness of implemented actions and the identification of progress achieved in the field of research.

Since the previous accreditation, the University has demonstrated increased research activity, particularly in Armenian studies and the natural sciences. Research in Armenian studies is mainly focused on the Syunik dialect, toponyms, and folklore materials, while in the natural sciences research activities include studies on medicinal plants and other applied research. In terms of the number of scientific publications, the most active departments are Chemistry, Biology, and Engineering. At the same time, research activity in other professional fields remains limited, and interdisciplinary research is not yet sufficiently developed.

In the 2025–2029 Strategic Plan, the directions for research development are presented in a more structured manner. Research areas are defined according to the fields of academic programs offered at the University, namely humanities, social sciences, and natural and mathematical sciences. More specific actions have also been defined, including the establishment of research groups, the organisation of national and international conferences, the attraction of additional funding, and the development of research infrastructure.

The Strategic Plan also emphasises the development of research competencies among university staff and students. To this end, training activities are planned, and mentoring mechanisms will be introduced to increase early-career researchers' involvement. The current Strategic Plan also defines quantitative performance indicators for the increase in scientific publications, the number of organised conferences, student involvement in scientific events, the modernisation of laboratory infrastructure, and the implementation of master's theses with applied significance.

During the expert panel's visit to Goris State University, it became clear that certain initiatives outlined in the Strategic Plan are already being implemented. In particular, the project titled "Innovative Ecological Product for the Prevention of Oral Diseases," authored by lecturers from the Departments of Biology, Chemistry, and Engineering, was recognised as a winning project at the 14th Pan-Armenian Medical Congress (AMWC) held in Madrid. In addition, the project "Folklore, Dialect, Toponyms, and Family Names of the Goris Region" was awarded under the "Scientific Efficiency Promotion Grant Program–2025" announced by the Higher Education and Science Committee of the Republic of Armenia and will be implemented during 2025–2027.

Research in Armenian studies also continues within the framework of cooperation with the Syunik Centre for Armenian Studies. The research carried out in this direction is significant for the study and preservation of the region's cultural and linguistic heritage.

To promote research activity, the University also organises scientific conferences. In 2022, a national scientific conference titled “Syunik as a Centre of Education and Culture,” dedicated to the 55th anniversary of Goris State University, was held, with participation from representatives of approximately 25 scientific and educational organisations from Armenia and abroad. The conference proceedings include 38 scientific articles of 44 contributors.

Another initiative to develop research activities is the Syunik Regional Administration's grant to the Student Scientific Society of Goris State University to organise a national scientific conference.

Within the framework of master’s programs, research with applied significance is also conducted. For example, some master’s theses completed by students in the field of IT address technical issues related to the University’s operations, including the development of an automated bell management system and software solutions for testing processes.

6.2 The Institution has a long-term strategy and med term and short-term programs that address its research interests and ambitions.

At Goris State University, no separate research and development strategy has been developed. The objectives and tasks of the research area are defined in the University’s Strategic Plan and in the actions that ensure its implementation.

During 2019–2022, research activities at the University were coordinated by the Scientific Centre, while in 2022–2023 these functions were carried out by the Scientific Secretary and the Vice-Rector for Academic and General Affairs. Following structural changes and the dissolution of the Scientific Centre, since 2024, the coordination of research activities has been assigned to the Academic Process Management Department. The University management justifies the dissolution of the Scientific Centre by noting that its activities were primarily focused on implementing continuing education programmes.

The review of documentation indicates that the Scientific Center had a mid-term strategic action plan for 2020–2023, developed in line with the University’s 2019–2023 Strategic Plan. During that period, annual research activity plans were prepared, aligned with strategic objectives. Annual reports presented the results of implemented actions in the field, structured according to strategic goals.

The report for the 2023–2024 academic year also presents comparative data on the implementation of certain actions relative to the previous year. Data on the growth of scientific publications demonstrates a positive trend. Based on the recommendations provided in the expert report for the previous accreditation, the University conducted a quantitative analysis of research activity by department for 2021–2024. As a result, an increase in scientific publications was observed:

15 in 2021–2022, 25 in 2022–2023, and 32 in 2023–2024. In the most recent reporting year, the number of publications increased by approximately 28% compared with the previous year.

According to the self-evaluation report, in the 2021–2022 academic year, for the first time, an article affiliated with the University was published in a Scopus-indexed scientific journal. In the 2023–2024 academic year, five articles were published in international scientific journals. The University attributes the increase in scientific activity to its research incentive policy, under which approximately 15–17 lecturers receive financial incentives annually for scientific publications.

At the same time, the review of the Academic Process Management Department's work plan for the 2024–2025 academic year indicates that, unlike previous years, research-related actions are grouped with actions related to the organisation of the educational process and are formulated in a more general manner. No specific results or measurable indicators have been defined for these actions.

In the mid-term activity plans of faculties, the direction for promoting research activity is also presented only briefly. The International Cooperation Division outlines actions related to international collaboration, the involvement of foreign specialists, and participation in mobility programs. However, not all these actions are directly linked to the development of research activities, and specific steps aimed at research-oriented international cooperation have not yet been defined.

Departmental work plans include activities such as organising scientific-methodological seminars, participating in conferences, and publishing scientific works, all intended to support the development of research activity at the departmental level.

6.3 The Institution ensures the implementation of research and its development through sound policies and procedures.

At Goris State University, to promote research activities, the "Regulation on the Encouragement of Research, Educational-Methodological, and Organisational Activities of Academic Staff" was introduced in 2018 and has been revised periodically in recent years, based on the results of implemented activities and relevant recommendations. One of the amendments to the Regulation increases incentives for publications in international scientific databases, such as Web of Science and Scopus; the points assigned for such publications have been increased from 40 to 50. In addition, for early-career researchers (under 35), the points assigned to several research-related activities have been increased by approximately 20%, thereby encouraging young scientists' research engagement.

The increase in scientific publications over the last three years indicates that applied incentive mechanisms have had a positive impact on research activity. At the same time, financial allocations for research and development have gradually increased at the University. In 2022, funding allocated to this area constituted approximately 0.3% of the University's annual budget; in 2023, it increased to about 0.53%; and in 2024, it amounted to approximately 0.5%. However, overall funding for research activities remains limited, and internal grant programmes to establish research groups and support scientific activities across different fields have yet to be implemented.

The renovation and modernisation of laboratories are envisaged in the University's 2025–2029 Strategic Plan. However, no activities in this direction have yet been implemented, and no dedicated financial allocations have been provided in the respective annual budget. As a result, University researchers, in certain cases, use laboratory facilities at partner organisations, particularly the Kajaran Copper-Molybdenum Combine and research centres in Yerevan.

The University also emphasises student involvement in research activities. The Regulation on academic staff incentives includes provisions that award points for supervising student research work. For example, supervising a student's report that is presented but not published is awarded 3 points, supervising a paper presented and published at a national conference is awarded 5 points, and supervising a paper presented at an international conference is awarded 10 points.

To promote student research activity, the University approved the document "Directions and Mechanisms for Student Involvement in Research Activities" in 2024, which defines the forms of curricular and extracurricular research, engagement mechanisms, and monitoring procedures.

Meetings held during the expert panel visit indicated that collaboration between lecturers and students in research activities is two-way: in some cases, lecturers propose research topics and guide students, while in other cases, students initiate research topics and seek lecturers' guidance. This collaboration has contributed to the development of students' research competences and to an increase in co-authored scientific publications.

Student research activity is also supported by the Student Scientific Society of Goris State University. Currently, it comprises 18 members who organise scientific-methodological seminars and discussions, participate in conferences, and deliver scientific presentations. According to an analysis of research activities for 2021–2024, approximately 10 students participate annually in student scientific conferences organised by various higher education institutions across Armenia, with the University covering their travel expenses.

6.4 The Institution emphasizes internationalization of its research.

In the 2025–2029 Strategic Plan of Goris State University, the internationalization of research is identified as a separate objective within the research development goals. This direction is also included in the faculty's mid-term plans. However, expert analysis indicates that systematic and sustained results in this area remain limited.

Between 2021 and 2025, several articles authored by University researchers were published in foreign scientific journals. Seven articles were published in scientific journals of the CIS countries, of which two were published in journals indexed in Scopus, while five were published in journals recognised by the Higher Attestation Commission of the Russian Federation and indexed in the Russian Science Citation Index. During the same period, an additional eight articles were published in international peer-reviewed foreign journals, two of which appeared in Scopus-indexed journals, including Quality in Higher Education and Forum for Linguistic Studies.

In July 2023, representatives of Goris State University, together with four students, participated in training courses organised as part of the Erasmus+ SAH program at the National Technical University of Athens. As a result of this participation, a student research project was developed.

6.5 The Institution has well-established mechanisms for linking research with teaching.

At Goris State University, the research component of teaching and learning is supported through course papers, final qualification papers, master's theses, and students' independent work. The organisation and requirements of these activities are set out in the "Regulation on the Organisation and Implementation of Students' Independent Work at GSU." Students also engage in extracurricular research activities, including conference participation, seminar presentations, and, in some cases, the publication of scientific articles.

The review of documentation and the outcomes of expert meetings indicated that, when proposing topics for individual assignments, lecturers often encourage students to pursue further exploration of these topics and to develop them into conference presentations or scientific articles. This approach contributes to the development of students' research interests and strengthens student–lecturer collaboration. At the same time, the review of students' completed works revealed that a considerable portion of independent assignments remains descriptive or referential, limiting the systematic and in-depth integration of the research component into academic programs.

Since the 2022–2023 academic year, the elective courses "Methodology of Mathematical Research" and "Methodology of Biological Research" have been incorporated into the curricula of the Mathematics and Biology master's programmes. These courses were introduced as part of the "Engaged Citizen" program and are designed to develop students' research competencies.

One of the University's research priority areas, the study of plant antioxidant properties, has been partially integrated into academic programs. Drawing on research in this field, the elective course "Bioantioxidants" has been introduced into the Chemistry program's curriculum. This reflects the research carried out in this area and contributes to strengthening the link between research and teaching and learning.

Considerations:

The expert panel positively evaluates the inclusion of research activities at Goris State University in the University's strategic development agenda and their status as an important component of the educational process. Defining research development directions and actions within the strategic plans provides a foundation for planning and advancing this field. At the same time, a more systematic, quantitative and analytical presentation of research results during the evaluation of the implementation of the Strategic Plan may contribute to assessing the effectiveness of implemented actions and to formulating more clearly defined future development steps.

Certain research directions have been established at the University, particularly in Armenian studies and the natural sciences, reflecting both the University's professional potential and the region's scientific and cultural specificities. The development of these directions provides an important basis for enriching the content of relevant academic programs. At the same time, the development of research activities in other program areas and the promotion of interdisciplinary cooperation may expand the University's research capacity and foster research-based development of academic programs.

It is equally important to ensure the ongoing development and sustainability of established research directions. In areas where positive results have already been achieved, it is advisable to establish research groups, encourage early-career researchers' involvement, and ensure the continuity of scientific themes. This issue is especially important for the natural sciences, where the limited number of students in certain academic programs may affect the sustainability of research capacity. Therefore, the application of additional mechanisms to ensure student involvement and the continuity of research in these fields is recommended.

The expert panel considers that defining clear, measurable outcomes and indicators for research activities at the institutional, faculty, and departmental levels may contribute to more targeted management of this field and to strengthening its linkage with the development of academic programs.

The incentive mechanisms applied at the University to promote research activities contribute to increased academic staff scientific activity, as reflected in the growth of scientific publications. At the same time, expanding research funding opportunities and introducing internal grant programmes may help establish research groups whose activities could directly contribute to modernising academic program content.

Appropriate infrastructure is also of significant importance for the effective implementation of research activities. The modernisation of laboratory infrastructure and the development of the research environment may, particularly in natural science academic programs, strengthen the integration between teaching and research.

It is positively noted that the University places importance on student involvement in research activities. The activities of the Student Scientific Society, students' participation in conferences, and lecturers' encouragement to supervise student research contribute to the development of students' research competencies. At the same time, the more consistent integration of the research component into academic programs and the deeper research orientation of student work may help establish a stronger link between learning outcomes and research activities.

Steps taken towards the internationalization of research, particularly participation in international programs and publication in international scientific journals, provide a foundation for the development of international research cooperation at the University. The expansion of these collaborations may also contribute to the internationalization of academic programs and to the further development of their research component.

Summary:

Considering that Goris State University has defined research activity as a key priority in its strategic documents and has established corresponding actions and indicators for its implementation, that mechanisms to encourage research activities are in place, that student involvement in research activities is ensured, and that certain results have been recorded in specific research areas, the expert panel concludes that the University meets the requirements of Criterion 6.

Conclusion:

The compliance of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 6 is **satisfactory.**

7. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

CRITERION: The Institution has necessary resources to create learning environment and to effectively support the implementation of its stated mission and goals.

Findings

7.1 The Institution has an appropriate learning environment for the implementation of current academic programmes.

Goris State University operates across three academic buildings totalling 8,660.5 sq. m. The University's infrastructure also includes a dormitory, library, canteen, and several auxiliary facilities that provide the essential conditions for the organisation of the teaching and learning process.

Over the past three years, renovation and material-technical improvement works have been carried out at the University through institutional funds, international grant programs, and the support of employer organisations. Within this framework, several classrooms and offices have been modernised and equipped with new furniture and equipment.

Following the previous accreditation, new computer laboratories have also been established at the University, enabling students to access modern computing technologies. Overall, the available classrooms are furnished and provide the necessary learning environment for the implementation of bachelor's and master's programs. However, the alignment between available resources and the intended learning outcomes of academic programs indicates that the material-technical base does not fully meet the requirements of the teaching and learning process in certain programmes. Laboratory facilities for educational and research activities in the natural sciences remain limited. Laboratories in Chemistry, Biology, Physics, and Electronics are mainly equipped with devices preserved from the Soviet period. While some of this equipment remains functional and allows selected experiments to be conducted, it does not fully support the practical and experimental activities required by modern

program requirements. At the same time, it should be noted that, for non-natural science programs, the available resources generally meet the requirements for program implementation.

To compensate for the limitations of the laboratory base, the University cooperates with employer organisations. Students regularly conduct chemical experiments in the laboratories of the Kajaran Copper-Molybdenum Combine, while certain practical activities foreseen within the Electronics program are conducted at the facilities of Goris Gamma CJSC. At the same time, based on the results of scientific experiments conducted by lecturers of the Chemistry Department, a project submitted in 2025 was recognised as a winner in a grant competition organised in Madrid, indicating a certain level of effective utilisation of available resources.

The library of Goris State University is equipped with professional and fiction literature. However, there remains a need to expand the collection of up-to-date professional literature in line with the contemporary requirements of academic programs. In recent years, reorganisation and inventory activities of the book collection have been carried out, and in 2024, all library materials were assigned accounting codes within the institutional system. Library acquisitions are carried out in response to requests submitted by departments. However, the process proceeds relatively slowly, and the proportion of modern sources among newly acquired literature remains limited.

The University also seeks to expand access to electronic resources. A portion of the most frequently requested literature has been digitised and uploaded to the electronic library on the University's website. However, the number of electronic resources remains limited, with relatively few materials available online for each field of study. During the expert panel visit, it was revealed that the University has recently acquired a new server and that technical upgrades are underway. As a result, the uploading of new materials to the website has been suspended, and required literature is often provided to students via individual email.

Although the University does not subscribe to international electronic databases or participate in inter-university library networks, students and academic staff use open-access electronic resources from other higher education institutions in Armenia. The library of Goris State University also cooperates with the National Library of Armenia and, when necessary, accesses its collections through interlibrary loan services. During the expert panel visit, it was also noted that students, when needed, make use of the Goris municipal library's resources.

A reading hall within the library, equipped with the necessary technical facilities, is used for distance and blended learning sessions.

The review of available resources revealed that the student canteen and dormitory are currently non-operational. At the same time, a guesthouse operates within the library building, intended for lecturers arriving from remote settlements and for part-time students with childcare responsibilities.

7.2 The Institution provides appropriate financial resources with necessary equipment and facilities as needed to achieve its mission and goals.

The review of Goris State University's financial statements for 2022–2024 indicates that the University's total revenues increased by approximately 10% over the period. In 2024, budgetary funding rose by about 33.5% compared with the previous year, while extra-budgetary revenues fell by about 15.2%, mainly due to the completion of international grant programs and a reduction in their volumes.

The analysis of the financial structure shows that the University's primary source of revenue is extra-budgetary income, with student tuition fees accounting for approximately 66% of total revenues. Budgetary funding accounts for about 22–23% and is mainly derived from state-funded student places. Among additional revenue sources, fee-based course income is notable, accounting for approximately 0.64% of total revenue in 2024. This share remains limited, and given the University's regional role, there is potential to increase additional income by organising short-term academic programs and professional training courses.

Within the expenditure structure, salary-related expenses remain the largest share, accounting for approximately 47% in 2024. This is a slight decrease compared with previous years, reflecting reduced spending on support and technical staff. At the same time, allocations to the stabilization fund and other non-salary expenditure have increased, rising from 19.3% to 26.5%.

Expenditure on the professional development of academic staff remained largely unchanged during the period under review, accounting for approximately 0.04% of the total budget. By contrast, expenditure on research activities increased from 0.30% to approximately 0.5%. At the same time, library-related expenditure stood at approximately 0.02% in 2024, down from previous years. No separate budget allocations were made in 2024 for the procurement of laboratory equipment and materials.

Capital and major renovation expenditures increased during the period under review. Their share of the total budget rose from 0.30% in 2022 to approximately 4.90% in 2024, indicating the University's investment in infrastructure improvements.

During the expert panel visit, it became clear that upgrading the material-technical base, particularly through modern equipment and computer technologies, is largely implemented through international grant programs. Consequently, the process of technical modernization is significantly dependent on grant funding, highlighting the increasing need to develop alternative funding sources in the event of a reduction in grant opportunities.

Expert analyses indicate that the current financial management system ensures the University's overall operational stability. However, from the perspective of achieving strategic objectives, assessing the effectiveness of financial investments remains challenging, as the previous Strategic Plan did not define clear, measurable indicators, and the new Strategic Plan is still in its early stages.

7.3 The Institution has a policy on financial distribution and capacity to sustain and ensure the integrity and continuity of the programmes offered at the Institution.

At Goris State University, the allocation of financial resources is regulated by internal documents, in particular the University Regulation on "Financial Management, Planning, and Monitoring." Financial planning is carried out based on budget requests submitted by structural units. These requests are aligned with the University's financial capacities, after which expenditure implementation is organized in compliance with the requirements of the Law on Procurement of the Republic of Armenia.

The allocation of financial resources for implementing academic programs is guided by the principle of a consolidated institutional budget. Revenues from different academic programs are consolidated into a single financial flow, and expenditures are planned across all programs in line with established institutional priorities. This approach enables the continued implementation of non-self-sustaining academic programs. In certain natural science programs (e.g., Biology, Chemistry, Physics), student cohorts are small, sometimes consisting of only one or two students per year, and their implementation is made possible through cross-subsidisation from revenues generated by other academic programs.

The financial sustainability of academic program delivery largely depends on tuition fees, indicating the University's significant reliance on this funding source. At the same time, the University seeks to attract additional financial resources through participation in international grant programs. During the expert panel visit, it was also revealed that the University is considering changing its organisational-legal status (from a state non-commercial organisation to a foundation), which would enable the institution to engage in broader economic activities, including the provision of fee-based courses and professional training programs.

Various information technology solutions are used to support the organisation of the teaching and learning process. Currently, the University operates 27 licensed IT software programs. During the expert panel visit, it was confirmed that the applied professional software tools are generally up to date, integrated into the teaching process, and largely align with labor market requirements. Computer laboratories are accessible to students from various academic programs, particularly for the delivery of Informatics courses. At the same time, it was noted that within the Economics academic program, modern analytical software packages are not utilised in the Statistics course, for example, IBM SPSS Statistics, which may limit the development of students applied analytical competencies.

7.4 The Institution's resource base supports the implementation of Institution's academic programmes and strategic plan, which promotes sustainability and continuous improvement of quality.

The review of previously published institutional reports, together with income and expenditure estimates, indicates that the allocation of financial resources is not always directly aligned with the priorities set out in the Strategic Plan. The analysis of the documentation and information presented

during the expert panel site visit also shows that the University has not yet established a clear, systematic framework to ensure financial sustainability.

At the same time, the 2025–2029 Strategic Plan envisages the development of fundraising mechanisms and the diversification of financial flow sources. However, during the expert panel visit, such mechanisms had not yet been developed by the University.

During the expert visit, it also became evident that the University is engaged in discussions with employer organisations in the region regarding potential infrastructure investments. The development of such partnerships is intended to contribute to the gradual strengthening of the University's resource base and to improve the conditions for implementing academic programs.

Expert analyses indicate that the University's existing resource base enables the implementation of academic programs. However, the linkage between achieving strategic objectives and resource development has not yet been fully systematised.

7.5 The Institution has a sound policy and procedure to manage information and documentation.

At the University, document circulation is governed by the GSU Record Management Procedure. The circulation of documents is administered by the Human Resources and Record Management Division for both paper-based and electronic formats.

At Goris State University, an internal computer network operates, enabling the exchange of information between the University's structural units. Official document circulation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia is also carried out through the Mulberry electronic system. Internal electronic communication is mainly conducted via email.

In the University's financial management and accounting processes, the "AS" Accounting Software is used to systematically manage and record financial data.

Documents related to the activities of the University's structural units are stored and archived in accordance with established procedures by the archivist.

7.6 The Institution creates safe and secure environment through health and safety mechanisms taking into account the students with special needs.

At Goris State University, the physical safety of students and staff is ensured through security, healthcare, and sanitary and hygienic measures coordinated by Department of Organization of Economic Activities.[4] The University operates a medical point and a security service, which together ensure a safe and controlled environment across the University premises.

[4] The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions received from the Institution

Fire safety requirements are met in the University buildings; evacuation plans are available; an operational fire response plan is in place; fire prevention measures are implemented; and fire-fighting equipment is installed. In laboratories, safety regulations are displayed prominently to govern the safe use of equipment and materials.

Accessibility of University buildings for people with special needs is partially ensured; ramps are available only on the ground floor of the third academic building. Although there are currently no students or staff with mobility impairments studying or working at the University, the need to ensure full building accessibility remains relevant.

In emergencies, a shelter is available on the University premises, with an average capacity of approximately 70 people. At the same time, given the region's security risks, the availability and adequacy of shelters remain important considerations for the further development of the University's safety and risk management system.

7.7 The Institution has special mechanisms in place for the evaluation of the effectiveness, applicability and availability of resources given to the teaching staff and learners.

At Goris State University, the evaluation of the accessibility and usability of resources provided to students and academic staff is primarily conducted through surveys administered by the Quality Assessment and Assurance Division. The survey results are discussed within the relevant structural units and communicated to academic advisers and governing bodies to identify emerging issues and ensure their resolution.

The analysis of survey results from the 2024–2025 academic year indicates that overall evaluations of the learning and working environment are above average. The Division for the Organisation of Economic Activities received an average rating of 4.14 points. At the same time, comparatively lower ratings were recorded in specific areas, particularly regarding the provision of sanitary-hygienic conditions and measures to protect staff and students in emergency situations, indicating the need to improve safety and living conditions.

Survey findings also indicate that the most significant concerns about resource effectiveness were identified in library services. Satisfaction with the library stood at 3.87 points, while lower scores were recorded for opportunities to participate in international and national programs, for cooperation with libraries in the Republic of Armenia and abroad, and for the operation of the electronic library. These findings indicate that improving access to and modernising information and library resources remain key priorities for the University's further development.

Considerations:

At Goris State University, the existing infrastructure and material-technical resources generally enable the implementation of academic programs. In recent years, renovation work and improvements to material-technical resources, as well as the modernisation of computer laboratories, have enhanced the learning environment and ensured students' access to modern technical facilities.

At the same time, aligning academic program requirements with available material-technical resources indicates that, in certain fields, particularly in natural science programs, the capacity and equipment of laboratory facilities do not fully support the implementation of modern experimental and practical activities. Using the laboratories of employer organisations provides an opportunity to partially compensate for this gap. However, the gradual modernisation of laboratory infrastructure would contribute to the more effective delivery of the practical components of academic programs.

The availability of library and information resources ensures the basic conditions necessary for organising the educational process. However, limited access to up-to-date professional literature and electronic resources indicates the need for their continuous replenishment and renewal. Expanding electronic resources and providing access to international information databases would create more effective research opportunities for students and academic staff.

The University's financial management system generally ensures the institution's current operational stability. However, the structure of financial resources indicates a high reliance on student tuition fees and international grant programs. The diversification of funding sources and the development of mechanisms to generate additional income could strengthen the University's financial sustainability.

The allocation of financial resources for the implementation of academic programs is carried out according to the principle of a unified institutional budget, which enables the continuity of programs with small enrollments. At the same time, establishing a clearer linkage between financial planning and strategic objectives would contribute to the more targeted and efficient use of institutional resources.

The University has established core mechanisms for document circulation and information management, supporting the implementation of administrative and governance processes. Further development of information systems could enhance the efficiency of internal communication and management processes.

The mechanisms used to evaluate the usability and effectiveness of resources enable the University to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the learning environment. A more systematic use of survey results in resource development planning could contribute to the continuous improvement of the learning environment.

Summary:

Taking into consideration the improvements made to infrastructure and material-technical resources at Goris State University following the previous accreditation, the availability of the key

conditions necessary for the organisation of the educational process, as well as the existence of certain financial management and resource evaluation mechanisms, and the availability of an environment necessary for the implementation of academic programs, the expert panel concludes that the University meets the requirements of Criterion 7.

Conclusion:

The compliance of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 7 is **satisfactory.**

8. SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY

CRITERION: The Institution is accountable to the government and society for the education it offers and the resources it uses as well as for the research it conducts.

Findings

8.1. The Institution has clear policy on accountability.

In 2020, Goris State University approved the "Policy on Ensuring Accountability to Stakeholders" and the "Procedure for Ensuring Accountability to Stakeholders", which set out the key principles of institutional accountability, vertical communication links, and the tools and mechanisms for ensuring accountability to internal and external stakeholders.

The University's accountability processes are governed by Armenian legislation, the Charter of GSU, and the Strategic Plan. The primary form of accountability is the Rector's annual report on university activities, compiled from data submitted by all structural units and presented to the University Council. Upon Council approval, the report is published on the University's official website and made available to the public.

A review of the Rector's annual reports published on the website (the most recent available during the expert panel visit, covering the 2023–2024 academic year) indicates that they primarily summarise activities implemented across various areas of university operations. The reports are largely descriptive, with a limited analytical component. Existing challenges, their underlying causes, and directions for improvement are not presented systematically. Nevertheless, the section on financial and economic activities includes analytical observations, conclusions, and recommendations for improvement. At the same time, a comparison of the improvement directions outlined in this section with those of the previous year's report indicates that they have largely remained unchanged, with only minor modifications.

In the financial and economic domain, accountability is based on the income and expenditure estimates approved by the Academic Council. Their implementation is presented at the end of the year, approved by the University Council, and subsequently published on the University's website. However, a review of the relevant section of the website indicates that the series of published financial reports is incomplete; income and expenditure estimates, procurement plans, and financial reports for certain years are missing.

The reports submitted present selected outcomes of the University's activities. However, the direct linkage between these outcomes and the objectives defined in the Strategic Plan is not clearly articulated.

8.2 The Institution ensures transparency of its procedures and processes and makes them publicly available.

Transparency of activities and the public dissemination of information at Goris State University are primarily ensured by the Division for External Relations, Cooperation and Media. The main platforms for information dissemination are the official University website and the GSU and Division for Continuing Education and Career Development Facebook pages. The Student Council also operates its own Facebook page, which is managed by students. Information on University activities is also disseminated through local media outlets, particularly the Goris Today Media Group, which operates in the Syunik Province.

The official website of the University provides a range of information on the activities of structural units, including, in some cases, annual work plans and mid-term development programmes for individual divisions. The webpages of faculties and academic departments include the curricula vitae of academic staff and details of the courses they deliver.

At the same time, certain information sections, particularly the full academic programs in the "Education" section, are accessible only with login credentials, limiting free access to external stakeholders.

The University website operates in three languages- Armenian, Russian, and English. However, the information presented in the foreign-language sections is largely limited. The 2025–2029 Strategic Plan envisages modernising the website and systematically updating information in Armenian and foreign languages. Nevertheless, the mid-term plan of the relevant structural unit does not clearly define measurable indicators for implementing activities in this area.

The Division for Continuing Education and Career Development's Facebook page is also active, with approximately 2,600 followers. The content primarily covers professional development training, non-formal courses, student admissions, career guidance, and career support services.

Information on processes implemented at the University is also made accessible to various groups of society through meetings organised with external and internal stakeholders, student exchange visits, and information and outreach events.

8.3 The Institution has sustainable feedback mechanisms for establishing contacts with society.

At Goris State University, the main channels for public communication and feedback include the "Feedback" section of the official University website, email, social media platforms, and telephone. Information exchange is primarily conducted via the University's Facebook page and electronic mail.

On an annual basis, the University's Facebook page receives more than 130 messages, to which the responsible structural units provide responses. The inquiries received mainly relate to student admissions, the University's academic programs, and organised events.

Expert analysis indicates that the existing feedback mechanisms are primarily oriented towards responding to stakeholder inquiries. However, systematic processes for the periodic assessment of stakeholders' informational needs, as well as the targeted publication of information based on those needs, have not yet been established at the University.

8.4 The Institution has mechanisms that ensure knowledge /value/ transfer to the society.

Goris State University implements a range of educational and informational initiatives to transfer knowledge to society, particularly through professional development and training programs. To this end, the Division for Continuing Education and Career Development operates within the University structure and conducts needs assessment surveys among internal and external stakeholders. Based on the identified needs, the Division organises training courses to develop professional and soft skills, thereby ensuring opportunities for continuing (non-formal) and supplementary education.

Since 2019, the University, with the endorsement of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia, has been implementing training programs for heads of general education institutions, aimed at obtaining the certificate that grants the right to hold a managerial position. Since 2022, the scope of these training activities has been expanded to include programs for preschool educational institution heads.

The University also implements various initiatives for information and career guidance. These include the "School Intellectual Crossroad" initiative for school students, as well as visits by university academic staff to schools within the region and by school students to the university. Information about these activities is published on the University's social media platforms.

Considerations:

The expert panel notes that at Goris State University, mechanisms for accountability and communication with society have been established, ensuring the publication of information on university activities and maintaining communication with stakeholders. The preparation and publication of annual reports provide an opportunity to present the University's main outcomes. At the same time, further enhancing the analytical component of the reports, including the presentation of

identified challenges and measures for their resolution, as well as the clear linkage of reported outcomes to the objectives of the Strategic Plan, could contribute to the more effective use of the accountability system as a management and development tool.

Information dissemination is primarily delivered through the University website and social media platforms, helping reach a wider audience with information about university activities. Ensuring the completeness of information published on the website and expanding the content of foreign-language sections could improve accessibility for external stakeholders and enhance the international visibility of the University's activities.

Communication with society is primarily through responses to stakeholder inquiries. The development of mechanisms for periodic assessment of stakeholders' informational needs, as well as for planning targeted communication activities based on identified needs, could contribute to establishing more effective interaction between the University and society.

It is a positive development that the University's professional training, career guidance, and applicant engagement activities strengthen institutional links with society and the regional educational community. More systematic planning of these activities and their clear integration into the Strategic Plan could further support the University's societal role in the region.

Summary:

Considering that mechanisms ensuring accountability are in place at the University, enabling stakeholders to be informed about the main outcomes of institutional activities, that the transparency of ongoing processes is ensured through the publication of information on the University website and social media platforms, and that initiatives aimed at transferring knowledge and values to society are implemented, the expert panel concludes that Goris State University meets the requirements of Criterion 8.

Conclusion

The compliance of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 8 is **satisfactory.**

9. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

CRITERION: The Institution promotes experience exchange and enhancement through its sound external relations practices, thus promoting the internationalization of the Institution.

Findings

9.1 The Institution promotes its external relations through sound policies and procedures aimed at creating an environment conducive to experience exchange and enhancement and internationalization.

At Goris State University, internationalization is one of the strategic directions of institutional development. While the 2019–2023 Strategic Plan set out objectives for internationalization and the development of external relations, along with tasks for their implementation, in relatively general terms, the 2025–2029 Strategic Plan sets out more clearly defined objectives, tasks, and actions, together with performance indicators to evaluate their implementation. The Strategic Plan envisages promoting the internationalization of education through expanded cooperation with leading higher education institutions and organizations, as well as through the attraction of international students and academic staff. In the area of internationalizing research activities, the Plan foresees the development of academic mobility and the creation of new opportunities for scientific cooperation and funding.

In pursuit of these strategic objectives, the University has taken several steps. Following the previous accreditation, the University has expanded its participation in the Erasmus+ Programme, taking part in 5 projects. At the same time, cooperation agreements have been signed with international and national educational institutions, opportunities have been created for the professional development of administrative and academic staff, and new educational modules and digital tools, including Moodle, Confluence, and IdiAL, have been introduced to support the modernisation of the educational process and the development of international cooperation.

At the same time, the analysis of the evidence presented indicates that the University's internationalization toolkit remains limited. The primary mechanism for external cooperation remains participation in Erasmus+ Programme projects, which play an important role in developing international cooperation. However, reliance on these programs alone cannot fully ensure the long-term sustainability of the internationalization process.

In addition, several internal factors within the University constrain opportunities for developing external relations. Some of these challenges were also identified in the University's analytical study, "Effectiveness of Cooperation between Goris State University and Partner Institutions". Although the study was conducted in 2022, certain issues remain relevant. In particular, the University's reliance on external funding sources and the limited number of staff with adequate proficiency in foreign languages restrict opportunities for international cooperation. This limitation is especially evident in attracting international students to mobility programs, as the University does not yet offer educational programmes delivered in foreign languages.

9.2 The Institution's external relations infrastructure ensures regulated process.

At Goris State University, the coordination of external relations and internationalization is managed by the Division for External Relations, Cooperation and Media. The Division was established

on 1 February 2023 by a decision of the Academic Council of GSU, following the merger of the Public Relations and Media Division and the Division for External Relations and Cooperation. The Division employs two staff members, one responsible for external relations and cooperation, and the other for public relations and media communication.

The Division's activities are regulated by a relevant regulation that defines the key functions for organising external cooperation and internationalization. These functions include concluding cooperation agreements with other educational institutions and organisations, disseminating information on international and academic programs among university structural units, providing organisational support for academic mobility within international programs, and promoting the development of foreign-language proficiency and expanding foreign-language content on the official University website.

The Division's activities are planned through mid-term strategic action plans and annual work plans. The mid-term plans define the main directions of activities and certain performance indicators; however, some of these indicators remain general, and the expected final outcomes are not always clearly specified. For example, in the case of foreign language training courses, the evaluation indicators mainly include the number of course participants and the difference between initial and final assessment results, while the expected final level of language proficiency is not clearly defined.

At the same time, the review of annual action plans indicates that the University has taken specific steps to improve the clarity of the planning process, in light of the observations outlined in the previous expert accreditation report. Implementation timelines and expected outcomes are more clearly defined in the action plans, and the annual reports present implemented activities in a more analytical manner.

The primary tool for evaluating the effectiveness of the Division's activities is the satisfaction surveys conducted among students and academic staff regarding the learning and working environment. According to the 2025 surveys, the average evaluation score for the Division's activities among academic staff was 82.8%.

9.3 The Institution effectively collaborates with local and international counterparts.

Following the previous accreditation, Goris State University has broadened the scope of its cooperation activities. At present, the University maintains cooperation agreements and memoranda with 43 national and 36 international higher education institutions and organisations.

The University has strengthened cooperation with Armenian higher education institutions, research organisations, and partner institutions to expand opportunities for educational, research, and organisational collaboration. The University has continued to reinforce partnerships established in previous years with several universities and research institutions. These collaborations are mainly focused on organising student professional placements, developing practical skills, and providing the practical component of academic programs. In several cases, cooperation has also enabled the joint use

of partner resources, particularly laboratories and specialised infrastructure within the educational process.

International cooperation is demonstrated through joint projects, academic mobility, and the shared use of resources. Within this framework, the University has also taken steps to establish links with Armenian studies centres in the diaspora. To this end, a list of Armenian studies centres operating in the diaspora was compiled, and cooperation proposals were sent to relevant institutions. As a result, a cooperation agreement was concluded with Paris Lodron University of Salzburg. The Director of the Institute for the Study of the Christian East and Head of the Armenian Studies Department delivered lectures for the University's academic staff and students, contributing to the exchange of academic and research experience.

In the area of academic mobility, the University participates in Erasmus+ Programme international credit mobility projects. As a result of this cooperation, 7 staff members and students from the University have undertaken international mobility, while the University has hosted 3 academic staff members and 2 students. Although mobility indicators remain limited, they have increased compared with previous years.

The University has also intensified its participation in Erasmus+ Programme projects. During 2020–2025, five projects, SMARTI, SAH, T-GREEN, CompIIT, and DeSIRe, were implemented. As a result, five centres equipped with modern technologies were established at the University, [5]educational modules were developed and introduced, two manuals were published, and training sessions and various events were organised for academic staff and students. Within these projects, collaboration and e-learning platforms were created; the IT infrastructure of the CompIIT project (IdiAL) was launched, and a virtual campus was established. These projects have enabled the University not only to expand international cooperation but also to support infrastructure development and improve institutional resources.

At the same time, the analysis of cooperation agreements indicates that some agreements lack clearly defined objectives and planned actions to achieve long-term outcomes. Since 2022, systematic monitoring of the effectiveness of cooperation activities has not been conducted, and there is no comprehensive analysis of the relevance, necessity, and outcomes of various cooperation initiatives.

In addition, the geographical scope of international cooperation is largely limited to European universities, while a strategic approach to developing cooperation with regional higher education institutions has not yet been established. During the expert panel visit, it also became evident that the University had received a cooperation proposal from a university operating in Iran. However, this proposal has not yet progressed to practical implementation.

The analysis of the evidence presented indicates that the University is taking steps to expand external relations. However, the planning of cooperation activities, their effectiveness evaluation, and their strategic orientation still require further systematic development.

[5] The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions received from the Institution

9.4 The Institution ensures internal stakeholders' appropriate level of a foreign language to enhance efficiency of internationalization.

According to Goris State University data, the language proficiency profile of the academic staff is dominated by Russian, which is spoken by all academic staff members. English proficiency is reported for 71.93% of academic staff, French for 22.81%, and German for 5.26%. The data indicate that the overall proportion of students with English language proficiency is approximately 81.8%.

At the same time, the distribution of language competencies across academic programs is uneven. A higher proportion of English-speaking students is observed in the “Professional Pedagogy” and “Economics” academic programs, whereas in several programs the proportion is significantly lower. In particular, the proportion of students with English language proficiency remains limited in the “Special Pedagogy”, “Preschool Pedagogy”, “Educational Sciences”, “Chemistry”, “Energy Engineering”, and “Informatics” academic programs. The University has not systematically collected data on proficiency in other foreign languages.

Despite the statistical data presented, the University has not yet implemented a systematic assessment or periodic monitoring of the foreign language proficiency levels of academic staff and students. Although initial and final language assessments have been conducted within certain training courses, a unified and clearly defined institutional toolkit for language proficiency assessment has not yet been introduced, complicating the accurate evaluation of actual language proficiency levels and the planning of their development.

To improve foreign-language proficiency, the University has implemented several individual training initiatives. For example, in 2023, a 60-hour (2-credit) training course was organised, primarily for stakeholders involved in international, grant-funded projects. The course was attended by 21 staff members and students, who received relevant certificates. However, these initiatives have not yet become continuous and systematic, and they do not cover a broad range of internal stakeholders.

Academic staff also participate in professional development activities delivered through international programs. Within the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme SMARTI project, several academic staff members participated in training organised at foreign universities, focusing on English-language teaching methodologies and the development of curricula and course materials. Following these training activities, the staff participated in internal training sessions. However, these activities have not been implemented continuously.

At the same time, foreign language instruction is included in the curricula of academic programs, and within the regulations governing the incentive system for academic staff research, teaching-methodological, and organisational activities, the development of language competencies is recognised as an eligible activity.

The analysis of the evidence presented indicates that the University implements measures to develop the language competencies of internal stakeholders. However, this process has not yet been structured as a systematic and continuous activity. Evidence obtained during the expert panel visit

indicates that the limited level of foreign language proficiency remains a factor that partially constrains the expansion of internationalization processes and international cooperation at the University.

Considerations:

The expert panel notes that at Goris State University, internationalization is regarded as an important direction of institutional development, and in recent years, several initiatives have been implemented in this field through international programs, cooperation agreements, and academic mobility schemes. These initiatives have contributed to a measurable increase in the University's international visibility and to the application of modern approaches and tools in the educational process.

The expert panel considers that the effectiveness of internationalization processes could be further enhanced through more systematic planning and management. Within the framework of external cooperation, it would be appropriate to define expected outcomes more clearly and to ensure their periodic evaluation and monitoring of implementation. The development of monitoring and impact assessment mechanisms for cooperation activities could contribute to the more targeted use of external partnerships and strengthen their impact on the University's strategic development and on the improvement of academic programs.

The effective implementation of internationalization processes also requires the development of internal capacities, particularly the continuous improvement of foreign-language competencies. The development of a systematic institutional policy in this area could help raise the level of foreign-language proficiency among stakeholders, thereby facilitating the study of foreign-language academic literature, the comparative analysis of academic programs, and the adaptation of best international practices.

At the same time, the development of external relations may also play an important role in strengthening the practical component of academic programs by ensuring students' access to professional environments and enabling the effective shared use of partner institutions' resources.

Summary:

Taking into account that, following the previous accreditation, Goris State University has taken steps to develop external relations and internationalization processes, has established cooperation mechanisms with employers and partner organisations to organise internships and practical training, and that participation in international programs has contributed to the enhancement of institutional resources and the development of internal stakeholders' capacities, the expert panel concludes that the University meets the requirements of Criterion 9.

Conclusion:

The compliance of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 9 is **satisfactory.**

10. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

CRITERION: The Institution has an internal quality assurance system, which promotes establishment of a quality culture and continuous improvement of all the processes of the Institution.

Findings

10.1 The Institution has quality assurance policies and procedures.

In 2021, in line with the recommendations in the previous accreditation expert report, Goris State University developed and approved the "GSU Quality Assurance Handbook", which defines the University's quality assurance concept, policy, key processes, and feedback mechanisms. The Handbook clarifies the roles and responsibilities of participants in quality assurance processes. The Handbook's annex includes questionnaires on teaching quality and effectiveness, as well as surveys assessing student and academic staff satisfaction with the learning and working environment, all of which are used in the data collection process.

At the same time, the review of the Handbook's content indicates that the procedures in the "Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures" section primarily address student assessment and the recruitment, motivation, and professional development of academic staff. These procedures do not cover quality assurance across all areas of institutional activity, particularly research, governance, and administration. As a result, the Handbook does not provide a comprehensive overview of quality assurance mechanisms across all institutional processes.

According to the self-evaluation report, quality assurance is considered an integral component of the University's core areas of activity, education, research, public engagement, and governance, within the 2025–2029 Strategic Development Plan. The review of the Strategic Plan indicates that quality assurance activities are more clearly defined in the areas of education and governance. To ensure high-quality education, a monitoring system for the effectiveness of the educational process and students' academic progress will be continuously operated, and studies on student satisfaction with internships will be conducted. Within the framework of governance and institutional capacity development, planned activities include analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the University's governance system, organising focus group discussions, and developing governance processes through the application of the PDCA Cycle. At the same time, in public engagement, the planned actions emphasise expanding internal and external stakeholder involvement.

The review of documentation and the expert panel meetings demonstrated that, since the previous accreditation, the University has taken several steps to improve the internal quality assurance system. These include the establishment of a dedicated Quality Assessment and Assurance Division, as

well as the broader involvement of internal and external stakeholders in governance processes and needs assessment activities.

10.2 The Institution allocates sufficient material, human and financial resources to manage internal quality assurance processes.

During the previous accreditation period, Goris State University operated the Division for Education Quality Assurance and Student Career Support. In 2022, the Division conducted benchmarking of quality assurance policies and procedures with Yerevan State University, Armenian National Agrarian University, and Shirak State University. As a result of the analysis, it was concluded that, to ensure the effective organisation of quality assurance processes, it would be appropriate to centralise these processes within a dedicated structural unit.

Based on this conclusion, structural changes were implemented in 2023, resulting in the creation of two separate divisions: the Division for Continuing Education and Career Development and the Quality Assessment and Assurance Division (hereinafter referred to as the QAA Division).

The QAA Division operates in accordance with a 2023 regulation and coordinates the University's internal quality assurance processes. The Division comprises two staff positions, Head of Division and Specialist, whose functions and responsibilities are defined in the Division regulation and job descriptions. The Division is provided with dedicated office space and the necessary material and technical resources. However, no mandatory training requirements or a structured professional development plan have been established for the Division staff.

Faculty-level coordinators and academic departments are also involved in quality assurance processes, particularly during the preparation for institutional accreditation, the organisation of internal program audits, and the administration of surveys. Student agents likewise participate in the organisation and implementation of surveys.

The QAA Division plans and reports on its activities by preparing mid-term and annual work plans, activity reports, and analytical reports on surveys conducted and on monitoring activities.

The allocation of financial resources for implementing quality assurance processes is governed by the University's annual institutional budget estimates and financial performance reports, as well as by the norms for calculating academic staff teaching and methodological workload. Expenditures related to the quality assurance system accounted for 0.60% of the total institutional budget in 2022 and 2023, and 0.02% in 2024. No separate financial resources are allocated specifically for survey implementation, as surveys are conducted online.

10.3 The internal and external stakeholders are involved in quality assurance processes.

Following the previous accreditation, Goris State University has expanded the involvement of internal and external stakeholders in quality assurance processes. Students, representatives of the

academic staff, and employers were involved in the committees responsible for developing the 2025–2029 Strategic Development Plan and preparing the institutional self-evaluation report.

The participation of internal stakeholders is also ensured through surveys that focus on evaluating teaching quality and effectiveness, assessing student and academic staff satisfaction with the learning and working environment, and identifying first-year students' needs. Survey results are analysed by the Quality Assessment and Assurance (QAA) Division, discussed in focus groups, and communicated to relevant structural units to address identified issues. During the site visit, it became clear that, in certain cases, survey results have served as a basis for implementing changes. For example, the results of teaching quality surveys were discussed during departmental meetings, leading to revisions in certain teaching methods and the resolution of issues related to lecturer–student interaction.

The University also operates a suggestion box, which the QAA Division periodically reviews. However, submissions through this mechanism are infrequent. Student participation in surveys remains relatively low. This is due to several factors, including the difficulty of maintaining anonymity in small groups and limited student engagement, particularly among part-time students.

During expert panel meetings, it was observed that external stakeholders, particularly school principals and representatives of several regional organisations, are interested in participating in institutional improvement processes. External stakeholders are involved through various formats, ranging from membership of governance bodies to the participation of employer-practitioners in the educational process. At the same time, mechanisms for engaging external stakeholders, particularly employers and graduates, are not yet fully systematised. Surveys conducted among employers and graduates remain limited in scope, and the results of graduate surveys have not yet been fully consolidated. According to university leadership, approximately 80% of graduates are employed within the region. However, data have been systematically collected only for graduates of the past three years since the establishment of the Division for Continuing Education and Career Development.

10.4 The internal quality assurance system is periodically reviewed.

Following the previous accreditation, several changes to review the quality assurance system were implemented at Goris State University. In particular, the "GSU Quality Assurance Handbook" was developed and approved, and as a result of structural changes implemented in 2023, a separate Quality Assessment and Assurance Division was established, thereby clarifying responsibility for coordinating quality assurance processes.

At the initiative of the Division, the mechanisms applied within quality assurance processes are periodically reviewed, including stakeholder surveys and regulations related to human resources development. These reviews are conducted based on the analysis of survey results and focus group discussions organized by the QAA Division.

10.5 The internal quality assurance system provides valid and sufficient grounds for the external quality assurance processes.

The internal quality assurance system of Goris State University comprises a range of tools and processes used in preparation for external evaluation procedures. These include the institutional self-evaluation process, internal audit reports on academic programs, and monitoring activities and surveys conducted within the quality assurance framework.

Based on these tools, the self-evaluation report submitted for external review has generally provided an overall understanding of each accreditation criterion. Although certain sections contain repetitive information, the overall structure and presentation logic have been maintained, allowing for a general understanding of institutional activities, implemented changes, and progress achieved in specific areas. At the same time, it is noted that the self-evaluation report is largely descriptive in nature and provides limited analytical conclusions. Although certain institutional weaknesses are identified in the document, they do not provide a comprehensive picture of the existing challenges.

During the review of documentation and the expert panel visit, certain inconsistencies in the presentation of quantitative data were also identified, particularly in graduate employment rates and foreign language proficiency data, which were attributed to the double-counting of the same individuals.

The self-evaluation process was coordinated by the Quality Assessment and Assurance Division, while representatives from various University structural units prepared content related to specific accreditation criteria. During the implementation of the self-evaluation process, the available institutional resources were also assessed. In particular, the possibility of developing an English-medium educational program was discussed; however, based on the evaluation of existing resources, the self-evaluation report identified the need to establish the necessary preconditions before its introduction.

An additional important basis for external quality assurance evaluation processes is provided by the results of internal audits of professional academic programs, as presented in these programs' self-evaluation documents.

10.6. The internal quality assurance system ensures the transparency of the processes at the Institution providing valid and up to date information on their quality to the internal and external stakeholders.

To ensure the accessibility of information on the quality of institutional activities and processes, Goris State University has published a range of documents on its official website. These include the Rector's annual reports for the past ten years (including the 2023–2024 academic year), the Quality Assessment and Assurance Division's work plans and reports [6], financial reports, procurement plans,

[6] The text has been modified as a result of the discussion of comments and suggestions received from the Institution

the institutional concept, strategic development plans, the institutional self-evaluation report, and several regulatory documents. The website also publishes the results and analyses of surveys conducted among academic staff and students. In addition to the official website, the University actively uses its Facebook page to inform stakeholders about institutional activities.

The reports and analytical outputs of the QAA Division include both quantitative and qualitative data. At the same time, the University is continuously working to strengthen the analytical component of its reporting practices.

The primary tools for assessing internal stakeholders' awareness of quality assurance processes are surveys measuring student and academic staff satisfaction with the learning and working environment. During the site visit, it was noted that internal stakeholders are generally informed about the various quality assurance processes and their outcomes. In disseminating information, particularly when presenting the results of academic staff evaluations to relevant structural units, the QAA Division adheres to ethical standards and ensures data confidentiality.

Although employers and graduates are involved in several institutional processes, systematic quantitative surveys assessing the level of awareness among external stakeholders have not yet been conducted.

Considerations:

The expert panel notes positively that the fundamental institutional foundations of the internal quality assurance system at Goris State University have been established. The changes implemented following the previous accreditation have contributed to clearer coordination of quality assurance functions and to the strengthening of their linkage with institutional governance processes.

In certain cases, the data collected are used to support management decision-making and process improvement, indicating an emerging linkage between quality assurance and governance systems. At the same time, further development of data analysis practices and their systematic application could enable quality assurance processes to support strategic and operational decision-making more comprehensively.

The expert review also indicates that stakeholder participation in quality assurance processes is gradually expanding. Internal stakeholder participation is primarily ensured through surveys and discussions, while external stakeholders are engaged in various institutional processes. At the same time, further systematising stakeholder engagement mechanisms could contribute to more comprehensive feedback and the systematic identification of stakeholder needs. To ensure the continued development of the system, it is necessary to strengthen the linkage between quality assurance and governance processes, expand the analytical use of data, and organise stakeholder participation more systematically. This would contribute to the further consolidation of quality culture at the University and the continuous improvement of institutional performance.

Summary:

Taking into consideration that, following the previous accreditation, Goris State University has undertaken steps toward the development of the quality assurance system, including the provision of appropriate human and material resources, the integration of quality assurance processes into the objectives and actions of the Strategic Plan, the expansion of internal and external stakeholder participation, the diversification of data collection and monitoring tools and mechanisms, as well as the promotion of cooperation between the Quality Assessment and Assurance Division and other structural units of the University, the expert panel concludes that the University meets the requirements of Criterion 10.

Conclusion:

The compliance of GSU institutional capacities with the requirements of Criterion 10 is **satisfactory.**

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERION	CONCLUSION
I. Mission and Purposes	**Satisfactory**
II. Governance and Administration	**Satisfactory**
III. Academic Programs	**Unsatisfactory**
IV. Students	**Satisfactory**
V. Faculty and Staff	**Satisfactory**
VI.Research and Development	**Satisfactory**
VII. Infrastructure and Resources	**Satisfactory**
VIII. Societal Responsibility	**Satisfactory**
IX.External Relations and Internationalization	**Satisfactory**
X. Internal Quality Assurance System	**Satisfactory**

Lilit Badalyan

Date: 16.06.2026

Head of the expert panel

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1.CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

Lilit Badalyan - graduated from the Faculty of Romance and Germanic Languages at Yerevan State University after V. Brusov (1992–1997). From 1999 to 2004, she pursued postgraduate studies at the same university as an external student. In 2008, she defended her кандидатская dissertation and was awarded the academic degree of Candidate of Philological Sciences (PhD in Philology). From 1997 to 2019, she worked at the Department of English at Yerevan State University after V. Brusov, where she held the position of Associate Professor. From 2012 to 2016, she served as Acting Head of the Department of Romance and Germanic Philology at the European Regional Educational Academy. Since 2012, she has served as an oral examiner for the international examinations (ECCE and ECPE), jointly administered by the University of Michigan and the University of Cambridge and held at the Master Plus International Educational Center. From 2019-2022, she worked at Yerevan State University, where she was Head of the Department of Linguistics and Communication Theory. Since 2022, she has been the Head of the Department of English Communication at Yerevan State University after V. Brusov. Lilit Badalyan is the author of approximately 15 scientific articles and 6 conference theses, and a co-author of 3 teaching and methodological manuals.

Nonna Khachatryan- studied at the Institute of Foreign Economic Relations and Management from 1993 to 1997, where she obtained a Bachelor's degree in International Law. She continued her studies at the same institution from 2001 to 2003, earning a Bachelor's degree in Economics. From 2005 to 2007, she studied at the Financial Academy, obtaining a Master's degree in Accounting and Audit. From 2006 to 2008, she pursued postgraduate studies at the Armenian National Agrarian University. She subsequently defended her dissertation and was awarded the academic degree of Candidate of Economic Sciences (PhD in Economics).

From 2000 to 2008, she worked at the University of Foreign Economic Relations, where she served as Head of the Academic Affairs Office. From 2008 to 2010, she served at the same university as Quality Control Officer for Educational Services. Since 2011, she has been working at Yerevan State University as a Lecturer in the Department of Management and Business.

Gohar Petrosyan: graduated from the Law Department of the French University in Armenia (2007–2011). She then continued her studies at the same university (2011–2013), earning a Master's degree in International Business Law. In 2013–2014, she completed professional training at the Public Defender's School of Armenia and obtained a law licence. From 2018 to 2021, she pursued doctoral studies at Jean Moulin Lyon 3 University, where she was awarded the Doctor of Legal Sciences (PhD in Law) degree. Since 2018, she has been working as a Lecturer at the French University in Armenia. Concurrently, she serves as Head of the Department of Private Law and Procedure at the European University of Armenia.

Mieczyslaw Socha - obtained his Master's degree from the University of Lodz and his doctoral degree in Economics from the University of Warsaw. He worked at the University of Warsaw as a Lecturer and, for approximately nine years, also served as Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Economics. During his professional career, he also served as Head of the Department of Economics at Kozminski University and at Northern State University. He has extensive professional experience in higher education quality assurance and accreditation. For nearly 20 years, he collaborated with the Polish Accreditation Committee (PKA), serving on advisory and programme councils and as an expert. He has been elected to the boards of international quality assurance organisations, including the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education, and the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education. He has participated in programme and institutional evaluations of higher education institutions and accreditation agencies within the frameworks of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education, and national quality assurance agencies in various countries, including Armenia, Albania, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Denmark, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, and Sweden. He is the author of approximately 140 scientific publications on macroeconomics, labour markets, and higher education quality, published in multiple languages, including Polish, English, Japanese, and German.

Vahe Hovhannisyan- From 2019 to 2022, he studied at the Ararat Regional State College, Department of Accounting and Audit. He participated in the student-expert training course implemented within the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation Student Voice Project. Since 2022, he has been studying at the Department of Informatics and Applied Mathematics at Yerevan State University. From 2023 to 2025, he completed his compulsory military service in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia.

APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT

15.12.2025		Launch	End	Duration
1.	Meeting with the Rector of Goris State University	9:30	10:30	60 minutes
2.	Meeting with the Vice-Rector	10:40	11:30	50 minutes
3.	Observation of GSU resources and	11:40	13:00	80 minutes

	infrastructures			
4.	Break, discussions of the expert panel	13:10	14:10	60 minutes
5.	Meeting with the self-evaluation working group	14:20	15:10	50 minutes
6.	Meeting with employers	15:20	16:20	60 minutes
7.	Meeting with alumni	16:30	17:20	50 minutes
8.	Observation of documents, close meeting of the expert panel	17:30	18:30	60 minutes
16.12.2025		**Launch**	**End**	**Duration**
1.	Meeting with the members of Goris State University Board	9:30	10:30	60 minutes
2.	Class observations	10:30	11:40	70 minutes
3.	Meeting with students	11:50	12:50	60 minutes
4.	Break, discussions of the expert panel	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
5.	Meeting with the Heads of the structural units (Academic Process Management Department, NQAC, Archive, External Relations, Cooperation and Communication Department, Continuing Education and Career Development Department, Accounting, Librarian)	14:10	15:20	70 minutes
6.	Meeting with the Deans	15:30	16:10	40 minutes
7.	Meeting with the Heads of Chairs and representatives responsible for academic programs	16:20	17:20	60 minutes

8.	Observation of documents, close meeting of the expert panel			17:30	19:00	90 minutes

17.12.2025				Launch	End	Duration
1.	Meeting with teaching staff members (10-12 representatives)			9:30	10:30	60 minutes
2.	Meeting with the representative(s) responsible and teaching staff of the "Economics" academic program	Meeting with the representative(s) responsible and teaching staff of the "Law" academic program	Meeting with the representative(s) responsible and teaching staff of the “English language and literature” academic program	10:40	12:00	80 minutes
3.	Meeting with the students of “Economics” academic program	Meeting with the students of “ Law” academic program	Meeting with the students of “English language and literature” academic program	12:10	13:10	60 minutes
4.	Break, discussions of the expert panel			13:20	14:20	60 minutes
5.	Meeting with the representatives of Student Council and Student Scientific Union (10-12 representatives)			14:30	15:20	50 minutes
7.	Open meeting			15:30	16:20	50 minutes
8.	Observation of documents, close meeting of the expert panel			16:30	18:00	90 minutes

18.12.2025		Launch	End	Duration
1.	Meeting with the staff of the Quality Assurance Centre	9:30	10:30	60 minutes
2.	Observation of documents, close meeting of the expert panel	10:40	11:40	60 minutes
3.	Meeting with the representatives selected by the expert panel	11:50	12:50	60 minutes
4.	Break, discussions of the expert panel	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
5.	Closed expert panel meeting	14:10	15:20	70 minutes
6.	Meeting with the Management of Goris State University	15:30	16:00	30 minutes

APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

N	Name of Document	Criterion
1	List of surveys conducted among internal and external stakeholders	1
2	Analysis of survey results conducted among internal and external stakeholders (last 2 years)	1
3	Results of labor market needs analysis	1
4	Minutes of council meetings	1
5	Samples of evaluation reports	1
6	Graduate employment data by academic programs	1
7	Results of satisfaction surveys related to the learning environment (recent years)	1
8	Inclusive education policy	1
9	Budget planning for academic programs	2
10	Financial audit reports (last 2 years)	2
11	Minutes of focus group discussions	2
12	Performance evaluation reports of mid-term action plans derived from the Strategic Plan	2

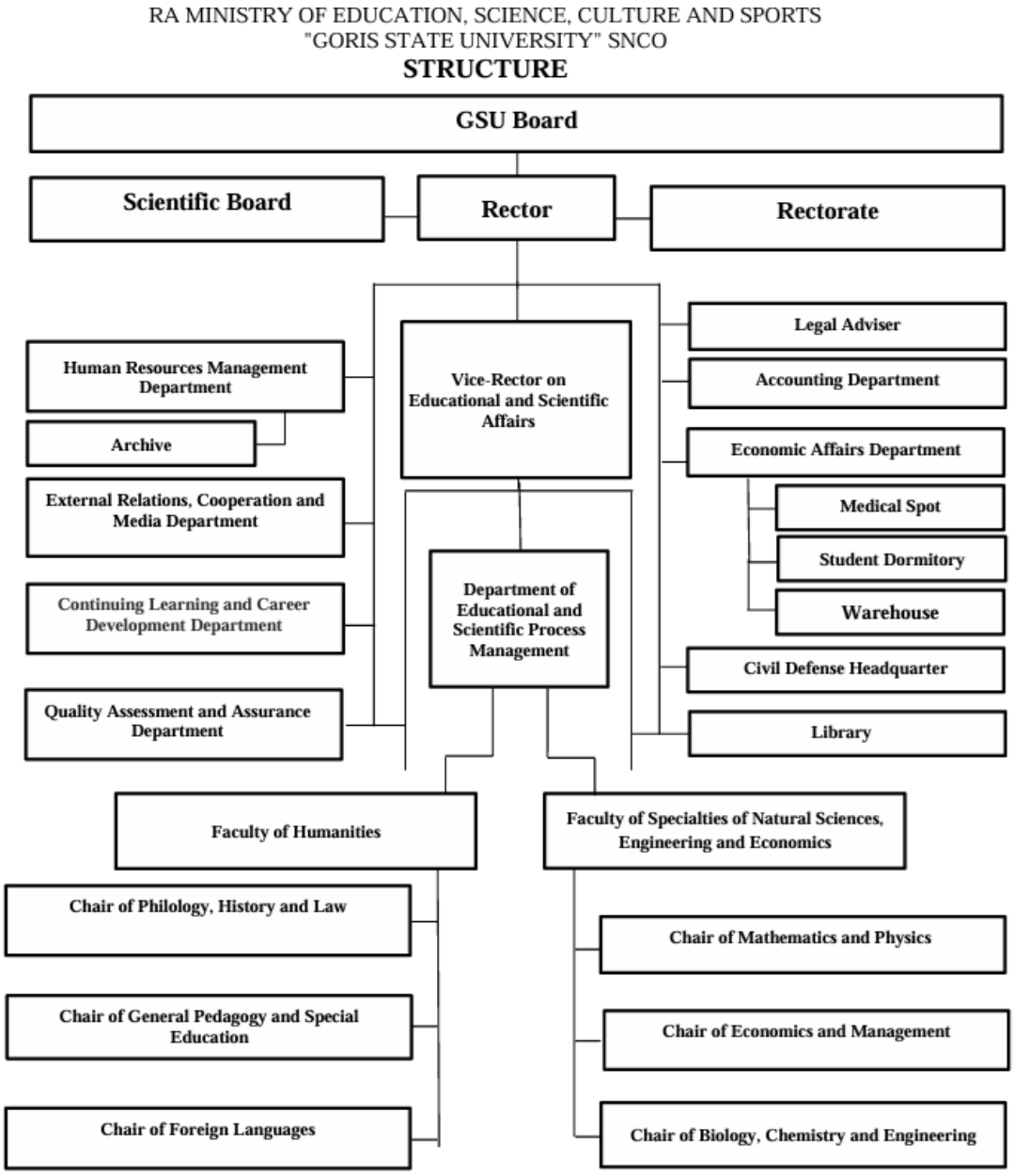
13	Annual departmental reports (last 5 years)	2
14	Benchmarking results	2
15	Analyses of internal audits of academic programs	2
16	Results of student surveys (2022–2023)	2
17	Graduate employment data	2
18	Self-analysis reports of internal audits	3
19	Topics of course papers and Master's theses (last 3 years)	3
20	Samples of diploma projects and course papers (last 3 years)	3
21	Samples of diplomas (last 3 years)	3
22	Revised curricula	3
23	Academic staff portfolios	3
24	Internship/practicum implementation programs	3
25	Completed internship logs/diaries (for selected 3 academic programs)	3
26	Samples of practical assignments (for selected 3 academic programs)	3
27	Assessment scale/regulation for diploma projects, final papers, and Master's theses	3
28	Results of needs assessment processes (recent years)	4
29	Admission results (last 2 years)	4
30	Results of student surveys (last 3 years)	4
31	Graduate database	4
32	Reports of the Student Scientific Society	4
33	Regulation and/or format for classroom observations	5
34	Classroom observation records	5
35	Analysis of classroom observation results	5
36	Results/ratings of surveys on academic staff (2024–2025)	5
37	Results of needs assessment surveys conducted among internal and external stakeholders	5
38	List of professional development trainings	5
39	HR Department plan (2025–2026)	5
40	Continuing education plan (2025–2026)	5
41	Examples of research conducted at Goris State University (recent years)	6
42	Samples of final papers and Master's theses (recent years)	6
43	List of literature acquired in recent years	7
44	Results/evidence related to resource optimization and staffing policy implementation	7
45	Analysis of survey results related to resource demand identification	7
46	Regulation governing the analysis of the annual performance of structural units	8
47	Annual Rector's reports (recent years)	8
48	Regulation governing the preparation of the Rector's annual report	8
49	List of publications about Goris State University posted by Goris Today Media Group LLC	8
50	Updated data on the website, Facebook page views, and visitors of Goris State University	8

51	Analysis of the results of the School Intellectual Crossroads event (recent years)	8
52	List of trainings conducted in English (last 8 years)	9
53	List of internship placement sites	9
54	List of local partnerships	9
55	Evidence of the results of Erasmus+ Programme projects	9
56	Work plans and reports of the Quality Assurance Department (recent years)	10
57	Analysis of survey results conducted in 2024–2025	10
58	Minutes of department meetings (recent years)	10
59	Regulation defining the responsibilities of faculty-level quality assurance coordinators	10
60	Analysis of survey results on student and academic staff satisfaction with the learning and working environment at Goris State University	10

APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED

- Auditoriums
- Dean's offices
- Departments
- Structural units
- Laboratories
- Subject-specific classrooms/cabinets
- Computer labs
- First-aid post / medical room
- Library
- Reading hall
- Archive
- Assembly hall
- Sports hall/gymnasium

APPENDIX 5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION



APPENDIX 6. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANQA- National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation

GSU- Goris State University

AC- Academic Program

TLI-Tertiary Level Institutions

QA- Quality Assurance

NQF-National Qualification Framework

SSQ- Sectoral Scope of Qualifications

SP- Strategic plan

CEENQA – Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

ECA – European Consortium for Accreditation ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

ENQA – European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

ESG – Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

INQAAHE – International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

PKA – Polish Accreditation Committee

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals